

06/24-25

Pauntley Parish Council Meeting
Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on
Monday 29th April 2024, 6.30pm
Pauntley Village Hall, Brand Green.

Present: Cllrs P Eastabrook (in the Chair); C Philipps, M Hampton; N Fowke; M Hargreaves; J Thomas.

Also present: Rachel Freestone – Clerk

Lesley Harding – Village Hall Management

Public: 9 approx.

1. Chairmans Welcome:

Cllr Eastabrook welcomed everyone to the meeting, great to see so many here.
Please see Appendix 1 for the full welcome.

2. Apologies:

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr. Cathy Chapman-Hughes and County Councillor Gill Moseley.

3. Minutes of the 2023 Annual Parish Meeting:

Members considered the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting on the 22nd May, 2023. **It was RESOLVED:** to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting. They were duly signed by the Chairman.

4. Chairman's Report:

Cllr Eastabrook presented his report.
Please see Appendices 2, 3 and 4 for the full report.

5. To receive a report from the County Councillor:

In her absence there was none.

6. To receive a report from any District Councillors present:

In his absence there was none.

7. To receive a report from Pauntley Village Hall:

Lesley Harding presented her report – please see Appendix 5 for the full report.

It was Agreed to move Agenda Item 8 to the final item to allow for time for public participation.

9. To receive a report from Pauntley Church:

Derek Bartlett, Church Warden reported on behalf of the Church.

St John the Evangelist is one of 9 churches in the Leason Vale Benefice, I am one of the 2 Churchwardens, Hilary Witcomb being the other. Rev'd Kat Mepham is our Priest-In-Charge and we have 2 curates and 4 retired priests who take occasional services.

We have a regular congregation of 16 at each service, more at Easter and Christmas and the annual Carol Service is always well attended with about 60 people coming. We have two services a month, Holy Communion on the 2nd Sunday, Evensong on the 4th. Holy Communion is always

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led by a priest: Evensong can be led by one of our Lay Leaders but Pauntley is very popular with the retired clergy and the curate's so we often invite one of them to come to us.

We are lucky to have some weddings for couples marrying at the Court which are always joyful occasions and of course help with our finances. This summer both our curates Caroline and Molly will be officiating at their first weddings, both at Pauntley.

The Church, as you probably know is nearly 900 years old and is Grade I listed so as you can imagine it takes constant maintenance to keep it in good order. Currently we are about to have woodworm and deathwatch beetle treated, next on the list are repairs to the roof.

Financially the church is fairly secure at the moment, although a worst-case scenario with the roof repairs could change that. However day-to-day expenses have risen, as for everyone. Heating the church for a winter service now costs £70 each time. We also now need to pay for some regular cleaning-not all of it-as one of our main problems is simply that the congregation and those who help out are getting older. We manage week to week, but if any parishioners could spare a few hours to help with the upkeep of the graveyard or the twice yearly church and brass cleaning it would be a big help. It goes without saying that you'd be very welcome at services as well, but even if you're not a churchgoer, this is your Parish Church and a very special place. As it is only two of the six members of the PCC actually live in the Parish.

On a happier note the conservation work on the Triptych is now complete and it's back in its place, the detail and colours clearer now, do go and have a look at it, there can't be many other 15th century Flemish artworks in the Parish.

10. To receive a report from Pauntley C of E Primary School:

Cllr Eastabrook read the report provided by the school. See Appendix 6 for the full report.

8. To receive a report on Biodiversity and the Village Hall Boundary:

Cllr Eastabrook presented. Please see Appendix 7 for the full report.

Cllr Eastabrook invited the public to question or make comment.

A member of the public, Mr Tony Spacey a local professional in this field, commented on the choice between native and dead hedging. A native hedge would need basic maintenance for its first 12 -15 years. It would need plenty of water in the first two years to establish. Dead hedging when freshly done does not need much maintenance but after 3-5 years it would need maintenance work. Have to be aware that a dead hedge is not maintenance free as once the wood degrades it needs topping up regularly. One will look greener as time goes on and one looks browner and deader as time goes on. His recommendation is to plant new hedging, predominantly hawthorn (fast growing), blackthorn (bees rely on) and rowan. Keep away from oak and yews.

A member of the public commented that public feeling during the coffee morning sessions is that they don't want a hedge.

A member of the public commented that it is lovely view.

