

Abbots Morton Parish Council



Annual Parish Meeting on Thursday 11th May 2017 at 7pm at Abbots
Morton Village Hall

Minutes

Present: Nick Humphries (Chairman), Richard Whitlow

In Attendance: David Hunter-Miller (Clerk), District Councillor Audrey Steel, Diane Pearson (West Midlands Ambulance Service), members of the public

1. Introduction and Welcome

The Chairman welcomed residents to the meeting.

2. Apologies

Apologies were received from District Councillor David Wilkinson, County Councillor Anthony Hopkins

3. To approve the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 14th April 2016

The minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

Nil.

5. To receive a presentation by the West Midlands Ambulance Service on using the defibrillator

The Council and public received a very informative briefing session by Diane Pearson (West Midlands Ambulance Service) on the use of the defibrillator and the relevant first aid procedures.

6. To distribute the free Smartwater kits and go through the registration process

The Smartwater kits were distributed at the meeting and some residents offered to circulate additional kits amongst their neighbours. A log was kept to identify which households still needed a kit.



7. To invite the Community Policing Team to address the Meeting

The following report was read by the Clerk:

No significant incidents occurred over the past 2 months in the Abbots Morton area.

We now have 5 Officers that form a tasking team based at Droitwich Police Station.

3 burglaries occurred in the Droitwich east town area over the past month and all crimes were detected. The offender was identified, arrested and charged with the offences.

8. To invite the County Councillor for Harvington Division (Cllr. Holt) to address the Meeting

Cllr Clive Holt was not able to attend the meeting but it was confirmed that Cllr Anthony Hopkins had been elected as County Councillor for the Harvington division.

9. To invite the District Councillors for Inkberrow Ward (Cllr. Wilkinson, Cllr Steel) to address the Meeting

Cllr Audrey Steel provided an update to the Parish Council. It was confirmed that the New Homes Bonus would still be made available to eligible Parish Councils for the foreseeable future. It was noted that Abbots Morton had been able to take advantage of funding previously.

A new conservative candidate was being selected as Karen Lumley MP was not standing for re-election due to ill health.

10. To receive a report from the Residents' Association

The following report was circulated at the meeting:

Very little has crossed AMRA's desk this last 12 months to warrant any intervention or comment from the Association.

AMRA held its AGM in the last few weeks and as well as the usual matters of business there was an excellent presentation on the Victorian Lifestyle by Paul Harding of Discover History.

The AMRA committee had in its last normal meeting prior to the AGM discussed the future of AMRA and as Chairman I opened the topic for debate at the AGM. The consensus was that AMRA is seen as an organisation based on objecting to issues such as planning and that this approach alienated of some parishioners.

As Chairman I therefore undertook to work with the committee and other members to re-launch AMRA even to the possibility of a new name that reflected the new approach whilst keeping true to the AMRA strap line of "Preserving the Past and Protecting the Future". There would be a new twice a year Bulletin featuring articles from a wider pool of contributors and greater focus

Abbots Morton Parish Council



on maintaining that strap line. It was hoped that it may also encourage more villagers to help AMRA and possibly serve of the committee.

The new look AMRA would entail a great deal of work; changes wouldn't happen quickly, but the AGM attendees felt that the move would start to mend the social wounds caused by the building of the controversial solar farm.

David Smith

AMRA Chairman

11. To receive a report from the Parochial Church Council

The following report was circulated at the meeting:

The year began with the PCC deciding on the options for removing access obstacles to the church and its services for anyone with a disability. The issues had been previously considered at length, in considerable detail and at considerable cost, and professional advice had been given by the church architect.

In terms of wheelchair access and in the light of the opinions given by almost 30 members of the Abbots Morton community at a public meeting on 11th April 2016 (which were overwhelmingly against all the options on practical or aesthetic grounds), the PCC reluctantly felt the options should be abandoned.

The PCC wished then, and wish now, to make it clear that if anyone requires individual assistance with access then the church warden will provide such assistance. The PCC also agreed that it would keep accessibility issues under regular review and that a wheelchair will be acquired to be kept in the church in case of emergency.

