

Bilbrook Annual Parish Meeting

held on Wednesday 3rd April 2024 at 6:00 pm at Bilbrook Village Hall

Minutes

Present:

Parish Councillors: M Adams, S Adams (Chairman), R Armitage, S Bailey, B Coppola, G Burnett (Vice-Chair), F Hopkins, D Hutchinson, P Hutchinson, A Lloyd.

Representatives from:

Friends of Bilbrook, The Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association, Codsall Community Arts Festival, The Twentyman Playing Fields Association, The Coffee Pop-in, We'll Meet Again.

Also present:

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

1.0 Apologies

Councillors: - S Leedham, G Price, D Williams

Community Groups: Lane Green First School & Bilbrook Middle School PTFA, Bilbrook Initiatives Hub, The Cancer Support Group, St John Ambulance.

2.0 Minutes

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 5th April 2023 were approved and signed as a correct record by the chairman.

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 2023 to 31st March 2024) (See Appendix 2)

- Friends of Bilbrook
- Bilbrook Initiatives Hub
- Lane Green First School & Bilbrook Middle School PTFA

5.0 Community Reports. (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024) (See Appendix 3)

- Codsall Cancer Support Group
- Codsall Community Arts Festival
- Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association
- Twentyman Playing Fields Association
- Friends of Bilbrook
- Coffee Pop in
- We'll Meet Again

6.0 Open Discussion – It was suggested that the Parish Council works more closely with the local Schools. Ideas were raised for events to be held in Bilbrook as part of the Codsall Arts Festival.

The meeting closed at 6.43 pm.

Signed: Dated:

Appendix 1 – Bilbrook Parish Council Chairman’s Report

Good evening, everyone, and welcome to the 2024 Annual Parish Meeting. I am Sue Adams and I have chaired the Parish Council for almost 3 years. I will now ask councillors currently serving to introduce themselves, starting with Vice Chair Gary Burnett.

Thank you to the Bilbrook Parish Council (BPC) Clerk and Assistant Clerk. Both have worked extremely hard to ensure that the PC continues to meet its targets, and BPC has the Quality level of the Local Council Award Scheme, showing that it is a well-run council. Thank you to our Parish operatives who continue to do jobs around the village and make it a better place to live.

The Parish Council spreads its work over various committees and working groups. During the year each had been busy with many projects:

Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – work continues on this massive project. The main aim is to ensure any developments in Bilbrook take into account the needs of Bilbrook residents. All policies are now written. The next step is Regulation 14 where the residents are consulted. This will be followed by the referendum.

The Events Working Group. Several very successful events were organised during the last year including:

- Two May Day Walks
- Bilbrook Coronation Celebrations.
- Bilbrook Remembrance.
- Christmas Light switch. A special thanks to “The Grinch” who saved Christmas when Wolfie arrived late!
- The monthly Menopause Meet up – Thank you to Cllr Hopkins for setting this up and to South Staffs Council “Community is the Best Medicine” Fund which will enable at least another year of meetings.

Bilbrook Allotment Committee – All allotments were renewed this year with none given up which is a first. This year the renewal date changed from April to January which has worked well for both allotment holders and parish staff.

The Open Space Working Group has been busy with several projects:

- Lottery grant monies has been used to replace worn out bollards on the village green. These should be installed once the Village Green has dried out.
- Solar farm revenue was used to install two picnic benches on the playpark.
- Planting of the Village Planters. The aim is to reduce the use of annuals within the plants.
- Bulb and wildflower planting around the village has continued. Thank you to Staffordshire County council climate change fund which paid for the bulbs and plants. Thank you to pupils from Codsall high School and staff from Lloyds Banking Group who helped plant them.
- More trees have been planted around the Parish this year. Thank you to Forest of Mercia who provided the trees and tree guards and friends of Bilbrook, other volunteers and Parish Councillors who helped with the planting.
- Community Social Responsibility (CSR) – In last year the Parish Council has been grateful for the help of Lloyds Banking Group and Cargills who have helped in the Parish as part of their CSR Scheme. Amongst other things have cleared the verges, dug over wildflower beds, litter picked, planted bulbs and wildflowers and painted Bilbrook Village Hall.

- We continue to encourage volunteers to litter pick the village by providing equipment.