A member of the public queried whether it would be possible to plant a hedge only in certain areas so it doesn't infringe the view. Could there be a gap where the benches are?

Mr Tony Spacey questioned whether we want countryside with wildlife or one with a view? A native hedge would have to be left to grow higher first before cut back to the required height to ensure it is healthy.

A member of public asked who is going to cut a native hedge? Cllr Eastabrook replied that a local company had offered a lifetime service to cut back.

A member commented that it would feel hypocritical asking landowners to build on biodiversity and the parish council not to commit themselves.

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Cllr Eastabrook asked all present to vote on their preferred option for the Boundary. Results as follows; Native Hedging 12; Dead hedging 0, Leave as Now 4.

A member of the public commented that many of those against the hedge were not present at the meeting.

A member of the public asked how regrowth of the brambles will be managed. Mr Tony Spacey replied that brambles are also important for biodiversity, his company will bring a weed wiper which will eradicate some of the brambles but regrowth is inevitable.

11. Comments and Questions from any Elector of Pauntley Parish:

A member of the public pointed out the Plaque to John Buckland which is now on the wall in the Village Hall. Mr Bartlett commented that the church have a commemoration to him also.

Cllr Eastabrook showed those present the newly received Portrait of the King.

A member of the public asked whether we know when the planning meeting will be for Herridges. Cllr Thomas responded that nothing new had been registered and that we are still waiting for new information.

Cllr Eastabrook informed the meeting that with regards to the Glynchbrook consultation it has been the parish councils policy to not engage.

A member of the public enquired on how the speed of traffic could be controlled and mentioned the 20 mph limit in the Parish of Redmarley. Cllr Eastabrook commented that the argument historically had been that the parish does not have the density of housing to support and to date there have been no fatalities. Members of the public commented on the number of near misses. Pauntley School has no 20mph sign, at school run time the local residents try to avoid the roads. Cllr Eastabrook confirmed that he continues to raise this matter at meetings.

It is possible to get voluntary signs for example happy/sad faces signs.

A resident raised the need for Defibrillator and Basic First Aid training. Mrs Lesley Harding responded that plan to redo the training but difficult to find a time where everyone is free, possibly during a coffee morning.

Cllr Eastabrook ended the meeting by providing the latest crime statistics from the police which showed a slight increase in certain crimes.

Signed...*Paul Eastabrook* Dated:.....28.04.2025.....

Chair

Meeting closed at 8pm.

Appendix 1

Chair's Introduction ANNUAL PARISH MEETING – MONDAY 29TH APRIL 2024

Background to the concept:

The Annual Parish Meeting is a legacy from the Middle Ages (500 to 1400–1500 CE) when all local decision making was carried out by meetings of the whole community, taking place in the church vestry. Local parish councils themselves did not exist until 1894.

Local Government Act 1972 requirement:

- The parish meeting of a parish shall assemble annually on some day between 1st March and 1st June, both inclusive, in every year
- In a parish having a separate parish council the chairman of the parish council, if present, shall preside at a parish meeting

Interestingly, where a **parish** has no parish council, it is required to hold meetings twice a year rather than just annually.

Strangely enough though, although 91% of the geography of England has a parish or town council, this covers only a mere 36% of the population. That means that 64% of the population won't even have a single annual assembly **because there is no parish let alone parish council.**

In summary, although this meeting is organised by the Parish Council, it is not a formal meeting of the Council. The meeting is an opportunity for the Parish Council to explain what it has done over the last year and to share future aspirations. It is also an open forum allowing residents the opportunity to raise issues they feel are important to the community as a whole.

Pauntley Parish specifically is covered by two District Councillors, Philip Burford and Clayton Williams, who represent the WARD of Hartpury & Redmarley, which covers the 8 parishes of Bromsberrow; Corse; Hartpury; Pauntley; Redmarley; Rudford and Highleadon; Staunton (Gloucester); Upleadon.

One County Councillor, Gill Moseley, represents the DIVISION of Forest of Dean: Newent, covering the 10 parishes of Bromsberrow; Dymock; Gorsley & Kilcot; Kempsey; Newent; Oxenhall; Pauntley; Redmarley D'Abiot; Staunton; Upleadon. This is in addition to Gill's other role as a district councillor for the WARD of Newent & Taynton, which doesn't impact us here, other than possibly in her membership of the FoDDC's Development Management Committee (that means "Planning").

That was a very quick run through of how the PC and tonight's "community assembly" fits into village life. During tonight's gathering, we will feature updates:

- from myself on things that may be of interest, including road safety aspirations and planning matters (successes and ongoing);
- from our district and county councillors;
- from Lesley Harding, our VH Co-ordinator on what has been happening in the VH;
- biodiversity and a chat about boundary hedges underpinned by a bit of local democracy in action, to ascertain what it is that we all want to achieve. In that regard I'll be expecting you all to sing for your supper and choose between different options before releasing you all to enjoy the free food and drink in, hopefully, about an hour's time. That should enable us to reach a consensus before we press any nuclear buttons;
- receive a report from the Churchwarden on St John the Evangelist Church, Pauntley;
- receive a report from Pauntley C of E Primary School;
- crime stats from Gloucestershire Constabulary;
- comments and questions from the floor;
- finally, the real reason we are here - food and drink or, as we always used to call it at work - "networking".

Appendix 2

CHAIR'S ADDRESS

I am now coming to the end of my first year in the role as Chair, following a year as Vice Chair. There seems to be a bit more to it than I previously thought.

I have been delighted, however, to serve the parish in this way and wish to thank everybody I dealt with in the previous 12 months for their support, guidance and help during that time. My fellow councillors have done us all proud and have shown themselves to be a hardworking and committed group of people.

Similarly, our sister organisation, formally recorded on the Charities Commission database as "Village Hall" has shown itself to have the knack of generating substantial amounts of interest at all of its events and helped to make the important social side of our community the hub of what we all do here. We have another dedicated group of volunteers, without whom we would not be able to have anything like the community spirit that we do.

In order that we don't overrun tonight, I'd like to highlight tonight just two areas where we have been particularly busy over the last 12 months, as these are current issues and probably unlikely to go away any time soon. I'm talking about road safety and planning.

These are issues which affect all of us, not least because we are a small community and these are things that impact the quality of our lives and also are part and parcel of living in a rural environment.

Appendix 3

PLANNING

Planning issues have taken off within the parish, particularly over the last year.

We have had THREE very contentious applications to deal with, one of which didn't come through to us for consultation as it was approved under permitted development, aka Section 192 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

We have had other applications that we have not challenged but have become extremely concerned at these three plus, potentially, another one that is lurking.

P1803/21/LD2 | Application under section 192 to establish whether the siting of a twin unit mobile home (not operational development) within the garden of the lawful dwelling house for use as additional incidental accommodation requires planning permission. | Lime Grove Compton Green Redmarley Gloucester Gloucestershire GL19 3JB.

The application laid down very clear and specific assurances over construction by non-builders and for a "caravan" whose use would be "incidental" to the main dwelling and would not have full cooking facilities and meals would be held at the main dwelling. Steve Gooch Estate Agents, however, revealed this not to be the case and the whole property is up for sale as having a separate fully independent living facility with a full catering kitchen facility. Appeals to Planning Enforcement and, more recently, to the Head of Paid Services at Forest of Dean DC have not yet had any impact. However, we continue to push for further transparency.

P1618/23/FUL | Erection of general-purpose agricultural building. (Resubmission and part retrospective) | Herridge Orchards Pool Hill Newent Gloucestershire GL18 1LW

What can I say about this one? Misleading application and supporting documentation. Reluctance by Planning Enforcement to do anything until it was finished. Fortunately this view was changed eventually after relentless lobbying on our side.

P1021/23/FUL | Change of use of land and siting of 1 no short-term holiday cabin. | Land Parcel At E372834 N230375 Ketford Gloucestershire GL18 2BL

Amongst all the fog of planning applications and misinformation this one was, from our point of view, a success story. It meant taking on the Development Management planning staff and management and, with Councillor Philip Burford's invaluable contribution including from his sick bed, resulting in it going to the Development Management (Planning) Committee, where the ridiculous nature of the application finally came to light and we managed to get the application refused, despite it being recommended by the DM team despite unprecedented objections all of which had been cast aside, even though there were more inconsistencies and factual inaccuracies identified and highlighted by ourselves throughout the process.

We even had the crazy situation of two councillors being precluded from taking part in the discussions as part of the parish council as they were deemed to be directly impacted parties and had to declare an interest. When you consider the size of Pauntley Parish, it is difficult for councillors not to be directly impacted one way or another by any one particular planning application.

Anyway, this was a hard-fought success story and there were 7 of us present at the meeting. Luckily, we were the second item on the agenda so only had to stay for approximately 2 hours unlike others who, I think had to stay for closer to 5 hours. I'd like to give my thanks to Nick Fowke, Josh Thomas, Tony and Janet Izon, David and Brenda Bainbridge for their involvement and encouragement throughout the process and meeting and to Councillor Burford whose very powerful report was read out in his absence plus, the Chair David Wheeler for his fair and impartial handling of proceedings and Councillor Simon Phelps of Westbury upon Severn who wasn't afraid to stir things up when the inconsistencies in the application and responses given were not satisfactory, despite being accused by the Development Manager of cross examining him.

The result read as follows:

- MOTION TO GRANT PERMISSION - 3 in favour; 6 against; 3 abstentions; 1 not voted – MOTION TO GRANT PERMISSION IS LOST
- MOTION TO REJECT APPLICATION – Detrimental to character of the natural landscape which falls with a natural wildlife site SO.73 /024 Barn Farm Banks impacting visual landscape from right of way in accordance with policy NPPF CSP1 & Policy Core Strategy AP1 of Allocations Plan (biodiversity, noise, disturbance and vehicle movements) - 9 in favour of refusal; 2 against refusal; 1 abstention; 1 not voted – MOTION TO REFUSE PERMISSION IS PASSED

Appendix 4

ROAD SPEED INITIATIVES

On the subject of making our roads safer by endeavouring to restrict speeds to sensible levels, we have been tinkering with this issue since 2021 but not progressing quite as far as we'd have liked.

We were waiting with interest to see how things were going to pan out in Wales, but there has been a bit of back-peddalling there lately.

We started the process off with vigour back in early 2023 when we applied to Gloucestershire Constabulary to borrow radar boxes with a view to record reliable road speed data throughout parts of the parish. We had a meeting with David Holland, who was the Road Safety & Traffic Management Officer (I believe that he is now the Senior Collision Investigator). We were told that the entire police force has only 8 of these radar boxes to use throughout the whole of Gloucestershire. So, I asked for nearly 40% of them (3 in total) for Pauntley to cover three stretches of road in Brand Green, Pool Hill and Ketford. In fairness, he didn't say no. But he said it might take some time. Well, it certainly has so far. The OPCC told me in January this year to buy our own cameras but with a total budget like ours that is never going to fly.

Another initiative that we latched onto was with regard to the "20s Plenty for Us" campaign group. I am now in regular contact with Adrian Berendt, the South Campaigns Co-ordinator, who is very keen for us to join their group, which I took the liberty of signing up to join the campaign group in support of making our communities and streets safer for all of us. Although Adrian is based in Royal Tunbridge Wells, he does seem to have an awareness of this area and is holding a meeting on 15th May 2024 to discuss next steps in Gloucestershire and to which I have been invited.

Incidental to this, one of the County Councillors has been collating levels of support county-wide from parishes as part of GCC's own 20 mph campaign on behalf of County Councillor Dave Norman, the Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries. We contacted Helena Amey, the co-ordinator and Vice Chair at Swell Parish Council, in late October when we sent her details of our resolutions in this regard since 26th July 2021. Adrian Berendt of 20s Plenty for Us, about whom I was just referring, was already aware of Helena so said that he would liaise with her too on our behalf to check on the level of progress.

Also, following the OPCC meeting of 16th January that I referred to earlier and the follow-up meeting I had with members of the Office of Police and Crime Commissioner on 24th January, where I was doggedly encouraging people to move things along at both police and county level, I was copied in to a message on 11th February from David Holland at Gloucestershire Constabulary to Andrew Middlecote at GCC Highways asking to meet with him in person to discuss the possibility of the Pauntley community being treated as an "ideal candidate" for a Vehicle Activated Sign (VAS) or "perhaps some additional signage". That would mean that we wouldn't have to pay for anything, but I'm not heard anything further thus far.

The only other realistic approach for us to take would be to apply for a Traffic Regulation Order, costing up to £15,000 which can be shared with other parishes, neighbouring or otherwise. Even sharing £15,000 would cause a mighty hit to the council tax burden, even if we spread the cost over a number of years by way of an interest free loan, plus there is no guarantee of success, depending on the view of the police, in terms of population density and costs of enforcement. Most of the dialogue I have had with the OPCC's office tends to focus on speed *limits* and catching speeding vehicles rather than driving at safe speeds which are currently not deemed to be illegal.

