

Bilbrook Parish Council, Bilbrook Village Hall
Annual Parish Meeting held on
Wednesday 19th May 2021, 7:00 pm
Minutes

Present:

Parish Councillors:

M Adams, S Adams, (Chairman), M Barrow, G Burnett (Vice-Chairman), A Hill, D Hutchinson, P Hutchinson, S Leedham, J Michell, G Price, D Williams.

Representatives from:

Codsall Community Arts Festival, Holy Cross Church, St Nicholas Church, Codsall & Bilbrook Cancer Support Group, Bilbrook Initiatives Hub, Friends of Bilbrook, Bilbrook Playgroup, Twentyman Playing Fields Association, South Staffs District Council.

Also present:

K Daker (Parish Clerk). No members of the public were present.

1.0 Apologies

Cllr V Chapman, Cllr B O'Connor, Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association, South Staffs Work Clubs.

2.0 Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 3rd April 2019 were approved and signed as a correct record by the chair.

3.0 Bilbrook Parish Council Chairman's Report (See Appendix 1)

4.0 Community Reports. (Organisations who have received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021) (See Appendix 2)

- 4.1 St. Nicholas Church
- 4.2 Codsall Arts Festival
- 4.3 South Staffs Work Club
- 4.4 Codsall & Bilbrook Cancer Support Group
- 4.5 2078 (Boscobel) Squadron ATC – No Report
- 4.5 South Staffordshire First Responders – No report

5.0 Community Reports. (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021.) (See Appendix 3)

- 5.1 Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association
- 5.2 Friends of Bilbrook
- 5.3 South Staffs District Council – an update was given on building works at the Council Offices.
- 5.4 Holy Cross Church
- 5.5. Twentyman Playing Fields Association
- 5.4 Bilbrook Play Group

6.0 Open Discussion

A request was made that the funding from the solar power farm is put back into environmental projects. Also, a sustainability award for local businesses was suggested.

The meeting closed at 8.12 pm

Signed: Dated:

Appendix 1 – Bilbrook Parish Council Chairman’s Report

Good evening everyone, and welcome to the 2021 Annual Parish Meeting. I am Sue Adams, and was elected as Chair of the Parish Council 2 weeks ago at the Annual Meeting of the Parish Council.

The outgoing Chair, Megan Barrow, and Vice-Chair Val Chapman, sadly decided for personal reasons that they did not wish to continue in those roles. They continue to sit on the council, for which we are grateful. I would like, both personally and behalf of their fellow councillors, to thank them both for the tremendous contribution that they have made to the council and to the village, not just in the past 2 years but over many years. Angela Morrison has retired from the Parish Council after many years service to the village, and our thanks must go to her, together with our best wishes for a happy retirement from this role.

I am pleased that Gary Burnett is our new Vice-Chair, and we also welcome Sam Leedham as the newest member of the Parish Council, taking the place vacated by Angela. I will now ask those Parish Councillors here tonight to introduce themselves.

As we are all too aware, the past 15 months has been one of the most difficult times that most of us have ever experienced. Covid 19 has impacted on all lives in some way, be it in respect of education, employment, illness, or the painful loss of a loved one. As we now begin to manage this virus, we hope that lessons can be learned, that vaccinations control the situation, and that the sacrifices made are not forgotten, or have been in vain. We must all be thankful that we have come through this horrendous time.

Because of this, there was no Annual Meeting of the Parish last year, and I will therefore try to cover the 2 years since the previous one.

During 2019 we were able to function as normal. Remembrance Sunday was again well attended, and Bilbrook at Christmas was enjoyed by all. Our thanks to all who contributed to and attended these events, and we hope that this year we can again meet to remember those who gave so much for their country, and to celebrate Christmas again together as a village.

The past year has been a difficult time, and many of us have had to learn new skills so that we could continue to meet. Your Parish Council is no exception! Virtually all communication has had to be via Zoom, which at times can be challenging. In spite of this, and the restrictions imposed, we have carried on with the work of the Parish council, and I commend them for the tremendous amount of work that has been done in many areas under such difficult circumstances.