Banks's Field Working Group – The group has been working on increasing the biodiversity of the field. Trees and fencing have been installed around the edges of the site, funded by the Forest of Mercia. The Parish Council will be working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust to scrape the land to create a natural wetland. Should the site eventually given up by the farmer, decisions will then be made as to how to develop it further.

Young People Engagement Working Group. - This year the Parish Council Young Peoples Working Group has been looking to improve the opportunities of the young people of Bilbrook. As part of this they have been working with Codsall Community High School to engage with the young people.

Climate change Action Group – This was set up at the end of last year following the Parish Council's declaration of a Climate Emergency. It has several projects that it is focusing on including reducing idling of vehicles which is a major pollutant. They also organised the recent Great British Spring clean along with Friends of Bilbrook.

The Parish Council continues to work with its partners.

- Staffordshire County Council including Highways – we meet regularly with them to expedite works to the Highways.
- Staffordshire Police – We continue to work with them to reduce crime and ASB around thank our PCSO's for their work around the Parish.

The Parish Council would also like to thank all the community groups who strive to make Bilbrook a better place to live.

Going forward

We will continue next year as we have this year.

We continue to be committed to being more involved with the community and will continue to increase community engagement via the Bilbrook Buzz, social media and our website.

We would like to get more residents involved in Community Speed Watch now that we have our own speed gun.

Dates for the Diary for this year are as follows:

- **May Day Walks - Monday 6th May** from at 10.00am from Bilbrook village hall. There will be a long and a short walk.
- **Bilbrook Remembrance – Sunday 10th November.** 11:00am on Bilbrook Village Green for the Act of Remembrance (or from 9:45am at Holy Cross Church for the Service of Remembrance)
- **Bilbrook Light Switch on** – Friday 29th November from 6:00pm on Bilbrook Village Green

Thanks to all councillors and staff for their work.

Appendix 2 – Community Reports. (Organisations who have received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024)

Friends of Bilbrook - The Friends of Bilbrook continues to be a very active group in the Bilbrook community with 6 committee members and over 30 regular volunteers. Over the past 12 months the Friends of Bilbrook have cleared 75 bags of litter from the Moat Brook and Jubilee Wood. They have also collected numerous bags from around the village along with other litter picking volunteers.

They have hosted one Great British Spring Clean and delivered a Great British Spring Clean event for the Bilbrook Climate Action Group. Over the summer months they carried out 6 Balsam Bashing events along the Moat Brook, removing 6,000 strands. This project has been running for 7 years and initially they would remove up to 30,000 in one season, the work is definitely having an impact.

They have carried out 7 water tests on the Moat Brook reporting their findings to the Environment Agency, and 2 kick sample river fly surveys. Over the 10 years that they have been testing the brook, they have seen a slow decline in its health. This is due to extra pollution from new housing estates and run off from agricultural fields. They have Scythed the wildflower meadow in Jubilee Wood, cleared the accessible gate entrance and the main path, as well as started to redefine the paths with some help from Autoneum as part of their CSR.

The habitats in Jubilee Wood continue to thrive and regular monitoring events are held. There have been 30 bird ringing events, the Belvide ringers have ringed 500+ Siskin this winter as well as 40 Redpoll (as well as the usual birds). Theresa Dorrence (RSPB) led a dawn chorus walk, Sean Pope (Staffordshire Bat group) led a bat walk, and for the first time a local expert carried out moth trapping, over 40 species were identified in the first hour.

Members of the community helped with the RSPB garden birdwatch in the wood in January. In January the annual nest box cleaning took place and it was noted that 14 out of the 26 had been used. Events have been held in the wood, Enjoying Creativity Outdoors ran a family forest fun day in September with 6 families taking part, Forest of Mercia ran a Christmas Wreath making event in November with 15 attendees and on May Bank Holiday the Friends hosted a guided walk around Jubilee Wood. In early March this year the Friends of Bilbrook and volunteers planted 8 street trees along Bilbrook Road, helping with flood protection, carbon capture and providing habitats.

The Repair café has grown in popularity and size, the fifth café was held in March 24 and since it began in Dec 22, volunteers have repaired almost 200 items, saving them from going to waste. The team of volunteers is also growing as more people want to share their skills. There are two more repair cafes planned for 2024.

