

ENGLISH BICKNOR PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the bi-monthly meeting held on 11th October 2010 at English Bicknor Village Hall.

Those present were as follows:

Councillor Mrs P. Drinkall
Councillor Mr J. Carrick
Councillor Mr P. Scott
Councillor Mr S. Dartnell
Councillor Mrs S. Holden
Councillor Mrs D. Owen

Also present were District Councillor Mrs M. Smart, PCSO N. Jones, Mrs Barbara Britton, Mr D. Edgar, Ms T. Brown, Mrs F. Edwards

162. Apologies and Welcome

Apologies were received from County Councillor T. Glastonbury and from Councillor Mrs P. Stott

The Parish Council chair, Cllr Drinkall, welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the members of the public, and gave a brief outline of the format the meeting would take.

163. Public Forum

Ms T. Brown thanked the Parish Council for putting the 'no dog fouling' signs back on the playing fields. She explained that she had brought with her a petition, signed by many parishioners who feel that the playing field is only for footballers and not for the village as a whole. She had seen the minutes of previous Parish Council meetings on the website and was unhappy that her address had been included in the minutes. She told the meeting that she does exercise her dog on the playing fields, but it is not her dog which is responsible for leaving dog mess on the fields, as she always picks it up. She has spoken to the District Council's dog warden co-ordinator - Nick Brain - who told her that he was unaware of the problems in English Bicknor. Ms Brown explained that in the course of asking people to sign her petition she had spoken with many parishioners who asked why the village fete had been moved to the school and why there is no play area for children on the playing fields. Children are cycling on the pavements as they have nowhere else to go.

The chair clarified the situation with regard to the replacement of the 'no dog fouling' signs and confirmed that the fete, which is actually organised by a group of volunteers, had moved from the playing fields to the school in 2009 when the village hall was being refurbished and unavailable for refreshments etc. This venue was also used in 2010, but could be moved back to the village playing fields in future years. However, many

other events are held in the village hall. The Village Hall Committee have looked at the possibility of setting up a children's playground, but the costs involved are too great at present for either the Parish Council or the Village Hall Committee. Cllr Drinkall clarified that many of the points brought to the meeting by Ms Brown and Mr Edgar are not the jurisdiction of the Parish Council but of the Village Hall Committee.

164. Minutes of the last bi-monthly meeting

The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed and signed by the Chair.

165. Report of the District Councillor

Cllr Mairilyn Smart reported that a census will take place on 27th March 2011, with the results to be announced in 2012. It is a legal obligation for everyone to complete the census, with a £100 fine for those who do not.

The District Council have to find savings of £2.3 million over the next five years. Both wages and Council Tax are to be frozen for the next 2 years, but until later this month the Council do not know what the Government grants cut will be.

Landfill tax for Gloucestershire has increased from £1m to £23m in 5 years and will be £35m in 2014. We therefore have to reduce the amounts going to landfill. New changes to waste collection will be introduced in 2012, with weekly collections of food waste, weekly collections of garden waste - for which there will be a charge - and fortnightly collections of glass, cans, paper and non-recyclable waste.

Car parking charges at hospitals are to remain; free car parking at hospitals in England would take £200m out of the NHS budget.

The Pride of the Forest Awards will take place at Forest Hills Golf Club on the 26th November.

Cllr Dartnell asked if there has been an increase in fly-tipping due to the changes in waste collections. Cllr Smart confirmed that this has happened. This is also a major concern to the Forestry Commission. She was also able to confirm that some of the leisure centres owned by Forest of Dean District Council operate at a loss. There was also concern as to how the freezing of the Council Tax would effect the Parish Council's Precept.

166. Report of the Police Representative

PCSO Nick Jones reported that the Police have also been affected by budget cuts, with the result that from now on the Forest will be one area, with one Superintendent and one Inspector based at Coleford. There is also a new Safer Community Team Sergeant in charge of the PCSOs.

Since the last meeting of the Parish Council there have been 2 thefts in English Bicknor, 2 non-dwelling burglaries and one case of criminal damage. The Traffic Officer has confirmed that 3 speed checks have been carried out in Hillersland, each lasting for one hour. From these one ticket was issued and 3 verbal warnings given. PCSO Jones has carried out speed checks with Cllr Dartnell; the first on 21st September in Hillersland between 8.45 and 9.45 am, when 1 or 2 speeding tickets would have been issued had he the authority to do so. A further speed check was carried out outside English Bicknor Village Hall on 1st October between 3.15 and 4pm,

when four tickets could have been issued if the Traffic Officer had been present. PCSO Jones confirmed that he will continue to request the Traffic Officer to carry out checks in the area. PCSO Jones will also start work earlier in order to carry out some early morning speed checks.

