

LITTLE MARLOW PARISH COUNCIL

CONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT ABBOTSBROOK HALL FROM 8PM ON FRIDAY 10th MAY 2024 AND CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Present:	Cllr K Acres - Chairman Cllr S Goss Cllr A Crabtree Cllr S Kershaw Cllr K Cook Cllr R Start Jennie Phenix - Clerk Buckinghamshire Council (BC) Cllr D Watson Joy Morrissey MP Members of the public
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APM24/01

1. Welcome & Introduction by Chairman of Little Marlow Parish Council

APM24/02

2. Apologies for Absence

Cllr P Emmett, Cllr J Downes, Cllr V Morton, Cllr D Johncock (BC), Mr R Mills, PCSO C Bis, Thames Valley Police

APM24/03

3. Minutes of previous meeting held on Friday 12th May 2023

The Minutes of the previous meeting were to be **RESOLVED**, and the Chairman would sign them at the 2025 Annual Parish Meeting.

APM24/04

4. Report from Joy Morrissey MP

Joy Morrissey reported that she continues to be strongly committed to protecting our greenbelt and waterways. She expressed her support for Little Marlow Parish Council (LMPC), Save Marlow's Greenbelt (SMG) and residents of Westhorpe in vigorously opposing the planning application for Marlow Film Studios.

She noted that her opposition was influenced by her personal experience with Pinewood Studios (both the effect on local residents and the fact there is no longer the demand in the film industry for its expansion), the effect it would have on the local greenbelt, the existing heavy traffic congestion and the devastating effect it would have to those living in Westhorpe Park.

The next goal was to aim to get it rejected at the next Council Strategic Sites Committee and she was hopeful this would happen. There were many items on the application that had been requested for revision, which so far have not been addressed. The Highways Agency were not happy with the application, Natural

England were not supporting it and there was significant local opposition. BC Officers had recommended refusal at the first Strategic Sites Committee. She noted that the recent Parish Poll in Marlow Town showed a record turnout and resounding local opposition. (18% of the electorate voted and 85% opposed).

She also discussed water pollution in the Thames and noted her intention to request a meeting with BC Councillors and the Environment Agency and Thames Water (TW) together in the same room to attempt to progress action and move Little Marlow up the priority list for action and investment by Thames Water

Ms Morrissey invited local Civic groups to get in touch if they would like to arrange a tour of parliament, a Q&A session and the opportunity to watch proceedings from the gallery.

Ms Morrissey kindly took questions from the floor.

LMPC Chairman Cllr K Acres thanked Joy for attending the Parish Meeting and for her support.

APM24/05

5. Geoffrey Moss Memorial Bowl Rose Bowl Presentation by the Chairman

Geoffrey Moss was a former County Councillor and Chairman of the Parish Council from 1975-1980. He gave a rose bowl to the Parish Council and asked that it be presented annually to any resident of Little Marlow who in the opinion of the Parish Council had given outstanding service to the community. The Parish Council considered the nominations for the bowl at its meeting on 19 March 2024.

This year the Council unanimously decided to award the Geoffrey Moss Memorial Rose Bowl to Niall Blair and Joy Morrissey kindly agreed to make the presentation.

Niall has given outstanding service to our local community and is a very deserving recipient of the Geoffrey Moss Memorial Rose Bowl. Niall Blair is a good neighbour, and he keeps a helpful watch on the comings and goings at the Recreation Ground. Niall is very active in Church, sings in the choir and rings the bells when required. For many years he has been involved with the Rotary Club at both local and County level and is recognised as a Paul Harris Fellow, a mark of appreciation for services rendered to Rotary.

Not many people will be aware that for the last twenty years he has been regularly emptying the bin by the children's playground in the Recreation Ground as nobody could find out who owned it.

APM24/06

6. Annual Report given by Chairman of Little Marlow Parish Council

Presented by Cllr K Acres, Chairman of the Parish Council

Annual Report given by Chairman of Little Marlow Parish Council

The full Parish Council has met seven times since our last Annual Parish Meeting in May 2023 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 visiting www.littlemarlowparishcouncil.org.uk.

