

EAST HARPTREE PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting held on Saturday 7th May 2022 at 6pm in The Theatre, East Harptree

- 1) Apologies for absence – Cllr Carver
- 2) The minutes from meeting held on Tuesday 20th May 2021 were signed by the Chair and returned to the Clerk.
- 3) **Reports from groups within the village:**
 - i) EH Community Shop – Guy Stobart thanked EHPC for making the meeting happen. He also thanked everyone for supporting and using the shop, but they need more volunteers. If anyone can volunteer just 1 hour a week that would be a help. The shop committee are aware of cost of living issues, but they are able to buy in bulk, please ask if there is something specific anyone would like. Please support the shop, not lose it.
 - ii) EH Environment Group – Chris Johnson presented a slideshow from the East Harptree Environment Group. Key points included:
Swifts – good population here, they feed on the lake. Few more nests this year.
Bats – EH is very important for bats, there is a great variety of species, 10 or 11 which is a lot. More surveys to be undertaken, it is useful to understand what we have so we can help.
The Churchyard is a great benefit to the local ecology, and CJ thanked those responsible for providing wildflowers, path, good moth habitat, and for the new bat box.
The group need more volunteers.
Habitats and connecting corridors are being destroyed, diminishing movements. Need to protect green corridors ie hedgerows. The ash trees at the playing fields had to be felled due to ash dieback, but more have been planted, creating a major link of 450 trees and shrubs rich in species. Thanks to Nick and Bernice Roberts for their work on this and EHPC for the funding. An owl nest box is to be put up.
Need to respond to Local Plan on an ecological level.
Do locally, think locally.
 - iii) Jubilee Street Party – Emma Coleman provided a brief update on the Jubilee Street Party. She also mentioned the village Flower Show, the committee is a team of 5 but need more help, please volunteer if you can.

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- iv) Safer Routes to School – is a sub group of EHEG. John Darvill discussed the work the group is currently doing, which included look at who uses paths and who doesn't because they think they're not safe. They have also looked at air pollution, EH is "quite high" due to airport and traffic pollution. Walking is good for health and wellbeing, so there is a drive to help people to drive less, working in conjunction with the Primary School, and to sign up to the Modeshift Stars Scheme run by B&NES. Upcoming survey to look at pinch points, what they look like and consider better signage. Other ideas are to have a 'Park & Stride' from the Pavilion, possibly with EV charge points; and improve the Coley Road crossing: traffic calming etc.
- v) EH Village Hall & Playing Field – Graham Harding talked about the Village Hall and Playing Fields being a very important village asset. The Committee have a responsibility to maintain and make these available. The next AGM is on the 8.6.22, if anyone is interested in joining the committee, please contact Graham. Major works are due to be undertaken at the hall with refurbishment of the pre-school which is moving into the old club space. The room upstairs will become empty, if anyone has any ideas on future use of the space, please contact Alex Pearn. The room could be a multi-purpose space with varied users. It will be available from Sept-Oct in raw form. Huge thanks to Alex Pearn and Mark Jerzak for their work but also with the fundraising. Graham also extended a huge thank you to Andrew Cook for 46 years on the Village Hall and Playing Field committee, Andrew was presented with a gift.
- vi) Project Newton – another call for volunteers, the project is a large-scale Heritage funded refurbishment of St Laurence Church, working with many groups including the school and environmental groups. Volunteers needed to help arrange tours to see what is going on, possibly arrange trips up the scaffolding to view work in progress. For example, some wall paintings have been found under white paint.
- vii) Electric Vehicle Charging Points – Andrew Jones asked who would like communal EV charge points in the village. There are approximately 20-25 houses without off street parking. But there are real practical issues, there is a page on the village website for discussion, please read and feedback views. There are 4 possible locations for charge points: the playing fields, the Waldegrave Pub, Whitecross Road, and Grey Hollow. The playing fields have the space but needs 3 phase supply for fast charging. Anything at the Waldegrave would be managed by Admiral Taverns as a commercial venture.

viii) **EHPC Chair's report for 2021/22** –

2021/22 was a year of change for EHPC. Our fantastic new Clerk, Sarah-Jane, has settled in well and has been busy modernising our systems. So a massive thank you to her and all our

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current councillors for embracing these changes to make EHPC run more efficiently and effectively for everyone.

If you have ever considered trying your hand at volunteering to be a parish councillor, even if only for a short period, then there is no better time than now. Your commitment is limited to attending as many of our monthly meetings as you can (usually on a Tuesday evening), to read the agenda papers circulated by Sarah-Jane in advance and to be interested in helping our community. Anything else is entirely optional depending on your availability and interests.

We have two vacancies at present, but anticipate a third later this year due to an existing councillor moving out of the area. So please do contact Sarah-Jane if you are interested and she can help deal with any queries you may have.

So what has EHPC been doing in 2021/22?

Planning matters

We responded to 19 planning applications last year, covering:

New houses	2
Extensions/refurbishments to existing houses	7
New outbuildings	1
Change of use of existing building	1
Variations to existing approved applications	8
Total	19

There is a continuing trend for developers/owners to submit variations to existing approved planning applications which often seek to undo previously agreed conditions. EHPC spent time trying to hold B&NES to account when conditions are being altered and supporting residents to challenge adverse variations.

There are currently no new “allocated sites for development” in the village so any new houses are broadly restricted to infill sites only within our Housing Development Boundary. EHPC invests time monitoring and trying to influence changes to planning rules and responding to statutory consultations. This is because these changes will determine future issues that are of importance to our community such as:

- how many houses can be built in our Parish in the future,
- how environmental concerns are addressed by future developments, and
- provision of off-street parking to avoid our narrow lanes getting clogged up.

Thanks in particular to Pam Carver for her vigilance on such matters.

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Helping residents to hold B&NES to account

In our experience when residents take the time to report local service issues direct to B&NES then the council is pretty good at dealing with them. However, when B&NES gets things wrong, or falls short in delivering services to our Parish, EHPC can support residents in holding B&NES to account. Last year we helped residents deal with a diverse range of issues including fly-tipping, parking obstructions, hedge cutting, breaches in planning conditions, fallen trees, and road repairs/closures. Thanks also go to our local district councillor, Dave Wood, who helps to escalate issues with B&NES when necessary.

Maintaining & improving village assets

A big thank you as always to our road-sweeper, Paul Sperring, for diligently keeping our roads, gullies & paths clear of leaves, moss and rubbish. The village is still on the circuit for B&NES' occasional mechanical road-sweeper, but without Paul's efforts the roads & paths would be in a much worse state. We consider him an essential service.

Two road safety projects have been scheduled by B&NES for 22/23: the long awaited reduction of the 30mph zone to 20mph in the village, and to resurface the High Street. Thanks to Richard Coombs in particular for keeping these on the radar.

There have been structural repairs needed to our iconic EH Clocktower to keep it safe this year, and I would like to thank our "clock watcher", Paul Waldron, for his regular care of it.

We are also in the process of replacing our old parish noticeboard with a new, larger, oak version. This remains an important mode of communication for all residents who are not online and cannot join our emailing list or access our website directly.

Following the reports of the Climate & Nature Emergency workgroup last year several projects have moved forward this year:

- Continuing enhancement of our green infrastructure corridors courtesy of our EH Environment Group.
- Over the last few months EHPC has been looking into the practicalities of having communal Electric Vehicle Charging Points in the parish. Thank you to everyone who has taken time to feed back comments on the background information and our initial views that we have shared. If you are interested in this topic and have not engaged in the debate please do look at the information on our website (hard copies are here today) and share your thoughts with us.
- Some residents have worked up recommendations for "Safer Routes to School". These will be presented at the Annual Village Meeting. Do let us know which you are keen to pursue further and whether you would support using EHPC funds to help make these happen faster.

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Modernising EHPC systems

Under the expert guidance of our new clerk great strides have been made to modernise PC systems to help run it more efficiently. Financial controls have been improved by using new accounting software and our banking services are much more efficient and reliable now that they have been taken online.

We are continually trying to improve communication with all of you:

- For those residents who are offline, a much improved parish noticeboard should be in situ soon. Also, our monthly PC meetings are back “in person” in the theatre now Covid restrictions have eased and you can always just talk to any of our councillors and clerk in person.
- For those who wish to receive relevant information by email, please email Sarah-Jane at parish.clerk@eastharptreeparish.org to let her know that she can include you on our email distribution list.
- For those on Facebook, Sarah-Jane now posts some information on the EH Village Facebook site.
- For those with access to the internet, do take a look at our website if you have not already done so.

Precept and value for money

Councillors are always aware that we are spending your precept monies and always aim to secure value for money. We constantly strive to keep costs down and find cost savings wherever possible. For example, sharing a clerk with Chew Stoke has helped to reduce some of the administration costs such as training and Zoom costs during the lockdown. EHPC has also raised its level of reserves to be more in line with recommended practice as further protection against unforeseen essential expenditure within the parish.

The precept for 2022/23 remained the same at £15,152. With more new dwellings in the village for this to be shared between it is hoped this will result in a reduced precept charge on individual council tax bills.

Spending our parish Community Infrastructure Levy (“CIL”) funding

As at 31 March 2022 we have just under £34k of CIL funding available to spend on infrastructure projects in our parish. This funding arises when new dwellings are built in our parish. Funds must be spent within 5 years of receipt or returned to B&NES. Full details of what qualifies and how to make an application for funding are set out on our website. A big thank you to all those who have submitted applications for funding projects. During this year c. £18k was spent on the following projects:

- Green Infrastructure hedgerow corridor at the playing field
- Repairs & refurbishment of EH Theatre building
- Contribution towards maintenance of EH playing field
- Contribution towards new signage and digital infrastructure for Project Newton
- Structural work on the EH Clocktower.

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More details on these can be found on our website.

Other potential projects in the pipeline for funding could include:

- Safer Routes to School projects
- Electric Vehicle charging points
- New storage container for the playing field

Decisions on supporting CIL applications are taken at our monthly meetings. Please come along and let us know your views on which you wish to support.

Well that is it for another year and we look forward to welcoming some new people willing to try out being a councillor for a while and helping in a small way to make this village such a great place to live.

Andrew Jones - April 2022

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