

MINUTES

ANNUAL PARISH MEETING, BICKNOLLER PARISH

**Held on Wednesday 12th April 2023, commencing at 7.00pm
Bicknoller Village Hall**

(in the format to presented to the next meeting for approval)

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

The meeting was chaired by the Parish Council Chairman, Councillor C Warren.

C Warren welcomed everyone to the APM

1) Apologies of Absence

Apologies of absence were received from SC Cllr M Kravis

2) Acceptance of minutes from Annual Parish Meeting 6th April 2022

The minutes were approved and were signed by the Chairman

3) Reports from County Councillor

Christine reported that she was very pleased to be here and delighted that Bicknoller has soldiered on over the last year. Lots of challenges overcome and plenty to come.

Local government reorganisation: Somerset is now a unitary council with 110 division councillors. Cllr Kravis is the other councillor for the Dunster division with Christine

03001232224 – the switchboard at SC. If you need help, use the number given and you will be directed to the correct area of the council.

Finances are not great (about £24.5 million behind budget) particularly adult social care

Project to raise speed awareness in younger drivers

More online support for careers. (see SC briefing for phone number & website)

New housing support scheme for people coming out of hospital to help people get home safely with the support they need

4) Report by the Chairman of Bicknoller Parish Council

There have been changes in the last 12 months with new community members Sadly lost Anthony Trollope-Bellew, SW&T district councillor last year. He has been the spirit of helping West Somerset over the last 50 years and he will be sadly missed.

Condolences to Christine Lawrence on her loss of her husband who was so supportive of her.

Congratulations to the Village Hall committee on moving the present issues forward and consolidating the previous trustee issues

Airband – PC has given permission for broadband lines over Woolston Moor using the existing poles

The Queens Jubilee was very important last year and a special tribute to a devoted queen. Special thanks for Gilly Leighs for her scroll to the queen and this and the queens response have been framed and are displayed in the village hall. Congratulations to the WI for the celebration leaflet about the coronation of King Charles and the activities planned for Bicknoller
Parish groups are lacking support and need to gain support from new people

5) Parish Council Financial Report

The Clerk presented the end of year accounts for 2022-23. The closing balance at 31.3.23 was £10811.81, of which £1,896.67 is held in reserved funds. This leaves the balance of the Parish Council's general reserves as £8915.14. The clerk advised the 2022/23 accounts were now with the Internal Auditor for examination.

As in all walks of life, the PCs expenses have increased and the precept for 2023/24 has had to reflect that. It has been set at £7600, which has resulted in a charge of £35.92 for a band D property, an increase of £7.03 on 2022/23.

As with other Bicknoller groups, the Parish Council is looking for more people to step up and join. There are currently 2 vacancies that can be filled by co-option so if you, or anyone you know, wants to work with the parish council for the benefit of the parish, please contact the clerk , the chairman or any current parish councillors for more information

6) Reports from Local Organisations

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

7) Any other business

Questions:

What is happening with the volunteer group?

It is currently not functioning. Attempts are being made to locate the PC owned volunteer group equipment

Is fly tipping/littering a responsibility of volunteers or district council?

It is the responsibility of County – instances of tipping can be reported on the Somerset County portal

<https://www.somerset.gov.uk/bins-recycling-and-waste/how-to-fight-fly-tipping/?district=Somerset+West+and+Taunton#Report%20fly%20tipping>

What about litter picking volunteer days?

Thank you to the Parish Council who organise the APM, it is a shame it was not so well attended this time. Maybe increased advertising of the event may promote attendance

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 20.05

Chair:

Date:

Community Group reports. Annual Parish Meeting 2023

Bicklifts and EVIE Community Transport Report.

Delivered by David Croxton

'Bicklifts has been providing a community transport service to the residents of Bicknoller, Sampford Brett, West Quantoxhead and Woolston for over 20 years.

This service, however, is coming under threat as fewer volunteers come forward to replace those stepping aside. It is not just a local problem, however, with the voluntary sector, generally, suffering from a lack of new volunteers.

Bicklifts currently needs a volunteer Record Keeper, a Treasurer and a Scrutineer, as well as new drivers. None of the roles are onerous and for drivers, every trip is a personal decision to accept or decline at the time.

Thanks to a substantial Grant awarded from the Somerset Council Climate Emergency Fund, Bicknoller PC and Bicklifts are founding partners with Sampford Brett PC, Watchet TC and Drives for a new community transport initiative. This Grant has funded the purchase of a modified electric Nissan NV 200 that can safely carry one person in their own wheelchair, as well as three other passengers. We all value the independence our own cars give us, but community transport is a valuable community service that is there, when driving yourself may no longer be possible or practical. Please help if you can.

Bicknoller Neighbourhood Watch

Delivered by Andrew Harrison, Parish Coordinator

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. However John Grellier who has looked after Church Lane for many years has recently stood down and so we have a vacancy for that wardenship. For anyone here who might be willing to step in to fill this position, we would be very happy to welcome you into our team. There is very little work involved, just acting as a point of contact for members in your patch and encouraging any newcomers to join up!

Currently we have around 68 members. 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. 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 armor and so we should never become complacent!

Since the Covid lockdowns ended we have reinstated our 6 monthly warden meetings during which we review our current status and to exchange information and ideas. Thankfully the local crime situation has remained very quiet over that period and no other matters have arisen that required coordinated efforts on our part.

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 FLOWER SHOW

Delivered by Carole Darke

The Spring Show seemed to be 'early' this year, but despite the cold wet weather, the show benches were well filled and Chris Yates was very pleased with the standard of the exhibits.

The floral art section was very well supported.

We would like a few more entries in the Bake-off competition, and also more in the photography display, but the show is always a super Spring time tonic!

Lucy Croxton excelled herself this year, taking all 4 trophies – congratulations to her.

Our next event is a talk by the French manager of Cannington Walled Gardens, on 28th April at 7.30pm in the BVH.

In early July we will be asking for help to put up the marquee. 20 pairs of hands are needed for about 3 hours – with a break for bacon rolls and mugs of tea! Then we will have a fundraising evening with food and disco music 2 weeks before the summer show. The schedules for this are going to print very soon, and we hope that somehow the Junior classes will be supported- are there any youngsters in Bicknoller these days ??!

Please follow the Flower Show news on our Facebook page. We are there to help with advice on all gardening problems!

VILLAGE HALL MANAGEMENT GROUP

Delivered by Claire Rawle

The aftermath of the Covid epidemic meant that some bookings and events were slow to start again and it was obvious that people were wary of mixing for quite some time.

Bookings have steadily increased, all the village clubs are using the hall and there have been increased bookings for private functions such as children's parties, wakes, craft exhibitions and even dog training.

The new kitchen has been our main project this year and we are pleased to say that this is now finished, signed off and ready for use. It has been made possible by some very generous donations from local people, the shop, the flower show and a grant from the Somerset Foundation. The hall now has a modern kitchen which complies with safety standards and which contains all the appliances needed to enable professional catering for larger events.

As part of the kitchen project it was decided that the electricity throughout the whole building be updated, this has now been done. A fire alarm system has also been installed which covers the whole of the building.

The committee are also working hard to keep the energy costs down, even though the hall is receiving energy relief the monthly charges continue to rise, something that is going to be an ongoing issue. As part of this plan, they are looking into fitting LED lights to the main hall, quotes have been obtained and grants are being looked into. This would mean a considerable saving in electricity use and also a better quality of light to the hall.

It has been decided that the car charging points be re-sited at the rear of the hall as vehicles plugged in do cause an obstruction to the entrance of the car park, this is under discussion at the moment.

The refurbishment project is still very much continuing and there will be fund raising events throughout the year – A dance as part of the Coronation celebrations will be held on Monday 8th May, the event is already sold out. The May Market will be on 20th May and there will be an auction of promises on 2nd December, other events are being planned. For anyone interested in having a look at the new kitchen there will be an open morning on 28th April 10am-12pm, with coffee and cake. After considerable research and discussion the committee have voted not to change the charitable status to become a CIO at the moment but this will be reviewed in the future should circumstances alter. They are also in the process of applying for an order to vest the property in the Official Trustee of Charitable Lands, this has not been as straightforward as originally thought, there are no problems but the application is rather more involved so the situation is ongoing. The hall is an important asset for the local community, it continues to be used for many varied events both by parishioners and from 'outsiders' and the committee will continue to strive to make sure that it is fit for purpose for future generations.

