

EAST HARPTREE PARISH

Minutes of the Annual Village Meeting held on Sunday 16th April 2023 at 6pm in The Theatre, East Harptree

- 1) Apologies for absence – Cllr Underhill
- 2) The minutes from meeting held on Saturday 7th May 2022 were signed by the Chair and returned to the Clerk.
- 3) **Reports from groups within the village:**
 - i) Village shop (Kate Gillingham). Kate thanked all the volunteers who help in the shop, and updated the meeting about the change of space which now includes a coffee area. The key issue is that the shop is part of the community, so please consider volunteering, even just an hour a week, please contact Kate if you can help.
 - ii) Village Hall and Playing Field Committee (Graham Harding). Update on the management committee, there are 12 members who represent various organisations across the village. They meet every six months with an AGM in June, all welcome to hear the updates. Also called for more volunteers and encourage people to get involved. The Playing Field is funded primarily via the Flower and Craft Show each September, but also by the Pancake Race and the 100 club which helps fund the play area. The zip wire in the play area and the sand have been replaced. The play area is inspected annually and belongs to the Fields in Trust. In the Village Hall the preschool is moving downstairs to the area where the club used to use. Thank you to all who are involved in the refurbishment. Now considering how to use the old preschool space, there is the possibility of an arts hub, and they will be applying for funding to rent out to two emerging artists. The Coronation Cricket is being organised, please come along tickets will be available.
 - iii) Waldegrave update (Andrew Jones). The Waldegrave is now up for sale, and it was listed as an Asset of Community Value on the 3rd April 23 which means the community can now put in a bid if the owners, Admiral Taverns go ahead and sell. 9 volunteers came forward to see what this might look like, there is a meeting on the 17th April, all welcome to find out more. Significant finances could be available, to the sum of £250K. The intention is not to bid if another pub expresses an interest in buying it, only if it looks like the pub would be lost to a developer.
 - iv) Project Newton (Mary Cookson). Many thanks to everyone for their patience over the last 14 months whilst the church was shut during the refurbishment, the project is very nearly complete. Mary gave an update on or the different aspects that have been refurbished and thanked East Harptree Environment Group for their work in the churchyard which looks amazing. This is to become a green area and include two new benches and will include a green learning space for the school. She concluded by reminding parishioners that it is their church and she thanked them for their support, time and money, and commented that the

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work is never finished and there was a need to keep going to support the church which it is vital to the village.

- v) East Harptree Environment Group (Chris Johnson). Chris started by reminding parishioners about what they try to achieve, which includes practical things like looking at climate and nature emergency issues. They look at meadows being lost, pollution of rivers, declining insect populations. Last year they undertook a swift survey, a bat survey, they have been measuring hedgerows, leading churchyard walks and producing a monthly newsletter with other activities documented. There is now a village wildlife map where wildlife hotspots can be found. There are also massive legislative changes, the Environment Act is now law. All new planning applications must show biodiversity net gain (BNG) in the applications, this is not just avoiding damage but must add to the wider diversity. EHEG have prepared a planning toolkit for the parish council to use when considering planning applications.
- vi) Cricket Club - remind that there is a Cricket Club in the village and everyone is welcome. There is a fixture list available and contact numbers if you would like to join.
- vii) Demand Responsive Transport DRT (Jackie Head). The 672 bus will be discontinued at the end of July 23, and the DRT will replace it. Places can be booked by phone, app or the website. There are 2 ways to use the service, by linking to existing main bus routes (eg the A38), or directly to places where there is no bus route eg W-S-M. The service uses an IT system and algorithms are picking up data, to plan routes, please feedback, whether a good or bad service. Please use it, and consider joining the Facebook group, 'Bus Transition in the Chew Valley'.
- viii) Chair's report, sent to residents before the meeting, so not read out but can be read again:

EHPC 2022/23 Chair Report

It was a good start to the year when we welcomed two new councillors, Alan Harper and Mick Underhill, to bring us up to our full capacity of 7 councillors.

The many system changes introduced last year by our Clerk, Sarah-Jane, have really helped EHPC to run smoothly and efficiently, freeing up resources to focus on things that matter to our community. Also, the Clerk's commitment to training for the professional CiLCA qualification is much appreciated, bringing professionalism and authority in her guidance to councillors. There is no better time to try your hand at being a parish councillor.

2023 is a local council election year. This means that all the current parish councillors stand down and everyone in the parish is free to put themselves forward to be a parish councillor. By the time people are reading this we will know who is standing. If there are more people than the seven slots available, then the community will vote for their parish councillors alongside their local B&NES councillor in the election on 4th May. Don't forget to take your photo ID if you are voting in person at a Polling Station.

I would like to say a massive thank you to our Clerk and our current councillors for all their hard work this year and for making the Chair's role easier.

So.. what has EHPC been doing in 2022/23?

Road Safety

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. Paul's short period of convalescence just before Christmas provided a stark reminder of what our roads & paths would be like without his efforts. We consider him an essential service.

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The long-awaited reduction of the 30mph zone to 20mph in the village was (almost) completed. It is a shame that the contractors did not quite follow their own plans. EHPC and Dave Wood are on the case to ensure that the errors are rectified. I also hope that by the time you are reading this the resurfacing of the High Street will have been completed.

Looking forward to 2023/24, EHPC are exploring more possible road safety projects with B&NES Highways. In particular, the feasibility of a pedestrian crossing at the Townsend crossroads, and the merits, or not, of a coloured tarmac, pedestrian-friendly zone around the EH Theatre/Village Shop crossroads. Rest assured that following mixed feedback from the community on the latter idea nothing will be done without further consultation with you.

Thanks to Richard Coombs in particular for keeping these on the radar with B&NES and for the EaST Sustainable Transport volunteers for raising these ideas.

Maintaining & improving village assets

We had a timely reminder during the year of the importance of our two defibrillators in the village. I would like to thank Chris Head and Sarah-Jane for their ongoing monitoring and for every one of the 30+ villagers who attended the defibrillator training kindly arranged by the EH Playing Field committee.

We replaced 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 email list or access our website directly.

This year EHPC explored the practicalities of having communal Electric Vehicle charging points in the parish. Thank you to everyone who took time to feed back comments. The current conclusion is not to proceed with any installation for now. Instead EHPC would encourage those households who install private chargers to consider offering to share them with nearby residents who do not have off street parking.

Following the news that the Waldegrave Arms was up for sale, EHPC resubmitted an Asset of Community Value application to try to help protect this important social asset from being lost to the parish. A separate working group of volunteers has formed to explore what else can be done by the community. Hopefully there will be an opportunity for an update at the Annual Village Meeting.

I would like to thank our "clock watcher", Paul Waldron, for his regular care of the EH Clock Tower, and Mike Jennings for looking after our parish footpaths.

Communication

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

- For those residents who are offline, there is a much-improved parish noticeboard opposite the Clock Tower. Also, our monthly PC meetings are open to all in the theatre, 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.

EHPC arranged our first, new-look Annual Village Meeting back in May 2022 and this year's will be on Sunday 16th April at 5-6.30pm in the Theatre. Thank you to all those who have volunteered to bake cakes, serve tea and share information. There is no better way to communicate than by getting together as a community. It is great to see so many other events thriving in our village such as the Summer Fete, the Flower & Craft Show, Safari Supper, village brunches, cricket matches with Valentine's Coffee and the Jubilee Street Party to name but a few.

Of course, the next big event will be the Coronation picnic & family cricket match at Harptree Court followed by the Ceilidh at EH Theatre on Saturday 6th May.

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Planning matters

EHPC responded to 19 planning applications last year, covering:

New houses	1
Sub-divisions into two or more dwellings	3
Extensions/refurbishments to existing houses	6
New outbuildings/groundworks	6
Tree Preservation/Listed Bdg consents	2
Ground solar array	1
Total	19

EHPC invests time, not only in reviewing planning applications, but also in monitoring and trying to influence changes to planning rules and responding to statutory consultations. This year that included:

The Local Plan Partial Update (approved Jan 2023):

- This introduces 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.
- This introduced additional policies to not only protect, but enhance, bio-diversity in our Parish which was recognised as one of the top priorities in our last Village Survey. Please be aware of these new planning obligations should you be considering any major works. I would like to thank the volunteers of the East Harptree Environment Group (EHEG) for their invaluable input in making this happen.

New Local Plan (consultation just started):

- EHPC is monitoring plans for how many houses can be built in our Parish in the future
- EHPC have made representations to improve planning controls and resources. These are needed to avoid mistakes being made by B&NES Planning Officers in approving applications (such as those uncovered at the Water Street site), and
- EHPC is keeping a close eye on proposals for locating new Community Sustainable Energy sites for wind turbines or solar arrays.

Thanks in particular to Pam Carver for her vigilance on such matters, and also to John Darvill and the EHEG for assistance in their areas of expertise.

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 especially in the midst of a cost-of-living crisis.

The precept for 2023/24 remained the same at £15,152 for the third year in a row. 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 March 2023 we have around £44k 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 only £780 was spent on replacing “Norman the Knight” in the Coombe. More

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details can be found on our website. **Remember if we don't use it ,we lose it so please keep applications coming.**

Other potential projects in the pipeline for funding could include:

- Road safety projects
- Possible solutions for enhancing parking provision in the centre of the village
- Replacement of stone stile
- 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. Thank you to all my fellow councillors and our Clerk for your efforts in helping in a small way to make this village such a great place to live. I would also like to extend my very best wishes to whoever steps forward to become our parish councillors for next year.

Andrew Jones - April 2023

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