Jubilee Wood is an area to be hugely proud of, as can be seen it is providing a home for so many different species and is a much-loved place for residents to walk and picnic. So, Friends of Bilbrook were alarmed and shocked last summer when several fires were started in the wood using the plastic bins put in place by South Staffordshire council. The Fire Service were called out at least once. As a result, this year the wood will be part of the fire watch scheme. The group asked South Staffordshire Council to replace the plastic bin with a metal bin which would be fire proof, the metal bins however are twice the price of the plastic bins. The group approached Bilbrook Parish Council for funding for a metal bin, and were very grateful to be successful. South Staffs Council have agreed to fund the price of a plastic bin with the Parish council agreeing to provide the difference to allow a metal bin to be installed. The bin has been ordered and should be installed at the end of April ready for the summer. The group would like to thank the Parish Council for their contribution.

The group has provided over £20,000 worth of volunteer hours over the last 12 months equivalent to one full-time member of staff. The aim of the Friends group is to improve the open spaces in Bilbrook for the benefit of nature and people. We are at a tipping point in the fight against climate breakdown and it really is a race against time to save many species and habitats. The group look forward to many more activities planned for 2024.

Bilbrook Initiatives Hub - Bilbrook Initiatives Hub continues to deliver projects within the community and support those within the community to grow initiatives that are needed. This past year we've had a real focus on helping people with food poverty. We delivered a successful trial of putting a food bank into a local primary school and supporting it to get to a place where it becomes self-sufficient. Our project continues to grow with the impending opening of our community shop, located on Bilbrook Middle School grounds. We know that this is needed for community, and we are happy to be able to work with others to deliver this successfully. We will continue with our primary school food bank project as well throughout this year, opening more within all primary schools in Bilbrook and Codsall.

We are happy that we can support people to grow their projects and continue projects that make an impact on our village and surrounding areas. The wildflower planting within Bilbrook continues to bloom as we support Alan with volunteers and seeds to continue to make the beds thrive and bring patches of joy in the village for both the residents and the wildlife.

We're happy to have helped Jason and Bro -con to be able to start much needed and wanted men's mental health group at Bilbrook fire station and we are excited to see how this thrives for the community. We thank the parish council for seeing the potential and the need for this group and providing funding to help to kickstart it. This is be used for advertising and providing signposting support to those who need it.

We provide affordable PAT testing for local charities and businesses as well as supporting the repair café with this service. We will continue as always to support the people of Bilbrook and the surrounding areas in whatever ways are needed.

Lane Green First School & Bilbrook Middle School PTFA - Introduction: The purpose of this report is to update the Bilbrook Parish Council on the progress made regarding the design of sensory rooms at Lane Green First School and Bilbrook Middle School. Sensory rooms play a crucial role in providing a supportive environment for students with sensory processing needs, aiding their development and well-being.

Current Progress: The school has been actively working on the development of sensory rooms in both Lane Green First School and Bilbrook Middle School. Recognising the importance of meticulous design and expertise in creating these spaces, we have engaged a reputable design company specialised in sensory room architecture.

The design company has been thoroughly briefed on the specific requirements and objectives of the sensory rooms, ensuring that the spaces are tailored to meet the diverse needs of the students. Collaborative meetings between the design company and school representatives have facilitated the integration of innovative ideas and practical considerations into the design process.

Next Steps: As we approach the new financial year, we anticipate significant strides in the implementation phase. Once the financial year commences, we will initiate the procurement process for specialist sensory equipment required to furnish the sensory rooms. This will include equipment such as tactile surfaces, interactive lighting, auditory elements, and other sensory tools aimed at creating immersive and therapeutic environments. Key Considerations:

- **Accessibility:** Ensuring that the sensory rooms are accessible to all students, including those with mobility impairments, will be a priority during the design and implementation phases.
- **Safety:** Safety measures will be rigorously incorporated into the design, with careful consideration given to equipment durability and stability.

- Flexibility: The design will allow for flexibility in the use of space, accommodating various activities and sensory experiences tailored to individual student needs.
- Staff Training: Comprehensive training programs will be provided to school staff to familiarise them with the equipment and best practices for facilitating sensory experiences.

Conclusion: The development of sensory rooms at Lane Green First School and Bilbrook Middle School is progressing smoothly, with careful attention paid to ensuring that the spaces are thoughtfully designed and equipped to meet the diverse sensory needs of students. The engagement of a design company and the forthcoming procurement of specialist sensory equipment mark significant milestones in this initiative. We are confident that these sensory rooms will greatly benefit the students and contribute to their overall well-being and educational experience. We look forward to providing further updates as we move forward with the implementation phase. Should you have any questions or require additional information, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Appendix 3 – Community Reports. (Other Organisations who have not received grants from Bilbrook Parish Council from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2024)

Codsall Cancer Support Group - Apologies for not being with you but here is a summary about what Codsall and Bilbrook Cancer Support Group has been doing over the last 12 months. We started off 2023 on a sad note with the death of one of our youngest members Marie Townley, who passed away on Christmas Day 2022. Her death was not cancer related, but ill health that had affected Marie for the last few years of her life and she died from a heart attack in her late 50s. Marie was a sad loss for us and when she joined our group, she brought a brightness and energy that we shall miss. We decided to plant snowdrops in the green in part of the garden at the Trinity Methodist church to remember her by. They didn't appear this winter, but we are hoping that planting some more in a better spot may be successful this coming winter.

Les and I have visited the Warm Hub in Codsall over the last year and raised money by selling home-made jam for fund raising and letting people know where they can meet up if they have cancer concerns, where they can find more information and where they can be in company and meet others who share their concerns. We have had quite a few new members and enquiries come in this last year.

Our Facebook membership has increased again this year and is now 60 plus. We try to keep our Facebook website up to date with information from the various cancer charities, articles about symptoms, activities and outings from The White House and classes that can be attended there, for those who are interested.

We were approached by Doctor Katerzyna Greiner from the Perton Medical Centre to help with the setting up of a kind of communication hub. for cancer patients in South Staffs. She is a busy GP who came to meet with us about how we could approach this rather difficult job she has as a cancer co-ordinator for the area, where cancer patients can find alternative therapies that may help them on top of what they are already receiving in the way of medical treatment. We already have a therapist who does regular sessions with us on diet, meditation for pain relief and wellbeing. Following on from that, Dr Greiner sent her assistant to see us, so that she could listen to our members' opinions on what they would like to see happen. A kind of communication system between doctors and therapy and helpful services that exist but are perhaps not widely known about. We are waiting to see what developments might have taken place over the last 6 months.

We spoke to the Rev Margaret about doing a sewing project for the St Nicholas Church concerning wildlife in the churchyard. I made some small sewing kits containing felt, threads, ideas etc to be completed and mounted on a 'Tree of Life' on a banner to hang on the wall in the church. We did a large flower banner for Trinity Methodist Church a few years ago, which is still there for visitors to see when they enter the church. This one is on a smaller scale, but we could do with some more people who like to sew to do a few more. Last September we did a fundraiser for Macmillan and raised E480 for their cause. We very much appreciate the information and help Macmillan give with their free books on various aspects of living with cancer. Members of our group find them very useful. Last summer we did a fundraiser on the Wheel Field and sold cakes, preserves, did a tombola and 'Guess the Weight of the cake' and raised a respectable E300. Most of that went to Cancer charities such as CRUK, Childrens Cancers, Prostate Cancer UK, Blood Cancer UK. We have to thank our volunteers who came along and helped us with the gazebos and selling on the stall, especially when we did the Christmas event on the Green at Bilbrook last November. We managed to raise E132 in two hours. Thank you to the people of Bilbrook and Codsall. We have also had generous donations from our own members and a grant from St Nicholas Church to help with the expenses of running the group EG insurance, advertising, stationery, renting a room each month. We also have to thank Staffs County Council for a generous grant which enabled us to buy a rotating card stand for display, a smaller gazebo to fit into a limited space with a smaller banner to fit. We were also able to buy a rotating tombola drum, book display stands, a rain cover and an extra table. I went online and passed my Food Hygiene and safety certificate Level 2 for retail and a food allergy course. Both were ROSPA approved. As we sell gluten free items, as well, these were especially useful.

In November some of us attended a Compassionate Communities Event at Trinity Methodist Church where we were able to do some PR for our group and to do a bit of circulating to give our cards to other organisations and to see if they may be of use for some of our members. We had our December get together with a buffet and decorations. We gave the Blood Bikers £60 for their charity after an interesting talk about what blood bikers do, remembering that they are volunteers, and their bikes are bought with the donations they collect. In February this year, we had Jean Rogerson from the Wolverhampton Nuffield who came to talk to us about clinical hypnosis and she sent me some useful recordings for us to listen to.

