

Chairman's Report 2022-2023

The full Parish Council has met nine times since our last Annual Parish Meeting in March 2022 and the Parish Council committees have met regularly. Parish Councillors have represented the Council on various outside bodies throughout the year, including the Southwest Chilterns Community Board and its four action groups.

The work undertaken and the money spent by the Parish Council is all carefully (and transparently) recorded on our website. You can find out many many things by paying www.littlemarlowparishcouncil.org.uk a visit and help make this chairman's Annual Report shorter than it could be.

We have 9 seats on the Parish Council and co-opted Councillors Rose Start and Mike Wandsworth last year. Sadly Councillor Wandsworth resigned but happily we have two potential candidates for the vacancy which we hope to fill at our May meeting. Buckinghamshire Council and Town and Parish Council Elections will next be held in May 2025 and it would be wonderful to have a contested election for Little Marlow Parish Council. Hopefully the King's volunteering initiative will encourage more people to volunteer to become councillors.

It was with great sadness (and some trepidation on my part) that we received Councillor Valerie Brownridge's resignation in May 2022. Cllr Brownridge was elected to the Parish Council in May 2011 and served as Chairman with care, commitment and a great deal of hard work from May 2015. I would like to take this opportunity to thank her for the huge amount of work she did while on the Council and I still greatly value her wise advice on Council issues.

The Council is fortunate to own a number of assets which both serve the community and bring in welcome income. With the exception of the recreation ground (which I will come on to) income has increased by 19% compared to pre covid income levels in the year ending March 2020, which is excellent news. We reviewed our 2022/23 Action Plan which set out our objectives for the year at our April Council meeting and drew up a new Action Plan for 2023/24 (including a number of new objectives relating to the environment). The plan can be found on our website littlemarlowparishcouncil.org.uk

Pavilion/Recreation Ground

Sadly the 'drastic measures' we took last year to control the bunnies had little impact on net migration (to coin a government phrase) and new bunny families moved straight back in, rendering the football pitch unusable for junior football this year, and meaning overall income was down by 5% compared to pre covid levels. Luckily the cricket pitch remained protected and our thanks once again go to Richard Tedham for maintaining the recreation ground so excellently.

Abbotsbrook Hall

Fortunately a new owner Nathalie McDonald has taken over the pre-school group following the retirement of Angela Gregg after XX years and the group has gone from strength to strength. I

am grateful to our Hirings Administrator, Christine Samuels, and to our caretaker, Peter Samuels, for all they both do to ensure the smooth running of the hall.

Burial Ground

Work has continued on expanding the cemetery by clearing the copse to become a new area for burials once we run out of space in the existing cemetery. In the meantime, we have sown wildflower seeds in the top part of the copse. Wild Marlow organised a successful working party with the Parish Council at the cemetery in November 2022 to plant whips and bulbs and generally tidy up.

Allotments

The allotments continue to be an asset for the community and all our allotments are now taken. We are taking steps to control water usage and have updated contracts to reflect the Parish Council's sustainable environment agenda.

Environment

The big news is that following consultation with parishioners LMPC has committed to replacing all street lights in the Parish with LED lighting at a cost of c£27,000 (using funds from CIL grants) and work is due to start on this imminently. Not only is this the right thing to do for the environment but it will result in considerable savings in energy costs. We have also (with some funding from the Community Board) installed cycle racks at Abbotsbrook Hall, the recreation ground and in Coldmoorholme Lane car park.

The Parish Council is lobbying to influence the evolution of the Little Marlow Country Park (which is currently threatened by Buckinghamshire Council's proposal to limit its size) and Councillor Sam Kershaw chairs the Little Marlow Country Park Vision Working Group of Parish and Ward Councillors and other interested parties which is committed to trying to bring about the Country Park as it has always been envisaged since xxxx.

The Parish Council continues to carry out the grass cutting and other work which the then Buckinghamshire County Council devolved to us in 2015. The Devolved services contract was rolled over for a further year until March 2024.

We are grateful to volunteers from Coldmoorholme Lane Residents Association for the time and effort they put into maintaining and keeping litter free the car park funded (in part) by £500 per annum contributed by The Spade Oak Pub.

I would like to end by saying a few more thankyou's. We are fortunate to have two active Residents' Associations in the parish and I greatly appreciate the support and co-operation from their Chairmen, Guy Carter and Sam Kershaw (who both did a splendid job of organising the Coronation celebration kindly hosted by Priya and Councillor Jason Downes). I am also grateful to Buckinghamshire Councillors David Watson, David Johncock for attending our Parish Council meetings and for their continued support and advice.

My biggest thanks go to my fellow Parish Councillors for all the service they have given to the Parish Council and the wider community throughout the year and for the advice and support they have given me. Being a Parish Councillor is not always a glamorous job (and sometimes it

could even be described as a thankless task) but we are fortunate to have such a strong team of Councillors with many different skills, talents and sometimes opinions who work so well together.

When I was working out how long Valerie had been on Little Marlow Parish Council I dug out old minutes from 2011. I wasn't really surprised to read that the car park pot holes had been repaired at Abbotsbrook Hall, or that work had commenced on repairing the chapel window, or that the Abbotsbrook Hall redecoration was complete with the exception of the wall under the kitchen sink (that was still drying out) or indeed that the Thames Water Liaison Committee had discussed the fact that works were to be undertaken at the Sewage works which may result in some escape of odour. 12 years on and we have recorded exactly the same issues in May 2023. The Parish Council's ongoing role is up there with painting the Forth bridge (although, actually technology has moved on and the bridge only needs painting every 20 years). Sadly this is not the case for our Parish Council, our hamster wheel continues to turn.

You will be glad to know that I am not covering planning or detailed finances as the Planning Committee Chairman and the Budget Committee Chairman will be giving separate reports.

And last, but by no means least, I would like to thank our Clerk, Jo Murray, for keeping the council running on a day-to-day basis and for the support she provides to us all.

Cllr Kath Acres

Chairman, Little Marlow Parish Council