We have 9 seats on the Parish Council and co-opted Councillor Katie Cook in May last year. Councillor Elections will next be held in May 2025 and it would be wonderful to have a democratically contested

election then for Little Marlow Parish Council so please consider if you would like to join our ranks. It can be fun and is always interesting. If you aspire to write cosy crime novels (and according to my research on something called 'Book Brunch' the stereotype of cosy crime novels is that they're set in small villages, featuring amateur and often bumbling detectives who somehow manage to solve mysteries) there can be no better starting point than Little Marlow Parish Council with its Councillors (we could be the detectives), if you need ideas for a plot we have a Cemetery, we have a Chapel, who knows what's buried in Ted's Shed on the Cricket Ground?, not to mention what goes on at two rival Bridge Clubs at Abbotsbrook Hall and the Pilates, Thai Chi and yoga groups. You certainly don't have to join Marlow Town Council for inspiration. We did invite Richard Thorogood of Marlow Murder Mystery fame to come tonight but didn't hear back.

The Council is fortunate to own a number of assets which both serve the community and bring in welcome income. These include our Allotments, our halls here at Abbotsbrook and at The Pavilion and of course our beautiful (and biggest earner) our Cemetery.

Pavilion/Recreation Ground

If you were here last year you may remember that despite the 'drastic measures' we took to control the bunnies it had little impact on population density. We accepted defeat and bought a bag of soil to fill holes and to enable Bourne End Junior Football to play this season. Luckily the cricket pitch remained protected and our thanks once again go to Richard Tedham for maintaining the recreation ground so excellently.

Exciting news is that we have gone out to tender for a new equipment shed to replace the infamous Ted's Shed and we hope to have it completed in time for the Annual Fete on Bank Holiday Monday.

Abbotsbrook Hall

The introduction of a Hall Bookings Calendar has helped us increase lettings here at Abbotsbrook Hall and we just have a few slots left for summer weekends and the school holidays. We aspire to instal WiFi here shortly and have started to tackle the car park surface issues by clearing vegetation. We did have yet another issue with more four legged furry friends though (I can't believe I had to google how many legs does a rat have?....) but that too has been dealt with.

We are 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 continues on expanding the Cemetery and we are preparing the ground for new hedging but there is still much to do. We were rewarded with a fine display of flowering Foxgloves in June and the bluebells were resplendent in April. The chapel roof has been repaired and there are plans afoot to add to the bee population there having cleared the area of damaged hives.

Allotments

The allotments are not without their own challenges but 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

LMPC has now replaced all streetlights in the Parish with LED lighting using funds from CIL grants arising from Planning approvals in the Parish. This has resulted in savings of 83% in energy costs. We have also installed extra dog poo bins at Abbotsbrook, at the Recreation Ground and in Coldmoorholme Lane car park.

There has been much press coverage in recent weeks on the level of pollution in the River Thames in our Parish and Cllrs P Emmett and S Kershaw had the joy of a guided tour of the sewage works which Cllr Kershaw will tell us about. I am pleased to report that Cllr James Mortimer from Bourne End and Wooburn Parish Council has initiated a water testing programme for the Thames that LMPC is participating in and he will be telling us more about this later.

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 2025.

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

I would like to end by saying a few more thankyous. 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. Martin Braint and all his helpers run a fabulous summer fete on August Bank Holiday Monday and are always grateful for more volunteers to help. I am also grateful to Buckinghamshire Councillors David Watson and David Johncock for attending our Parish Council meetings and for their continued support and advice and I am grateful to the Clerk and Deputy Clerk of Bourne End and Wooburn Parish Council for their support in recent months And I would like to thank our ex Clerk, Jo Murray who left in February after 5 years to work for Buckinghamshire Council and to welcome our new Clerk Jennie Phenix.

Sometimes it seems that being a Parish Council is like being on a wheel in a hamster's cage, with the same issues recurring year after year: the sewage works, the quality of water in the Thames, attacks on our Greenbelt, the pot holes, assorted rubbish related issues, speed limits, trees that need looking after and of course following THE rules...

So 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.

APM24/07

7. Financial Report

ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023/2024

Presented By Cllr A Crabtree, Chairman of the Budget Committee.