Finally, PCSO Jones stressed the importance of reporting anything suspicious - anything out of the ordinary - to the police, as this could help in future crime solving.

167. Matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2010

152. LEANING FINGER POST AT REDINHORNE The Public Rights of Way Officer was informed of the location of this leaning post. He has visited the site but his response is that as the post is leaning away from the road it does not constitute a danger to vehicles or pedestrians and is therefore not a priority matter when viewed against other work commitments and available budget.

HEDGE ON ROAD BETWEEN SYMONDS YAT ROCK AND HOLLY BARN Highways were informed of this overhanging hedge. The clerk received a reply at the beginning of October saying that a hedge notice was sent to the owners and Highways thought that the hedge had been cut back. Highways have subsequently been advised that the hedge has been cut at pedestrian level, but not higher up where the overhanging hedge is causing vehicles to move into the middle of the road.

156. DOG FOULING In August the Clerk had spoken to the Chair of the Village Hall Committee to inform him of the action taken by the Parish Council with regard to instituting a Dog Control Order and received a positive response with regard to a contribution towards the cost of advertising the Dog Control Order from that committee. It was also confirmed to the clerk that the 'No Dog Fouling' signs owned by the Parish Council had been disposed of by a member of the Village Hall Committee. However, at their meeting held in September the Village Hall Committee decided not to go ahead with banning dogs from the playing fields and instead agreed to purchase new 'no dog fouling' signs to replace the signs banning dogs. A notice clarifying the situation has been put in the September edition of the Parish Magazine by the Village Hall Committee, and a leaflet has been distributed to all homes in the Parish. New 'no fouling' signs were ordered from FODDC on behalf of the Village Hall Committee, which have now been erected on the playing fields.

Meanwhile, an e-mail has been received which indicated that a petition is being drawn up by a number of villagers who feel that the playing fields are used only for football and not for the benefit of anyone else. A letter received by the Parish Council and a telephone call from our PCSO confirmed that there are also people in the Parish who do not wish to see dogs being allowed to use the playing fields.

98.3 PARKING AT SCHOOL Councillor Scott reported that the unanimous view of all members of the Glebeland Committee is that no further funds or work should be expended on the idea of extending the car park further, for a variety of reasons.

140 TUMP LANE Cllr Scott reported that the pot holes in the lane have been marked ready for filling.

159.3 WYE VALLEY AONB TOUR Cllr Holden and Cllr Drinkall attended this very interesting and informative day at Chepstow.

160.1 TREE OUTSIDE 7 SMITHY CLOSE The clerk contacted Two Rivers

Housing, who arranged for their contractor to visit the site. The contractor has now been to the site and feels that there is more than one tree which is causing a problem outside 6 - 8 Smithy Close. A full report has been sent to Two Rivers Housing, who now have to decide what - if any - action they will take. Once a decision is made they will report back to the clerk.

160.6 HEDGE AT THE GLEBE Cllr Scott is hoping to arrange to have the hedge laid this coming winter. He will meet with a representative from the AONB this week to discuss whether they are able to use this as a training hedge for their course. A quote for £650.00 to have the hedge laid has been received.

160.7 FOOTPATH REB/19 A reply was not received from the PROW Officer until 6th October, by which time he was able to report that the footpath had been cleared and the crop harvested. It was agreed that we need to inform the PROW Officer earlier in the year if there are problems with footpaths through fields of crops.

160.8 FOOTPATH REB/29 The crop was removed from this field/footpath on 31st August 2010. With reference to whether we should contact landowners or no re improvements to footpaths, the reply from the PROW officer is that stiles/gates etc are the land owners' responsibility to maintain and as such, in the first instance we are advised to contact the landowner direct. A local approach often gives a quicker response and desired results. Where a land owner is unable to assist with a surface clearance which is obstructing a path, the AONB Officer would appreciate being informed of the path and contact details of the landowner.

160.10 REPLACING STILES WITH KISSING GATES The PROW Officer advised that the responsibility for such items lay with the land owner, although the County Council may consider a small contribution towards such an improvement. The specific stile referred to in our query was examined on 31st August and found to be in an average state of repair. The PROW officer subsequently contacted the landowner, who refused to have the existing stile replaced or upgraded to a kissing gate. The PROW Officer confirmed that he was unable to identify any source of funding such suggested improvements.

