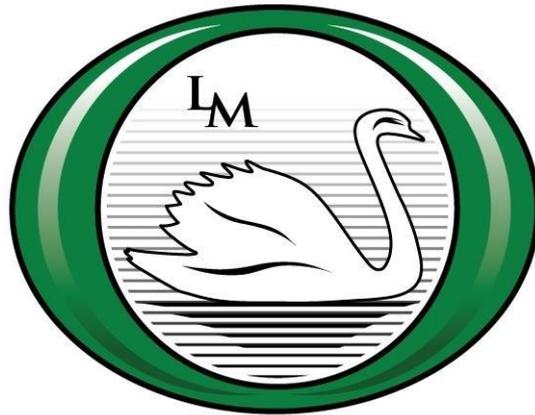


# LITTLE MARLOW PARISH COUNCIL



## ANNUAL REPORT & CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019



## **Chairman's Report 2018/2019**

This is my fourth annual report as Chairman of Little Marlow Parish Council.

The full Parish Council has met 10 times since our last Annual Parish Meeting, including one Extraordinary meeting. The various Parish Council committees have also met regularly. Parish Councillors have represented the Council on numerous outside bodies whose responsibilities and deliberations have a bearing on our Parish. In addition, the Clerk and Councillors have attended training and briefings on a range of issues including Wycombe District's Local Plan, planning more generally and the proposed abolition of the existing County Council and District Councils and their replacement by what we now know will be a single unitary authority.

For reasons which I will come to shortly, we only produced one newsletter last year but we are planning to return to our usual two newsletters this year with the first one coming out soon.

In spite of our relatively small size, we own quite a number of assets. Not surprisingly the Clerk and the Councillors have to devote a fair bit of time and energy to keeping them in good order – there always seems to be some problem with the plumbing or heating or something similar! But we consider ourselves fortunate to have these assets as they do benefit the community and bring in a very welcome income.

Before I give you a brief resume of what the Council has been up to, I would like to say a few words about one of our biggest challenges this year – the departure of our previous clerk, Emma Marsden, who unexpectedly handed in her notice last August. She was head hunted for a new and bigger job in Haddenham Parish Council. I would just like to record our enormous thanks for the excellent service which Emma gave in the four years she was our Clerk. I would also like to thank Deirdre Hansen, the Clerk at Bradenham Parish Council, who very kindly helped us to keep the Council functioning during the three months it took us to find a permanent Clerk. Our new Clerk, Jo Murray, whom I hope you have now all met, started at the end of November. It is already clear that we made an excellent choice. Jo has not been a Clerk before so she has had a very steep learning curve. I would like to thank her for her dedication and for all the hard work she has put in over the last six months to get on top of the many facets of what is actually a very complex job. And for keeping so calm and cheerful no matter what we throw at her!

### **Abbotsbrook Hall**

Abbotsbrook Hall continues to be well used by the community but we would love to see it used even more, particularly at weekends. I would like to thank our Hirings Administrator, Christine Samuels, for dealing with Hall bookings on our behalf, and our caretaker, Peter Samuels, for looking after the hall so well.

### **Pavilion and Recreation Ground**

You will recall that at last year's Parish Meeting, I reported that we were planning to refurbish the Pavilion and that we would be applying to the Public Works Loan Board for a loan of £20,000 to cover the cost. Unfortunately, we were unable to make sufficient progress with the project before Emma left and following her departure, we had to put the project on hold. A few months ago, we dusted off the plans and set up a small Refurbishment Committee to take the project forward. We are now at the stage of drawing up the tender document with the aim of carrying out the refurbishment this summer. There is some good news on the funding front. District Councils are required to pass 15% of Community Infrastructure Levy or CIL receipts arising from developments in their areas to the relevant Town or Parish Council. WDC have made one CIL transfer to us in respect of the development at Westhorpe House with a second one expected shortly which will bring the total to £42,216 with the possibility of a third transfer in October/November. The Council has decided to use the CIL funds to finance the refurbishment project which means that we no longer have to apply for a loan. Turning to the recreation ground, I should like to thank Richard Tedham for all the time and effort he puts into maintaining the ground.

## **Burial Ground**

We have had a small traffic mirror installed on Sheepridge Lane opposite the entrance to the cemetery to make it safer for vehicles to exit onto Sheepridge Lane. Following a discussion about the future capacity of the cemetery, the Council tasked the Burial Ground Committee with coming up with a plan for extending the cemetery into the copse area. It will present its proposals to a Full Council shortly.

## **Roads and road safety**

I mentioned last year that we had obtained matched funding from the Local Area Forum for two road safety projects in 2018/19 – a speed review in Little Marlow village as part of an attempt to have the speed limit reduced from 30mph to 20mph and measures to improve the exit from the Athletics Track onto Westhorpe Lane. Both projects were completed. We have only just received the results of the speed review so the Council has not yet discussed them. The conclusions are that a speed reduction to 20mph is unlikely to produce a further reduction in already low speeds.

## **Allotments**

We still have some empty plots but I am pleased to report that we have a couple of new allotment holders and have recently had a few more expressions of interest.

## **Athletics Track**

The Council is continuing to press WDC to enforce the S106 planning obligations with relation to the cycle paths and footpaths.

## **General**

As a Quality Award Council, we are required to draw up an Action Plan setting out the Parish Council's objectives for the coming year. We reviewed our 2018/19 Action Plan at a recent Council meeting. I have to admit we failed to meet a couple of our objectives. We have therefore carried them over into our Action Plan for 2019/20 which also includes some new objectives. The Plan is on our website and there are a few copies available on the table.

The Parish Council continued to carry out the grass cutting and other work which Bucks County Council devolved to us in 2015. The Council accepted the offer from Bucks CC to renew the Devolved Services contract for another 4 years but this has since been reduced to a year because Bucks CC won't exist after 31 March 2020. I should like to thank our two contractors, Greg Taylor and Steve Rogers, for the sterling work they did last year to maintain the Parish open spaces and the burial ground. Their two year contracts ended earlier this year so we went out to tender for the new contract. The Open Spaces Contract was awarded to Buckland Landscapes and the Burial Ground contract was again awarded to SR Farm Services.

We greatly appreciate all the hard work the volunteers from Coldmoorholm Lane have again put into maintaining the car-park on the Lane. Following the sale of the Spade Oak Gravel Pit site and the field off Coldmoorholme Lane, we continue to be concerned about the future of the Permissive Path around Spade Oak lake which was covered by an agreement between Lafarge and the Parish Council.

This brings me to the issue which has taken up a good deal of the Council's time this year - fly-tipping and particularly the fly-tipping on the approach road to the Spade Oak Gravel Pit site and the Thames Water Sewage works. Removal of waste from private land is the responsibility of the landowner. Although Bucks CC is not responsible for clearing waste on private land, their fly tipping team do investigate and, where possible, prosecute the fly-tippers. The team have undertaken a number of investigations of the fly tipping on the Spade Oak site and are now pursuing a couple of court cases. We are delighted that Bucks CC's waste enforcement officer, David Rounding, has kindly agreed to join us this evening to update us on the work he has been doing and the progress he has made.

Both BCC and the Parish Council have made a number of attempts to contact the landowner, directly as well as through his agent and solicitor to urge him to have the waste cleared and to put security measures in place to prevent further tipping. Most of our e-mails and letters have failed to elicit a response. Following a visit by

travellers in April, the landowner's son came to the site. He did make arrangements to clear away some of the waste but more waste has been dumped since then. We were told that the remaining waste would be cleared last week but nothing has happened - again. We have also approached Thames Water but they say they are unable to take action because they do not own the road. Thames Valley Police have been very helpful. They regularly patrol the area and have spoken to the landowner's son a couple of times to urge him to remove the waste. We seem to have no option as a Parish Council other than to keep plugging away as we have been doing.

We were all greatly saddened by the damage caused and the losses sustained by some of our parishioners as a result of the field fires last July. A number of concerns were raised with the Council following the fires which we followed up with the Fire Brigade and Thames Water.

Turning now to the Local Plan for Wycombe District, the Inspector has submitted his comments on the Plan. He accepted the policies in the Plan relating to the Little Marlow Lakes Country Park and the Westhorpe site, particularly its retention in the Green Belt and non-inclusion among the proposed areas suitable for development. He has not however questioned the policies relating to the proposed development at Hollands Farm in spite of the concerns which the Parish Council and others expressed.

The Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government announced in November that he had decided to implement the proposal to replace Bucks County Council and the four District Councils in Buckinghamshire by one new single unitary district council which we now know will be called Buckinghamshire Council. The new Council will come into being on 1 April 2020. It was agreed that there would not be any local elections in 2019 so the elections for the next Parish and Town Councils will take place on 7 May 2020 at the same time as elections for new Unitary Council. The Secretary of State made it clear that the existing Councils had to engage with the local community, including Town and Parish Councils, during the transition phase. He also indicated that although the Shadow Authority had to have regard to Bucks CC's business case, they did not need to follow it to the letter. We hope that this will mean that Parish Councils will be able to have a say on how some of the proposals affecting them such as devolution, the proposed Community hubs and the creation of five planning authorities are taken forward. On behalf of our Parish Council, I have already been involved in a consultation process being run by the Bucks Association of Local Councils to ensure that the views and concerns of Town and Parish Councils on the operation of the new Unitary Council and particularly its relationship with Town and Parish Councils, is taken into account by the Shadow Authority during the transition phase.

As usual I have gone on for too long. But I would just ask for your indulgence for a few more minutes as I cannot end my report without expressing my appreciation to a few others who have supported me in my role as Chairman. I will start by thanking the chairmen of our two Residents' Associations, Jason Downes and Richard Boas. I would also like to thank County and District Councillor David Watson and District Councillors David Johncock and John Savage for their invaluable advice and for taking up matters on our behalf with both the County and District Councils. But my biggest thanks go to my fellow Parish Councillors for their continued commitment and service to the Parish Council and the wider community. I have already recorded my thanks to Emma Marsden, who was a fantastic Clerk and to Jo Murray who I know is going to be just as fantastic. We could not achieve what we achieve as a Parish Council without each and every one of them.

## ANNUAL ACCOUNTS

Presented by Cllr Acres. Councillor Acres is the Chairman of the budget committee and outlined expenditure in 2018/19.

<b>31<sup>st</sup> March 2019</b>	<b>Income</b>	<b>Expenditure</b>
Abbotsbrook Hall	£8,553	£11,840
Allotments	£730	£978
Burial Ground	£13,605	£7,648
Pavilion / Recreation Ground	£6,640	£8,886
Street Lighting	-	£3,406
Precept	£50,760	-
Devolved Services	£1,767	£5,366
Grants	£0	£0
Administration	£36	£32,722
<b>Total</b>	<b>£82,091</b>	<b>£70,846</b>
<b>Full Council to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2017/8</b>	<b>£93,567</b>	<b>£92,035</b>

### Little Marlow Parish Council Bank Accounts – 31st March 2019

<b>Current Account</b>	£36,000.06
<b>Precept Account</b>	£13,591.42
<b>Petty Cash</b>	£281.12
<b>Reserves Account</b>	£44,130.15

### Planning Report

Unfortunately Cllr Emmett was unable to attend the meeting, the Clerk read the following report:

We had 27 full permissions and 26 tree permissions granted, together with 2 “others” which included signs & gates.

Last year we supported the biggest development locally, being the conversion of Westhorpe House and buildings to 33 quality flats. It is unknown what is happening to complete the development at this time.

We will have to watch carefully the area this side of the A404 because many elements in Marlow town are pushing to extend into our district.

Cllr P Emmett – Planning Chairman

