

ABBOTS MORTON PARISH.

Draft minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held Abbots Morton Village Hall, Tuesday 29th March 2011 at 7.35 p.m.

Present: Mr. D. Ernest (Chairman), Mrs. N. Holland, Clerk to the Parish Council, County Cllr. Mr. Holt, PCSO Jenny Hawkins and 21 parishioners.

1. Welcome – the Chairman of the Parish Council, Mr. Ernest, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

2. Apologies: Dist. Cllrs. Mrs. Steel and Mr. Lee, David Smith and Lord Borrie.

3. Minutes: The minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on the 18th May 2010 were amended to show that Mr. G. Barker was present at the meeting and that item 12 should read “Mr. Brewster sent a report”. Mr. Burton proposed, County Cllr. Mr. Holt seconded and all agreed to be an accurate record, signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters Arising: Nil.

5. Chairman of the Parish Council: Cllr. Mr. Ernest gave the following report:

In response to feedback from the last few years regarding the Annual Parish meeting, the Parish Council has reviewed the format of the meeting. Our intention is to reduce the period of the formal part of the meeting to enable a longer time for informal and formal discussions and questions to the Parish Council and the other Parish bodies represented here today. I hope that you find the evening informative, and I would like to thank our guests and members of the various parish bodies for their attendance. As you can see the various bodies have tables set up, so please feel free to circulate after the formal part of the meeting. At the end of my report I will ask each representative to provide an overview of the information that they have on their respective table

After my report and the questions and answers we will be serving refreshments, many thanks to Margaret, Angela and Nicky for their contributions.

Firstly, I would like to express my appreciation and thanks to all my fellow councillors Angela, Margaret, Pat, Clive, Will, and Don for their support and work during the year. The Parish Council’s ability to deal with issues during the last year, and provide a high level of continuity, is attributable to all of the council members and their collective and individual experience. I am very appreciative of Pat Ansell assistance and support as the Vice Chair of Abbots Morton Parish Council. I would also like to thank Angela Eason for her previous support as Vice Chairman. Nicky Holland continues to provide outstanding support to the Council as Clerk and without her experience and efficiency I feel that we would struggle to meet our commitments.

Footpaths, their access and maintenance are very important amenity to both parishioners and visitors. I would like to thank David Smith as Footpaths Officer for the Parish. David has very effectively and enthusiastically worked with Pat Ansell to make great inroads to the conditions of the footpaths and by ways. He has worked to keep paths clear and has recommended additional work to be done, and his effort is much appreciated and continues the tradition of active and effective Footpaths Officer to the Parish.

I am pleased to report that the Parish Council has had a positive and productive 12 months. Surprisingly we met formally 9 times last year, including special planning meetings, meetings of the Staffing Committee and Full PC. In addition there have been several off site consultation meetings with various authorities regarding drainage, road safety and maintenance.

Planning.

Again much of the work done is in regard to planning applications. The Parish Council commented on 3 planning applications, some of these related to significant structural changes. As many of you are aware, the Parish Council has a statutory duty to examine and where appropriate comment on these. The Parish Council is also duty bound to investigate potential issues re possible planning enforcement. In nearly all planning applications the views of the Parish Council concurred with the actions and recommendations of the planners at Wychavon District Council. There was one occasion where our views and that of Wychavon were not held on appeal. In addition to the planning issues, Councillors have discussed and pursued a number of local issues including:-

Flooding, road and ditch maintenance.

As you are aware the Parish Council uses a Lengthsman on a contract for services. (Compared with a previous arrangement to sub contract his work from another Parish Council). This work is funded by the County Council, and the Lengthsman role is to carry out routine maintenance to the verges and ditches around the Parish. During the Autumn months the council commissioned additional work from him to ensure that leaves etc were kept under

control and not block drainage and keep wherever possible the verges neat and tidy
During the past year we have seen the benefits of the ongoing improvement plan for ditches, and drains. I would like to thank the ongoing work of the various bodies including the Worcestershire Highways that has invested much resource in improving the drainage. We still have a little further way to go, including ongoing discussions with local landowners re the water runoff from their land.

I would also like to thank the local landowners for their ongoing cooperation with ensuring that hedges are cut back to make exiting from junctions easier, and also keeping their verges and ditched maintained.

Please be advised that the Council is aware that the various roads in the Parish are suffering deterioration. We are in regular contact with Worcestershire Highways Authority to ensure that potholes are repaired. We are pushing for a resurfacing of the road through the main part of the village, but have been told that whilst it is on a list, it will be several years away.

Finally please advise any members of the Council or the Clerk of any issues that you notice regarding drainage or maintenance so that we can ensure that we keep on top of the situation.

Village Hall

I would like to thank the Village Hall Committee for its hard work in both holding events that bring the village together and for their hard work in raising funding for its ongoing maintenance. This is important for the Parish Council as major part of the precept goes towards paying off the mortgage on the Village Hall.

Traffic and speeding problems at Morton Spirt.

As I believe everyone is aware, this has been the subject of many years of attention by the Parish Council. During that time we have worked with Worcestershire and Warwickshire County Councils to improve signage, road markings and bollards to be placed at the verge in Morton Spirt. As I mentioned in last year's report, we have had discussions with the Ragley Estate, and we believe that this plus additional local Authority pressure has had a beneficial effect. Consequently, the drainage onto the road in the wooded area, (where the deer cross), has been improved from the woodlands and vegetation has been cut back to provide better visibility.

Unfortunately, our efforts to press for a reduced speed limit (it is currently 60mph) on the road through Morton Spirt have met with some resistance by the relevant bodies. We understand that they are currently reviewing speed limits for a and b category roads, but we are hopeful that they will address this c category road in the near future. That said we are keeping up pressure for change. In that regard we have requested Worcestershire County Council for a traffic survey report. This report is due to be presented to the Parish Council in the next few months. The Parish Council is reviewing other measures including movable warning signs etc. This however is complicated because of the 60 mph limit on that part of the road. We are also aware of the speeding issue through Gooms Hill.

Regional Spatial Strategy and Joint Core Strategy (Wychavon, Worcester City and Malvern Hills)

Last year I reported on this Government led initiative. Since the General Election, this strategy appears to have been discontinued with the original plans for in excess of 24,500 new homes across South Worcestershire being shelved. However we are monitoring the situation very closely as originally Inkberrow appeared to be earmarked for some development.

Mineral Core Strategy

Warwickshire County Council commissioned a study on the Minerals Core Strategy for Warwickshire. This has resulted in some concern regarding the future consideration of expansion of existing sites and the identification of new sites. On a local basis planning permission has been granted for the extension of the quarry working north of Broom. We are monitoring this very carefully and are mindful that other sites have been provisionally identified for potential expansion. There are two issues here, one related to the proposed development and the other relating to the lorry movements by the quarry operators.

The Parish Council understands that a formal agreement between the quarry operators and Warwickshire County Council was entered into at the time of the original quarry development and this was amended in 2009. This prevented lorries from using the C103/2010. We have been given assurances that this agreement will stand not withstanding any subsequent planning permission for the proposals to develop the other quarry sites. However we continue to monitor the situation.

Wind Farm

The Council is also monitoring the situation regarding proposals for a Wind Farm near Church Lench. As you maybe aware the planning application was rejected by Wychavon District Council and I believe that the applicants have

until July to appeal.

Parish Plan

During the year the Parish Council reviewed the Parish Plan in an exercise led by Angela Eason. I am pleased to say one of the key concerns, which of speeding at Morton Spirt continues to be addressed. I believe that the provision of facilities for the residents (young and old) of Abbots Morton continues to improve, with the hard work of Village Hall Committee. We are also monitoring the need for local affordable housing.

Finance

For the third year in a row the Parish Council has kept the total annual precept for the Parish at the same level as the previous year. However, you may have noticed that this has shown a small per household increase in your latest rates statement. I have made enquiries as to the seeming inconsistency, and this is due to several households being rerated (downwards) during the period in time. Thus the same load has to be spread over a smaller number of rated properties and thus this account for the increase. Unfortunately The Parish Council does not have access to this information before the precept is set. Please be assured that we are very conscious of providing value to the community and are carefully balancing the need for cost containment against investing for the future, and for the last financial year we managed to increase the Parish Council reserves for future contingency.

Grant

As a result of careful management and luck that some of the contingencies budgeted for have not occurred, the Parish Council have considered the principle of providing limited discretionary funding being made available to local organisations for the benefit of our local community. We hope to be making announcements shortly re grants...I would ask any interested party to contact Nicky Holland or any member of the council to register their interest. We hope to make available a small amount of money later in 2011 for local use.

Website

I would draw your attention to the Parish Website which is managed by Worcestershire County Council. The website address is www.worcestershire.gov.uk/MyParish

Elections

As many of you are aware, there will be local elections early in May. The term of the current Parish Council also expires then and Nicky has forms for nomination for candidates to stand for the Parish Council. In the event that there are more than 7 nominations submitted (the current number of Parish Councillors on the Parish Council) then elections of the Parish Council will be held in May at the same time as the other elections. I would encourage all the members of Abbots Morton to consider standing for the Parish Council.

6. Summary of end of year accounts: Attached.

7. Police report: PCSO Jenny Hawkins reported:

Over the last four weeks there has been no crime reported in the Parish. Would advise residents who have oil tanks to take precautions following recent oil thefts in the District. Leaflets on preventative measures were handed out.

8. County Cllr. report – Cllr. Mr. Holt reported the following:

- The County Council set up last year the BOLD programme to highlight areas where expenditure could be reduced.
- The County Council would receive an incentive from the Government as Council Tax has not been increased.
- Schemes to continue are the Parish Lengthsman scheme, the £15 million rural roads initiative scheme and the £3 million footway enhancement programme.

9. Dist. Cllrs. report: Not in attendance.

10. Matters raised by parishioners:

The following points were made:

- It was noted that the railings on the left hand side as you drive out of the village towards Morton Spirt Farm have been replaced.
- The initial agreement set up in 1989 that was amended in 2009 requests that quarry lorry drivers do not use the B4088.
- The money in the business account is there as a reserve for any unexpected expenditure.

Meeting closed at 8.20 pm.