160.11 SIGNPOST/ROADSIGN NEAR DRYSLADE FARM Highways have been contacted three times concerning these signs, but no reply has been received to date. The Clerk will contact the District Council to ask who is responsible for the roadsign.

168. Planning Matters

The following planning decision has been received:

(573) P1522/10/FUL Spence Airfield, Tump Lane, English Bicknor
Erection of an aircraft hangar
Full permission granted on 24th September 2010

The following planning application was considered:

(574) P0141/10/DISCON Eastbach Court, Eastbach, English Bicknor
Discharge of condition (03) of planning permission P0877/10/FUL , roofing and

facing materials

The Parish Council have no comment

169. Accounts for payment

Miss Wendy Lawrence - clerk's wages and expenses - £467.18

Cllr Mrs P. Drinkall - expenses for AONB Tour - £9

Cllr Mrs S. Holden - expenses for AONB Tour - £9

Proposed by Cllr Carrick, seconded by Cllr Scott, all voted in favour.

170. Footpaths in the Parish

The Parish Council have a small number of circular footpath signs which can be put on paths where signs are missing. It was agreed that each councillor will put up these signs where they are needed on paths they have checked. Following the advice from the PROW Officer, landowners will be contacted direct where stiles/gates are in need of improvement. Councillors will report back to the next Parish Council meeting.

171. Correspondence received since last meeting

1. An e-mail has been received from the Electoral Services Manager of the District Council outlining the possible costs of the Parish election due in 2011. As these costs vary greatly, the clerk will ask for further clarification.

2. The Parish Council chair has received a letter from a resident which includes two areas of concern. The writer is unhappy with the owners of a Doberman dog which runs free on the playing field and is allowed to leave mess on the field and on the grass near his home. His chief concerns are for the health and safety of his young children and the mess he has to clean up. Cllr Holden commented at this point that she has also been advised that a young girl was knocked over by a large, exuberant Doberman on the playing fields, and is now afraid to go to there.

The writer of the letter was also concerned at photographs taken by Cllr Carrick of their property. As this letter was received by Cllr Drinkall on 31st August, a reply was sent advising that the Parish Council had not discussed this matter at a meeting and were therefore unable to comment. Cllr Carrick explained that he was taking photographs of the land in Smithy Close following concerns expressed to him by a local resident, who had approached Cllr Carrick because he knew he was a Parish Councillor. After taking the photographs Cllr Carrick had spoken to the owner of the land, and shown him the photographs. Cllr Carrick confirmed that it was only at this point that he became aware that one of the photographs included the owner's children, at which point he immediately deleted this photograph, in front of their father. A further reply will be sent to advise that the Parish Council has now had the opportunity to discuss this matter, confirming that Cllr Carrick had no knowledge of any child being in the photograph and that this photo was destroyed immediately their presence in the photo was pointed out to him. With reference to the concerns about the dog, the Parish Council will advise on the up-to-date position and forward a copy of the notice sent out by the Village Hall Committee.

3. A further letter has been received, from the same resident, concerning a bill for

grass cutting received from Two Rivers Housing. The letter asks the Parish Council to get involved and take a stand. The Parish Council felt that this issue has been on-going for several years and has received a great deal of publicity in the local press. At present there is a case going through the courts, so it would not be appropriate for the Parish Council to comment. A letter of reply will be sent which will include the contact details of the residents' committee which is working on behalf of those affected by the grass cutting fees.

4. An e-mail has been received advising that Cllr Scott's 4 year tenure as the Parish Council representative on the Lucy Machen Charity expires this month. Cllr Scott agreed that he will carry on as Parish Council representative to that Charity until May of next year, when he will be standing down as a Parish Councillor.

A number of posters and leaflets were circulated for information.

172. Any other matters affecting the Parish Council

1. Cllr Dartnell accompanied PCSO Jones on a tour of the Parish, looking at possible areas of concern.
2. The Clerk was asked to inform Highways of Lime Trees which are blocking the school warning signs.
3. Cllr Mrs Owen reported that the English Bicknor sign on the road coming from Lydbrook has been painted red.
4. The Council discussed what could be done to attract more people to the Annual Parish Assembly. Suggestions included inviting a speaker, perhaps meeting on a Saturday, possibly carrying on from the lunches held in the Village Hall and involving the older children from the school. This will need to be discussed further.

173. Date of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held on Monday 13th December at 7pm, in the Village Hall.