

Minutes of the Aston Abbotts Annual Parish Meeting

8.00pm 20th May, 2015

Present: Mr C Higgs (Vice Chairman, Parish Council), Mr Paul Bruton (acting secretary), Mr Peter Cooper (District Councillor), Mrs N Glover (County Councillor) Ms P Boston (PCSO, North Wing) and 20 parishioners.

1. Apologies: Mr P Shorrocks, Mrs K Curry, Mrs J Hardcastle, Mr B Carvey, Mr S Markwell, Mrs V Smith and Mr L Smith.
 2. The Minutes to the meeting held 14th May, 2014 were approved and signed as a true record
 3. No matters arising.
 4. **County Councillor Glover** advised that her monthly reports included within the minutes of the Parish meetings had hopefully kept residents up to date with current developments within Bucks CC. A question from the floor was asked whether the A418 bypass would ever be built. This was not planned and as a result concern was expressed regarding the junction with the A418 that was extremely hazardous and dangerous. Given the anticipated increase in use of the A418, County Cllr Glover was requested to raise the matter on behalf of residents with the appropriate department. County Cllr Glover agreed and would keep residents updated via the Parish Clerk. **District Councillor Cooper** addressed the meeting with a number of updates to local issues affecting Aston Abbotts and the Aylesbury area in general although as the election had only just been held and as the new Council had yet to meet, precise plans were not agreed.
- The upgrade to Broadband is due to have the cabinet that serves Aston Abbotts & Rowsham switched on in June. There was an issue with the power supply that has delayed the anticipated date and this has now been resolved.
The possibility of a cycle path to Aylesbury was still being explored and a feasibility study had been commissioned with funding from the Local Area Forum. It was hoped an application for funding the project from the New Homes Bonus would be made next year. The cycle path would run from the crossroads to Bierton where the plans for development of Aylesbury East included a cycle path into the Town Centre.
Areas that the new Council had to address included the following:
 - The development of the Local Plan was forecast for 2017 and Cllr Cooper felt this was too long and Council should be putting more resource and effort into developing the plan sooner. Our neighbours Wingrave had developed a Neighbourhood Plan as a way to control development in their village as developers had identified 21 sites. Although Aston Abbotts is smaller and there are no developer sites at present, the current situation regarding the Local Plan did mean we were exposed given our proximity to the A418.
 - The development of Aylesbury town centre was continuing with plans for the Old Police station to be demolished to create a Cultural area to include a new piazza with new restaurants and shops. The open air car park will be affected during the build.
 - The new Council will have to continue to make cost savings as cuts to the Central Gov't Grant continue with the potential for no grant within the next 5 years – a saving of £10m - £12m, or alternatively continue to look for ways of generating income. They will also look to change the structure of Local Councils reducing the number from 5 to 1 or more likely 2, a consultation has been commissioned.

- Answering questions from the residents Cllr. Cooper confirmed residents fears that the A418 would get busier as the new Dunstable by pass is built and Aylesbury grows. A recent bid by BCC for funding a by pass had been thrown out and there were currently no plans to improve the situation. There was also a question concerning grass cutting and this was the responsibility of BCC who were only planning 2 cuts this year as the cost savings continue to affect certain services.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Cooper for his report and making the effort to attend given the other meetings he was committed to attend this evening.

- PCSO Boston reported that over the past 12 months there have been 3 reported crimes within our Parish, these have all been theft from vehicles. This has been the main issue in our Area with power tools being the main aim. There have been targeted operations carried out and arrests made but we felt there are different groups carrying out these offences. Crime prevention is a key message, we all have a responsibility to make ourselves and our property as secure as possible.
- There were 36 calls to Thames Valley Police to report incidents in addition to crime and these included calls regarding abandoned vehicles, parking issues, road hazard, noise complaints and suspicious persons activity.
- WE are in the process of implementing priority based budgeting, this is to ensure that monies are spent to tackle the main crime issues that affect communities and resources are directed where it is needed. It is important residents report crimes when they happen so a true reflection of what is happening in rural areas.
- Wing police office is at full resourcing with 3 PCs and 5 PCSOs with full support from the Aylesbury and Buckingham response teams, we also have dog units that book on at Wing Station who although covering all of the Thames Valley area have been fundamental in assisting within the rural area.
- Many villages are up and running with Community Speedwatch and sharing the use of MVAS – this has been positive with villagers taking action in educating motorists in adhering to the speed limit and when there is evidence of a persistent speeder information is passed onto Thames Valley Police to intervene.
- Thames Valley Police website is worth a look to gather varied information and signing to alerts keeps you in the picture on what is happening within our policing area.

The Chairman thanked PCSO Boston for her report.

5. Parish Councils Chairman's Report, In Mr Shorrock absence Cllr Higgs read his report and this summarised the work undertaken during the year;
 - Council had been considering whether to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan, a formal document that sets out the planning policies for an area and will have legal weight in any planning decision. A Neighbourhood Plan is supposed to be ancillary to a master plan prepared by the Local Council, but the AVDC Local Plan was rejected by Government, and it will not be completed until 2017 leaving the area open to speculative planning applications from Developers. The cost of developing these plans can be in excess of £10,000 and although it may be possible to get a grant towards these costs we would still have to find several thousand pounds out of its own

resources. For this reason very few parish councils have prepared such plans and none as small as ours. We have sought advice and although there is some risk it does seem that the risk is less great here than Wingrave, who are developing a Plan. We will continue to discuss the matter and no decision has yet been reached.