Cllr A Crabtree noted that the bank balance had fallen in 2023/24 and now expenditure had exceeded income by c£7k, although this was considered to be a good thing as the auditor had noted the need for LMPC to spend more. (Total Income was up from last year at £122,827 and expenditure was £129,990).

It was noted that LMPC has spent c£30k on new LED streetlights during 2023/24, however the savings on electricity and lowering of the council's carbon footprint are significant and will pay back the cost in 5 years.

Funds had also been allocated to improving the parking area and pond at the burial ground to make it fit for purpose and improve the biodiversity.

It was noted that income from the burial ground was down as there had been fewer deaths, but this was offset by increased income from hall hire, increased interest and a 3% increase in the precept.

Ear Marked Reserves have been allocated to replacing the cricket shed which is in process and finally progressing.

Total cash balance at 31st March 2024 was down slightly to c£155k from just over £160K the year before.

APM24/08

8. Planning Report 2023/2024

Presented by Cllr K Acres, Chairman of the Parish Council

LMPC were requested by BC to comment on 87 Planning Applications during the year (of which 2/3 were approved) a significant increase from last year when 65 Applications were considered. The Planning Committee consider all planning applications presented to them and feedback comments to BC, but it is BC's ultimate responsibility to review the planning application and to determine the outcome. LMPC are not the ultimate decision makers.

It was noted that LMPC had objected strongly to both of Dido Property Limited Guernsey's Planning Applications for Marlow Film Studios.

APM24/09

9. Water Testing Project Report

Cllr Sam Kershaw presented a report on sewage treatment at the Little Marlow Thames Water Sewage Works.

It was noted that TW is on the whole operating within the law and that there were four instances of untreated overflow this year. SK noted that LMPC is very keen to put pressure on TW to reduce pollution and new storage tanks that would solve the problem would cost tens of millions to install (currently an unlikely expectation). He noted the need to understand what types of pollution and sewage were being released and through testing we can hope to put pressure on parliament to tighten up the constraints of legislation so that TW has to reduce its pollution into the Thames.

Cllr James Mortimer of Wooburn and Bourne End Parish Council (WBEPC) reported that he will be starting a water testing project which is being jointly financed with LMPC and will last a minimum of 12 months. This will involve taking regular water samples up stream, at the TW outflow and downstream and tested by an approved UKAS laboratory in order to build picture of what happening in terms of water pollution in our geographical area. It is hoped that this information will be useful to put pressure on relevant parties and help to instigate change.

APM24/10

10. Save Marlow's Green Belt Update

Save Marlow's Greenbelt (SMG)

Cllr S Kershaw presented an update on SMG and reiterated the points made above by Joy Morrissey.

SMG is a local residents pressure group whose sole objective was to fight the destruction of green belt in the area whenever it was threatened. Although the biggest threat was the Marlow Film Studios Application SMG had actively opposed other threats to our local greenbelt and would continue to do so.

He reported that SMG had now been fighting the Film Studios development for 3 years and focuses on raising awareness, promoting arguments for why it should not happen and putting pressure on BC to refuse the application. He noted that SMG was confident that the planning officer would recommend refusal and that the Highways Agency were not happy with the proposals.

He noted that there are questionable economic benefits to the project as many film studios are currently empty as a consequence of the declining streaming industry and less content being made. Also most people who work in the film industry live in London and commute in so it will not create significant jobs for the local area, It would be harmful for the green belt, have a significant negative effect on traffic and the rural feel of the local area.

APM24/11

11. Other Reports

Thames Valley Police submitted a written report and stressed that whilst there are many Neighbourhood Watch groups using social-media such as ‘WhatsApp’ to communicate issues they encourage reporting of incidents and issues formally - if they don’t know they can’t help. For non-emergency incidents, call **101** or report online at: thamesvalley.police.uk - ‘Report a Crime’ or call **999** if there is an emergency.

Overall it was noted that crime levels in Little Marlow were extremely low but interested Parishioners could check crimes reported in their area using Crime.uk. It was noted that of the high number of violent and sexual offences most of these are domestic abuse and happen within the home and are prevalent within middle class communities. This highlighted the need to look out for our neighbours and report any concerns to the police.

APM24/12

12. Other Matters

There being no other matters arising the meeting closed for refreshments at 21.10

Signed:
Chairman of the Council

Date: