



Abbotts Ann Parish Assembly

Held at the Pavilion, Bulbery on Thursday 26th May at 19:00

Present:

Councillor Howard (Chairman), Councillor Jones (Vice Chair) and Councillor Cole.
Borough Councillor Maureen Flood, Borough Councillor David Coole & Hampshire County Councillor David Drew & nine members of the public.

Apologies for absence:

Apologies for absence were received and accepted from Councillor Jordan and Councillor Wallis.

1. Introduction and welcome by the Parish Council Chairman, Councillor Howard.

Councillor Howard welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologised for the short notice due to the acceptance of Chairman position.

The works completed within the Pavilion were noted. Councillor Howard provided the following report:

As your Parish Council Chairman of a whole three weeks, it falls to me to welcome you all to this Parish Assembly. It has rather crept up on us as it is our first 'in person' Assembly and until I did some research I for one was not really aware of its significance.

So why do we hold one? - There can be, and often is, confusion between the Annual Parish Meeting and the Annual Parish Council Meeting. All Town and Parish Councils throughout England are required by law to hold an Annual Parish Meeting, which must take place between 1 March and the 1 June (inclusive).

The purpose of the meeting is to give the Parish Council, and other local organisations an opportunity to let local residents know what they have been doing over the past year. The meeting is also an opportunity for electors to have a say on anything they consider valuable to the people of the Parish.

Any registered elector may ask a question of the Council which will usually be answered by the Chair, the Clerk to the Council, or a designated Councillor. An elector may also make a suggestion and comment on anything pertinent to the residents of the Parish. **This will be welcomed and is the whole purpose of the meeting.**

Agenda Item 2 – states – Reports by Portfolio Holders.

As a completely new Council in 2019 members held a workshop to identify all topics which might be within the remit of our Parish Council, grouped then in to Portfolios, which have been updated from time to time. Whilst understanding that portfolio holders were not essential at our level of local government, and indeed had no legal authority, portfolio holders and assists were agreed for each portfolio. The lead for each portfolio then produced the proposed responsibilities for that portfolio for the approval of the Council and the Clerk.

The Clerk had to agree to the proposals. As had been made clear at the start of the HALC course held for all new councillors that whilst councillors are decision makers in formal meetings and take a wider, strategic view of matters within their remit the Clerk is the Council's Responsible Officer and that implementation of all decisions is, in law, the responsibility of the Clerk.



The role of portfolio holders is therefore, when requested by the Clerk and as approved at a Council meeting, to work with the Clerk on all matters within their portfolio. This could include ensuring the efficient operation of council owned or managed facilities, developing or updating Regulations, applying for grants, supervising contractors and so on.

Portfolio Holders should be prepared to become points of contact on Parish matter which come under their portfolio for parishioners and external agencies. They should not as individuals give advice on these matters, but should ensure that suggestions or complaints are addressed by the Parish Clerk or, if necessary, the Council and that those concerned are advised of the outcome.

Before letting my fellow councillors and yourselves loose I will just make 2 points -

Firstly, to produce a Budget which even nearly balanced was difficult, even after increasing the Parish precept by 10%. That was before our maintenance contractor chose not to renew this April and tenders for the task were at least £4,000 higher.

So what is the problem you might ask, you managed before? Well actually we didn't it only looked as though we did! When Burghclere Down estate was transferred out of the Parish the Precept fell by over £4000 per year. Brian Sims cut Bulbery sports field grass for many years and more recently The Green voluntarily, charging us only for his fuel. With no-one willing to take it on, those costs went up nearly £2000 per year.

Also, when any major project is slow to come to fruition and the funding for it needs to slip from one financial year to the next it should be put into an item known as Ear Marked Reserves (EMR). Otherwise, the general reserves appear higher than they should and, to councillors, available for them to use to balance the budget, resulting in funding for a given project being inadequate when that project actually comes to fruition. A case in point is the Churchyard footpaths where the funding was spread over several years but as the project slipped the monies were just put into the general reserves and spent, leaving a large budget entry for this year for this project and one for refurbishing the Burial Ground fence, a project which was put on hold whilst we try to get a grant for it.

