

## **Bridford Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting Minutes – 7<sup>th</sup> May 2026**

**Present:** Cllr. Topley, Cllr. Purser, Cllr. Gallagher, Cllr. Symons, Clerk - Tamsin Mowat, Lorraine Hart, Andy Hawkins, Dan Tidball, Anne Mayes, Nige Skelton, Joseph Dunkley, Carolyn Studd, James Lockwood

**Apologies:** Lou Lucraft, Kathy Fitzjohn, Richard Keeling, Andy Swain, Pip Morrison, Lucy Smerdon, David Fine, Tessa Derby, David Price, Steve Sim, Grania Fine and Jayne Lockwood

Meeting opened at 6pm

Cllr. Judy Topley, current Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and introductions and points for discussion were made by each person

Joseph:

The Swift caller is now installed in the church – fingers crossed we will see some swifts

Good working relations with Highways lighting and all lights in the village working as they should be

The church light is still idiosyncratic and although there is an understanding of the long-term wish of BPC, TDC and DNPA to support the dark skies initiative, it is appreciated that the funding is not currently available to update the timer system in the church.

PC TARGET

Add Dark Skies to agenda for next Three Parishes Meeting

Nigel:

Reminder Bridford Fete is Saturday July 11<sup>th</sup> and all offers of help gratefully received

Carolyn:

Is keen to see more initiatives for bringing villagers together. She mentioned her Woodland Park party last year and Brilliant Bridford. She would be happy to start a WhatsApp group for the village.

PC TARGET

Liaise with Carolyn re Whatsapp group

James:

Updated us on work of Friends of the church – date for diary Quiz Night at the Bridford Inn June 11<sup>th</sup> 7.30

Beating the Bounds was discussed

James is our new Flag Man – some discussion around flags from various people

PC TARGET

September 2026 Liaise with James and others to work out who needs a request letter to allow Beating the Bounds on their land.

Trudy:

Representing twinning, twinnings are coming next weekend. Do come to the Barn Dance on May 16<sup>th</sup> in the Village Hall

Discussion about next year, going to St Vaast will be the 50<sup>th</sup> year of our twinning association. Anne Mayes started twinning and talked about the early days.

#### PC TARGET

Consider in the New Year if there are ways the PC can involve itself in the 50<sup>th</sup> celebrations.

Anne:

Talked about her role as Snow Warden and how she has now received a certificate for her efforts.

The erratic nature of the new Bus Service was discussed – buses are still not routinely stopping at the Bus stop and are late or do not arrive.

Anne mentioned issues with water leaks and the difficulties of trying to establish details of repair timelines with South West Water.

Concern about split services, such as bus services and surgeries, was raised with regard to LGR. In theory Cllr Purser advised us the Government should be in touch in July, after which we may know more.

#### PC TARGET

Ensure Snow Warden Plan is included when The Emergency Plan is updated this summer

Continue to monitor buses and if no better by the autumn on agenda for September meeting to discuss and contact Bus Company

On July agenda ask Cllr Purser if there is any more information about LGR. PC to monitor

#### GENERAL DISCUSSION

##### Lengthsman

Other local councils have a Parish Lengthsman. We explained that we looked into it but we simply haven't got the finances. We are lucky that Seven Acre Farm has kept the sidings and gullies clear at the top of the village so that despite heavy rain we have had no flooding down School Lane and into or along to the village. Clerk liaises with DCC Highways over Pound Lane gullies and drains and Councillors undertake clearing of drains too. Issues with degradation of road causing additional build up in drains.

The consensus was that a combination of continued voluntary kindness on the part of the farm and others and consistent reporting to Highways was the best we could do.

##### Road Warden Scheme

Despite the fact that other councils have started the scheme, we are still struggling with our insurer to get a clear answer on whether Road Warden volunteers would be covered by our policy as cover from DCC is limited to third party and limited public liability only. Clerk is continuing to pursue this. The issue is that we are locked into a very favourable three-year contract for insurance. The training is still available and our three volunteers ready and waiting: apologies to them for the delay.

#### PC TARGET

Clerk will continue to be in contact with insurers and will do the sums if our premium goes up to see what is financially feasible

##### Chapel signs

There was a query about whether they would be able to stay in the village when the Chapel is sold. An anonymous parishioner has purchased them and is having them framed with the express wish that they stay in the village.

#### Back road to Christow

There was talk about whether the back road to Christow will in fact be repaired. The implications to the village in terms of Neadon Lane and hill closures were discussed.

#### PC TARGET

Clerk will contact Highways for an update

The Chair then read her Report to Parishioners (see full text at the end of these minutes). The fact that Teignbridge District Council (TDC) have a plan to build five affordable houses on the Playpark site which it owns, whilst keeping the Playpark was discussed (See Chair's report below for more details). Some very good points were brought up by those present. Nige agreed to find the settlement boundary map of Bridford for us.

#### PC TARGET

Establish a sub – committee to include interested people with the skills to monitor the project and ensure the best interests of Bridford

There was a really good atmosphere during the meeting, with conversation and information sharing. The Chair thanked everyone for coming and the Parish Council was thanked for its work.

The meeting ended at 7.30

#### CHAIR'S ANNUAL REPORT TO PARISHIONERS – MAY 7<sup>TH</sup> 2026

This is the part of the meeting where the Chair is meant to let you know what the Parish Council does for our community: how we spend your precept.

Bridford Parish Council is an elected body and as such is responsible and accountable for spending public money, your precept, which is taken from every household eligible to pay council tax. If you haven't already found it, you'll find it as a separate line on your Council Tax Bill.

I am happy to say that at the moment we have a full parish council, with councillors able to offer a range of skills and advice to enhance our understanding of the community. It is clear from informal feedback that Bridford Parish Council continues to be most visible and approachable.

The total amount of precept available to us last financial year as a parish council was £13442. You will appreciate this is not a lot of money. We understand that times are stretched and strive to protect and spend your money as wisely as we can. We took the very difficult decision to put up the precept this year by 16% in order to ensure we have an almost balanced budget. We expect that from year to year going forward, the Parish Council will ensure a financially stable balanced budget.

We are currently looking at a 5-year action plan to ensure maintenance of parish assets, to build on initiatives already started and to consider the implementation of new ideas coming from consultation. In order to do this, we understand that it is time to move away from the culture of full reliance on the precept for funding and to start to seek out grants, loans and so on to bring income in to support our future spends. At the moment, the Village Garden seats, the Telephone Box, the Bus Shelter and the Playpark all need some refurbishment.

Just to remind you, our actual responsibilities are: managing the allotments, the village garden and the play park; the Bus Shelter; keeping the hill open by maintaining the gritter; facilitating the Book Exchange and Clothing Bank; maintaining two defibrillators. We pay to hire the village hall weekly for the outreach Post Office. We have one paid employee, the Clerk. All other roles on Bridford Parish Council are voluntary.

Last year, in addition to the everyday work of the Parish Council, Bridford Snow Team and Snow Warden ran a tight ship; Matt and Ellie produced very attractive Time to Talk leaflets for our young people; we updated the Welcome Book, (available to all new residents); worked with our Wildlife Warden on verges management and tree planting in the Playpark; devised our first Emergency Plan; started work on instigating a Road Warden Scheme for the village (currently waiting for insurance to respond); worked with Seven Acre Farm to keep the culvert clear at the top of the village to prevent flooding. All the roles I have outlined here are only possible because of the goodwill, expertise and experience, freely offered by our village volunteers (at the 2021 census Bridford Village had a population of 535 inhabitants, with nearly 31% of residents aged over 65). Some of you are here and others have sent apologies. Either way, Bridford would be a poorer place without you so thank you very much.

We are continuing to work hard to build on good working relationships with District and County Councillors and highways, as well as local businesses, the church (including 'Friends of the Church'), the Village Hall, Bridford Fete, Twinning, Teign Unity volunteers and the Teign Valley Larder.

We have been, and continue to be, committed to providing opportunities to listen to parishioners and to bring parishioners together. We are hoping to source funding for an autumn event similar to, but not the same as, our very successful Brilliant Bridford event last year. So watch this space!

Our main consultation for this year is to do with the Playpark. For those parishioners who don't know, the land for the Playpark is on an annual lease to the Parish Council from Teignbridge District Council (TDC), as TDC actually owns the land. Bridford Parish Council has the responsibility of maintaining the Playpark in all respects. Recently TDC contacted the parish council with a proposal for a small affordable housing scheme to be developed on the play park. TDC has affordable housing targets to meet and there is an identified need for five affordable houses in the village (taken from sign-ups to the Devon Home Register)

As things stand, the Parish Council feels this an opportunity for the village; we need homes that is clear and at the same time there is no desire by TDC to take away the play park altogether: there is an appreciation that health and well-being are vital to children and young people and community cohesion is important (parents who are still in the village were indispensable in bringing the Playpark to the village about 20 years ago). The Playpark will soon be in need of a revamp (the total cost of which over time is estimated to be around 50K) and at the moment, without any grants, the parish council does not have that kind of money. If affordable housing were to be built on the Playpark land, the parish council understands there would still be room for a Playpark which would likely receive funds through Section 106 Funding, where local councils can secure money from developers to improve or create infrastructure, including playgrounds.

TDC asked if the parish council could quantify the degree of use of the Playpark, which equipment is preferred and the ages of those using it. Cllr Gallagher has developed a consultation with a QR Code for this purpose which will shortly be up on the play park gate. The Fete has agreed that the QR Code can be put on to fete programmes, and there will be some door-to-door leafleting. By the end of the summer holidays, we should be in a position to analyse this information.

TDC say they have some proposals for community engagement including aiming to provide some drawings for layout options for residents to comment on. They will write an article for Unity and will commission

some technical surveys of the playing field. They feel they will then be in a position to come up with some realistic options for further comment in due course, including arranging a drop in event at the VH.

That's it from me today,

Thank you all for coming and you know where we are if you want to be in touch.

Judy

DRAFT