

LITTLE MARLOW PARISH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
HELD AT ABBOTSBROOK HALL
ON FRIDAY 8TH MAY 2009

AND ANNUAL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

.

Present were eight members of the Parish Council, Mrs G.J. Barclay, Clerk to the Council, County Councillors M. Appleyard and D. Watson, one member of the Press and 26 members of the public.

Apologies were received from D. Grieve MP, District Councillor W. Jennings and Parish Councillor Mrs B. Wallis.

PC Jemma Faherty, Thames Valley Police

PC Faherty introduced herself as the area police beat officer, and also introduced the two PCSOs who cover this area. She gave a short report on speed checks, Neighbourhood Action Group (NAG) and burglaries. The team have gone into local schools to make themselves known and were actively engaging with young people.

The Chairman thanked PC Faherty and the PCSOs for attending.

MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S MEETING

On the proposal of Mr Anderson and seconded by Mrs Morton, the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 9th May 2008 were taken as read and approved.

PRESENTATION OF ROSE BOWL

The Chairman presented the Geoffrey Moss Memorial Rose Bowl to Mrs. Ulrike Walmsley in recognition of her hard work and dedication to the Claytons School Travel Plan.

CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

I have much pleasure in presenting my 15th report as Chairman.

Reading the minutes of our last annual meeting recalls the sadness we all felt over the death of PC Sarah Underhill who gave us such an upbeat presentation last year. I do remember saying afterwards how refreshing it was to meet such a positive and enthusiastic officer who was really out to make a difference to her community.

You will know from previous meetings that this council was proud to have been awarded "Quality" status based on a national standard promoted by government. Something like an MOT this distinction does not last for ever and I am very pleased

that the council have now been re-accredited. This distinction is largely due to the skill and dedication of our Clerk Gloria Barclay who ensures we act properly, within the law and with as much efficiency as we can muster.

Some of the requirements of Quality status relate to the council's communications with the public that we serve. To this end we have now launched the Parish Council website at www.littlemarlowparishcouncil.org.uk. Do have a look at it, There are the latest agendas and minutes, notes on the history of Little Marlow, an aerial view of the parish and the history of the council together with links to other useful sites. Other items will be added in due course.

Your councillors have also been out delivering our 17th bi annual newsletter and I do hope you have all received your copies. If anyone hasn't, do please let the Clerk know and she will give the Councillor responsible a severe talking to!

The face of local government is changing slowly and one of the stated aims is to devolve power to those closest to the community. As such your parish council have taken on responsibility for several matters from the County Council. We now deal with maintenance of road traffic signs, granting permission for event signage and removing any unauthorised signs, inspecting the repair of pavements and footpaths and issuing "hedge notices" where they cause an obstruction.

During the year the council met formally on 9 occasions together with various sub committee meetings and planning inspections.

As usual, a large part of the council's work was involved with planning matters and I will be taking you through Barbara Wallis's report later on. As Barbara is not here I can say what I really think of her without fear of embarrassment. I do not know what we would do without her. The energy she displayed in tackling the Stadium appeal was phenomenal and whatever the outcome she just keeps on going. She has become an expert in her field and I know she has won the respect of the planning officers at the District Council.

Turning now to our other main areas of activity;

Abbotsbrook Hall

Since our last annual meeting the improvements to the loos and kitchen have been completed. With any project of this type it is always a balancing act between what one would like and what one can afford. I hope we have the balance about right. I know there have been criticisms of the size of the oven and the reuse of the sink unit but we could not justify the extra cost involved. If a generous benefactor wishes to help that is of course another matter.

We are intending to decorate the hall during the coming year.

The pressure on parking has increased and this together with a continuing ponding problem has meant we have had to spend money on the car park. We have increased the parking space by removing some small trees and undergrowth and installed a

soakaway. Unfortunately the soakaway has not cured the problem and more work will be needed. In the old days of course we simply drained the car park into the adjoining stream. This, for very good reasons is no longer permitted but it has caused us a problem.