During the year we have been involved with the introduction of wildflower verges, planting of additional trees in the village, and with the help of the Payback team during the previous year, the allotments are now tidier and almost all plots have been rented out, with priority given to Bilbrook residents.

As many of you will be aware, over 60 years ago the Twentyman family conveyed land to the parish, to be used for agriculture or as playing fields for the use of the residents. In 1961 a charity was formed, the Twentyman Playing Field Association, to look after this facility, and a 60 year lease was given by the council, as landlord, to the charity, as its tenant. The expiry of this lease has generated a lot of work for both the Parish Council and the Management Committee of the Charity. As the original lease was in respect of only part of the field around the village hall, the other part being purchased by the Council, we are amending the agreement to attach that land to the charity, and also the land that the skatepark is now on, that was purchased by the parish from Wolverhampton council in 1977. In this way, we are trying to ensure that all of this land can continue to be used by

the residents as the fantastic facility that it is. We are now awaiting confirmation from the Charity Commission that they will accept this.

We do have many community groups and volunteers who make a tremendous contribution and difference to our community, and our thanks go to all of them, some of which are here tonight, and I will shortly ask them to speak. Others have sent in reports, which will be read.

I must also thank all of our contractors for the work that they carry out on our behalf. You may even have seen our playing fields on TV reports featuring "Jimmy the Mower".

Going forward, we are looking at:

Neighbourhood Plan – this will not stop any developments but can give us the ability to say how things look, green spaces, etc. However, a condition of this is that there is community involvement. It is a legal requirement, we cannot do it without it. We are planning to start the process, the 1st step being to issue a document to all residents for feedback. We need to know your thoughts on this, and to be advised of who can contribute and be involved. If anyone here tonight is interested, please speak to us.

Playpark – to look at what we have and how we can improve this, with particular emphasis on inclusivity. What do you, the residents want.

Electronic Charging points – We are investigating this, and will continue to do so.

Youthworker – investigating the possibility of using the services of a youthworker in an attempt to offer alternatives to those young persons who feel that there are no options available to them.

Volunteers – in many areas. Become involved.

What do the residents want. We should be involving all sectors of the community.

I want more dialogue with all sectors/people, more interaction and involvement.

Before handing over to the other speakers, I want finally to give my thanks to all of my fellow councillors for their dedication and hard work, and to our Parish Clerk, who has had to cope with both the day to day work that the role entails, plus an enormous amount of extra work due to the pandemic and other projects, not least of which has been in respect of the renewal of the Twentyman lease.

Appendix 2 – Community Reports. (Organisations who have received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021)

St Nicholas Church, Codsall

Codsall PCC report to Bilbrook Council 19/5/2021 In thanking Bilbrook for their annual grant of £1,900 in 2020 I would like to express our deep gratitude. In the last year, as a charity, we have been losing an awful lot of the income we usually generate for our church and without this grant, we would have had to raid our meagre income and increased our losses further. Last year we kept the churchyard tidy and open to all, right the way through the pandemic and lockdowns. Following The Church of England guidelines for the first lockdown, we didn't charge for and funerals and burials. In the year we undertook 21 burials and 35 burials of ashes. The grant was spent on the general upkeep. This includes mowing 13 times, hedge cutting, path spraying, mole control and tree and hedge cutting. The churchyard has visitors every day, wind, rain and shine and thanks to the help of you council we have been able to maintain it in good condition. When Holy Cross Bilbrook left our benefice some years ago, we had it written into our regulations that all those residents of Bilbrook have retained the right to be buried. This was done at the time in full recognition of the assistance given by Bilbrook Parish Council added to the fact that Holy Cross do not have their own operating churchyard. The churchyard is being expanded as we speak with funds set aside specifically. This is to ensure that the 4,500 memorials currently in the site across Church Lane from St Nicholas, can be joined by future generation for many years to come. We would like to thank the council again for their continued generosity in 2021.

Codsall Community Arts Festival

The committee has met virtual and resolved to have a festival next year albeit a limited one of around six events. It has been decided to approach it cautiously. Those who were due to attend in 2019 have been approached to return. The idea is to have something for everyone. It will take place in Late March /Early April 2022. Thank you to the Parish Council for their continued support. All events are planned to be at Codsall Community High School, however, it will be taken back to the committee that something in Bilbrook would be welcomed.

South Staffordshire Work Clubs

South Staffordshire Work Clubs (SSWC) is a registered charity which was established in 2011 (Codsall & Bilbrook Work Club started September 2011 at Lane Green School, Bilbrook) to provide services to support people into employment as well as providing a social hub and network for disadvantaged individuals with various social and economic barriers. Our charity has always had a policy of "Open To All" and, in normal circumstances, is based at 7 venues throughout South Staffordshire, namely, Great Wyrley, Featherstone, Huntington, Penkridge, Perton, Codsall and Wombourne.

SSWC offers a preventative, structured approach for individuals to assist them in not becoming long-term unemployed after redundancy, offering employability advice on careers guidance, CV development, job search, transferable skills, IT support, English and Maths support and free access to wi-fi and internet.

SSWC has continued to work since the announcement of Lockdown on March 23rd 2020 and throughout the Covid-19 Pandemic, in and out of lockdowns and continued to do so via FaceBook, Twitter, Emails, FaceTime, Zoom and phone calls. The telephone, social media and zoom interaction provided during the lockdowns continued for those clients who were not comfortable with attending the South Staffordshire Work Clubs, when we were allowed to open, due to anxieties caused by the pandemic. South Staffordshire Work Clubs also worked with South Staffordshire Council offering a Webinar Service #Back to Work and Welfare Support#, as well as the Staffordshire Countywide Redundancy recovery Covid-19 which was well received by South

Staffordshire residents. We cannot accurately predict the impact of the pandemic on local employment opportunities but as the furlough scheme comes to an end with almost inevitably significant further redundancies, to have a professional career and employability service delivered locally can only be a positive in these uncertain times.

The Codsall & Bilbrook Work Club re-opens on May 26th at the Codsall Methodist Church, Histons Hill, Codsall from 10.00 until 12.00 noon. We will still adhere to Government guidelines regarding social distancing and PPE.

Codsall and Bilbrook Cancer Support Group

The group meets at Trinity Methodist Church on the third Friday of the month at 10am-12noon. The group was founded in 2018 and was very pleased to receive grant money from the Parish Council. The money has been used for room hire, equipment, materials for their craft group, public liability insurance, books, advertising materials and items for the various activities they do such as a gazebo and lighting,

The members are recently diagnosed with cancer, have recovered from it or have lost a loved one to cancer. Some come for support, some to take their minds off things, and others for companionship.

Appendix 3 – Community Reports. (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2019 to 31st March 2021.)

Codsall and Bilbrook Twinning Association:

In June, 2019, the Association hosted a visit from our French friends to commemorate the 20th anniversary of official Twinning between Codsall and Bilbrook with St Pryvé. This coincided with the annual Scouts Carnival and a large group from our combined villages joined the parade. The French contingent were easily identified by the wearing of berets and the carrying of baguettes!

Having raised sufficient funds over the previous two years, we were able to entertain our guests to an evening meal in a local restaurant and also finance an outing the following day to the Brewery Museum in Burton and to the National Memorial Arboretum.

We had planned to make a return visit to France during Easter 2020, but this had to be cancelled due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, due to continued restrictions, we have been unable to organise any activities since March 2020.

Friends of Bilbrook

I am a founder member and Treasurer of the Friends of Bilbrook. Despite Covid we were able to carry out a number of activities in 2020 and meet virtually as a committee. During lockdown, FOB followers made 150 washbags for carers at local residential homes, FOB made a litter pick Steve scarecrow for the scarecrow competition and delivered 40 Co-op food shops for those shielding.

Since December 2020, 4 of our members have been volunteering at the vaccination clinic at the Staffordshire County showground. I worked there today and was very proud to be part of the team that delivered the 80000th dose today.

Our main area of concentration remains Jubilee Wood which continues to thrive and become home for more and more varied wildlife. We were unable to host our usual dawn chorus walk, mammal survey by students from Rodbaston College or our bat walk but all these events will go ahead this year, Covid permitting. The RSPB led our Dawn Chorus walk on the 1st May this year and it was a deafening choir of birdsong including a willow warbler, a new discovery for the wood. We were able to take part in the RSPB birdwatch in both 20 and 21 and noted large numbers of a variety of birds in the wood. We are really building a picture as this is our 4th year of taking part. We were able to host the Belvide Ringers who come to the wood twice a year to catch and ring birds. They will hopefully be back again in the Autumn.

We were unable to host groups from LGFS, Bilbrook Middle, The Brownies and Beavers at our outdoor classroom for activities in 2020, but we are really looking forward to welcoming two Brownie groups to the wood next week for pond dipping, bug hunting and fire lighting. The activities will end with toasting marshmallows around the camp fire. A big part of our work is educating young people about nature, wildlife and the importance of conservation.

We have a number of bird boxes in Jubilee Wood some made by the cub group, these were emptied and cleaned ready for the new nesting season. Not as many have been used as previously this might be because the wood is more mature, so birds are using trees there instead.

The iconic 200-year-old Black Poplar in Jubilee Wood was showing signs of rot, and it was thought it might have to be removed, we were able to call in an expert from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust and the minimum amount of work needed was carried out and it was saved. We have taken cuttings from that tree to try to continue the lineage.

2 litter picks were carried out with the local schools in September 20 for the Great British September Clean and also the public litter pick that same month to remember David Ward; he volunteered for us carrying out solo litter picks around Bilbrook and was a great asset to our group, he is greatly missed by many in the Bilbrook community. A total of 329 bags of litter have been picked up between the lockdown in March 20 until now, this doesn't include other volunteers who litter pick and is way above normal levels. During lock down Jubilee Wood was very popular for daily exercise which was lovely to see but unfortunately led to more littering. Some of our members also now work as part of WV8 Wombles. We will be holding events as part of the Great British Spring Clean, 29th May with the community and 9th June with LGFS and Bilbrook Middle School. As a result of our work with local schools, LGFS, BMS and CCHS have set up pupil litter picking groups to keep their school grounds tidy. We have asked that the clothing and footwear donation bins at the Woodman carpark are removed as lots of fly tipping has occurred behind those bins.

We continue to work with Waterside Care to look after the health of the Moat Brook. 2 river fly surveys were carried out in 2020. Both achieved a good score for biodiversity. We will be carrying out two more this year and will report our findings to the EA. One of our members tests the water quality in two areas of the Moat Brook monthly and reports their findings to the EA. The brook continues to be in good health, it does have a high phosphate level but this is a feature across the West Midlands and the EA are aware.

The river restoration project in conjunction with the EA and Keep Britain Tidy along the Moat Brook in the summer of 2020 went well, and we are beginning to see the effects of the work which will create meanders back into the brook. The work is also part of slowing the flow to prevent flooding further down the watercourse. We were awarded the bronze award by The Wild Trout Trust's 'Trout in the City' initiative and we know we now have trout back in the brook. Unfortunately, the further work planned for January 21 had to be postponed until after the breeding season. Unfortunately, no native crayfish were found after a survey by Nick Mott from Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, however, Otter spraint was again noticed, indicating a healthy population is using the brook to feed.

We report any pollution incidents to the EA and there was a fish death/possible poisoning incident witnessed by KL and Nick Mott at the brook near the higher outflow pipe. We have also begun to liaise with Severn Trent Water regarding the discharge into the Moat Brook of wet wipes etc from the Bilbrook sewage treatment plant. We are working with them regarding the elimination of use of glyphosate, planting wildflower meadows and controlling the invasive Himalayan Balsam on their site.

We have had a great success this year in being able to declare Bilbrook glyphosate free, BPC, SSDC and SSHA have agreed not to use this product in Bilbrook anymore. Glyphosate has a detrimental effect on wildlife habitat as well as insects, wild animals, pets and probably humans. Codsall has seen the work we have done and are requesting the same for their parish.

