

## **LITTLE MARLOW PARISH COUNCIL**

### **MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING HELD AT ABBOTSBROOK HALL ON FRIDAY 15<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2011. AND CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

Present were six members of the Parish Council, Mrs G.J. Barclay, Clerk to the Council, County Councillor M. Appleyard, District Councillors R.W. Jennings and J.Savage and 18 members of the public.

Apologies were received from Parish Councillors C.S. Innocent, Mrs V.A. Morton and Mrs R.R. Taylor, and Mrs C. Innocent, C.Cllr D. Watson and Mr S. Dowling.

#### **WELCOME**

Mr Banfield welcomed everyone.

#### **MINUTES OF LAST YEAR'S MEETING**

On the proposal of Mr R. Taylor and seconded by Cllr. P. Emmett, the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Friday 14<sup>th</sup> May 2010 were taken as read and approved.

#### **PRESENTATION OF THE GEOFFREY MOSS MEMORIAL ROSE BOWL**

Mr Banfield presented the Geoffrey Moss memorial Rose Bowl to Mr Richard Boas in recognition of his work for the parish and the Chiltern Society. He is a Paths warden, a member of the Little Marlow Lakes Community Partnership, the Thameside Preservation Trust, chairs a residents association, is a great volunteer litter picker and takes a full and active part in the life of this community to the benefit of us all.

#### **CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT**

I have much pleasure in presenting my 17<sup>th</sup> report as Chairman.

I should first of all explain that the meeting this year is a full month earlier than usual the reasons being the Royal Wedding, Bank Holidays and Easter. Anyway the report is for 11 months only so with a bit of luck it should be shorter than usual!

Looking back over the last year one is struck by how little seems to change in the day to day life of Little Marlow. World events happen and grab our interest for a while but we then return to our daily life in this delightful parish. Some may find this tedious but for most I suspect this is why we live in leafy Buckinghamshire rather than experiencing the excitement of London life.

It does however create difficulties for the report writer who wishes to inject fresh ideas and grab his audience's attention. Most of what I am about to report you will

probably have heard in previous years in one form or other. If you haven't you must be new or possibly your memory is even worse than mine!

We do of course have an election on the 5<sup>th</sup> May for both District and Parish Council plus the referendum. Whilst I am sure I am preaching to the converted this evening I do urge you to make sure you cast your vote.

As this Council comes to the end of our four year term I would like to thank all of the councillors for their hard work, whether it be at meetings, representing Little Marlow on outside bodies or getting involved in working parties I have appreciated your commitment and support. When I see some of the backbiting and general unpleasantness that occurs in some other parishes I thank my lucky stars that it's not like that here.

During the year we were sad to receive the resignation of Cllr. Patrick Walmsley who had moved from the Parish. We were nevertheless delighted to welcome Verity West as a co-opted member. Verity had earned her spurs by playing a significant part in fighting the Football stadium development the previous year and we were pleased she was able to join our ranks.

We are of course lucky to have an efficient and committed clerk such as Gloria. As well as looking after Little Marlow, Gloria also runs the training programme for WDALC, was the prime mover in organising the Little Marlow part of the National Emergency Planning system of which photos are on display and assesses other parish councils who apply for "Quality" status.

We are also fortunate to have a dedicated band of staff, Ron Stokes, Christine Samuels and Alison Bowler and contractors, Greg Taylor, Ivan Smith and Richard Tedham without whose help we could not operate as we do.

I would also like to thank Jane Vincent who is our allotments warden and those chairmen of Residents' Associations who regularly attend our meetings, William Northcroft and Richard Boas.

Turning now to our main areas of activity during the year;

Since the last annual meeting we met on 8 occasions as a full council plus various sub committees and working parties.

### **Abbotsbrook Hall**

As reported last year the floor had finally come to the end of its useful life and complaints of splinters were being received. During last summer we had a new oak floor laid which, as my old aunty used to say, should see me out, hopefully without further cost to the parish.

The outside decoration was also tackled together with some repairs to the rendering and gutters. We have had a few boiler problems due to the super efficient condensing boiler being susceptible to very cold weather and my apologies to any users who have been less than comfortable.

I was rather disappointed to see that the week after the painting had been finished some bright spark decided to stub out what must have been most of a packet of cigarettes on our nice white wall. The strangest problem however that we have had to tackle is the loss on two separate occasions of one of the loo seats, now replaced by a super secure version.

As you will be all too well aware the potholes have returned with a vengeance in the car park but we do hope to tackle these shortly.

### **Pavilion/Recreation ground**

We are pleased that the recreation ground remains the focus for the sporting activities of the village and particularly welcome the good relations we have with the BEJSC and LMCC. A new hiring agreement was signed with the cricket club last summer and we are grateful for the way in which Richard Tedham keeps the grass looking so immaculate.

During the year the remainder of the outside decoration was completed together with resurfacing parts of the car park.

The main work carried out has been the cutting back of the boundary trees at considerable but very necessary expense.

### **Burial Ground**

Following completion of the refurbishment works at the beginning of last year the chapel was at last available for use again. The first letting for other than its funeral use was for Bucks Art Week when it hosted several artists including Jane Vincent and Anna Payne. It was very satisfying to see so many people attracted to the exhibition and indeed the chapel for what was probably their first visit.

I am pleased to say that Jane and three other artists will be at the chapel for Bucks Art Week starting on the 18<sup>th</sup> June.

We have also bought two large industrial style heaters that should make winter use a little more comfortable.

We continue to investigate the possibility of providing a loo but this will be completely dependant upon obtaining external funding as the costs are high.

A quote has been accepted to carry out levelling works to part of the currently unused area to make further space for created remains.

Following the theft of the gate at the Sheepridge Lane end of the cemetery path a new timber gate was acquired and kindly installed by Richard Boas and Richard Mash.

During the year Gloria attended a useful Cemetery Management Course and as is the way of such courses came back with lots of ideas for improvement.

There have also been useful working parties involving both councillors and members of the public which have cleared a number of overgrown areas and generally improved the look of this peaceful area.

My thanks as always to our contractors Greg Taylor and Roger Wicks.

### **Street Lighting**

Just a reminder that lights belonging to the Parish Council have a label showing our phone number. Should you see one not working please tell the Clerk.

### **Roads & Footpaths**

Despite the best efforts of our County Councillors there has been no real improvement in the dire state of our roads during the year. The further appalling winter weather was mainly to blame but also a seeming inability of the County Council's contractors to tackle basic problems such as drainage. Time and again visits have been made but without improvement. My thanks to Mike Appleyard in particular for taking up the challenge and hopefully some improvement may be seen soon.

As has been reported on a previous occasion the Parish Council has taken on a number of responsibilities, mainly to do with road maintenance devolved from the County Council. In this respect I would like to thank Ivan Smith the contractor who maintains the drainage slips in Sheepridge Lane for doing such a good job. The problem of rain water run off is much improved.

We hope that the devolved responsibilities already gained may be added to once the Localism Bill obtains approval and is implemented. There should be many other opportunities for more local control but at present it is a case of wait and see.

Funding from BCC was obtained via the Chepping and Wye Valley Community partnership to extend the Sheepridge Lane footpath from the cemetery footpath back to the A4155. Within the constraints of the land available this has been completed although not to quite the same standard as the remainder of the path.

We have suffered several fly tipping incidents together with more serious dumping following the travellers visit to Westhorpe. I am pleased however that in some cases the culprits have been traced and prosecuted.

In November last we took part in a BCC "walk your paths" initiative by walking and checking the condition of the majority of the parish's paths. The information gained should assist the county to direct maintenance to where it is needed. (if any funds are available of course) My thanks to Richard Boas and Gloria Barclay for organising an enjoyable event.

### **General**

We have tried to keep the residents informed with the distribution of two of our newsletters during the year. I was particularly sorry to see the demise of the church

magazine in which we had a page as this had proved a more frequent way of disseminating messages.

After major successes in the past in 2010 the village managed to achieve a Certificate of Merit in the BKVC. We have entered for 2011 so fingers crossed!

Your Council has representation on a number of outside organisations together with the BALC and WALC at which Little Marlow's affairs are promoted. Representatives attend the Chepping Wye Valley community partnership at which bids are made for available funding mainly on road schemes and other matters of wider interest.

Thanks to the Amenities committee we were once again represented at the fete and I hope you will visit us again this year.

Whilst not part of my report can I also mention the Royal wedding Celebrations on Friday 29<sup>th</sup> between 1.30 and 4.30 on the recreation ground. There will be free food provided free of charge to LM residents courtesy of the Village Amenities Committee.

The Little Marlow Relief in Need charity continues to make payments at Christmas and has funds available to anyone who fits the criteria.

## **FINANCIAL REPORT**

### **Income and Expenditure Account 1<sup>st</sup> April 2010 to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.**

	<b>Expenditure</b>	<b>Income</b>
Abbotsbrook Hall	21,687	8,547
Allotments	1,237	624
Burial Ground	10,597	20,321
Pavilion/Recreation Ground	15,652	4,411
Street Lighting	3,930	-
Agency Work	237	283
Precept	-	39,794
Administration	<u>25,375</u>	<u>336</u>
	78715	74316

Bank Balances at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011.

General a/c	5,309.20
Petty Cash a/c	459.90
Premier Int a/c	<u>21,853.26</u>
	<b>27,622.36</b>

## **PLANNING REPORT**

There have been 57 planning applications for Little Marlow Parish since the last Annual Parish Meeting. As is often the case, the largest number has been for work to

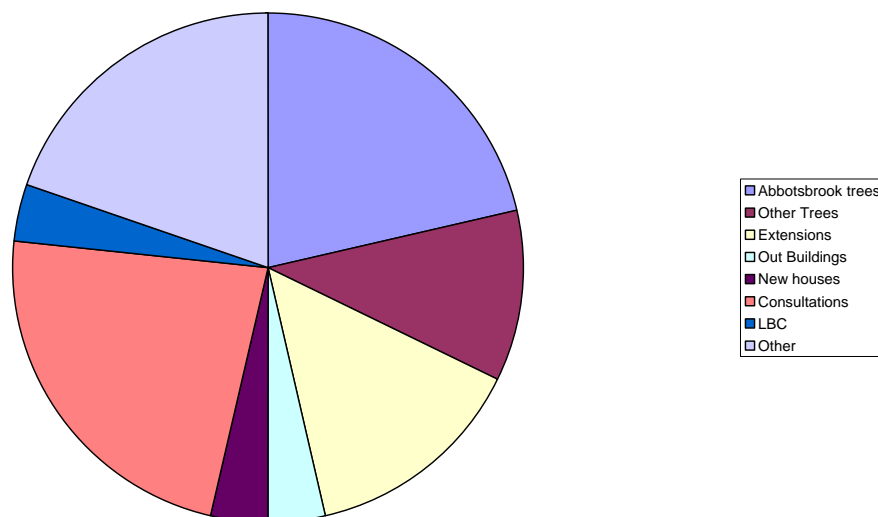
trees in Conservation Areas (mostly Abbotsbrook). There were only 8 for extensions, and two of those were for the same house with slightly different schemes. There were two applications for new houses both of which were refused by Wycombe District Council. One of these has subsequently also been dismissed by an Appeal Inspector.

It is becoming apparent that it is sensible to ask (& pay) for advice before submitting a planning application or to check if a proposal is permitted development. We have seen an increase in applications for Certificates of Permitted Development and have seen several plans withdrawn and resubmitted in a different form after consultation with the planners at Wycombe.

Interestingly we have had several agriculture related applications. It is sometimes difficult to find the balance between encouraging businesses and protecting the beauty of the landscape, but it is certainly good to see land used, whether it is for vineyard or pony paddock or for the more traditional 3 or 4 crop rotations or vegetables. The stables and sheds are what we must expect once traditional barns have been converted to houses.

The Localism Bill has been taking up quite a lot of time in the past few months as we try to keep informed about the Government's new plans. There are certainly going to be more changes in the planning system in the next year. The big question now is whether we want to have a Neighbourhood Plan. As these are supposed to encourage development, in a parish which is all Green Belt or already built up this seems difficult to envisage. The new Parish Council will need to discuss it carefully and involve the residents' Associations.

Planning applications 2010-2011



## **OTHER REPORTS**

### **Rt Hon. Dominic Grieve, MP, QC**

I am afraid I am unable to attend because I shall be up for a long weekend's walking in the Lake District at that time.

The last twelve months have not seen me receive a great deal of correspondence from Little Marlow in relation to specific matters concerning the village. The obvious exception to this continues to be the problems of smells from the Thames Water sewage works. It does seem noticeable however that for whatever reason these seem to have diminished and I wonder therefore whether progress is at last being made by Thames Water to control the smells better.

I am ready to continue to do battle on this issue to help the Parish Council and local residents as much as I can. I will be in touch with you and with the Chairman of the PCC about how we can take this forward in the coming months.

Other concerns raised with me have been about the government's plans to sell off woodland which as you know are currently under revision, concerns about litter and a suggestion that there should be CCTV installed to improve safety and cut crime. This latter point is one which I am perfectly happy to take forward although the question of funding does arise and in view of the nature of the community in Little Marlow it is not clear to me where the problem areas might be where this would be helpful. I continue to meet on a quarterly basis with Chief Superintendent Gilbert Houalla at Wycombe Police Station and if there are problems in relation to Little Marlow they come up for discussion then. I have to say in the last twelve months I cannot recall a Little Marlow issue being raised although Bourne End does feature quite frequently in our discussions and this may well have an impact on the Abbotsbrook area. Then again if local residents do have a problem in relation to concerns about crime rates then if they would write in to me I could take the matter up directly.

As you will be aware the localism bill is currently going through Parliament. Once it is on the statute book it does offer opportunity for profound changes in the way in which local communities run themselves and this is also linked to the development of the idea of the Big Society which is really the facilitation by government of the things which local communities are already doing very well when they are left to their own devices to cooperate for the common good! Reducing regulation and unnecessary paperwork are key priorities in this area. So far as the localism bill is concerned it ought to offer opportunities for a village community like Little Marlow to have greater control over planning and indeed whether it wants key worker housing for example built locally.

As I am now also the Member of Parliament for Marlow I have been holding some surgeries in Marlow as well as in Beaconsfield if that's more convenient for local residents wanting to come and see me. The dates on which Marlow surgeries are being organised can be obtained from my Parliamentary Office on 0207 219 6220.

I trust that the meeting this evening goes well. If there are any questions arising from it for me I will be happy to answer them directly to those who raised them and copy you in on my response.

**Mr R. Taylor**

Mr Taylor thanked the Chairman for his hard work for the Parish.

Chairman