

# Abthorpe Annual Parish Meeting

Monday 20<sup>th</sup> May 2019 at 7.45pm

at The Old School, Abthorpe.

## MINUTES

Present: Chairman Berry, Councillor Fenwick, Parish Clerk Emerton, Alison Robins, Steve Andrews,

### 1. To receive and approve apologies for absence

Apologies from Jan Miles, Councillor Peter Davies

### 2. Minutes from previous meeting

The minutes were approved

### 3. To note any matters arising from the minutes

There were none

### 4. Chairman's Report - presented by Chairman Berry

This, my second annual report as Chairman of Abthorpe Parish Council marks the end of my tenure as a Councillor after 4 years.

The electorate of 278 adults raises a small annual income from the Parish Precept. This year we were able to reduce the precept by £300 returning it to £4,000, due to the continued receipt of other income from Solar Farm which has allowed us to fund activities outwith our statutory duties, for example the installation of new street lights, and the upgrading of the footpaths around the village green and Church. The Parish approved the New Homes Bonus Grant to be awarded to The Old School Committee at the beginning of the year, to assist with its renovation activities.

Due to the resignation of the Mr Jamie Ford Cordes at the end of last year and Mrs Mary Hulbert in the summer we recruited two new Parish Councillors in July, Dr Mike Greenhalgh and Mrs Fi Noble.

Local Government Reorganisation, the result of the fallout from the financial crisis in Northamptonshire County Council, has required lengthy consideration and comment on proposals for a new 2 tier unitary structure across and the County. One outcomes of the financial crisis has been the withdrawal of bus transport to villages. The Council sought to establish the demand for a replacement service in conjunction with Braden, Slapton, and Wappenham, however demand is very low as are funds, and elderly residents who depended on the service have found other satisfactory ways of meeting their need for transport to access health and shopping services. A new proposal by Ability Northants to provide a service to the villages at a cost to each village of £500 remains at concept stage.

In October the Council worked closely with the Parochial Church Council to prepare for the Centenary of the Armistice. The War Memorial was refurbished; and the Council led a gathering of residents to place a wreath at the foot of the Memorial on 11 November. This tidying up work made it apparent that other paths around the Church and Green are also in need of maintenance and improvement. The Council decided to use Solar Farm money to commence an ongoing project to improve the appearance and access to the footpaths around the whole village, for which we are gratified to have received many comments of approval. The bench on the Green has been replaced, the Parish Notice board has been refurbished by 2 Councillors, and the Telephone Box will shortly be repainted. Meanwhile, road maintenance in Brackley Lane has been addressed in a superficial manner, but grass cutting has been reduced substantially. On-street parking throughout the village continues to create pockets of restricted access for some residents, and dog fouling remains a persistent, irresponsible issue.

We continue to work to protect the integrity of the village and maintain services supplied to it by considering and commenting where appropriate, upon planning applications, and the Local Plan - due for adoption at the end of 2019. Consideration of one particular Planning Application gave rise to a complaint about our Conduct in such matters. In response the Council has taken considerable time to revisit, debate and agree its Code of Conduct, to ensure our decisions are fair and transparent at all times.

### 5. Finance

At the year end the Business Account was £5880.58, Treasures Account was £4252.43 Total £10164.01. Our total expenditure was £12, 585.33. The precept for Financial Year 2018/19 will be £4000.00. This is an decrease on the previous year of £300.