During the rest of this year we hope to have our therapist to talk to us again and one of our members is giving us a talk on the summer garden and in August we plan a visit to Wollerton Old Hall and gardens near Market Drayton. In September we are having a picture and cardmaking session entitled Autumn Glory, On July 7th we will be on the Wheel Field as usual with our big red gazebo for more fundraising.

This year Les and I have been very aware that anxiety plays a big part in all of our lives and for those with a cancer diagnosis especially so. A quiet time working at a hobby or interest can take your mind off these worries for a short while. Walking also has a part to play. We joined some of our members went on a walk with Theresa Dorrance in January and we hope to join her again later on this month. If there is a Christmas Tree Festival in December at St Nicholas, this year, our theme will be breast cancer and prostate cancer. These two cancers are some of the most common and in our group we have both of these causing concern among our members. Thank you for listening. We meet every third Friday of the month from 10am until 12 noon at the Trinity Methodist Church in the lounge at the back of the church. You will always get a warm welcome from us and our members. We have refreshments and they are all free!

Codsall Community Arts Festival - Is a registered charity and as such just tries to cover its expenses. The 12-member committee of trustees aim to keep the tickets at a reasonable price. The festival takes place every 2 years; The 2024 festival took place in March. There were a variety

of events which were well attended and well received. Planning will start for 2026 in September. The committee is conscious that events appeal to an older demographic and are hoping to include events to encourage a younger audience. They would like to thank their members for their hard work. The community day didn't happen this year hence Bilbrook was not included in 2024.

Codsall & Bilbrook Twinning Association - As founder member of the CBTA, I am delighted to present this short report to you. At this time last year, we were preparing our visit to St. Pryve St. Mesmin (SPSM). The group of 12 made their own way by car/plane or train. Coach travel being no longer feasible for us. In Mid- May we all enjoyed the visit to (Blois) SPSM for various activities. We all stayed with our friends. It was agreed for "Les Grenouilles" to visit us, here, this year. In fact, the visit is imminent (24/5- 27/5/24). We shall be visiting Chillington Hall as well as enjoying other get togethers. Vive L'Entente Cordiale!

Although in general, we are no longer taking part in local events, e.g. Scout Carnival, we continue to hold an annual AGM; have a quiz, later in the year; and representatives who represent us at Remembrance Sunday. Within the last year, local young students, who attend Bilbrook Middle School, have established email contact with their opposite numbers in SPSM. The French Teacher, Mrs Allan, has worked hard to establish these links, and we offer her our sincere thanks! We hope to establish a "French Prize" there shortly. Our funds, while not great, sustain the Association, and besides prizes, pay for our Guests to, for example visit Chillington Hall. For organisation, we have a committee of three.

Coffee Pop in - The Coffee Pop morning continues with strong numbers. Thanks go to Cargill who donated prizes for the Christmas party. Unfortunately, Holy Cross Church is still without a vicar following the departure of Rev'd Simon Douglas. The Coffee Pop-In meets regularly on Thursday mornings at Holy Cross Church Hall, Bilbrook 10.00 am -11.30 am.

Twentyman Playing Fields Association - The year ending March 2024 has been an eventful one. Having successfully applied for grants to enable the refurbishment of the hall, this is now around 80% complete. Our thanks go to Enover and the Platinum Jubilee Village Hall Grant scheme for their financial assistance, together with Cargill for their assistance with internal decorating. We have also used some of our reserves to fund this. As grants could not be obtained to assist with anything that can be removed from the hall we have held fundraising events, which have been well received and attended. This will enable us to add to and replace items such as tables and chairs. Thank you to all who have attended to assist with this.

I am grateful for the contributions of the Treasurer, Secretary, Football Administrator and all committee members without whose help running the hall would not be possible. Volunteers are welcome, please contact me if anyone is interested in joining us. A special thanks goes to Chris and Arthur Skidmore, who despite retiring from employment with the Parish Council, continue to assist the Charity on many occasions. Without their help, many things would not be possible.

We remain in a stable financial position, and now have an enlarged number of regular bookings. Party bookings for the hire of the hall continue to be received, many being from persons who have attended other events here. Football bookings continue with matches being played when weather permits. Going forward we hope to continue the maintenance and upgrade of the facilities, ensuring that the community can enjoy the hall and playing fields for years to come.

We'll Meet Again - A group for people on their own who are not so mobile. They meet 10:30-12:30pm on Thursday at the Trinity Methodist Church in Codsall. They work closely with the Dementia Support Groups in the area. Various events and outings are organised throughout the year.