BICKNOLLER WOMEN'S INSTITUTE

Delivered by Maggie Pumphrey

Bicknoller WI had an active year, retaining a membership of around 24 people and with newcomers to the village joining us. Some of our members live outside the parish but have joined us due to our reputation of being a welcoming, lively and friendly group of ladies. Our speakers and demonstrators during the past year have ranged from wood whittling, silk scarf painting, gardening, prevention and management of diabetes. A Quantock Question Time event held last autumn resulted in a packed hall and raised over £200 for The Alzheimers Society. Another open meeting in March of this year, resulted in another full house when the speaker was Phil Gannon who talked about The Mineral Line. Our visit to the American Museum in Bath last summer was very popular and this year we have two visits planned. One to Burrow Farm Garden near Axminster and the other to Ford Abbey and Gardens. Some of us enjoy walking and a series of walks is planned, the first one to take place later this month. Of course not all members are hill walkers but we try to have a range of activities to cover everyone's interests. Our Christmas lunches have been at Halsway Manor for the past 2 years and have been much enjoyed. This year the WI has taken in the role of host for the Coronation Tea Party to be held in the car park here the day after the coronation. In case of rain we decided to ask people to bring their own food while we will supply and serve the beverages. We will be setting up the car park along the lines of a street party with long rows of tables. The Parish Council have kindly agreed to finance the purchase of bunting and coronation table-wear and we are extremely grateful to them. Bicknoller Shop has financed the printing of all the flyers – which went to every home in the parish. There will be a decorated cake competition and a treasure hunt for any children who attend. Some residents will be playing a selection of music. At the Village Hall May Morning Market, the WI will be running a bumper cakes and produce stall to help raise funds towards the new stage curtains and lighting. Of course, the WI is not just a local organization. We are a National organization and so we get an opportunity to put forward resolutions and vote for resolutions that are taken to the Annual National Conference every year. The successful resolutions are then taken to Government and other bodies to take action. This year, we are voting on a resolution to clean up rivers. Over the years the WI has

been a front runner for resolutions including saving honey bees, violence against women and many years ago Keep Britain Tidy – who remembers that?

My late husband Bill used to talk about the Buzz of a WI meeting. Something he said was special to WI ladies. I think he was right and I think we are maintaining that buzz and will continue to do so. It is very special.

Thank you.

BICKNOLLER SHOP REPORT

Delivered by Clive Raisey

Our shop continues to provide a convenient service to the village, we are now in our 28th year. Our greatest worry over the last year has been the escalating cost of electricity, rising from £1500 to £3500. We measured the demand for each of our fridges and freezers and found that one was using half the daily demand. Having changed it for two smaller ones, the daily use has halved.

We are still contemplating donating funds to the Village Hall for a storage battery and additional solar panels, and have applied for a grant to insulate the shop walls.

\in keeping with our status as a not-for-profit undertaking, we gave £8000 to the Village Hall to help it complete its kitchen extension. We have acquired several new shop volunteers, but as ever, we still need more.

CHURCH REPORT

Delivered by Carolyne Stack

Since the last Annual meeting our Rector Angela Berners-Wilson retired in April last year, and we look forward to welcoming the new Rector Nicky Morgan who we expect to take up her duties around the beginning of July. Bicknoller is part of a wider benefice consisting at the moment of six parishes. When the new Rector comes this will be enlarged to eight parishes as East and West Quantoxhead will join the benefice.

During the vacancy several people undertook training as lay worship assistants. This meant that with the support of retired and visiting clergy the same number of services have taken place in Bicknoller even though we have not had a full time priest.

During the year the Church participated in the two significant national events. Over the weekend of the Platinum Jubilee celebrations as well as special services there was a flower festival in the Church. On the death of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth, the church was a place where people could sign a book of condolence.

The Church will be well decorated for the coming Coronation weekend and there will be a special service on the Sunday morning.

At Harvest Festival time charitable giving include the local Foodbank and the Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution. Recent charitable giving was for an overseas charity supporting some of the poorest people in India raised at a 'Simples' lunch in the Village Hall.

We hope by the end of the month to have completed the process for gaining permission to lay up in the Church the Standards for the closed Bicknoller and Quantock branches of the British Legion. The Church is also very pleased to be part of the whole community project to erect a commemorative gate in the Churchyard to mark the long and faithful reign of Her late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, which will be an appropriate companion to the Victoria Jubilee gate also in the Churchyard and the Silver Jubilee gate at the Village Hall.

Thanks to a very diligent group of volunteers the Church is open every day of the year and the visitors' book attests to how much this is appreciated. The Churchyard is of course a place which is still open to all, and which the Church tries to maintain as a place of peace and beauty.

As with all organisations costs are rising, and there are plans to ask people to renew their regular giving, or perhaps start a regular donation or perhaps make a one off donation. The generosity of villagers is hugely appreciated, and we will continue to ensure that the Church welcomes everybody.

SOCIAL CLUB

Delivered by Carole Darke.

The club is doing fine, with regular monthly speakers.

The full programme for next year has already been published and membership has been kept at £15 per year. Everyone who comes enjoys themselves and they are lovely afternoons enjoyed by all.