We continue to have problems with illegal parking, occasional vandalism and on one occasion someone who took up residence in their vehicle.

Pavilion/Recreation ground

We are all becoming used to seeing the majestic red kites flying low overhead but it must have come as a slight surprise when a large hot air balloon landed on the recreation ground. On being challenged this latter day Phineas Fogg merely asked the parking charge and waited to be picked up. Our quick thinking councillor Clive Innocent, spotting an opportunity relieved him of a free flight voucher as a fund raiser at this years fete.

Having re-laid the football pitch last year with the financial assistance of the Bourne End Junior Sports Club we have had problems with other teams turning up unannounced. Whilst no one wants to discourage people from healthy exercise using a purpose laid sports pitch indiscriminately is likely to cause damage and spoil the enjoyment of those who have actually paid for the privilege.

The play equipment is obviously being well used as it had to be refurbished during the year due in part to wear.

Further external re-decoration is to take place during the year.

As reported last year, users of the pavilion continue to be inconvenienced by inconsiderate lunchtime parking by people not using the hall. Unfortunately this is something almost impossible to prevent. Unless a barrier system or perhaps clamping is employed then we are stuck with the problem at the present. One possibility may be to enlarge the car park but as are told happens with roads this may just bring more parking. If this concerns you do let us know your views.

Burial Ground

In addition to the sterling work carried out by our contractors Greg Taylor and Roger Wickes councillors and others have attended working parties at the cemetery. Considerable clearing of brambles and undergrowth has taken place and paths have been redefined. The chapel has also been cleared of accumulated items and the old storage shed removed. It is a very difficult balance to achieve but we want to be able to offer a well cared for environment but without being too regimented.

I hope you find the result pleasing and, if you would like to help please come along to the next working party on 28th May from 9.30am.

Whilst we know that the cemetery is sometimes used for various late night activities I was particularly disappointed by the vandalism last year. It must have taken considerable effort to break an old stone seat in two and for what?

We are also hoping to bring the chapel into greater use by installing a power supply. The cost is large and we do not feel justified in making it a charge on your council tax. We are therefore largely dependant upon grants being available. The amenities committee have already made a generous offer and we have an application in elsewhere to cover a good part of the remainder. More information to follow!

Street Lighting

Although we generally approved of the County Council's policy of turning off street lights we were and still remain concerned about the effect on users of the C100. With two pubs and no pavements any pedestrian tempted to a night on the tiles may face difficulty on their way home. I know the Residents Association is also concerned about this and we will do whatever we can to support a rethink.

Roads

The least said about this the better. Despite a good start the appalling winter weather has really undone most of the work carried out earlier in the year. Despite this we are encouraged by the assistance we receive from the County Council's Local Area Technician who is able to direct expenditure where the Parish council consider it to be most useful. Whilst this doesn't create more money it does at least enable us to set the priorities.

During the year a footpath has been created alongside a large section of Sheepridge Lane. We hope this will be extended to the A4155 before too long subject of course to funding being available. The change has been remarkable. What was a life threatening experience has now become a pleasure and high level of the path gives most wonderful views over the surrounding fields.

This was also a good example of the increased co-operation in that it was a joint scheme with Chepping Wycombe Parish and funded by the County Council.

The speed limit review was finalised last year and the new limits are in place. Not all the parish council's recommendations were accepted by the County particularly with regard to Winchbottom Lane. It is however a lot better than before.

To reinforce the new limit on the A4155 a speed device was installed just outside Gloria's office and for several weeks all she could hear was the sound of braking cars.

General

As always the amount of training required, liaison and other committees to attend and meetings about everything continues to increase. Some is useful, much is not; the knack is to tell the difference!

We have however been consulted on a large number of central and local government proposals and in all cases a response has been sent on your behalf.

Some members of the council were involved in an emergency planning exercise organised by the District Council and had a great day pretending that Little Marlow had been cut off, had no power and was running out of supplies. Whilst I find it difficult to believe that the farm shop couldn't keep us supplied in any emergency I am told that some typical Little Marlow suggestions were made. Living off pheasant didn't seem much of a hardship but being shot by Philip Emmett as a looter certainly had less appeal.

I would particularly like to thank all those councillors and indeed the Clerk who so willingly attend the various meetings, workshops and seminars on the council's behalf.

I had hoped to be able to report good news on the sewage works front. You will however have all received a letter regarding the recent fire and the impact on the proposed improvements. Although we still struggle to resolve this problem our thanks must go to the Liaison committee under the chairmanship of C. Cllr David Watson and with particularly active involvement from Phillip Emmett.

Last year I reported that this was the second most complained about works in the country. Progress has been made, we have now moved into first place!

Little Marlow village was once again a runner up in the Best Kept Village competition last year. The village has also entered for this year.

Thanks to the publishers of the Church Magazine I have also been able to keep you up to date with events more regularly.

Thanks to the Amenities committee we were once again represented at the fete and I hope you will visit us again this year.

Finally my particular thanks to;

The Chairmen of the Resident's Associations for their cooperation.
BEJSC and Little Marlow Cricket Club and particularly Richard Tedham for his hard work at the sports ground
Greg Taylor the contractor who amongst other duties looks after the burial ground.

Parish Council staff, Mr Stokes and Mrs Samuels.

Last but definitely not least Gloria Barclay the Clerk to the Council

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

The Accounts were successfully audited without qualification by the external auditors again this year.

The accounts for the financial year ended 31st March 2009 were presented by the Clerk. The Annual Precept was £39, 794.

	Income £	Expenditure £
Abbotsbrook Hall	21308	41780
Burial Ground	9005	7456
Pavilion/Recreation Ground	5496	7199
Street Lighting	nil	3098
Allotments	389	636
Parish Plan	500	1595
Vat	7794	7630
Administration inc Precept	<u>40676</u>	<u>22444</u>
Totals	85168	91838
Opening balance	24921	
Plus Income	<u>85168</u>	
	110089	
Less Expenditure	<u>91838</u>	
	18251	
Earmarked Reserves: Admin	2700	
Abbotsbrook Hall	5600	
Allotments	300	
Burial Ground	300	
Pavillion	<u>4500</u>	
Total earmarked reserves:	13400	
Balance carried forward:	£4851	

PLANNING REPORT

In Mrs Wallis's absence. Mr Banfield read her report and invited questions.

In the year since the last Annual Parish Meeting, Little Marlow Parish Council has received 69 planning applications to comment on. Unlike most places, this is an increase on last year, but as can be seen from the chart, in our parish the applications are dominated by those for works to trees in conservation areas, and trees do not stop growing!

The second largest category is house extensions, which can vary from small conservatories to those which double the size of the original house. There were two for new houses, one of them is on the site on one that has been demolished and the other, in Abbey Road, is in a back garden.

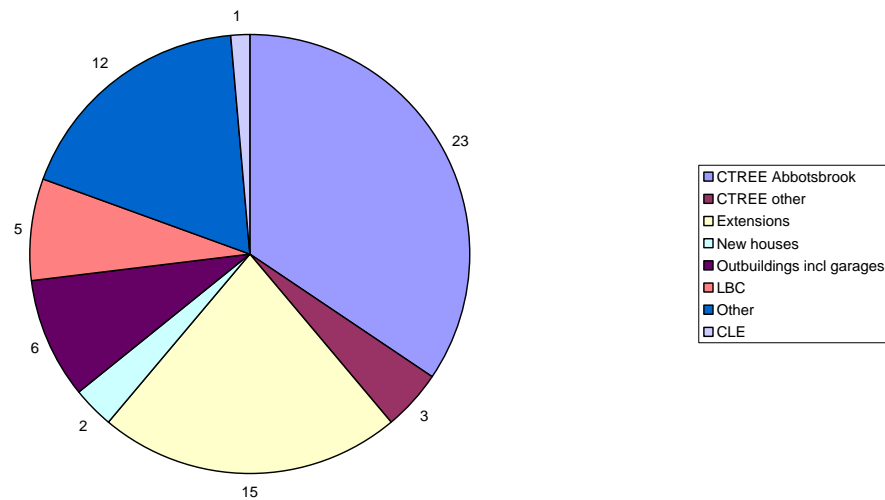
The 'other' category includes renewals of temporary permission, (2) stables (2) new accesses and gates, advertisements at public houses and two from Lafarge to regularise the end of the gravel pit operations.

Wycombe District Council has given permission for 49 applications, refused six and issued a hedge retention notice. Three were withdrawn and eleven are yet to be determined. Bucks County Council gave Lafarge their permissions. The majority of the decisions were non-controversial, but there were two occasions where our objections were overruled.

Of course our major activity regarding planning applications was the proposal to move Marlow football club to Westhorpe. North West Estates applied for this in 2007, but it was not decided until March this year, after a hurried consideration of some amendments which did not alter the plans, but added public access to a little more of the land owned by North West and improvements to rights of way over which they have no control. We were disconcerted to find that the officers at Wycombe were recommending the plan for approval on the dubious ground of improvement of leisure activities, but luckily the Development Control Committee saw sense and refused the application decisively. I should like to thank all those who helped me in the run up to the meeting and those who had to put up with me talking about nothing else for a week or two. It was a really good community effort which we must capitalise on to bring the Country Park to reality.

As well as commenting on planning applications, the members of the Parish Council are involved in commenting on the documents that will determine the future of our area. In particular we have attended meetings about the possibility of development at Abbey Barn South and Daws Hill. These are outside our parish, but would have an impact on it. The site allocations document for the whole of Wycombe District will be published in June. Do look out for it and make your comments known, either direct or to the Parish Council.

Planning Applications 2008-9



OTHER REPORTS

Report From Dominic Grieve, MP, QC

I am very sorry that I cannot be with you this evening due to my having to deliver a lecture in London.

So far as I am concerned, the last year has had a number of problems relating to Little Marlow, some but not all of which we have resolved satisfactorily.

I was obviously delighted that the attempts to get planning permission for the football club turned down. I am particularly pleased that the lobbying which took place from all sides proved to be so effective.

On the reverse side, the problems relating to the Little Marlow Sewage Works continue. I have made another visit and I have been given some further assurances of an intention to take action to reduce the smells. The matter has, however, been complicated by the fire and I would be interested to hear from local residents as to how the consequences of this are immediately affecting the village. In the meantime, I will continue to maintain the pressure on Thames Water to carry out the long-term changes which are clearly needed to ensure that the problem of the smells from the Works are eradicated.

As far as policing is concerned, I have received no particular representations from Little Marlow of problems in the last year, but I meet quarterly with the police, so if anybody has a problem in this area I would be grateful to know about it so that I can raise it at my next meeting.

There is no doubt that with the current financial crisis expenditure by both national and local government will be constrained in future and this may well have a knock-on consequence on local services. I will do all that I can to ensure that the impact of this is minimised as far as possible.

I look forward to contact with the Parish Council and local residents over the coming year and hope that the current economic recession may ease.

C.Cllr Mike Appleyard

Mr. Appleyard gave a progress report on the road works at Bourne End. The finishing date is not yet known and various problems have arisen that have delayed the works.

C. Cllr David Watson

Mr Watson gave a report on the Thames Water Sewage Works. Odour escapes remain a continuing problem, but he is optimistic that there are improvements being made. The Chief Executive Officer of Thames Water attended the last Liaison meeting and made certain promises, confirmed in writing that improvements will be made.

Other Matters.

Mr Dennis Harwood, Fern Lane.

Mr Harwood commented on the lack of public transport in the area, and asked if an extension of the bus service could be investigated to cover the Fern Lane area.

Mr Harwood also drew attention to the area of Fern Lane near to the A4155 junction which he considered to be unsightly and in need of improvement.

The Chairman thanked everyone for attending.