

MINUTES
ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, BICKNOLLER PARISH
(in the format to be presented to the next Parish Meeting for approval)

Held on Wednesday 6th April 2022, commencing at 7.00pm
Bicknoller Village Hall

PRESENT: Councillor C Warren (Chairman)
Parishioners x 13
Parish Council clerk, Claire Morrison-Jones

The meeting was chaired by Councillor C Warren.

Chair introduced the new parish clerk, Claire Morrison-Jones

1) Apologies of Absence

Apologies of absence were received from M Andersen, C Stock, C Darke, C Lawrence and A Trollope-Bellew

2) Acceptance of minutes from Annual Parish Meeting 28th April 2021

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chairman

3) Reports from County and District Councillors

None

4) Report by the Chairman of Bicknoller Parish Council

Cllr Warren gave thanks to all the current councillors for their work over the previous year.

Also special thanks to Cllrs Chris Skinner and Mike Rawle for services to the Parish Council. Neither will be standing for re-election in May and their work on the Parish Council has been much appreciated.

Thanks as well to all those in the village for their work throughout the village over the last 2 years during the pandemic. Hopefully we will not see a return to zoom meetings and quarantine

The Jubilee message from the village to be sent to the Queen was read out by the Chairman.

5) Parish Council Financial Report

The Clerk presented the end of year accounts for 2021-22. The closing balance at 31.3.22 was £9,808.77, of which £1,396.67 is held in reserved funds.

The clerk advised the accounts were currently being prepared for examination by the Internal Auditor.

6) Reports from Local Organisations

Representatives of local organisations gave a summary of the current activities of their organisations which can be found attached to these minutes.

7) Any other business
None

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 19.50

Reports:

St George's Church Report
Delivered by Rt Revd Nigel Stock

St George's Church is the only village institution to be open every day of the year, from early morning to late afternoon, and available for everyone who wishes to come in. While various strains of the Covid virus have remained a continuing threat from last April until now, Bicknoller Church services have been held as normal, due to sensible anti-Covid precautions. Three regular Sunday services have been held each month, from formal to very informal, and Morning Prayer on most Mondays.

The church was also available for significant family occasions in the journey of life, baptisms, weddings, funerals and memorial services. In addition, informal community social gatherings have been held in non-church settings. These were Songs of Praise in the Bicknoller Flower Show tent in the summer and Carols around the Tree, held on the corner of Church Lane in December. Both these involved singing, merriment and good refreshments!

Besides the opportunity for worship, the church welcomes casual visitors, tourists looking at the historic features, people admiring the floral displays at Easter, Harvest and Christmas, walkers coming in out of the rain to eat their sandwiches or to use the toilet or anyone who wants a peaceful, beautiful space for prayer or meditation. Bicknoller Churchyard is also open to the community as a place for burial and for the interment of ashes, but many also use it to enjoy the natural surroundings or for walking their dog.

The congregation at St. George's are there to pray for anyone in need, in the local community, for our nation or all those suffering anywhere in the world and welcomes requests for prayers for particular concerns. On Wednesday 30th March a special service was held to pray for the people of Ukraine.

The congregation of St George's is outward looking, raising funds in the last year for community, national or international charities: the Quantock Foodbank, the Royal British Legion, Toilet Twinning and a Ugandan charity to support vulnerable women and girls in Uganda. This year we aim to become even more outward looking and at the service of the community. Church events are being planned, together with the other village organisations, for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations. With other local churches, we are conducting a survey to find out what local people appreciate about our church and how they would like the church to be used, both in a spiritual way and as a local amenity.

In order to carry out such projects and to maintain the building and the churchyard, the congregation needs local help, financially and by volunteering for practical tasks or by giving administrative advice. As in any organisation in a rural area, members are aging and less able to assist in such work. An appeal to help maintain St George's Church as an active, beneficial and beautiful part of the community will be sent out in the coming months.

Flower Show Report

Delivered by Claire Rawle

After all the cancellations and disappointments of Covid we held a scaled down summer flower show last year. Entries were high and the standard of entries and exhibits was as good as ever with judges commenting on the quality of the exhibits. Although there were not as many people attending, which was not surprising considering Covid was still making people nervous about socialising, everybody enjoyed the opportunity to do something different and to have tea and a chat with neighbours again.

David Croxton retired as chairman of our committee a couple of months ago, I and the other members of the committee thank him for all his dedication and hard work over the past few years, I am now “acting” chairman for the time being.

We held a “full” spring show last month which again saw good entries, some beautiful floral art – the village hall was alive with colour and the scents of spring.

Membership numbers are continuing to rise and there seems to be continued interest in the club activities – we have a talk coming up in April by Nigel Williams and the summer show this year will be on July 30th. Financially the club is doing well, we have not been able to hold much in the way of fund raising events, there will be a Simple Lunch next Tuesday 12th April – all are welcome. The hog roast which we traditionally hold in the marquee before the summer show will this year be more of a village event – details will follow in due course.

The large metal container has now been sold as we no longer need it to store items, with the new extension to the hall we are now able to use part of that as storage and we have had trolleys designed and fitted under the stage as another storage area.

Going forward we are optimistic that more people will attend our events and we look forward to welcoming everybody to the summer show – as exhibitors and spectators.

Bicknoller Neighbourhood Watch Report

Delivered by Andrew Harrison

Neighbourhood Watch is a partnership between the police, wardens and members where responsibility for success lies with all of these working together as a team. Thankfully this is a low crime area, but an active NW scheme helps further reduce the chance of crime by increasing awareness on prevention measures, maintaining increased vigilance and by the deterrent effect of signs around the area.

The Bicknoller group has seven wardens each covering a patch within the parish and with me lurking in the background as an overall coordinator. Currently we have 68 members signed up. We receive regular alerts and security information from Avon and Somerset police and those items deemed most relevant are circulated to our membership by email. We also act as a hub for disseminating alerts about any suspicious activity spotted in the area and we are point of contact between local police and our members for forwarding advice and passing information in both directions.

There continues to be a steady trickle of break-ins in the district, mostly targeting garages, sheds and other outbuildings, but recently none within our parish. By far the greatest danger of becoming a victim to crime in our area remains fraud. Principally this is online and by text messaging and telephone where the criminals attempt to extract personal information or extract money for non-existent goods and services. Unsurprisingly a lot of these recently have been associated with the NHS and Covid and now even the Ukraine conflict. Hopefully by now our members are sufficiently aware of the signs to steer well clear of such traps. However, the fraudsters are

always trying to find ever more ingenious ways of penetrating our armour and so we should never become complacent!

In last May's elections, Avon and Somerset's Police and Crime commissioner Sue Mountstevens was replaced by Mark Shelford who stood as a Conservative candidate. A group of parish councillors and Neighbourhood Watch wardens met him at the Bick later in the summer. We were pleased to hear that he is highly committed to creating a more effective and efficient police force. A major goal to achieve this is the prevention crime rather than having to catch criminals after the event and, to that end, involvement with the community is a key factor.

Before Covid struck the wardens held meetings every 6 months to review our current status and to exchange information and ideas but have not had one for over 2 years now. Thankfully the local crime situation has remained very quiet over that period and no other matter have arisen that required coordinated efforts on our part.

However, it is my intention to resume warden meetings some time later this year. If anyone here who is not already a member would like to join us, please talk to me afterwards or contact myself or any of our wardens using contact details available on the Parish website.

Bicknoller Village Shop Report

Delivered by Clive Raisey

The shop has continued to serve the village during the pandemic thanks to the very much reduced band of volunteers. Now that restrictions have been largely abandoned, the shop takings have returned to our normal level but we trust that we will be able to uphold our founder's principles of service to the community.

We have just sent a further £8,000 from our surplus to the Village Hall towards their new kitchen. This is in accordance with our status as a Co-operative and Community Benefit Society. We still have adequate funds in hand to replace our point-of-sale till system in the coming year, but the increasing cost of electricity is a cause for concern and this year's results will inevitably reflect this.

We always welcome more helpers, not just at the till, but for several behind the scenes tasks.

Bicknoller Social Club

Delivered by Dr Christopher Leigh

The Social Club, despite the COVID pandemic and associated closures and restrictions has succeeded in continuing to hold their monthly meetings in the Village Hall. We have heard about EAT festivals, Foraging, and were amused by Dr. Burroughs telling us about his days as an organist. We managed to have our Christmas brunch with suitable musical accompaniment with our harpist Hazel.

For those who have never attended we extend a warm welcome to you all, please see the posters widely displayed around the village.

The Committee feel they are providing a service to all villagers with an opportunity to meet and chat without a need to leave the village and cause further global warming. I look forward to meeting you all on the 20th April at our next event when the forthcoming year's programme will be available to view.

Village Hall Committee Report

Delivered by Claire Rawle

The past couple of years have seen testing times for village halls and other social centres and ours was no exception. Thankfully government grants helped keep the hall going until bookings could be taken again.

There was an issue with the Trusteeship of the hall but this has now all been sorted with the Charity Commission.

The hall is now becoming busier, bookings are up and we have had some new clients using the hall. There are a number of local families holding parties in the hall this year and of course it is regularly used by other village social and sports groups.

The extension was finished last year which has provided a storage room and what will be the new kitchen.

We have received some very generous donations towards the fitting out of the new kitchen – the village shop, the flower show and the WI have all contributed as well as some anonymous members of the community.

This has enabled us to obtain quotes for the next stage of building work and preparation before fitting the appliances, and we are hoping that work will commence towards the end of May.

This is the first part of what will be a complete refurbishment of the hall giving the building a more modern feel but retaining the traditional atmosphere.

The two car charging points are now being regularly used at the side of the hall, the committee is now getting a quote to tarmac the two car bays and making them safer to use.

