

LITTLE MARLOW PARISH COUNCIL

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING AT ABBOTSBROOK HALL FROM 8PM ON FRIDAY 88th MAY 2025 AND CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT

Present:	Cllr P Emmett – Vice Chairman Cllr A Crabtree Cllr S Kershaw Cllr J Downes Cllr R Start Cllr V Moreton Cllr P Ward Jennie Phenix - Clerk Buckinghamshire Council (BC) Cllr M Turner Dallas Banco – Chair of Residents Association Members of the public
----------	---

APM26/01

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

APM26/02

2. Apologies for Absence

MP Joy Morrissey, Cllr K Acres (LMPC Chair), Verity West (Wild Marlow)

APM26/03

3. Minutes of previous meetings held on Friday 9th May 2025

The Minutes of the previous meetings were **RESOLVED**, and signed by the Vice-Chairman.

APM26/04

4. Retirement Presentation to Mrs Christine Samuels

Tonight we would like to take a moment to recognise the long standing contribution Mrs Christine Samuels has made to running this Abbotsbrook Hall over the last 40 years, prior to her retirement earlier this year. When Mrs Samuels first started working for Little Marlow Parish Council you could buy a five bedroomed house with a stream in Abbotsbrook for £250,000.

The longstanding contribution that the Hall has made as a hub of the local community over decades is often underestimated. Brownies and Rainbows met here for years. Bourne End Bridge Club started playing here in 1977 and Abbotsbrook Bridge Club has been going since the early 1990's. Abbotsbrook Pre-school started in 1994 (with a play group before that). The last recorded jumble sale was in 1986 held by a local WI and in 1991 an Opalin Sky Blue hen was voted best in the Bucks and Berks Budgie Association Annual Show held here. Mercifully 'Work That Body' in 1987 has now been superseded by Pilates, Yoga and Marial Arts. The Coldmoorholme Lane Residents Association has held annual meetings here since it started 56 years ago. And of course Abbotsbrook Hall has hosted many and varied family gatherings to celebrate various milestones across the years.

The fact that we have achieved so many repeat bookings over so many years is down to Mrs Samuels (helped by her husband Peter Samuels) availability, attention to detail and friendly help to hirers. Nobody has any recollection of anything ever going wrong. So many thanks for that.

On behalf of Little Marlow Parish Council I would like to ask Mrs Samuels to accept this token of our gratitude.

APM26/05

5. Geoffrey Moss Memorial Bowl Rose Bowl Presentation by the Cllr Sam Kershaw

Ladies and gentlemen, it is a great honour and privilege to announce this year's winner of the Geoffrey Moss Rose Bowl.

The award is for a local resident who, in the opinion of the Parish Council, has given outstanding service to the community of Little Marlow.

Our community benefits from living in a beautiful part of Buckinghamshire, nestled between the Chilterns and the Thames with lakes, woodland and green open spaces on our doorstep. Our wellbeing is deeply rooted in this beautiful natural environment. So, in 2021, when it became threatened by the film studio development, we were all deeply concerned and an air of despondency spread across the community. But cometh the hour, cometh the man and that man was Richard Sherwin.

Richard gathered together a group of like-minded individuals and launched a campaign to fight the development, protect the environment and defend the community. His unflagging energy, boundless enthusiasm and sheer force of will built "Save Marlow's Greenbelt" into a significant campaigning force. SMG raised awareness, raised over £65,000 and raised a fair few pints along the way. Under Richard's leadership, SMG fought the developers at every turn – at planning meetings, at a public inquiry, in the media and on the street. It was a magnificent effort.

Whilst we ultimately lost due to an asinine decision by the secretary of state, SMG helped delay things for over two and half years – hopefully long enough for potential backers to recognise that the film studio bubble has well and truly burst and the development is uninventable. We shall see.

But as well as stepping up to defend our community, this year's winner has strengthened it. There is nothing like a common enemy to draw people together. But a catalyst is needed to make it happen. Richard was our catalyst.

So, for his huge efforts in both protecting and strengthening the community of Little Marlow, I am delighted to present this year's Geoffrey Moss Rose Bowl to Mr. Richard Sherwin.

APM26/06

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

Presented by Vice-Chairman Phil Emmett on behalf of Cllr K Acres, Chairman of the Parish Council

The full Parish Council has met eight times since our last Annual Parish Meeting in May 2025 and the Parish Council committees have met regularly.

Parish Councillors have represented the Council on various outside bodies and at civic occasions throughout the year.

The work undertaken and the money spent by the Parish Council is all carefully (and transparently) recorded on our website. You can find out all about our income and expenditure by visiting our website - there are no secrets in Little Marlow.

All 9 seats on the Council are currently filled but to find out more about the work we do please come to any of our meetings.

Following the Bucks Council elections (after boundary re-organisation to cut the total number of Bucks Councillors) Little Marlow has now been included in Chiltern Villages Ward rather than Flackwell Heath, Little Marlow and Marlow South East and we welcomed Cllr Mark Turner as our Bucks Councillor. We are also pleased that our Parish Cllr Anna Crabtree was elected as a Bucks Councillor for Marlow.

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.

The Assets and Environment committee does what it says on the tin and covers the following areas:

Pavilion/Recreation Ground

Fingers crossed that the rabbit population remains reasonably controlled and we have been able to host both Bourne End Junior Football Team and Little Marlow Cricket Club this year. The Pavilion continues to host the pre-school and family/childrens parties. A Line Dancing class has started in the Pavilion along with the established Pilates and Yoga classes.

The new equipment shed is in use and extra topsoil generated from building it has been used to level parts of the cemetery. The trees at the recreation ground have been seriously coppiced and while they look very reduced now they are healthier long term.

Abbotsbrook Hall

The hall continues to host the Abbotsbrook Pre-school, Bridge sessions and Yoga and Martial Arts classes and hosts 11 plus tuition sessions. We just have a few slots left for summer weekends and the school holidays. We have had another try at improving the carpark surface but have been hampered by extremely wet weather. We have contracted to start decorating the hall inside and out shortly.

Burial Ground

Work continues on improving our beautiful Cemetery and we have planted new hedging but there is still much to do. The cemetery is well worth a visit and is blessed with beautiful snowdrops, bluebells and daffodils as well as bird, bee and bat boxes courtesy of Wild Marlow. We have begun the long process of digitally mapping and recording the cemetery which will make our burial records more accessible to all. We are still waiting to hear from the Commonwealth Graves Commission to recognise the unmarked burial plot of Joseph Jeremiah Smith who committed suicide at Pigeon Farm in 1919 as a result of post traumatic stress following severe injuries in the war. In the last year there have been 12 ashes internments and 10 full body burials.

Coldmoorholme Lane Car park

This carpark is leased on a long term lease by the Parish Council from Bucks Council. 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.

Dog Bins

The Parish Council has six dog bins throughout the Parish which are well used. We have an ongoing problem in the summer when the carpark bin gets full (with all sorts of litter) and people then leave assorted rubbish nearby. Every summer weekend we have to pay to clear up this fly tipping.

Allotments

The allotments on Chapman Lane are now fully occupied and productive.

Environment

The Parish Council continues to lobby for the protection of our Greenbelt which is under threat of becoming 'Greybelt'. We are also working with Marlow Film Studios to try to mitigate the impact of their development proposals on local people. It remains to be seen as to what timescale we are operating in. The LED street lighting seems to be running reliably and we are making considerable savings on energy costs. We have recently had the VAS (Vehicle Activated Sign) on Sheepridge Lane mended and hopefully it will give another ten years' service.

The Parish Council have a contractor to carry out grass and hedge cutting which the then Buckinghamshire County Council devolved to us in 2015. The Devolved services contract was rolled over for a further year until March 2027 but it remains to be seen what will happen in the end.

I would like to end by saying a few thankyou's. 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 Dallas Banfield. Martin Braint and all his helpers run a fabulous summer fete on the recreation ground on August Bank Holiday Monday and are always grateful for more volunteers to help.

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 and 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...

I would particularly like to thank our Parish Clerk Jennie Phenix who has been with us since March 2024. Her enthusiasm and organisational skills have made such a difference to the quality of services that the Parish delivers and she has made it a pleasure for councillors and local residents to work with her.

My 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.

I would now like to ask Cllr Anna Crabtree to give you a financial report.

APM26/07

7. Financial Report

year ended 31st March 2026

Presented by Councillor Anna Crabtree, Chair of the Budget Committee.

If you look at copies of our Annual Accounts Summary, you will see that our income and expenditure were not hugely different from one year to the next.

Expenditure at Abbotsbrook Hall was lower in the year to March 2026 than before because we are gearing up for a wider refurbishment in the coming months. This means fewer small maintenance jobs have happened recently and in the Earmarked Reserves, you can see some extra money set aside ready for these works, including the Community Infrastructure Levy.

Chairman's initials4

We have been pressing ahead with some bigger tasks at the Burial Ground as well. Not just continuing to make the ground ready for burials down towards Sheepridge Lane (expanding the parking area, planting new hedging and seeding the new grass area), but also starting quite a major new digitisation of our old burial records. This is helping to meet our requirements for maintaining records and also save the clerk time in the future when assisting members of the public in their ancestry or local history searches.

The initial mapping process has been quite expensive and a lot of work, but hopefully the improved system will be beneficial going forwards. I'd like to take this opportunity to say thank you to Jennie for all the effort she has put into sorting out the old records and her dedication to making sure the job is done properly. Costs at the Recreation Ground have been significantly lower this year than last, now that the Equipment Storage shed is finished. This year was a pollarding year for the trees around the cricket field, so that has been our largest cost at the Recreation Ground recently.

Whilst the move to LED street lighting is proving hugely successful and cost efficient, continuing to keep our electricity costs low, we decided we would be able to freeze our Parish Precept in the coming year. The tax we all pay to the Parish went up by 3% last year but in the coming year, your Council Tax bill should have reflected a static charge from the Parish for the coming year.

The Grants income showing in 2025/26 relates entirely to CIL (the Community Infrastructure Levy) and is allowing us to reinvest in community assets like this hall.

Last year I spoke about how our Administration costs were high due to the professional support we had to buy in to help us challenge the Marlow Film Studio development. Sadly, we all now know that the site near Westhorpe was granted planning permission back in November by the Secretary of State. Being involved in the Planning Inquiry has helped the parish though, because we are now guaranteed a place at the table for Community Liaison Meetings and are therefore able to represent residents better as the development progresses.

With the new Bucks Local Plan being drafted this year, however, the new Greenbelt Assessment, housing allocations across the county and creation of the new concept of Greybelt in planning, are all major causes for concern. The Parish Council have therefore taken the decision to put £10,000 into an Earmarked Reserve for planning costs, to give us flexibility in the future to stand up for our local patch if needed. If no planning issues emerge, we would be free to reallocate this in the future.

We are still holding between 8 & 9 months of operating costs in our cash and investments, which we are managing carefully to maximise our interest return without taking any unnecessary financial risks.

2024/25	Income	Expenditure
Abbotsbrook Hall	£17,119	£23,390
Allotments	£2,635	£634

Burial Ground	£26,750	£17,517
Pavilion / Recreation Ground	£8,515	£66,516
Street Lighting	-	£4,612
Precept	£57,131	-
Devolved Services	£2,662	£3,207
Grants	-	-
Administration	£2,571	£70,054
Subtotal	£117,383	£185,930
Full Council to 31st March 2025	Deficit	(£68,547)
Transfer from earmarked reserves		£38,955
Movement from General Reserve	Deficit	(£29,592)

2025/26	Income	Expenditure
Abbotsbrook Hall	£18,239	£14,691
Allotments	£1,962	£1,361
Burial Ground	£26,702	£28,632
Pavilion / Recreation Ground	£9,849	£19,511
Street Lighting	-	£1,249
Precept	£58,845	-
Devolved Services	£2,784	£5,006
Grants	£16,354	-
Administration	£2,546	£61,356
Subtotal	£137,281	£131,856
Full Council to 31st March 2026	Surplus	£5,425
Net transfer to earmarked reserves		(£19,758)
Movement from General Reserve	Deficit	(£14,333)

Little Marlow Parish Council Bank Accounts at 31st March 2026

	2025	2026
Current account	£10,993	£4,674
Reserves account	£11,100	£272
High interest account	£60,945	£37,186
Investment account	-	£50,000
Total	£83,038	£92,132

Little Marlow Parish Council Earmarked Reserves at 31st March 2026

Abbotsbrook refurbishment	£2,000
---------------------------	--------

Burial ground	£3,513
Planning	£10,000
Road safety	£1,339
Tree works	£2,430
Environmental projects	£1,000
Green energy projects	£1,850
Pathway maintenance	£2,000
Elections provision	£1,645
Signage	£824
CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy)	£16,354
Total Earmarked Reserves	£42,955

APM26/08

8. Planning Report 2025/26

Presented by Cllr P Emmett, Chairman of the Parish Council

LMPC were requested by Buckinghamshire Council (BC) to comment on 67 Planning Applications during the year, of which 32 were for buildings and 35 for trees (of which almost all were approved) slightly down from last year when 74 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.

APM26/09

9. Other Reports

i) Thames Valley Police

PC Chris Bis kindly attended to deliver a report on crime in Little Marlow Parish. This report was given earlier in the agenda between items 3 and 4.

Key findings are that Since 1st April 2025, there have been 31 varying reports made to police. These include reports concerning;

Action Fraud, ASB, Assault with injury, Assistance to other agencies [SCAS / Fire], Criminal Damage & Theft. Other less notable reports include Road related incidents, Bail offences, concern for safety, Making off without payment and Suspicious incidents.

It was noted that Little Marlow Parish is a very safe area.

Chairman's initials7

ii) Cllr Mark Turner (Buckinghamshire Council)

I've been asked to give a brief update on three issues affecting Little Marlow: Thames Water, Planning Enforcement, and the SANG proposal at Little Marlow Lakes Country Park.

Thames Water

Thames Water's challenges—pollution, ageing infrastructure, and financial instability—affect every community along the Thames. Last year I set up the Town and Parish Councils River Partnership, bringing together all councils along the Bucks stretch to work with Thames Water, the Environment Agency, MPs, and river groups. LMSTWLC is restarting shortly, thanks to Sam Kershaw and the Parish Council. Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works faces the same pressures as the wider network: population growth, old assets, and storm overflows. Nationally, 60% of water mains pre-date 1981, and 13% are over 100 years old, which contributes to pollution incidents.

However, Little Marlow is also part of Thames Water's long-term upgrade programme for 2025–2035, including increased treatment capacity, storm-overflow reduction, and new phosphorus-removal technology—essential to meet the Environmental Targets (Water) Regulations 2024.

Government plans commit £11bn for storm-overflow improvements and £5bn for treatment upgrades across England. These investments are mandatory if Thames Water is to meet new binding nutrient-reduction targets.

The Water (Special Measures) Act 2025 and the strengthened Special Administration Regime now ensure that if Thames Water fails, investors—not taxpayers—bear the cost. The new integrated water regulator, recommended by the Cunliffe Commission, will replace fragmented oversight and bring tougher, more transparent regulation.

Agriculture, responsible for around 40% of river pollution, will now fall under a single pollution framework. Citizen science still needs stronger recognition, but overall, we are finally seeing a regulatory system capable of driving real improvement.

Planning Enforcement

Buckinghamshire Council has statutory powers under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 to address breaches of planning control. Tools include Planning Contravention Notices, Enforcement Notices, Stop Notices, Section 215 Notices, prosecution, and Direct Action.

At Spade Oak / Coldmoorholme Lane, an Article 4 Direction removes permitted development rights. Unauthorised fencing was erected, followed by a Section 215 Notice, which has not been complied with. The site is now in active breach and in criminal breach of the Notice.

The Council now has two main options:

- Prosecution — unlimited fines and a criminal record.
- Direct Action — the Council removes the works and recovers costs, secured as a land charge.

Bailiffs can be used only for debt recovery, not planning enforcement. The Council may also seek an injunction, the strongest tool available.

The powers exist—the question is how the Council chooses to use them.

SANG at Little Marlow

The proposed Suitable Alternative Natural Greenspace (SANG) for Little Marlow Lakes Country Park has divided opinion. It was approved by the Strategic Sites Committee to offset visitor pressure from new housing in Bourne End and reduce impacts on Burnham Beeches SAC.

A key concern is the person-per-hectare-per-hour measure. The Country Park already exceeds Natural England's indicative threshold. Natural England argues these are guidelines and that management plans can compensate, but many residents find this difficult to reconcile with the site's already heavy use.

There are also concerns about the SANG's proximity to the Little Marlow Sewage Treatment Works, and whether encouraging more visitors near sensitive habitats is appropriate.

Supporters believe SANG designation will bring investment, better paths, and clearer management. Opponents fear it is primarily a mechanism to unlock housing development and may harm the Country Park's rare birdlife—particularly at the Spit.

The approval is not the end of the process. We must ensure ongoing monitoring, especially of bird species, and hold Natural England and Buckinghamshire Council accountable for the site's long-term protection.

APM26/10

11. Other Matters

There being no other matters arising the meeting closed for refreshments at 9pm.

Signed:
Chairman of the Council

Date: