

ABBOTS MORTON PARISH.

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Abbots Morton Village Hall, April 14th 2016 at 7.32 p.m.

<p>Present: Mr. N. Humphries (Chairman), County Cllr. Mr. Holt, Dist. Cllr. Mrs. Steel, Mrs. N. Holland, Clerk to the Parish Council, and 23 parishioners.</p>
<p>Welcome: – the Chairman of the Parish Council welcomed everyone to the meeting.</p>
<p>Apologies: Dist. Cllr. Mr. Wilkinson, Mrs. L. Pemberton, Richard Whitlow, Julie & Dirk Washington and Ruby Clapton.</p>
<p>Minutes: The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 30th March 2015 were agreed to be an accurate record, signed by the Chairman.</p>
<p>Matters Arising: Nil.</p>
<p><u>Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Humphries:</u> I hope you find the evening informative and I would like to thank the representatives of the various parish bodies for their attendance and invite you to ask them any questions later. 2015 was an election year for Abbots Morton Parish Council. Since there were only 4 candidates to fill 7 vacancies the election was uncontested so there was no public vote. The 4 members elected had all served on the previous council and were David Smith, who is serving as Vice Chairman, Clive Holt, David Ernest and I. Colin Pemberton, who had served as a councillor for 4 years with a short break and Pat Ansell, who had served as a councillor on and off for many years, took the opportunity to retire from the council. This left 3 vacancies which were advertised for co-option and duly filled by Becky Owen, Jim O'Boyle and Richard Whitlow who, I am pleased to say, has taken over my role as youngest councillor. I would like to thank all councillors who have served on the both current and previous councils for the all work they have done. Also, I must thank Nicky Holland who continues to do an outstanding job as Clerk to the Council. We all benefit from her experience and expertise in the roll. David Smith also does a fantastic job as the Parish Paths Warden - keeping the paths open and clear and carrying out repair work to stiles, signs and bridges. 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 runoff from fields and properties is taken away in the most efficient manner. Although we did suffer a number of floods a few weeks ago this was the result of extreme rain. The parish seems to fare much better in this regard than it did a number of years ago. 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 over the past year covering a number of topics. Planning applications within the parish have been very few a far between in the past 12 months. There was an application last April for an extension at Morton Wood Stables which was approved by the District Council. There was also an amendment to the solar panel layout at the proposed solar farm which was refused. The Parish Council also responded to the Warwickshire Draft Minerals Plan to reiterate that, when granting permission for new sites in the area, HGVs should be prevented from using the C2010 through Morton Spirt and Gooms Hill in line with the section 52 agreement granted in 1989 for sites in the Dunnington area. Following correspondence from residents and several incidents along the C2010 the Parish Council has</p>

been in contact with Worcestershire Highways about extending the 40mph speed limit at Gooms Hill all the way to Morton Spirt. Unfortunately this did not meet with a positive response as the Highway Authority's view is that there are too few houses to justify a reduced speed limit. A speed survey will hopefully be carried out shortly.

Following a suggestion from Graham Hobbs, The Parish Council helped fund the planters which have been placed by the village signs and are now coming into bloom. Thanks must go to Jim O'Boyle who made the planters and Graham who supplied bulbs and planted them up.

For the annual Wychavon Diamond Jubilee Community Recognition Award, The Council nominated The Bell Tower Committee, who received a certificate of commendation, and Viv Oddy who was chosen the overall winner of the award for all she does in helping others in the community. Congratulations to Viv who was a well deserving winner.

As in several previous years the council has again given a grant towards maintenance of the churchyard. It has also made a small contribution to the cost of the two directional signs to the Village Hall and is currently obtaining costings for footpath type signs directing people to St Peter's Church following a resident request and consultation with the PCC.

The Parish Council has maintained the precept unchanged for the 8th consecutive year. One of the largest outgoings the council has is the repayments on the loan taken out to finance the construction of this Village Hall nearly 20 years ago. This only has 2 years left to run. The Council is in a strong position financially having 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.

The new homes bonus scheme has continued to benefit the parish. This has provided just over £1,100 per year resulting from construction of replacement dwellings and council tax band changes and runs for around 5 years in total. This year the Village Hall Committee has made an application for New Homes Bonus funding for replacement cutlery. The Parish Council has considered 2 projects which may be possibly funded by News Homes Bonus but decided to proceed with neither for the time being. Firstly the purchase of a community defibrillator was considered which could be sited in the BT telephone kiosk. The defibrillator would have to be operated by trained volunteers within the parish. After much consideration it was felt that an individual in need would receive help from the local first responders in a similar amount of time that it would take to operate the community defibrillator so it would be of limited benefit. Secondly, there was a proposal to purchase a Smart Water Kit for each household in the parish together with signage to act as a crime deterrent. Our district councillor has stated that this is not necessarily something for which the new homes bonus can be used - although the parish of Crophorne has used it for this purpose. The Parish Council would like to hear views of parishioners on both of these suggestions and, indeed, any other ideas for the use of New Home Bonus funding.

Superfast Broadband. A great deal of effort has been put into this by David Ernest over a number of years. The good news is that the Parish is now included in the Superfast Broadband rollout area. The bad news is that the length of the telephone lines from the cabinet in Radford means that our benefit from upgraded speeds may be limited. The Parish Council is currently liaising with Superfast Worcestershire to try and get a new cabinet installed within the parish which would reduce the distances and increase the speeds.

Finally that brings me on to the community fund offered by Solarig. Following the original offer of a community fund made by Sun and Soil, the Parish Council saw it as their duty to pursue such and offer once permission had been granted even though the Parish Council objected to the planning application. For a long time, details were not forthcoming but a proposal of Solar Panels for a community building was eventually made. The site changed hands a couple of times and eventually a meeting with the new developers of the site, Solarig, was agreed with members of both the Parish Council and Village Hall Committee present to find out the exact details of what was on offer. It transpires that a fund of £10,000

would be made available for the benefit of the community with one option to use part of this fund towards the installation of Solar Panels on the village hall roof. The intention is to conduct a proper consultation of the parish before any decisions are made on what to do with this fund. After the formal part of the meeting is concluded, refreshments will be served and we will have an opportunity to discuss some ideas.

Questions/points raised:

1. Solar Farm - community fund has not been confirmed in writing; no start date is known.

2. Broadband - not known when survey taking place. Due to distance from the exchange it is hoped to either have the cabinet at Radford updated or a new cabinet closer to Abbots Morton. BT has told a resident that not likely to see any improvement in Abbots Morton until November 2017.

3. Defibrillator - request that the Parish Council re-look at installing one in the Village as First Responder may well be at another call if needed in the Village. It was reiterated that following the last consultation only 2 parishioners put their names forward for training, further numbers were needed.

County Cllr. Mr. Holt:

Budget approved - New infrastructure improvement programme underway called 'Driving Home'. £12 million allocated to improve 'C', unclassified roads and footways. Spending has been reduced over the past 5 years. The Council has disposed of 33 leases and sold 99 freehold properties.

Education Secretary is to introduce new plans for school funding.

Cllr. Mr. Holt explained that the County Council elections are due in May 2017. After 31 years in the post he will be retiring and his successor will be Anthony Hopkins from Inkberrow.

Dist. Cllr. Mrs. Steel:

South Worcestershire Development Plan (SWDP) has now been adopted.

Neil Pearce, who was a Senior Planner at Wychavon District Council is now practicing full time as an independent planning consultant principally for the public sector. He will be attending Inkberrow Parish Council meeting at 7.30pm on the 20th April 2016 in the Sports Pavilion in Inkberrow to give a presentation on Neighbourhood Plans. All welcome to attend.

David Lee, previous District Councillor for the area, is seriously ill in Evesham Hospital.

Public Paths Warden (David Smith).

The task of ensuring the paths and bridleways remain open has continued throughout the year with an ongoing clearance and maintenance programme particularly during spring and autumn. Some paths in the D category have not been visited for some time.

Paths are classified by their usage A, B, C and D. A being highly used possibly en-route to shops and other amenities whilst D is very infrequent use.

A number of dead trees that fell during the winter storms have been removed and several yellow or blue way markers have been replaced as has a stile behind Whites Close.

On several occasion horse jumps have been created in Slade Wood across and blocking the bridleway, these have been removed following comments from walkers.

Close contact has been kept with the Countryside Department of the County Council and this proved invaluable when Morton Wood Farm Management Association (MWFMA) the owners of a 400 yard section of bridleway AM555 (The Low) chose to undertake resurfacing of a severely potholed part. The work will involve a fresh layer tarmac and has been approved by the Council. The bridleway will remain open to horses, cyclists and walkers during the planned work later this month.

The same bridleway and also AM558 are subject to closure notices, imposed by the County Council, due to the potential building of the solar farm. The notices will also affect other bridleways and paths in the area where they connect with AM555 and AM558. This will cause considerable inconvenience and significant interference with users especially the residents of The Low who own or stable horses.

Solarig must apply to the County Council for closure notices 6 weeks in advance of commencing work

stating construction start and finish dates to provide suitable public notification. To date Solarig have not indicated any start dates. In such a situation immediate emergency closures would be applied by the County Council for a maximum of 21 days, this though removes any degree of notification to bridleway users increasing their inconvenience.

During the closures no public right of way will be possible, even if no work is being conducted at the solar farm. Visitors to Morton Wood Farm properties will have access.

Q. Has the start of the Solar Farm been delayed due to negotiations with Morton Wood Farm Management Association and is there a settlement on the horizon? Chairman thought that construction might start when the weather improves.

Residents' Association (David Smith).

Since the last Annual Parish meeting, AMRA have lost their long time Chairman, Mr. Cyril Burton. His experience and knowledge will be greatly missed and I would like to record my thanks to Cyril for what he did in building AMRA and supporting this very special village. It is hoped that under a new Chairman the Association can continue to support their strap line of 'preserving the past and protecting the future'.

With a new Chairman inevitably come new ideas. There has been criticism of how AMRA previously conducted its business; as a result committee meetings are minuted with notes of those meetings being posted to the village's website. Members are invited to contact the committee and even attend meetings should that be necessary. The Association is also looking forward and taking active steps in preserving the present for the future, with a project recording village life in the early 21st century. This is not a short term exercise but one which will continue for many years and that will need support from all residents.

It is hoped that a new approach will increase membership so if you are interested in getting involved with the preservation project or joining AMRA please contact me.

Finally a brief word on the solar farm industrial site, AMRA objected to this development from the very outset and continues to support the residents of The Low and their issues with the solar farm developers. The Low residents stand to lose approximately 15% on their property values, if this site is built. That equates to an approximate average of over £75,000 per household. They will be subject to disruption and also potential damage to their 'devalued' properties, yet there continues to be village support for this divisive project as it creates disharmony in the village something AMRA find extremely disappointing.

And what does the village gain from the solar farm? A possible £10,000. Other solar companies provide hundreds of thousands in compensation based on the site's output and life span.

Comment: Because people take a different view they should not be shunned or vilified. 34 people objected to the application (26%). We live in a democracy with free speech and people's views should be respected. The development gains energy for the village and £10,000 will benefit the community for whatever use decided.

Parochial Church Council and Bell Tower Appeal (Colin Pemberton).

It's been another busy year for St Peter's church in Abbots Morton, particularly notable for the successful conclusion of the essential repairs to the Bell Tower. The Bell Tower Appeal, initially for £40,000, was launched on 8th August 2013 giving ourselves two and a half years to raise the money before the Faculty ran out in February 2016. Thanks to the efforts of our Bell Tower Committee and the enthusiasm shown by the PCC and large sections of our community and beyond, we reached our target quicker than expected and even raised an extra £5,000 to meet the eventual cost ahead of schedule. Work on the Tower started at the beginning of June and was completed in four months by stonemasons Tewkesbury Conservation Ltd, under the supervision of our church architect John Middleton of John C Goom Ltd of Evesham. The 14th C tower is now secure and safeguarded for future generations and we thank everyone who contributed in any way to the Bell Tower Appeal. A special service of celebration and thanksgiving was held in the church on 15th November with a number of supporters coming from various parts of the UK to acknowledge the work. I'm pleased to say that the dedication and hard work of the Bell Tower Committee was officially

regonised with a Certificate of Commendation in the Wychavon Community Recognition Awards for 2015. We have reviewed, within the past few weeks, the report of the church architect's new five yearly inspection of the building carried out in February. The PCC will be studying its recommendation for essential work at its next meeting on 3rd May.

The PCC has also been much exercised during the year by the need to fulfill its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 and seek a solution to the question of Universal Access to the church and its services.

A number of options for removing the access obstacles to anyone with a disability have been considered at length, in considerable detail and at considerable cost, having sought professional advice from the church architect. The PCC held a public meeting on Monday this week, 11th April at which almost 30 parishioners were able to express their opinions on options which may or may not be feasible and viable. Their views and the way forward will now be considered by the PCC at its May meeting.

The church has sixteen people on the electoral roll and from them we form a PCC of seven, presided over by the Rector Richard Thorniley. The PCC members meet bi-monthly as trustees of a charity responsible for the financial affairs of the church, the care and maintenance of the church and its contents, and to express their views on the forms of services used t St. Peter's.

The PCC also concerns itself with the welfare and pastoral care of the Parish and discusses issues of a wider interest in the Church of England, making representations to the Bishop and the General Synod via the Evesham Deanery and the Worcester Diocese.

We are pleased to be able to say that the church is always open, not only as a place of worship but as a place of sanctuary and meditation and prayer. For that we are grateful to all those who take their turn on the rota to unlock and lock the building. We thank those who have come off the rota after a number of year's service and to those that have joined it.

Similar rota operated for those who decorate the church with flowers throughout the year. Peggy Clarke is always pleased to welcome any new volunteers to create the floral decorations which do so much to enhance the church and contribute to that feeling of warmth, peace and beauty which is so often written about in the visitor's book. You don't have to be a skilled flower arrange. On June 26th you'll have an opportunity to admire the arrangements at their best during the Flower Festival Weekend which we take part in along with the neighbouring churches of Rous Lench and Church Lench.

Our congregations vary, from the very small at some services to the substantial at the well established services such as Christingle, Mothering Sunday, Rogation, Pet Service, Remembrance, Harvest Festival, Carol and Gift services and Christmas Eve.

A number of services are led by lay members of the Community reflecting the fact that the Rector cannot always serve the four churches of the Arch Benefice of Abbots Morton, Church Lench, Rous Lench and Harvington. Indeed, while we congratulate the Rector on his additional appointment as Rural Dean of the Evesham Deanery, the post does give him additional workloads and leaves him with even less time to devote to each of his parishes. We have also lost the services of Rev. Steve Jordan who has emigrated with his wife to New Zealand.

Parishioners will notice an increasing number of "Benefice Services", where the four congregations come together for a service in one of the churches, in turn; we are keenly awaiting the next Benefice service at Abbots Morton on 22nd May. The service then will be led by the Bishop of Dudley, the Reverend Graham Usher. Another example of parishes coming together was the formation during this year of a Group Council, bringing closer links between the ARCH Benefice and the church council of Inkberrow and its satellite parishes. Called the North Avon Group Council, it has representatives of each of eight PCC's and considers issues and procedures which are common to them all.

Abbots Morton PC continues to meet its Parish Share, the financial contribution it makes to the Worcester Diocese to help pay the stipends and pensions of the clergy. It also continues to work hard to meet the £10,000 a year running costs of St. Peter's church. We give thanks for the support of all those who attend

and enjoy our two principal fundraisers, the Flower Festival lunch and the Harvest Supper and its Auctions of Promises, to those who make a regular contribution by way of Covenants and to those who give on the offertory plate in services, and to those who help by way of gifts and bequests. Indeed we have recently very gratefully received a legacy of £3,000 from the late Cyril Burton who stipulated that the money should be used "to improve and maintain the church building and fabric".

A number of parishioners now take part in the annual Ride 'n' Stride event each September, visiting as many churches in the vicinity as possible on one day by bicycle or on foot. It raises money by way of sponsorship for the Worcestershire and Dudley Historic Churches Trust. Half of everything raised comes back directly to the participating churches and the other half is used to fund grants for restoration projects on churches in the Diocese. We were a grateful recipient of such a grant for our Bell Tower.

May I express the PCC's thanks to all who have contributed in any way to the spiritual and physical well being of St. Peter's church, a church which the rector described at the public meeting on Monday as "a very precious jewel in this gorgeous village".

If you wish to follow the progress of St. Peter's church, or be part of it, our doors are always open and there is information online at; www.archbenefice.org.uk and our church page on the village website at www.abbotsmorton.info/church.html Members of the PCC: Chairman: Rector, Rev Richard Thorniley; Treasurer: Terry Brewster; Secretary: Colin Pemberton; Electoral Roll Officer: Lynne Pemberton; Peggy Clarke; Audrey Dunstone, Lynda Payne; Patrick Brooke.

Members of the Bell Tower Committee: Colin Pemberton (Chairman), Lynne Pemberton; Kevin Clarke; Terry Brewster; Margaret Brewster, Tim Jones, Sarah Dykes.

Neighbourhood Watch – Geoff Barker, Abbots Morton NW Link Co-Ordinator.

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.

Burglars have continued operating in our area; they have been very selective in choosing their targets and planning their raids. Gooms Hill and down the hill to Radford was particularly targeted. There were burglaries on 9th March 2015 and repeated on 26th January 2016. There were a number of thefts from outhouses and sheds on Bonfire night and also a theft on 13th January 2016. In the village there was a theft from a vehicle on 15th June 2015. There was theft of Mail from Alcester Rd, Inkberrow on 6th January 2016. Following these high value thefts and burglaries, Abbots Morton security needs to be up rated with new High Visibility NW and Smart Water signage. At the Parish Council meeting on 28th January this year I raised the need for Smart Water signage in particular, as there are already properties benefiting from Smart Water property marking liquid. The Parish Council have the results of the recent Smart Water survey and will make a decision on funding the signage in due course. Ideas on other community action security measures would be welcomed.

Please be vigilant to identify vehicles and maybe persons that are unknown in the parish, especially if they are 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. Email reports from West Mercia police have been circulated during the past year as were reports received from our local coordinators and residents. The NW circulation covers 94% of active households in the parish plus most households on the west side of Gooms Hill in Radford.

Your Neighbourhood Watch coordinators are;-

Gooms Hill – Pat Ansell 792643

Morton Speart – Vacant

The Low – David Smith 793107 (NW Webpage updates)

Top Road - Tina Hill 792006

Village - Geoff Barker 792562 (Link Coordinator)

Village – Sarah Dykes 792214 (Deputy Link Coordinator)

A vacancy is open for a volunteer at Morton Speart to take up the 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. ggbarker3@gmail.com Geoff Barker. Abbots Morton NW Link Co-Ordinator.

Village Hall (Mel Clarke).

Overview

It has been a busy and excellent year for Abbots Morton Village Hall. Usage & revenue are up, enabling us to spend money to maintain the building to an excellent standard and to invest in its future. Thanks must go to all those who serve as Trustees, attending meetings once every six weeks (and doing work in between), on behalf of all our parishioners to keep the building a marvellous asset to our community.

Finances

The current financial position of the VH is very healthy due to monies raised through increased hiring, events, grants and donations. Our strategy to make the VH a more attractive rental is undoubtedly paying off. Income from "Hire of Halls & Equipment" rose from £1431.88 to £2616.68 in the year of 2015. That's an increase of 82% increase.

Functions held by the VH committee as fund raisers brought in £1705.15, that's a 426% rise on last year! Along with additional funds from Christmas pudding sales (£125) and successful grant applications (£2085.36) we have managed to reduce the deficit from the previous year by 63%.

The VH committee established a policy of equally sharing the proceeds of fundraising events with Charities. The principal aim was to attract people to come to the events and it is working very successfully, producing full houses on two occasions and a very healthy attendance of 50+ on another. The principle of "half of a lot is better than all of a little" has proved itself a winner bringing life to the hall and raising very substantial revenues. The Hall has benefitted by £881 and £881 has very been gratefully received by three "good causes". A win-win situation.

In September, we registered with EasyFundraising, making the village hall a good cause for anyone who does online shopping to support. I can reveal tonight that since September, 11 online shoppers have raised, at no cost to themselves, the sum of £137 for village hall funds. If you want to join Easyfundraising let me know and let's see if we can get 20 supporters or even more!

We have invested substantially in the hall. The Trustees don't operate as a bank to accumulate money. In line with advice from the Worcestershire village halls adviser, Richard Timney, halls shouldn't aim to amass reserves more than is reasonable over and above the annual running costs, in our case around £2,000.

Activities and events

Our strategy to ensure the survival of this hall, without constantly calling on the village residents to fund it as has been the problem in previous years; is to make the hall a more attractive hiring prospect to people external to the parish. The number of private hires of the hall has increased dramatically. Every week there is now a Ballroom and Latin dance class for adults on a Tuesday night additional time on weekdays and Saturdays for private, one-to-one lessons. The JUMP Academy tap and ballet classes for 3+ year olds on a Wednesday are now well established. Both dance teachers are very pleased with the facilities we

offer.

The hall was hired in January by a family from Harvington for a funeral wake with 70 people attending; we've just taken a booking for a 30th wedding anniversary this July for a couple from Longbridge in Birmingham which will attract 70 people; a young couple from Studley who are getting married next June (2017) expressed themselves very impressed by this hall when they were shown the facilities just last Saturday. We are confident they will book us.

The Abbots Morton Art Club continues to enjoy the hall on Friday afternoons and they hope to recruit new members. Local authorities use the hall : the parish council use it for their council meetings, and annual parish meeting; Wychavon District use it as the polling station for local elections, general elections and this year it'll be used on June 23rd for the EU Referendum. St Peter's church has their Flower Festival Lunch and Harvest Supper. Abbots Morton Residents' Association book the hall for their AGM.

The Village Hall Committee itself hosts fundraising events e.g. Lymphocytes music night, Indian Summer, and Imo's Quiz which were all a great success and our thanks go to everyone involved for their hard work.

Maintenance and improvements

The Village Hall's Trustees continue with their refurbishment programme for this hall, now 18 years old. Since the AGM last year we have: painted the outside of the hall and re-laid paving slabs at the entrance and new slabs for improved disabled access, upgraded the crockery to make a full set of items for when we have full house-80 seat events, installed new "village hall" signs at The Low crossroads and on the verge outside the hall. For those we are grateful, to various degrees, for financial support from the Government's New Homes Bonus, from County Councillor Clive Holt and the Parish Council.

From our own funds we have: caught up on overdue maintenance work to the hedges and trees around the hall, (our thanks are also due to Phil Farmiloe who kindly keeps the hedge facing the road smartly cut), laid a non-slip, hard-wearing contract carpet in the entrance lobby, and replaced five double glazed window units. The hall continues to be regularly checked for maintenance issues.

Chair's Summary

The fortunes of the Abbots Morton Village Hall have been turned round in the past year thanks to the dedication and drive of the Trustees. Parishioners are becoming aware that, far from this being a little-used hall, it has become quite the opposite. It is a bright, attractive and a good size location for all kinds of events and gatherings. Our policy of looking outward to attract hirers is clearly working and we now look forward to more people within the parish taking advantage of the first class facilities it provides. We believe the high standards of facilities and maintenance of this hall has made it a much more attractive rental; and people are travelling from afar to utilise it.

This VH committee believes the success of its fund raising events is down to its new policy of sharing proceeds with charities. People have proved they will come to events where there is a benefit to other charities as well as our own. I also wish to take this opportunity to reassure parishioners that all members on the VH committee act as "trustees" for the VH. When any decisions are made around this table it is for the good of the Village Hall. Looking forward to the coming year:

- Bidding for financial help from various bodies to press ahead with Phase 2 Paving, relaying the slabs at the side and rear of the hall
- New range cooker for the kitchen and new chairs.
- We are also currently bidding for the Government's New Homes Bonus money to upgrade our cutlery to ensure that we have a full set of items that are needed for a successful reputation as a wedding reception venue.
- Solarig, the Spanish company which is now going to build the solar farm at Morton Wood, is being offering a Community Fund for projects within the village. A meeting with Solarig has occurred to look at the costings and feasibility of a solar panel installation on the village hall. It could give this hall long term energy efficiency savings which could provide a springboard for further investment in the hall and

even greater usage. We are still awaiting final details on this project before approaching parishioners with a proposal to use the said community fund for this purpose.

For Parishioners information

Ballroom & Latin Dance Classes

Ballroom and Latin dance classes for adults continue every Tuesday evening from 7.30pm to 8.30pm with a final half hour of practice until 9pm. The teacher Megan Smith from Alcester would like a maximum of 12 people there and currently it's around 7 or 8. Classes cost £9 per person per lesson. If you'd like join the class, just come along on a Tuesday night.

Tap & Ballet classes for 3yr olds and over are held on Wednesdays between 3.30pm and 6.30pm. They're run by Helena Mitchell of the JUMP Dance academy. The new term has just started and runs through until July. New dancers always welcome. Contact Helena on 07572 042164 or via www.jumpdanceacademy.co.uk

EasyFundraising: Eleven supporters have now raised £137 for the village hall by online shopping through EasyFundraising. If you want to join in EasyFundraising (it doesn't cost you anything) please visit: www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/abbotsmortonvillagehall

Matters raised by parishioners: Nil.

All organisations in the Parish submitted a report, copies available from the Clerk.

Meeting closed at 9.00pm.

Following the meeting refreshments were served and an informal discussion followed to collate ideas for the use of the community fund offered by Solarig, the company installing the Solar Farm, who has indicated that a sum of £10,000 will be made available.

The Parish Council has received no assurance that the amount of money will be given. Feelings were that the money should be received into an account before consulting on how to use the money.

Following previous consultation with organisations in the Parish installation of solar panels on the Village Hall was the only initiative coming forward.

Options put forward:

1. Solar Panels Village Hall.
2. Charity.
3. Steps/Ramp for the Church.
4. Security/CCTV.
5. Divide equally to residents along The Low.
6. Reject the offer or ask Solarig to give the Parish Council the £10,000 to place into an account who will then decide in due course how best to use the money on behalf of the community and distribute accordingly.

The Chairman asked for a show of hands to gauge how many persons present were in favour of rejecting the offer: 14 to reject; 3 against; 4 abstentions = 21 out of 24 persons present (not including County Cllr., Dist. Cllr. and the Clerk).

Dist. Cllr. Mrs. Steel had taken advice from Officers at Wychavon District Council regarding the community fund. The legal advice was that Solarig could put in an amended planning application, which if happened and the Council had taken a financial benefit, could go against the Parish.

Morton Wood Farm Association stated that Solarig had investigated the possibility of enlarging the area of the Solar Farm due to loss of money through the drop in Euro in relation to Sterling.

Village Hall Committee stated that Soalrig were invited to talks over the Community Fund in regard to an energy efficient project and until that meeting no amount of funding was known. Solarig has put forward a sum of £10,000 and details of a costed project.

It was asked if Morton Wood Farm Association had received offers of monies from Solarig for the repair and maintenance of the driveway. This was denied.

DRAFT