We continue to tackle the huge problem of Himalayan Balsam along the brook. Himalayan Balsam is an invasive plant which was introduced by the Victorians. Whilst it is very pretty, it is very damaging to the water course. It is prolific in growth and takes over the bank meaning no native plants can grow. In the winter it dies back leaving a bare bank which is easily eroded during high waters and contributes to flooding further downstream. We have been removing this for 6 years and have removed 113,120 Balsam plants. We would normally have groups from local schools, scout groups, JLR, Tarmac and NCS students helping but this could not happen in 2020. However, we were able to carry out 16 mini balsam bash events. We noted that there have been more balsam plants this year and a longer growing season. 13,000 plants were pulled out in 2020. ST Water cleared the Balsam from their land and strimmed the bank of the brook.

We supplied and planted more street trees in December to replace trees that had been removed due to disease.

We work closely with Bilbrook Middle School and Lane Green First School and one of our members is on the Eco Committee for LGFS. We helped initiate a 'Switch off when you drop off' campaign with Bilbrook Middle and Codsall High school, encouraging parents to limit pollution by switching off their car engines whilst collecting or dropping off children.

We have to thank SSDC for their continuing support, without the support of SSDC and BPC we would not be able to have the successes that we do. SSDC really understand our work and what we are trying to achieve. In 2020 they listened to the research and science behind the importance of grass verges to our insect population which is decreasing fast due to Climate disaster. They have agreed to leave 3 areas within Bilbrook to be cut only twice a year to allow wildflowers and insects to thrive. If successful it is hoped it will be expanded to other areas in the village. We invited the county recorder to log all the plants in these three areas and she has noted many varieties and passed on her findings to the relevant agencies.

We have clocked up £72,346 worth of volunteer hours in the last 9 years. As well as carrying on our normal work in 2021 we plan to celebrate our 10th Anniversary and also hope the work on creating a public right of way between the green bridge over the brook and Jubilee Wood comes to fruition.

We look forward to working together with all the volunteer groups, SSDC and BPC in 2021 to slow down climate change and biodiversity loss, limit the damage to our environment and ensure we have a healthy village and planet for generations to come.

The Bilbrook Community Hub

As a CIC, we celebrated our first birthday in February this year, at our AGM we reflected on a remarkable first year delivering projects within the local communities of Bilbrook and Codsall through an unprecedented year. We were fortunate to have some really great funders to help us react and deliver projects that our community benefitted greatly from

Hot Food Delivery service, many people were in need of help, of hot food but within the panic of lockdown, no one could provide to those who had never needed. So we set up a hot food service for the elderly and vulnerable, Helen and George have just been amazing, cooking and delivering meals every day and topping well over 10000 meals in the first year. They have been so much more though. A familiar face, someone to help, that conversation with a real life person. It's still thriving now.

Wellbeing kits: 150 created of different varieties and delivered to community members. Worked alongside CASS and Busy Minds to help their service users. Also a social media campaign got the community involved to nominate and identify people in the community in need.

Hugs of Appreciation: A side project where 50 hugs were given out to members of the community who had been working tirelessly in the community. Nominated by the community. It was a great little extra.

Covid Helpline: During the first lockdown period, we supported the South Staffordshire Covid Helpline, helping those in need in the community with shopping and prescriptions in Codsall and Bilbrook.

Food for families: The summer holiday food project. Helping support the vulnerable families within the community to eat! Over 70 families helped to live well.

Half term food offer: We offered food to those who needed it.

Self Soothe boxes: 50 of the boxes to help children with mental health trialled and delivered throughout the community, this project has expanding and grown now to people of all ages over the age of 5 and in the 2nd wave completed we have delivered another 125 and still have another 100.

Christmas bags: 27 bags for vulnerable families identified through schools and 25 bags for the elderly. Helping to make Christmas feel a little less lonely and special.

Christmas Dinner and Boxing Day Buffet: Feeding those alone and those who struggled over Christmas and Boxing Day. Over 50 meals delivered Christmas Day.

All of these projects have been delivered in a Covid secure way. We managed to deliver all of these, whilst socially distancing and organising through mediums that involved no in person contact.

Well Done to all the committee for your commitment to the CIC, your passion, drive and teamwork to deliver all of these projects and make a difference in the community.

We donated to the Be an Angel Kindness Campaign to have a pair of Angel wings for Bilbrook village. Thanks to the Woodman for allowing them on there and Gary Burnett for helping with installation. £100 went to Alan Preece to help with his Wildflower planting within the village. now expanded to outside Motorworld too. we are looking forward quite literally to seeing how this grows!!

Wellbeing Coffee Club: Both Successfully started up again in February at their new venue of The Olde Vicarage with great attendance and engagement. Our online community on social media has great engagement and interaction. We look forward to restarting in the new year. We have restarted the group in person and find we are full to our capacity with those who need to use it.

Through funding last year we raised just shy of £17,000

Continuing our work this year:

We are working with Codsall High School through multiple years to see how we can help engage the young adults by building projects with them that they want to grow within the community.

Leroy is working with Action for Children and SKVYS to bring more emotional and wellbeing led activities and drop ins for parents and children.

Bilbrook Community Day Sunday 18th July 2021 12-6: We want to celebrate the work done by groups and organisations like ourselves within the community. 'We would like to invite your group to set up an information stall, to promote the fantastic work that you do within the community, recruit new members and volunteers, and if you need to, raise funds towards the work you do, through activities on your stall. There is no charge for the pitch and we are hoping that many other local voluntary groups will join in the day too. Along with the voluntary groups we intend to have food and drink vendors and craft stalls. There will also be attractions for young families. Later in the afternoon, between 3PM and 6PM there will be live acoustic music in the grounds of The Olde Vicarage. There will also be a bar for the purchase of real ales and cider and soft drinks. So you can relax after the toils of the day and listen to local musicians.

We do hope you will come along and promote the great work you are doing and help celebrate together with other voluntary groups and the residents of Bilbrook.'

We also want to thank the community for nominating us for the Support Staffordshire volunteer awards as we are shortlisted for new volunteer group of the year.

Holy Cross Church

As with other churches, Holy Cross has struggled in the last 15 months due to covid-19 Physical services were unable to take place however with the help of technology, services have been brought online. The Church was busy during lockdown 1,000 phone calls, visits and deliveries were made to people in the community who needed support.

Physical worship has now restarted and they are looking forward to getting their groups up and running again. Unfortunately, Bilbrook across the community group will not be continuing as there are not enough people with disabilities known to the church.

Twentyman Playing Fields Committee

To enable a new lease to be entered into, individual trustees have had to be appointed, after which the Parish Council will become the sole charity trustee. My husband and I are fulfilling this temporary role, and as such I will now comment on the Twentyman Playing Fields Association.

I must give our thanks to Paul and Iris Fieldhouse for the sterling work and tremendous contribution that they have made to the running of the Charity. For personal reasons, they retired during July 2020, which has been a great loss.

Megan Barrow and Adrian Hill have also now stepped back from this, and again, our heartfelt thanks to them. I cannot omit to mention Pat and Denis Hutchinson, who have looked after the football teams and everything that that has entailed. Thank you.

Chris and Arthur Skidmore have been employed by the PC for several years, carrying out work mainly for the charity, but have now retired. We wish them a long and happy retirement.

The Charity remains in a healthy position financially, thanks to the grants that have been claimed, and to the income that we were able to receive from hirers when government restrictions allowed.

One final comment is: We do need persons other than parish councillors to be involved with this, and as such, I ask that if anyone is interested, please make yourself known to either myself, my husband or Pat and Denis Hutchinson.

Bilbrook Playgroup

The playgroup has been running for 35 years so is well established and takes children from 2 years old to reception age, It is a charity that is Ofsted registered and follows a curriculum so offers an excellent service to local children and some from out of the area. The Playgroup has an excellent relationship with local schools and provides a good transition to the first schools.

Playgroup had to change for the first lockdown and reopened for two weeks before the six weeks holidays following Government guidelines and has stayed open in term time since. It is open 5 days a week from 9.15 am to 12.15 pm. The playgroup is doing very well at the moment and has a waiting list in operation.