This needed some hard decisions. Our footpaths will be scruffy this coming year, especially the more rural ones; at a saving of some £3500. So, parishioners with footpaths by their property are encouraged to keep them tidy. Also, unless money can be found from within the existing budget, or by the Clerk and portfolio holder(s) being able to get funds from elsewhere, there will not be any grants to parish organisations in this financial year. Sorry, but there is no 'Magic money Tree'.

Secondly, your Council needs the 'Time and Talents' of more people willing to serve our Parish. We have had a vacancy for a councillor for months and half of the current ones hold down demanding jobs which involve them in long hours and quite a lot of traveling. Can you help?

Councillor Gordon Howard

2. Reports by Portfolio Holders.

Councillor Andy Jordan provided the following speaking notes due to his absence:

1. Review of last 12 months.



2. Chair for 3-years but ask Cllrs not to consider me as Chair for final year due to work commitments
3. An eventful 12-months.
4. Single greatest success was the appointment of a new Clerk, with no previous experience in local government, who in the last 12-months has delivered an excellent standard of service and extensive support to Cllrs. Matured in post, now been recruited by second Parish Council.
5. Grant for new sports pavilion: major step forward but now we need to come up with a coherent fund-raising plan to match fund grant from TVBC. Need to encourage action in this space or we will lose a great opportunity improve community infrastructure that benefits all.
6. Rationalisation of sports field equipment – Cllr Chris Wallis – sale of equipment raising several £k.
7. Loss of Cllrs for personal reasons. 2 lost and replaced by co-option. Further resignation but no volunteer's forthcoming. Cannot deliver a service if members if the community will not step forward to assume posts.
8. AAPC finances:
 - a. Considerable time and effort setting a balanced budget to ensure service delivery across all the portfolio areas.
 - b. Utilised the new accounting system – take some getting used too but is starting to add the granularity to our accounting system that we needed / wanted.
 - c. Set budget and precept agreed with TVBC.
 - d. Budget thrown into chaos with a 120% increase in tender prices for grounds maintenance services. Scale of prices increases was complete unforeseen. Limited ability to raid General Reserve and any significant movement of funds will need to be addressed via next year's budget.
 - e. Impact downstream will be a need to significantly increase the precept demand for FY 23/24 to recoup additional unforeseen expenditure this year and cater for higher operating costs going forward.
9. Review of portfolios; essentially refined delivery model.

Pan Parish Forum

10. A great idea but not able to have the impact that was envisaged.
11. I stated quiet clearly for the record in a written submission at the AGM that SW were not undertaking any additional works nor had they allocated any additional funds (Capex / Opex) to undertake additional works that would resolve the considerable problems surrounding



waste water and sewage.

12. The current project is more a PR exercise that has little or no effect for any areas downstream of where the work has been carried out; overpumping will persist as will the pollution of the Pill Hill Brook.
13. If SW are serious about addressing the crippling impact of water ingress to their infrastructure under Abbotts Ann, then they need to:
 - a. conduct a **full Electro Scan and CCTV survey of the entire network to establish its condition, identify areas that require repair, maintenance or replacement and then devise a scheme of works to address the issues identified.**
 - b. Only following a full survey and the identification of the full extent of their network should SW then come to us with a report on the condition of their infrastructure and their proposals for targeted interventions to repair and maintain the network going forward.
14. Additionally, please do not forget the huge disruption to members of our community on Foundry Road who have to endure 24/7 tanker pumping operations during damp periods.
15. Time as Chair - Thank Councillors for their support. Apologies for having to step down – work commitments simply mean cannot devote the time the appointment demands.

Amenities Report – 26th May 2022

Councillor Gordon Howard is portfolio lead for The Burial Ground and Churchyard. With the support of Ray Lucas, two large projects have been progressing, rather slowly. Six contractors contacted to quote for refurbishing the churchyard footpaths, with no response. There has been only one response on refurbishing the Burial Ground fence. However, TVBC have advised that they would accept a grant application as no forthcoming contractors. In summary, both projects cannot be progressed due to lack of contractors.

Beth Deacon asked whether the footpaths are likely to be cut soon. Councillor Howard advised that the Contractors are due to cut the footpaths soon.

Graham Platford (Church Warden) – Provided an overview of action he has taken and will be providing Councillor Coole with a letter summarising his actions.

Development & Infrastructure Report – 26th May 2022

Councillor Cole provided the following report:

I joined the Parish Council in February 2022. My portfolio is development and infrastructure. This includes:

- Planning
- Affordable housing
- Sustainable growth
- Highways and pavements
- Traffic
- Pan Parish Forum (Southern Water)



I have no pecuniary interests that pertain to my role on the council, but I have declared that I am a member of the Abbots Ann Community Land Trust board.

My main focus at the present time is the sewerage and water issues that the parish continues to face particularly the hill from Monxton, Mill Lane, Little Ann Bridge and Foundry Road. The Abbots Ann Parish Council is a member of the Pan Parish Forum with all the other parish councils to liaise with Southern Water to bring pressure to bear and to try to hold them to account.

Southern Water assert that the sewerage system is large enough to cope with current demands on it, but it is water getting into the pipes that causes the problems further upstream. Another cause of the problems is what they call “rag” and is caused when people flush nappies, wet wipes and use the super cushioned toilet paper.

They have an ongoing programme of lining the pipes to prevent water getting in and they’ve made quite some progress with this. But is not clear whether the work that’s been done and is being planned will address the issues that our parish faces.

At the meeting with Southern Water’s senior management on 17 May, I raised the point that there is nothing in their implementation plan that specifically relates to Abbots Ann parish. Because **Southern Water do not know where the problems are in their infrastructure under Abbots Ann**, I also requested that they undertake a survey of the whole network to establish its condition so that they can identify areas that need **repair, maintenance or replacement and then devise a scheme of works to address the issues identified.**

At this same meeting, Southern Water explained that they’re looking at other options as well as the ongoing pipe lining, including things like slowing the flow and creating a wetland. Each option has a different profile of pros and cons, and most of them will take many years to achieve.

You will have seen from Cllr Jordan’s message in the last parish magazine that the “jury is out” in relation to how much impact the Pan Parish Forum is having on Southern Water’s addressing of the issues with their infrastructure. I have to say that I share his concerns, but I will ensure that we lobby as hard as we can on getting them to address the issues that Abbots Ann faces. I am also giving consideration to how best to escalate our concerns. I’ll keep you posted.

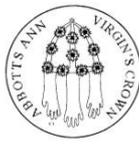
In other news, a number of people in the village have raised with me the possibility of having a community charging point for electric vehicles, and I brought a discussion paper to the council on this. One other parish council in Hampshire has been involved in the establishment of a charging point. Discussions are still at very early stage in Abbots Ann and I will be collaborating with Cllr Schneeberger on whether there’s a case for taking this forward including looking at whether there’s community support for such a scheme.

Councillor Cole

No questions were presented to Councillor Cole.

Environment Portfolio Report – 26th May 2022

Councillor Jones started her report by highlighting the areas that the environment portfolio covered and advised that Councillor Schneeberger has a lot of knowledge and expertise within the Climate Change aspect.



Maintenance Contract

Throughout the year Abbotts Ann Parish Council have continued to maintain footpaths and green open spaces in the village in support of the community's wellbeing and mental health. The four main areas requiring grounds maintenance are the Churchyard and Burial Ground, the War Memorial Hall, the Green and the Sports Field. The contract to cut the Green and Sports Field continues to be done by TVBC.

Grounds maintenance for the footpaths, Church Yard/Burial Ground and the War Memorial Hall was undertaken by Larkstel who informed us in early February that they were no longer able to continue with the Abbotts Ann contract after the end of March and were not prepared to go to tender for the new contract. This left Abbotts Ann Parish Council with less than two months to find a replacement.

The contract and invitation to tender were reviewed at the next Parish Council Meeting on the 3rd of March and then issued to six potential contractors on 8th March. As only two quotes had been received by the next Parish Meeting on 7th April the item was deferred whilst the Clerk chased outstanding contractors. When they declined, eventually, it was decided to follow up the remaining two contractors.

By May it was decided to go ahead with the lower tender from Scandor which was still significantly above the amount that the Parish Council had budgeted for. By 3rd May the first month of the contract had already been missed and everything was growing fast. Councillor Howard agreed to meet with Scandor's representative and was successful in negotiating a reduction in their quote for less frequent cuts of the footpaths. The revised quote and changes to the contract were agreed unanimously at an Extraordinary Meeting held later that day. On 12th May Scandor started working on the areas that needed it most, the Church Yard and the War Memorial Hall.