Appendix 5

VILLAGE HALL REPORT FOR THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Hall Hire

Private bookings have continued to be quiet, perhaps understandably so at a time when many people are struggling with the cost of living. We have made a decision to keep our hall hire prices at the current level to help people to use the hall for their celebrations and other events.

Our Pilates class continues on a Thursday evening, although numbers are low and it is at risk of closing. Newent Senior Section Guides meet at the hall about twice a month and have a camp during the summer. Geoff Thomas has been running regular Spiritual Healing Meetings and workshops at the hall on Monday afternoons. A new group, Pauntley Play, meets on a Tuesday morning and is seeing attendance increase, so hopefully this will continue.

Events

Our weekly Friday coffee mornings continue to be popular, providing a local venue for people to meet and to catch up. Volunteers run a rota to organise these, and we are grateful to them for giving up their time. The Market to Your Door mobile van visits us on coffee morning days on every third Friday of the month, bringing people from further afield and seeing new faces come along to our coffee morning on those days. Our local walks also continue every second and fourth Friday, run by Brian Richards, and included a special daffodil walk in March to see the wild daffodils at Ketford Bank. Our Post-Christmas Walk and Hot Dogs was yet again very popular. Thanks go to Brian for all these walk events.

Our Macmillan Coffee Morning in September 2023 raised a wonderful £290.00 in donations. Brian Richards also held an event in Newent which raised £265.00 and he asked us to pay this in along with our money, giving a total of £555.00. We are very grateful to everyone who came along and donated generously, and those who made cakes, and brought and bought items in the bring and buy sale. We will be doing it again this year, this time on 4th October.

We have held many and varied events over the past year, including a celebration of the coronation of King Charles, a quiz evening, regular friendly skittles matches, gardening bring and buy and coffee morning, and of course our Christmas party. Our film evening programme has been hampered by problems with the equipment, and we are planning to upgrade this if we can finance it. We have had two skittles matches with Upleadon, the first at Upleadon and the second at Pauntley, where our team won. The Real Ale team ran a pop up pub for us in September and made a very welcome donation to us of £500.

Future Events

We have an Italian themed evening planned for July, and another pop up pub is planned for 10th August, with Miniyaki's Japanese Food Van. On 27th September there will be a talk by Dood Pearce from Newent Local History Society, on 'Newent Then and Now'. There has been quite a lot of interest in this so hopefully we will have a good turnout. Mike Manning has agreed to run a music quiz for us in the autumn, and our Christmas party will be back again in early-mid December.

We have a special event on Thursday 9th June to mark the 10th anniversary of the D Day landings. We will be joining the nationwide lighting of beacons at 9.15 p.m., with the hall open from 6.00 p.m. for a social evening, and the Tudor Fish and Chip Van coming along. There will be a collection on the evening for Help for Heroes.

Finance

The 100 Club for Pauntley Village Hall is now in operation, with 60 people currently taking part. Draws are held every quarter at one of our events, with three prizes to be won. Total income for the Club is £1,440 p.a., with half (£720 p.a.) being paid in prizes and the remainder

being very welcome income for the hall of £720 p.a., which will go towards refurbishment projects. This will be a really useful amount to put towards our planned refurbishment work, and clubs such as this which show local support for the hall will be very helpful for us when applying for grants towards this work.

Along with everyone else, we have seen a rise in all our expenses, which continue to be closely monitored. Our three year fixed electricity tariff ends on 10th July and we are researching new tariffs, although prices have almost doubled in these three years. Savings have been made on our insurance by ensuring that we have up to date risk assessments, PAT testing and fire appliance testing, and further savings by volunteers taking on additional work cleaning and carrying out maintenance tasks on the hall themselves. We do ask all hirers to ensure that the hall is left as they found it, to try and minimise the cleaning required.

Village Hall Refurbishment

We thank Mark Hargreaves for arranging a clean of the exterior of the hall, which looks much better now. There are a few external repairs to the render to be carried out this summer. Also thanks to Tom Gifford and Ian Ratcliffe for removing all the brambles at the rear and side of the hall, and putting up the new low fence, and also to the landowner, Ollie Skelding. We can now make the most of our wonderful views.