Other income: VAT Refund £569.50; Bank Interest £1.92 and Renisola ££3,227.31

<b>Balances</b>	<b>3/31/2018</b>	<b>3/31/2019</b>	
Treasury Account	4,509.56	4,252.43	
Business Account	3,878.66	5,880.58	
Petty cash	31.00	31.00	
	<b>8,419.22</b>	<b>10,164.01</b>	
<b>Treasury Account Expenditure</b>			
E-On Street light supply	711.88	299.56	
E-on Street light maintenance	310.16	43.20	
E-on replace cells		-	
E-on new light		7,809.60	
Insurance	439.04	366.90	
Hire of hall for meetings	100.00	150.00	
Village newsletter	285.10	367.50	
Clerks expenses ink / paper		47.85	
Defibrillator		100.80	
Training	211.00	-	
NCALC	327.02	332.97	
Petty cash	20.00	-	
Clerks Direct	75.00	-	
Mower	126.64	42.36	Petrol
New mower	2,805.00	-	
Printer and Mouse	66.85	-	
Section 137 donations	100.00	50.00	St John the Baptist Church
Misc	6.00	6.90	Flyers and stain for notice board
Repair to memorial and wall		395.00	
Moss cleared from church wall		723.50	
Mower registration		55.00	
Bench moved		-	
Mower road insurance		151.20	
ICO registration		35.00	Data Protection Officer
Transparency fund		-	
TADD payments	170.00	65.00	£3 to pay for this year
Christmas Tree		69.99	
Woodstain for Notice Board		23.00	
	<b>5,753.69</b>	<b>11,135.33</b>	
PAYE	114.20	289.60	
Salary	456.95	1,160.40	
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>6,324.84</b>	<b>12,585.33</b>	
VAT reclaim	569.50	£1,330.89	Awaiting payment
<b>Total Income</b>			
Precept	4,000.00	4,300.00	
Renisola	3,122.31	3,227.31	
VAT	277.29	569.50	
Abtalk donation	20.00	-	
Over Petty Cash	1.52	-	
Transparency fund		-	
Interest	2.00	1.92	
Tadd refund	17.00	-	
Grant		6,210.00	For street lights
EON Repayment		21.00	
<b>Total</b>	<b>7,440.12</b>	<b>14,329.73</b>	

## 6. Asset Register

Assets			
<b>From previous years</b>			
Petrol Strimmer	89.98	89.98	
Red Telephone Kiosk	1.00	1.00	Nominal value
Bench			
2nd bench	200.00	200.00	Nominal value
Millennium Sign	1000.00	1000.00	
Vehicle Speed Sign	3541.39	3541.39	
Village Green	1.00	1.00	Nominal value
Defibrillator	999.00	999.00	
Mower		-	
Laptop and Software	447.40	447.40	
Printer and mouse for laptop		55.71	
Ride on mower	2372.00	2337.50	
<b>Purchased this year</b>			
Street lights		6508.00	
<b>Total Value of Assets</b>	<b>6,279.77</b>	<b>15,180.98</b>	

## 7. Organisation Reports

### 7.1 St John the Baptist Church, Abthorpe

**Recent progress with changes to the church:** Things have moved very slowly since this time last year. Despite having paid the architect's fee to go ahead with the plans for the development of the North Aisle and supplying other requested details, the DAC (Diocesan Advisory Committee) is proving exceedingly slow in its response, much to our frustration.

**Tea and Piece:** Our monthly afternoon tea events – usually held in the church -have continued during the months of better weather. We have had steady support for these from a core group of villagers raising £455 in total last year. One event was held in the garden of Richard and Carolyn Tomalin with Pimms added to the drinks list and this proved especially popular.

**Harvest:** Our annual Harvest Supper was held on the evening of Friday 12<sup>th</sup> October with traditional pies and puds on the menu. The support for it was good although, as with Tea and Piece, new faces would be most welcome. The produce donated at our Harvest Festival service once again went to the Hope Centre in Northampton.

**Remembrance:** The centenary of the end of WW1 was well celebrated in Abthorpe. Just before 11am on Remembrance Sunday we met by the war memorial and Marna Perrigo, chairman of the parish council, laid a wreath on behalf of the village. We then went into church where the large congregation heard poems, sang hymns and heard a short talk concentrating on the reality rather than the glory of war. In the evening, the Last Post was played and we lit our beacon, joining over 1,000 beacons that were lit across the country. The church bell was rung 100 times accompanied by bells which villagers had brought along. We then toasted 'peace' with a glass of bubbly inside church. The collection from the morning service went to the British Legion.

**Christmas:** Our Christmas celebrations started on 7<sup>th</sup> December when we held a Coffee Morning/Bring and Buy sale at the home of Mike and Jill Greenhalgh. This was followed the next day with the lighting up of the village Christmas tree. We were joined by a "surprise" visit from Father Christmas and his Chief Elf as we sang Christmas carols and songs around the tree and then went into the church to warm up with mulled wine and hot chocolate. On another evening, the Reverend Paul McLeod organised his now customary 'Beer and Carols' in the New Inn (with of course cracker jokes to make us all groan!) The evening finished off with tasty snacks supplied by Rob and his team.

The Christingle and Carol service on Christmas Eve was extremely well supported and once again there was that magical moment when the children had received their Christingles, and we all sang "Away in a Manger" by candlelight. Mulled wine and mince pies followed the service and it was lovely to have so many families enjoying, what is, to many, the real start to Christmas.

The Christmas Day service was also well supported.

**Children's Events:** We were pleased to host the Benefice Children's Epiphany event in the church. The children enjoyed the activities which were related to the arrival of the Kings visiting the baby Jesus. It was lovely to hear what the children would have given as a gift if Jesus had been born today. A second Children's event was held on Maundy Thursday when children from all the villages in the Benefice met in the Old School to make Easter hats, hear the Easter story and write their own prayers which they later took up to the church. It would have been nice to have had some children from Abthorpe at the event.

**Charitable Giving:** Our charitable giving this year has been £200 for the Indonesian Disaster Appeal, £298 to the British Legion and £178 to the Children's Society.

Thank you to everyone who has supported our food box in the back of church. In 2018 247.4kg of food was collected making a cumulative total since we started the food boxes of 1560 kg. Thank you to John Riches who keeps an eye on the box and takes it into Towcester food bank regularly.

**Family Occasions:** Although there were no weddings in church in 2018 there are 3 to be held in 2019. There were 2 Baptisms and 1 Funeral last year and one baptism has already been celebrated this year.

**Benefice Walk:** A good crowd of walkers from all the parishes in the benefice followed a route from Paulerspury to Abthorpe via all the 5 churches. Both people and accompanying dogs enjoyed fine weather and good fellowship on the walk through our beautiful local countryside. We finished at the New Inn in Abthorpe for a much appreciated meal.

**Church Finances:** The PCC would like to thank everyone who has supported the church over the past year. It is fair to say that without this support the church would cease to exist in Abthorpe. It is a commonly held misconception that the church has a lot of money. This is absolutely not the case. True, the value of the land on which our church, like all the thousands of churches throughout the country, is worth a lot, but this does not pay the bills. There is no pot of gold. Every single penny that provides our annual income is raised by the villagers of Abthorpe – through collections at services, through our planned giving scheme, through fundraising events and through the tote. Most years we just manage to break even, but any repair work on either the church building itself or in or around the churchyard and churchyard extension can have a catastrophic impact on our finances. If our beautiful church is to remain open for all occasions and to be kept in good condition, the continued support of the village is essential.

## **7.2 The Old School Committee**

The highlights of the last year in the old school were the very successful ginfest and the refurbishment of the big room.

Income for the old school has come from rents paid annually by the church, Tove Valley Broadband and the parish council and private hire. This income did not cover our costs for running the building and some of our fundraising money has been used to make up the deficit. Our difficulties have been compounded by the closure of the building preventing our usual winter fundraising plus some emergency lead work on the roof.

We held a ginfest on the green on world gin day last June with a gin bar, a regular bar, a pig roast and tea and cakes plus games for the children. The weather was perfect and the event was incredibly successful. We are intending to repeat it this year with fingers crossed for good weather again.

The refurbishment of the big room by Simat Builders started at the end of October and took 3 months to complete. The builders have done a spectacular job and given us a beautiful room that is warm and inviting. It is now more welcoming for hirers and we have booked some Pilates classes and are receiving more enquiries and bookings. This will hopefully ease the financial pressures.

We have managed this refurbishment with the generosity of those who have attended our fundraising events and contributed their time and money together with grants from various sources including the

National Lottery and the Constance Travis Charitable Trust. We would like to thank all these people and organisations, without whom the refurbishment would not have been possible.

### **7.3 Parish Path Warden**

There were no major footpath issues this year. There are just a few points to make. My contact with the Rights of Way team based at KierSWP 1 has been almost zero of late. About once a year for the several last years I have called them directly just to maintain a minimum level of contact. The RoW 2 team at KierWSP is now just four people. Three area reps and Colin Wicks. Such a small team can only support immediate fire fighting and key maintenance jobs. It is not yet clear what will happen in 2021 when Northamptonshire moves over to management by two new unitary authorities.

The condition of a few stiles remains a concern. I replaced one footboard on the path between the Stocking Frame and Bucknell Wood over the winter. There is another still to do at the end of Main Street. We have a number of stile sets if replacement is needed. Please let the Parish Council or I know what is required. Since it has been quite dry for a long time the byways and bridleways in Bucknell wood have stood up to the scrambling bikes and horses reasonably well this year. I have talked to a few groups as I have run across them but generally they know what to say. The RoW team is aware, but there is not much they can do.

Currently work is scheduled for two gates at the end of the RA43 (the bridleway through Bucknell Wood). My own contribution remains mostly at the level of observation, reporting and a little clearing. I have a copy of the definitive maps for the Parish should anyone wish to refer to them, and will be pleased to share details of local routes.

I always welcome input from parishioners concerning issues in the network. Alternatively, if you see a problem, you can use the Northamptonshire Highways street doctor online reporting system, rather than contact RoW directly, although I am advised there are still teething troubles with the reporting of off road issues.

Our contact points are: at Kier Integrated Services Ltd. Our local area representative is Katie Angel: kangel@kierWSP.co.uk, 01604 883451. Colin Wicks is still there 01604 883455 2 Rights of Way

### **Tree Warden Scheme.**

At last year's AGM I was asked to look into the Tree Warden Scheme. In brief: There is no longer a tree warden scheme of the type that was operated by Northants ~20 years ago. I believe that compared to the Path Warden scheme it was viewed as rather unsuccessful. The footpaths team were asked to take it over but declined.

There is a tree warden scheme organised by the Tree Council [ <https://www.treecouncil.org.uk/> ] – a registered charity founded in 1973.

There is an SNC tree officer shared with Cherwell (2 days each per week). His name is Ralph Branston 3 . He has never had any contact with the tree warden scheme. If appropriate the Tree Council works with the local Tree Officer and the network of about 6000 local volunteers. The terms of coverage of the country, Northamptonshire is a 'white' area. The nearest warden to us is in Warwick. If Abthorpe has a tree related project it wished to take forward

### **7.4 Tove Valley Broadband**

Use of the system, both in the number of members and the traffic, continues to grow so effort has been devoted to ensuring the reliability of the system. Over 650 properties are now connected. Additional backhaul capacity will be brought into use later this year and further extensions to the fibre network carried out. In Abthorpe, a scheme is currently being developed to connect more houses directly to fibre, taking advantage of government grants which are currently available. We do continue to have one major concern. The volunteers who are running the system are all getting older and we need fresh blood. Eric Malcomson has stood down as chairman, having been the driving force behind ABbA since it started 16 years ago - yes it is that long. We all owe him our thanks, but he will continue to be actively involved in operating and consolidating the network. Reports to Parish Annual Meeting Leeson Charity The usual donations were made during the year under the Education and Relief in Need headings. Otherwise there is nothing of significance to report.

### **7.5 Leeson Trust**

The usual donations were made during the year under the Education and Relief in Need headings. Otherwise there is nothing of significance to report.

### **8. County Councillor (Cllr Ian Morris)**

Non attendance

### **9. District Councillor (Cllr Peter Davies)**

Chairman Berry read out Councillor Davies update

### **10. AOB**

There was no AOB

### **11. Close**

**Meeting closed at 8.25pm**

Signed  
(Chairman Abthorpe Parish Council)

Date