The Green

Three new benches have been installed on the Green. A new DDA compliant gate has replaced the old kissing gate on the north west entrance to the Green.

The Copse has been tidied up and levelled and a local resident has volunteered to maintain it. It is now open for children to play safely there.

Wildflower Meadow

The Wildflower Meadow continues to be maintained by two volunteers from the village who strive to keep it looking tidy and full of interest. A number of new wildflowers have appeared this year, as pictured below.





4.



5.



1. Ladies Smock 2. Vetch 3. Red Campion & Oxeye Daisy 4. Star of Bethlehem 5. Lesser Stitchwort

Community Orchard

The Community Orchard was planted by volunteers from the village on Saturday 26th March in time to mark the Queen's forthcoming Platinum Jubilee celebrations on 2-5th June.

My thanks go to everyone who helped to plant the orchard and especially those who made donations which will help pay for the trees and their maintenance for many years to come. The majority of fruit trees are thriving thanks to the volunteers who maintain them and in particular the assistance of a volunteer who lives nearby and is happy to supply water on a regular basis.

Earlier in spring the fruit trees provided a pretty blossom display and small fruit can now be seen on some of the trees. Two of the Victoria Plum trees have canker and have now been dug up. The supplier has refunded the cost which will go back into the maintenance fund until we are able to replace the trees in the autumn. Finally, it is planned that there will be a sign to provide more information and some background about the planting of the Community Orchard.

Councillor Jones

No questions were presented to Councillor Jones.

Bulbery Sportsfield Update, provided by Kate Bone and Beth Deacon on behalf of Councillor Wallis

As you can see, things are definitely looking better up here at the Bulbery Sportsfield pavilion! The Abbots Ann Sports Field Group (AASFG), on behalf of the Parish Council and the Friends of the Abbots Ann Sports Field (FoTAAS) have jointly ensured the pavilion has had some much-needed tender love and care with a lick of paint throughout, electrics mended, lights replaced, hot water sorted and the leaky roof repaired.

This room has new carpet, blinds and heaters and is successfully being hired out once again. The new pack away tables and chairs are enabling the space to be used in a much more flexible way and hire rates are very reasonable and discounted for those living within the Parish boundary – let us know if you have any interest in hiring it out.

More exciting is the news that the grant application submitted to Test Valley Borough Council via the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) fund has been successful, with TVBC granting our full request of **£250,000**. This is intended to go towards the overall cost of a new pavilion/clubhouse and better sporting facilities on the field itself.

CIL is a charge that local authorities set on new developments in order to raise funds to help develop important infrastructure and community facilities and the Parish Council and the Sportsfield Group are delighted that our application has been successful.



There is a catch though – in order to draw down the funds from the grant we will have to fundraise at least an additional £250,000 and we have just over 18 months to do it as it has to be secured by December 2023.

Whilst £250,000 is undoubtedly a substantial amount to raise, we are confident that we will be able to achieve this amount in the time available.

We are already some way down the line securing some of this funding: For example, following their public consultation with the village last year, we have been advised by the Abbots Ann CLT that the Sportsfield will be the recipient of the Section 106 agreement associated with the Abbots Ann CLT development proposal if planning permission is secured for the development – it is expected that this will be a minimum of £100,000.

Friends of Abbots Ann Sports Field (FOTAAS) funds raised to date total over £26,000. Fundraising will continue via their usual events at the Village Fete and Fireworks Night, and I will be talking to them about potential additional fundraising activities.

Test Valley Borough Council via their Community Engagement Officer have been very helpful – they have advised that we should apply to the TVBC Community Asset Fund (CAF) for their maximum grant of £25,000. They have also provided a huge amount of information of other sources for funding and I will be following up on these options in the next few months. Timing of the applications for this and other grants will be dependent on terms & conditions of the various grants – some have 12 month timeframes to draw down funds so I am working to develop a timetable for potential development that will then enable a timetable of best times to apply for various grants to ensure we maximise what is available each financial year.

We will also be talking to Hampshire County Council and will be seeking their advice.

The promise of the TVBC CIL grant should help unlock other funding streams that exist to support viable community and sporting projects.

We have a long list of over 20 organisations (from National Lottery, through national sports governing bodies, to local supermarkets) who are making funding available for this kind of development and will be making approaches to them to secure as much funding as we can.

Councillor Howard noted that it is nice to see the outcome when a community group and SFG work together.

No questions were proposed to Kate Bone & Beth Deacon.

Wellbeing Portfolio

Councillor Howard advised that Councillor Schneeberger has just taken over the wellbeing portfolio, and in her absence provided a brief overview of what the portfolio entails.

3. Reports by Borough and County Councillors.

Test Valley Borough Councillor Report - Maureen Flood Abbots Ann Parish Assembly May 26th 2022

Test Valley Borough Council continues the major project of regenerating Andover Town Centre. A masterplan has been formally adopted and the first-phase delivered in the form of the new Riverside Park. The Borough Council is finalising feasibility and viability studies to determine next steps. The



Council have just recruited a cultural curator to facilitate many more town centre events plus preparing a bid to the Government Levelling Up Fund.

Test Valley aims to give more residents more opportunities to recycle. The new Environment Act requires the County Council to upgrade its waste disposal infrastructure. Test Valley will be announcing soon the details of how we intend to enable residents to recycle glass, thin plastics (pots, tubs and trays) and Tetra Pak-style cartons in the same household recycling bin in addition to providing a weekly food waste service.

Test Valley continues to implement the Climate Emergency Action Plan. This year over 19k trees have been planted and wildflower meadows have tripled in size from 8 to 24 hectares. The Borough Council have also pursued a zero-tolerance approach to fly-tipping by continuing with the policy to prosecute. This has resulted in some heavy fines and even prison time for the worst offenders – using evidence obtained from covert cameras.

The Council is currently paying the £150 council tax rebates to all households in Council Tax Bands A – D, which forms part of the Government's package of support to deal with inflationary pressures.

Turning to more local matters Test Valley Borough Council has awarded £250,000 from the Community Infrastructure Fund to the Abbots Ann Sports Field and Clubhouse Improvement project. Funding support from the TVBC Anna ward Borough Councillors fund has been awarded to the Abbots Ann Nursery School and the Community Orchard on The Green plus funding from the Community Asset Fund for the Church Path railings. I am privileged to have been able to assist a number of residents with their individual cases and continue to support our village initiatives including the Abbots Ann Community Land Trust, the Abbots Ann Gigabit project and supporting the pan parish Southern Water forum.

My thanks and appreciation to our Abbots Ann Parish Councillors and to the many groups and individuals in our community who give their time, effort and expertise contributing to our lovely Abbots Ann village.

County Councillor David Drew.

County Councillor David Drew advised the following after conversation:

Law requires home owners to trim bushes and hedges if the vegetation grows from their land.

There is a Lengthsman scheme which is noted that Abbots Ann Parish Council are currently not members of, he will discuss details with the Clerk.

The County Councillor budget fund is available again so grant applications will be considered.

Councillor Drew encouraged residents to report pot holes to Hampshire County Council, with photographs if possible. Once the pot hole has been reported a reference number will be issued which will allow the report to be followed up.

4. Reports from Community Groups.

Abbots Ann Bell Ringers

The last year has been fairly frustrating for the Bell Ringers. As we ring in quite a small chamber with poor ventilation COVID has prevented us meeting.



At last, everything is much better now and we are back to practicing and ringing before Sunday services.

We have a team of 8 ringers which is marvellous. Also, we have 3 beginners who are making rapid progress and will soon be able to ring before services. We have rung before a few funerals and there are 2 weddings in July so hopefully things are returning to some sort of normality.

Alex Pugh.

Abbotts Ann Community Land Trust

John on behalf of CLT, has reported to the Parish Council previously in February 2022 so recapped what has been shared previously.

Abbotts Ann Action

Ray Lucas provided the following report:

Abbotts Ann Action formed in 1998 result of proposal by Sparsholt College to sell much of Ilchester Estate. Caused great concern at mention of building 2000 houses, joining Abbotts Ann to Andover. Successful over the years against Local Plans to prevent that happening – designation of Local Gap between Abbotts Ann and Andover.

Made up of four members. See themselves as working with and for the Parish Council. Most recent task has been to assist with the Regulation 18 Consultation. To undertake consultation of what is going in to the Local Plan, by way of contents. AAA have helped the Parish Council respond to this document. Two important issues:

1. More housing is proposed in the plan, allocated to the villages, rather than the major development areas. Villages have been tiered with regards to the access to facilities, shop etc. Abbotts Ann is in tier 3, eligible for housing. It has been requested how and why things are being allocated the way they are. It is appreciated that housing is required, but the process would like to be understood and the village not be drowned by new housing.
2. Local gap. Direct importance to Abbotts Ann, the need for local gaps needs to be reviewed. They do not feature in national planning guidance. AAA feels that the Local Gap is a valuable planning tool to prevent coalescence of builds and helps protect personality.

Local gap should be retained and the boundaries refined. Regulation 18 document can be seen online (Google TVBC Local Plan), and Abbotts Ann Parish Council comments can be seen on the website. Encourage the community to look.

Councillor Howard noted that the Parish Council warmly accepted and appreciated the help and support of Abbotts Ann Action.

Abbotts Ann WI - Secretary's Report Year Ended March 2022

Following 2 years' restrictions and the need to switch to online meetings, it was impossible to predict what was going to happen during the year. However, the programme was designed to be positive (we WILL meet!) and yet flexible, as members adjusted to in-person gatherings again. We started the year with 30 members (1 dual) and ended after a full programme with 48.



Unfortunately, we started with Covid 19 restrictions still in place, and our first meeting in April 2021 was necessarily a Zoom meeting. However, Sarah Delves spoke passionately about the history of and her passion for handbags. In May, Oh Joy! we actually met in person for the first time in 2 years ! It was a lovely warm May evening as we toured the village on a Treasure Hunt (thanks to Sue George for compiling this so well), finishing at the Village Hall to enjoy a glass of Prosecco and strawberries, albeit outside to comply with regulations. In June, our Garden Meeting was the canal trip, with cream tea, on the Kennet and Avon Canal. Numbers were restricted to 20, but 20 people signed up and thoroughly enjoyed the afternoon.

July saw our first in person meeting inside, and our brains were taxed with the quiz questions compiled by our President's husband, some of which came from MENSA no less. In addition, the Walking Group restarted and we had the 'Welcome Back' Afternoon Tea at Esseborne Manor, enjoyed by 25 members.

In August, a small number of people visited the Weald and Downland Museum. September saw our delayed Annual Meeting. As has become traditional, a Fish and Chip supper was enjoyed, together with delicious ice cream supplied from the Village Shop.

October was an incredible meeting, when 35 ladies were joined by 14 members at our Fizz, Canapes and Chat evening. The buzz in the hall was electric. The evening was promoted by a flyer (designed by our own Kate Bennett) and was held to encourage more membership since numbers had fallen due to people moving away and the effects of lockdown. It was highly successful and resulted ultimately in 18 new members.

In November, WI member Elizabeth Howard demonstrated how to do a Christmas Wreath and in December we had our Christmas Party, when we held a Snowman Drive. January saw our Post Christmas Lunch at Esseborne Manor, when 32 members enjoyed a 3 course lunch with wine and coffee. And we finished the month with another Zoom meeting, with Felicity Cloake talking about her cycle trip around France sampling croissants. In February we announced our monthly Coffee Mornings, and enjoyed a demonstration and tasting of Thai Cookery. An almost normal, and very full year of meetings, activities and events finished in March with a wine tasting and canapes.

Unfortunately, Gill Page, had to resign as Secretary in September due to ill health and the Treasurer took up the role. Our thanks go to Gill for past commitment in this role and continued support in completing the Register and the MCS.

Gill Page and Helen Clark - Secretary

15.5.22

Councillor Howard noted that the meeting minutes are not Council minutes but a report of the meeting and comments are welcome.

5. General Q & A with the Parish Council.

No questions were asked.

Councillor Howard invited those who attended to stay for refreshments, that plans would be made to encourage more attendees next year. Councillor Howard thanked guests for attending and closed the meeting at 20:36.