On other aspects of accessibility, progress has been made during the year on steps, handrails, lighting, hearing loop, white lines.

The Bell Tower Appeal Fund was formally closed following the auditing of the accounts. The total amount of money raised during the two years of the Appeal was £45,329.43. Projects costs were £44,944.10 and the surplus of £385.33 has been transferred to the PCC's accounts for future use on the fabric of the church. The final act in the project was completed in February with the fixing of a plaque on the wall of the Tower acknowledging the restoration work in 2015. Once again the PCC wishes to thank everyone who contributed in any way to the incredible success of the restoration project.

Repair and maintenance is an endless job and we have challenges to meet from the latest five-yearly inspection, conducted by the church architect during the past year. Drains and guttering need attention along with other maintenance issues which, though they may be routine, will be a considerable expense.

Abbots Morton Parish Council



Abbots Morton PCC continues to work hard to meet the £10,000 annual running costs of St Peter's church. It has continued to meet its Parish Share, (the financial contribution it makes to the Worcester Diocese to help pay the stipends and pensions of its clergy). It also give thanks for the support of all those who attend and enjoy our two principal fundraisers, the Flower Festival lunch and the Harvest Supper, both of which were again very successful gatherings. Our thanks to Lynne Pemberton, for her organisational skills and the teams she leads. We also thank all those who make a regular contribution by way of Covenants, to those who give on the offertory plate in services, and to those who help by way of gifts and bequests. Weddings and Funerals are a continuing feature of each year and a small rise in fees has been agreed which helps contribute to our financial obligations.

The Flower Festival this year is on the weekend of June 24th/25th and will once again be an opportunity to see our church in its full glory, adorned with flowers courtesy of those who decorate the church on a regular basis, quietly but willingly. We hugely appreciate their effort and we thank Peggy Clarke for organising their rota and recruiting new comers to her list. Peggy is always pleased to welcome any new volunteers, who don't have to be a skilled flower arranger... a simple vase of flowers is wonderful.

Similarly we're grateful to Lynda Payne and the all the helpers she coordinates to unlock and lock the church...enabling us to make it always open, not only as a place of worship but as a place of sanctuary and meditation and prayer. We thank those who have come onto the rota just as we thank those who've left after considerable service.

The North Avon Group was established in 2012 linking together the four parishes of the ARCH Benefice (Abbots Morton, Rous Lench, Church Lench and Harvington) and the parishes of Inkberrow, Cookhill, Kington, and Dormston. Links between all the parishes continue and the Group now holds joint services and group events such as an after-service lunch and a forthcoming 8-mile pilgrimage around our joint parishes. We have representatives of our PCC who attend Group Council meetings to discuss things we have in common and joint services.

One thing we do have in common is an increasing workload for a reducing number of clergy and a greater reliance is emerging on lay-led service support. We thank Terry Brewster for his leading of the Remembrance Day service and for Lynda Payne's increasing involvement as a service leader. We still manage to maintain a wide range of services, Holy Communion twice a month at 8.30am, Morning Services at 11am, and "special" services including Mothering Sunday, Rogation, Pet Service, Remembrance, Harvest Festival, Carol and Gift Service, Christmas Eve, and Carols on the Green which attracted a record attendance last year and which raised money for Action for Children. Ordinarily those collections are used fund flowers being sent to those locally who've been hospitalised in anyway, but the co-ordinator, Audrey Dunstone, said the fund was in such a healthy state that it could miss a year's contributions!

St Peter's church has fourteen people on its parish electoral roll from whom our Parochial Church Council is elected. Our congregations are generally small, though it seems they are

Abbots Morton Parish Council



about the same, pro rata for the local population, as they were fifty years ago. All are always welcome to come to our services and our doors are always open.

The PCC members are: Chair, Rev Richard Thorniley; Churchwarden, Kevin Clarke; Treasurer, Terry Brewster; Secretary, Colin Pemberton; Lynda Payne, Audrey Dunstone, Lynne Pemberton, Peggy Clarke, Patrick Brooke.

Colin Pemberton, Secretary, St Peter Abbots Morton PCC, 7th May 2017

12. To receive a report from the Village Hall Committee

The following report was circulated at the meeting:

The Village Hall Committee worked hard through 2016 to further maintain and improve facilities and substance of the VH as directed by their prior plans. The hall as you can now see is substantially more desirable as a hire venue. Thanks must go to those who attend the meetings and the work done on behalf of all villagers to keep the building an asset to the community. We have had a busy and excellent year. I would specifically like to than Lynne for her tireless organisational skills, particularly in coordinating all the deliveries and workmen associated with the Solarig-funded developments.

The current financial position of the VH remains viable and promising due to monies raised through rental, events, grants and donations. We are becoming a much sought after venue. Income from "hire of Halls & Equip" rose by £530 in 2016 to stand at £3,134. Functions held by the VH committee as fund raisers brought in £2,129 The VH committee's policy of sharing fundraising events with Charities resulted in the equivalent donation of £2,129 to "good causes" (Bloodwise, Acorns Children's Hospice and the Sahkar charity in Leicester. We also had with additional funds from Christmas pudding sales of £250. Significantly the Village Hall was successful in receiving the Solarig community grant of almost £10,000.

The VH continued to host successful fundraising events last year; Band night, Indian Summer, and Imo's Quiz were all a great success.. Thanks to everyone involved for their hard work. The Art group continues to support the hall. The Parish Council uses the hall for meetings and also support the hall financially and again we are grateful. In addition, the hall is used for local elections, Residents Association AGM. Private hires have increased dramatically. We have regular booking for dance groups, children's parties, exercise classes, wakes & weddings!

You will have noticed Considerable improvements to the hall and its grounds. You are sitting on 80 new banqueting chairs, there's a new Belling Range Cooker with induction hob in the kitchen which has been beneficially re-arranged to accommodate it. Re-sanding & lacquering of the hall flooring has restored it to almost new. Outside, the paving slabs at the side and rear have been re-levelled, and maintenance of the grounds and the car park is ongoing. The hall continues to be regularly checked for maintenance issues. We are currently looking at the need to re

Abbots Morton Parish Council



wire/improvement to fuse boxes etc for H&S obligations. Appropriate checks on Fire alarms and Fire extinguishers are carried out.

I would like to thank Tim Jones for again auditing these accounts. The VH income greater than doubled on last year due to increase in rentals and events. We had a surplus of £1,087 at 31st Dec 2016

I wish to thank again the hard work & commitment of all the committee members. This facility is now a "real gem" within AM. Success breeds success and our new customers generally lead to further word of mouth referral and bookings. Unfortunately our longest standing committee member Carole Humphries stepped down this year after 20 years' service and her unwavering commitment to act as Treasurer to AMVH for approximately 18 of those years.

Melanie Betts, Village Hall Chairperson

13. To receive a report from the Neighbourhood Watch

The following report was circulated at the meeting:

The Abbots Morton NW and Smartwater community area is defined and recognised as the whole Parish of Abbots Morton plus Gooms Hill down to no 1, Alcester Road, Radford. This was with reference to the traditional inclusion of lower Gooms Hill residents with Abbots Morton Parish and Church together with more recently, the NW email and reporting circulation. The new Smartwater signage is now in place and includes additional signs adjacent to Dudley's Coaches at the Radford boundary.

The distribution and registration of Smartwater kits will take place at the 2017 Annual Parish Meeting.

Reported cases of fraud have generally continued to rise over the last year. Scams have become widespread especially phone scams by fraudsters pretending they are from the police or their bank. Over the previous year there have been Fraud ticket scams, Spoofed Pay Pal emails, Rental fraud, Internet Provider phone scams, Advance fee fraud, Council tax refund scam, Identity fraud and doctors GP scams. Also Bogus callers such as fake police and council/utility officials, bogus Websites and fake emails.

Please always be vigilant to identify vehicles and any persons that are unknown in the parish, especially if they appear there for no apparent reason. If you see anything out of the ordinary, try to take a photo, such as, a vehicle and number plate. Please report any sightings to the police or myself to pass on together with any photos.

As from 6th April 2016 all dogs must be Micro chipped, owners face a hefty fine if they do not comply.

Abbots Morton Parish Council



Email reports from West Mercia police etc have been circulated during the past year as were any reports received from our local coordinators and residents. The NW email circulation covers 94% of households in the Abbots Morton NW and Smartwater community area

Your Neighbourhood Watch coordinators are;-

Gooms Hill – Pat Ansell 792643

Morton Speart – Vacant

The Low – Vacant

Top Road - Tina Hill 792006

Village - Geoff Barker 792562 (Link Coordinator)

Village – Sarah Dykes 792214 (Deputy Link Coordinator)

Vacancies are open for a NW volunteer at both 'Morton Speart' and 'The Low' to take up the coordinator role.

Please call or email to 'ggbarker3@gmail.com' for details.

Most Home Insurers offer generous discounts off their premiums to members of "Active Neighbourhood watch areas". They consider areas 'Active' where there is a named local coordinator.

If you find yourself and/or family in any circumstances of an emergency or dangerous nature, then you must dial 999 for emergency services. The usual contact number for West Mercia Police is 08457 444 888. Please note the NEW national number to call for reporting non-emergency incidents directly to West Mercia Police is "101". You can still contact Crimestoppers anomalously on 0800 555 111.

Geoff Barker, Abbots Morton NW Link Co-ordinator.

14. Annual Report of the Parish Council by the Chairman and a Statement on the Parish Council accounts for Year ending 31 March 2017 by the Clerk to the Parish Council.

The Chairman delivered his year end report as follows:

As part of the proceedings tonight, as chairman, I am obliged to give you a report on actions and progress of the Parish Council over the past twelve months. Following this, our Parish Clerk, David Hunter-Miller, will provide a statement on the Parish Council accounts and I will invite any members of the public present to ask questions and raise any matters of interest.

In the interests of keeping the evening as short as possible, the Residents' Association, Parochial Church Council, Village Hall Committee and Neighbourhood Watch have all submitted written reports which are available for you to take away if you haven't already done so.

The past twelve months have seen quite a number of personnel changes on the Council. Our long standing Clerk, Nicky Holland, took the decision to retire from her roles both here and at

Abbots Morton Parish Council



Rous Lench Parish Council to spend more time enjoying life with family. I must thank Nicky for all the work she has done over the years and particularly in helping me get to grips with the role of Chairman. The Council Staffing Committee advertised interviewed several candidates for the role and appointed David who seemed an ideal candidate with a number of years experience working for Worcestershire County Council in the Highways department and also dealing with Parish Councils on a number of issues. David has now made the switch to Parish Clerk a full time job by combining his work for Abbots Morton with 3 other, larger, parishes. I am sure he will prove an asset to the village.

The Council currently comprises myself, Clive Holt, Richard Whitlow and William Hill, who was co-opted onto the council during the year. David Ernest, David Smith, Jim O'Boyle and Becky Owen have decided that it was the right time for them to stand down from the Council. Their contributions will all be greatly missed. David Ernest had served on the council for over 10 years, including several as Chairman and David Smith had served over 5 and also did an excellent job as Parish Paths Warden - ensuring the all the footpaths around the Parish were kept in a usable condition by carrying out necessary repairs to stiles and clearing undergrowth etc. As I mentioned previously, this leaves us with three vacancies on the council. I would encourage anyone who is interested in becoming a councillor to speak to David, our Clerk, for an application form. It is quite an enjoyable role and not an onerous one.

We meet around 7 times per year with meetings lasting around 1 to 1.5 hours. I always think it is important to have a good mix of people on a Parish Council - if you have ever disagreed with a decision taken by the Parish Council in the past this is your chance to make sure your opinion is a part of the decision making process in the future. Similarly, if anyone is interested in continuing the work of David Smith as Parish Paths Warden - please get in touch with the Parish Clerk.

The Parish Council continues to use a Lengthsman. This work is funded by the County Council, and the lengthsman's role is to carry out routine maintenance to the verges and ditches around the Parish. I am pleased to report that this work, coupled with the extensive work done by the statutory bodies has ensured that potential flooding risks are minimized and that the run off from fields and and properties is taken away in the most efficient manner.

I would also like to thank the local landowners for their ongoing cooperation ensuring that hedges are cut back, thus make exiting from junctions easier, and we also appreciate them keeping their verges and ditched maintained.

Please advise the Parish Council of any areas of concerns re ditches, drains and hedgerows so that we can monitor any issues.

The Parish Council had 6 Full Council Meetings, 2 staffing committee meetings and 1 extraordinary meeting over the past year covering a number of topics.

Firstly, the Solar Farm at Morton Wood. This has now been constructed and is operational. The Parish Council carried out a village survey and held an open meeting which resulted in residents expressing a desire for the Community Fund of £10,000 to be spent on Village Hall improvements. We are now able to see the results of this in new chairs, refurbished floor and

Abbots Morton Parish Council



external paving and new cooker here in the hall. The Council is still monitoring the site to ensure that all planning conditions are complied with.

There is, also, currently a planning application in process at Wychavon which is still open for comment, on varying one of the Planning conditions. If anyone wishes to raise and questions or making any comments regarding this to the Parish Council, they are free to do so towards the end of this meeting.

Planning Applications. There have only been a couple of other planning applications in the Parish this year, both of which were relatively minor. The Parish Council raised no objections and both have been passed.

Smart Water. Following expressions of interest by residents through the Neighbourhood Watch scheme, the Parish Council purchased the smart water kit for each household in the Parish, some of these have been distributed this evening. They were available at a reduced price to the council and were funded through the precept payable by households in the parish. These kits, together with the roadside signage and household stickers are viewed as a cost effective crime deterrent.

The Precept. This has been maintained unchanged by the Parish Council for the 9th consecutive year. One of the largest outgoings the council has are the repayments on the loan taken out to finance the construction of this Village Hall nearly 20 years ago. This only has 1 year left to run. Although expenditure slightly exceeded income in the last year, The Council is still in a strong position financially. Parish Councils cannot deficit spend and have a duty to hold sufficient reserves to cover any unexpected expenditure. These risks has been identified and the council has built up reserves over a number of years. We are always conscious of the need to provide value to council tax payers whilst also making a valuable contribution to the community where possible and the council continues to make contributions towards village projects.

New Homes Bonus. This is an initiative provided by the government to district councils which Wychavon has passed on to parishes. The Parish has benefited by just over £1,100 per year as a result of the construction of two new dwellings in the parish which were replacements for un-occupied properties. Each award of new homes bonus runs for around 5 years in total. This year the Parish Council made an application for £500 of New Homes Bonus funding to purchase the community defibrillator we have learnt about this evening. There are still some funds available and any resident, group or organisation within the parish may apply through the Parish Council.

Finally, Superfast Broadband. David Ernest first campaigned a number of years ago to get Abbots Morton included in rollout plans and the parish council have been in contact with the Superfast Worcestershire team regarding the site of a new street cabinet which has now been installed near the crossroads. This is in the process of being connected and it is expected that the village will be able to benefit from vastly superior broadband speeds with a new fibre service available in the next few months. I must point out that this will not be an automatic speed increase on the broadband service you currently have. Residents will have to place orders for

Abbots Morton Parish Council



the new service when it becomes available – the Parish Council will help to make people aware when this is available.

To invite the public to raise any matters of interest.

Colin Pemberton (Secretary of St Peter Abbots Morton PCC) provided details of a proposed cycle race around Inkberrow on Wednesday 12th July 2017, this would be in memorial to Graham Knowles.

Colin Pemberton thanked Carole Humphries for her work as treasurer to the Village Hall Committee and for her dedication over the last 20 years. Thanks were also extended to Geoff Barker for his excellent work on the Neighbourhood Watch.

The meeting closed at 9:05PM.

DRAFT

David Hunter-Miller
Clerk and RFO
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