The committee are working hard to look at different ways to raise funds to carry out the renovation works and feel positive that the future is looking good for the hall, but it might be a bit of a slog getting there!

Bicknoller Women's Institute

Delivered by Maggie Pumphrey

Like other organisations in the village we had to curtail our activities and cancel our meetings during the covid lock-down, Many Wis around the country resorted to zoom meetings and we had to decide whether to do this in Bicknoller. Not being a keen zoom fan myself I was concerned that members should not miss out because their President was not in favour. So during the early stages of lockdown I conducted a telephone survey with every member and found that only 3 of our 24 members would be happy to try zoom meetings. So it didn't happen.

We did manage to have a meeting last July because July is usually a garden meeting. So we had an informal gathering with food and wine in the garden of a member, Pat Williams, and everyone was glad to get a chance to meet up as a group again.

We decided that as members had gained little from their membership over the year we would finance a supper in the village hall in August giving members another chance to enjoy each others' company.

With an easing of covid rules, we also managed to meet in September when our speaker demonstrated making silver jewellery. It was fascinating. And in November we all had a go at making boxes, a participative meeting after which every member was able to take home one or two boxes that they had made.

We had decided that our Christmas meal would be at Halsway Manor and this was really enjoyed. So much so that we have booked Halsway Manor again for this year's Christmas meal.

We usually use the garden meeting to give opportunities to members to give ideas for the programme for the following year. This didn't quite work out this time so the committee put together a varied programme which so far has worked out very well. One of our members, Claire Rawle, started us off in January with a fascinating and amusing talk about life on TV. A natural speaker with lots of humour, we felt we could listen to her for another hour. February saw us learning how to Sword Dance with Brain Heaton. He gave a brief history of the dance before leading us in the dancing. It was great fun.

Our opening meeting in March saw a full village hall, spaced out of course, to welcome Pauline Kidner from the Secret World Wildlife Centre. Pauline is the founder member and has always been an excellent speaker but her use of technology to enhance her presentation included videos as well as stills of various birds and animals that are treated by the centre and then released back into the wild. The presentation was well received.

Which brings us to our programme of future talks. Included is a Gardeners' Question Time, which when next week Sally and Dave Simpson will answer our questions. Other speakers include a lady from Knickerbockerglory in Minehead showing us how to get a good fitment of bras. We will have Silk Scarf and Tie painting, Preventing Diabetes and, wait for it – in October we will be having another open meeting and a Quantock Question Time. The panel will consist of representatives from the National Trust, from the AONB and Quantock Rangers. We have held these meetings before and filled the hall to over-flowing. A buffet supper will follow and money raised that evening will be donated to Alzheimer Research or another Dementia charity. We hope to see you all there. It will be advertised nearer the time.

We will be making Christmas Wreaths in November and having a social evening with fun and games in December, as well as our Christmas lunch at Halsway.

However, our activities go beyond monthly meetings. We arrange walks – easy ones and strenuous ones; we are currently arranging an outing to The American Museum near Bath, we will be having a craft day in the village hall in November which will be open for others to join us.

At the village hall May Morning Market on 14th May, Bicknoller WI is running what we hope to be a bumper cakes and produce stall and we will be asking many members of the community to contribute. Proceeds will be going to the Ukrainian Appeal.

Our membership is around 24 people, not all of whom live in Bicknoller. We are known in the area for being welcoming, friendly, supportive and fun and we are hoping that newcomers to the village who have not already joined us will be encouraged to do so in the coming months.

Bicknoller Volunteer Group Delivered by Stuart Dowding

Volunteers are regrettably getting older. The idea is to divide the parish into areas with each area to have a warden with the main aim of keeping gutters and gullies clear from detritus.

West Somerset Crisis Fund Delivered by the Village Agent, Izzy Silvester

Background: The Community Council for Somerset team of Village and Community Agents work to provide confidential, practical solutions for residents and

communities. Village Agents work to enable people to be healthy and well, to manage their affairs, to remain independent and safe and to be part of a strong and thriving local community. Referrals to Village Agents for help come from a large number of sources including GP Surgeries, local councils, other agencies and charities as well as from individuals themselves.

Across Somerset there are now over 70 Village Agents. During the past year the West Somerset team has expanded to include 5 Village Agents, 3 Community Agents and our Locality Manager. The growth of the team reflects the increasing demand for the services provided by CCS Agents across the county. Further details of the West Somerset Team can be found attached to this summary.

The majority of the clients we support are vulnerable people, who may be elderly, isolated, low-income families, have physical or mental health concerns or individuals who are struggling on benefits - many of these people have no-one else to turn to. We also support Carers and young carers who may be struggling in their caring role. The West Somerset Crisis Fund: During 2020 we established a West Somerset Crisis Fund to enable our West Somerset Village Agents to rapidly access funds to assist those in emergency need. Since establishing this fund, we have been able to help clients in dire need with funding towards heating, clothing, food provision, home moving costs and provision of furniture/appliances. Requests for grants from the fund are subject to approval by both the Village Agent and Team Lead.