We thank the Parish Council for obtaining funding for our new petanque court, which is now ready to use. If you don't know how to play, we will be arranging an event this summer where people can try it out.

We have applied to the Forest of Dean Rural England Community Infrastructure Capital Grant Scheme, for a grant to install solar panels and a storage battery at the hall, and are awaiting the outcome. This would be invaluable in helping us with the increasing electricity costs, as well as contributing to our plans to reduce carbon emissions.

The audio visual equipment is in need of repair and refurbishment. Our application to Awards for All for this, and for acoustic panels to improve the sound quality in the hall, was not successful. We are now submitting an application to the Morrisons Foundation. If this is not successful then we will proceed with the recabling that will enable the audio visual equipment to be functional, and try to source other grants for the remaining improvements.

Our larger project for refurbishment, including improving the toilets, rewiring and improving our outdoor area, is proceeding, but rather slowly. We have been finalising the spec and now need three quotes from building firms if we are to apply for grants for the project. These have been difficult to obtain, but we have now received these and are discussing how to move this on. We would welcome involvement from the community on our project team, so please do let us know if you would like to be involved in shaping the future of your hall.

Our Volunteers

We are very grateful to all the residents of Pauntley, and also those from further afield, who come along to support our events and enable us not only to have enjoyable social events but also to raise much-needed funds to keep our hall viable for the future. We could of course not do this without an energetic and hard-working group of volunteers who come together to make this all happen, and I would like to thank them all on behalf of the village hall and the community for their hard work and enthusiasm. We particularly thank Maurice Elton once again for keeping our grounds looking good, despite the efforts of the moles to undermine his good work. Our

volunteers organise events, provide wonderful cakes at our events at their own expense, spend many hours making tea and washing up, and give up their time to help clean, decorate and generally look after the hall.

It is great that so many people come along and enjoy our events but we cannot keep going at our current pace without some extra helpers. The running of, and fundraising for, the hall involves a lot of hard work by a very small group of volunteers, and we need to consider if we can maintain this at current levels without more help. If local people want us to continue organising events for them, we do need more active volunteers to help spread the load. We would ask you to consider if you have some spare time and could be involved, in whatever capacity, in order to secure the future of your village hall.

Lesley Harding 20.4.24

Appendix 6

School report to Pauntley Parish Council Annual Parish Meeting 29th April 2024

We have had a very busy year at Pauntley CofE primary school. Mrs Michelle Kelly is currently acting Executive Head teacher over the GPP Federation.

We started the school year off in September with our annual blackberry walk, a tradition dating back over one hundred years, which reminds us what a special place our school is and how privileged we are to be here. On Armistice Day we all paid our respects and recited “In Flanders Fields” by John McRae before we held a minute’s silence together by our outdoor ceramic poppy display. This was observed immaculately by our pupils and the collection was impressive.

We also held a fundraising event for Children in Need and had a school disco in the village hall which is run regularly by our committed PFA association. The PFA continued their fundraising in 2023 with a Christmas Bazaar which raised much needed funds and children also attended the Newent Christmas Lights Switch On parade through the town, carrying lanterns which raises the profile of our little village school. The Christmas period of celebrations culminated as usual in a wonderful Nativity at St John’s Church. Parents, pupils and staff all attend this very special celebration and the children did us proud with their performance, prayers and songs.

We are joined by Reverend Kat and her team for “Open the Book” regularly. These visits always have the children engaged and reflective of their faith and they participate in plays and storytelling. At Easter Reverend Kat and Reverend Molly hosted an “Eastingle” event and the children discussed and learnt about the symbolism of the hot cross bun and the traditions surrounding Easter.

The spring and summer terms bring an array of sports events in the locality. Our pupils very much enjoy practising beforehand and heading off with our dedicated sports teachers in the minibus dressed in our Pauntley team colours. They have recently played netball and mountain biking and look forward to football, cross country and cricket this summer.

The exam season is upon us and children will look forward to some treat days after that period is over – we plan to take them for a whole day to Croft Farm waterpark to experience sailing and paddle boarding.

As the school year comes to a close, we will reflect on our Year 6 leavers and look forward to a healthy intake come September.

Appendix 7

VILLAGE HALL BOUNDARY WITH PAUNTLEY PASTURES

Background

There is a statutory duty imposed on town and parish councils by Section 40 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, updated by Section 102 of the Environment Act 2021 which requires Parish and Town Councils in England to consider what action the council can properly take consistently with the proper exercise of its functions, to further the general biodiversity objective.

Defra (Biodiversity 2020) defines biodiversity as the variety of all life on Earth including all species of animals and plants, i.e. everything that is alive on our planet.

Current situation

Regarding the Village Hall grounds, we took the decision to agree to support the neighbouring farmer in the replacement of the farm's boundary fence. This involved scrubbing out the brambles which had taken over the perimeter, but very much with a plan of our own to support initiatives to create, increase and preserve wildlife corridors to improve the passage of insects and small mammals on their journeys through the parish, both locally through the Dymock Forest Rural Action (DyFRA) network and also national initiatives to encourage local landowners to increase boundary hedges and seek.

As a concept, such an initiative is not totally dissimilar to what has happened at county level where 1.2km of hedgerow have had to be removed along the A435 Evesham Road between Cheltenham Racecourse and Bishop's Cleeve in order to create a safer pedestrian and cycle path. This means a loss of visual and ecological amenities in the short term but is mitigated by the subsequent planting of triple rows of mixed native trees as hedging plus an avenue of tall trees.

What we are seeking here is a low level mix of probably double planted hedging, all of which will be funded by charities that I have been in dialogue with over the last 6 months, including The Conservation Volunteers, the Woodland Trust, the Tree Planting Project Support Officer at GCC ("Trees for Gloucestershire" initiative) and even Balfour Beatty Vinci with its surplus HS2 stock that is no longer going to line railway track between Birmingham and Manchester and also Birmingham to Leeds.

We have already done this at the front edge of the VH grounds where approximately 100 native species were planted during 2021 and 2022. Accordingly, we would potentially be looking at a further planting of up to 550 trees, which isn't particularly onerous as I did the previous 100 myself in under half a day.

The boundary fencing has now been erected, although not after considerable difficulties encountered by Pauntley Pastures when they hit rock during the process, causing delays and considerable additional expense to them to have to navigate. The overall result is good for both sides, as it means that the bramble has been cleared and the land can be used for more productive arable farming or livestock grazing as required but with better biodiversity impacting all our lives.

I'd like to offer a vote of thanks to Pauntley Pastures for its bramble clearance as this has been a genuine issue for all our volunteers over a number of years where we have been trying to keep the hedge line in order often using fairly rudimentary tools. In particular I'd like to thank Ollie Skelding (Landowner), Tom Gifford (The Farmer) and Ian Ractliffe, who did the fencing, and the bramble clearing - free of any charge to ourselves. We fully supported what was being done and it was

carried out with our blessing as an enhancement to our mutual benefit and that we were consulted fully throughout the process and kept up to speed as to developments at all times.

Objective

All we need to do now is to agree how we wish to proceed going forward.

To this end we are exploring some options, including the re-planting of a range of native tree and hedging species as mentioned just now.

The reason that we are raising it today is that opinion is somewhat divided and, I think it's fair to say that despite all the work done to date on our biodiversity policy, there has been some pushback from within the community mainly over concerns about any future workload resulting from an enhanced hedgerow.

I am, however, delighted to express our gratitude to new residents **Jan & Tony Spacey who have offered the support of Littleover Forestry Ltd** for lifetime hedge trimming free of charge at the village hall, which is an extremely generous offer meaning that our maturing population does not need to worry about having to power up petrol hedge trimmers every time the hedge is in need of a short back and sides. The height and width of anything that gets planted can also be determined over time to suit the aesthetics of the grounds and prevailing views. Feel free to make yourselves known to the populace.

We do also have another potential option which is the alternative introduction of the concept of "dead hedging" which can be a very impressive and ecologically friendly option of using logs and twigs that represent a very low maintenance option and needn't preclude the very limited use of certain weedkillers should brambles continue to persist. If you want to see images, a google search will show some examples.

So that's the situation at the moment. I'd welcome thoughts from within the community with a view to implementing the wishes of everybody here today. We can conclude with a vote and the PC will agree to honour the wishes of the community, i.e.

- Option 1 - re-plant with a mix of native species at zero cost;
- Option 2 – arrange for dead hedging to be introduced;
- Option 3 – leave as is now.

I can take a small number of comments, viewpoints or enquiries on this item before moving to a vote, but would prefer this not to eat into everyone's evening as we'll be taking questions at the end anyway.