- Community Right to Bid - Recent legislation has allowed Parish Councils to register various buildings and areas of land in their area as ones for which they or groups of local residents would like to have the right to buy should the property come on the market in order to preserve that building for the benefit of the Community. We are taking advantage of this to register the Village Hall, the pub, the Church, the Recreation Ground and the allotments.
- The Rural Exception Policy – There is a planning policy called the Rural Exception Scheme that allows for the provision of housing in small villages if a need is established. Once built such houses will remain in perpetuity for the benefit of the parishioners with a strong local connection and will not be readily saleable on the open market. The scheme would provide for example starter homes for younger people, down-sized dwellings for the elderly, and generally affordable housing. We commissioned a survey that recommended we should try to provide 4 one bedroom houses for rent and 3 two bedroom houses for rent or shared ownership. The houses would be built on plots of land that are not earmarked for development and are usually built in a way that respects the character of the village. The search for a suitable site is on going.
- Council agreed to support a feasibility study for the provision of a cycle way alongside the A418.
- We have been continuing to press for Moat Lane and Lines Hill to be gritted in icy weather, especially after the accidents that occurred last winter, Cllr Higgs and Clarke attended a recent Local Area Forum meeting where it was agreed that the road meets the criteria and we expect the road to be included next year.
- There have unfortunately been no volunteers to update the Village Plan, despite advertisements in the Chronicle, and the Council will have to try to keep it updated.

6. Village Activity reports:

- Phil Corrigan updated the meeting on the current position of the Chronicle and advised that from September a new version would be launched that hopefully would help to reduce production costs. Currently we had around £1,800 of income from adverts – costs were £3,200 at present with the difference being made up with donations from the Fete and village funds. The new production method should reduce costs however any additional funding from the Fete would be gratefully received. A vote of thanks was recorded to Phil for taking on the Chronicle that all agreed was appreciated by residents.
- Phil Spooner reported that during the year the Village Postie had been launched. The website although not official was due a facelift and any ideas for content and layout would be welcomed. We could offer a link to local businesses, please contact him if interested. The Village postie had been started by S Burgess, S Markwell and himself after Steve Markwell raised the idea, and currently we have 90 email addresses and we are hoping to get more at this year's Fete. Emails are vetted for suitability and generally passed, there are some commercial but these must have a village connection. A lot of items have been circulated and include notices of forthcoming events and meetings. Comments on any posts are not circulated to ensure control. Those present all agreed it was a great addition to keep residents up to date with local activities and a vote of thanks was recorded for all involved.

- Colin Higgs reported the Good Samaritan Bingo takes place on the 2nd Thursday of each month in the Village Hall and it is a fun game for all ages, children included. There are cash prizes for the winners of the main games, an accumulating Snowball, plus raffle. It is a light hearted, very friendly evening. Donations were made to the following charities. Whitby RNLI, British Heart Foundation, Florence Nightingale Hospice, Motor Neurone Support, Air Ambulance etc. Thanks to all the loyal regulars and all those who have made prize donations. Colin Higgs also advised there was a Whist drive every 1st, 3rd, & 5th Thursdays of each month and all were welcome, the Ramblers also meet on the 3rd Sunday every month meeting at 2pm on the Green to explore local public walks.
 - Sally Palmer reported that the GNOMES (Girls night out men excluded) met every Tuesday night – new lady members were always welcome. They had organised a number of events during the year including an evening of Boules, games night and a race night raising funds for Charity.
 - John Hardcastle reported that the Village Orchard now has 111 fruit trees of 84 different varieties. There will be a stall on behalf of the Village orchard at the Fete kindly run by Brigitte Gutierrez. Peter Knight has recently mowed the Orchard and it is a good time to walk around and see all the trees. Gordon Smith has updated the Orchard Book, this lists all the trees and the family connections associated with each tree. Copies of the book are available in the shed if you would like to use one whilst visiting the Orchard. Finally a thank you to Peter and Ale for all their hard work.
 - John Hardcastle reported on the Aston Abbots Theatregoers – tickets for the summer season are printed in the Chronicle and cover the period to the end of September. About 25 people regularly express an interest and the tickets are free and you are offered a programme and a drink during the interval. It would be good for other villagers to enter the draw for each show.
 - John Hardcastle reported on the Book club that was started in 2009 and now had 14 members (2 male) who meet once a month at one of the member's homes to discuss the book of the month (chosen by the host) and enjoy the odd glass of wine., now on their 66th book. The size of the club seemed to be just about right and if other people were interested then he would be happy to start another club, Cheddington has three.
 - John Hardcastle reported to the meeting that planning consent has been received and Building Control have approved the drawings for the development of the Village Hall. The Trustees have appointed a Quantity Surveyor who will be able to report on the anticipated costs and have prepared the documents potential contractors will use to provide quotations. It will soon be possible for applications to be made to potential funders, the most likely one being WREN. Support from the village will be needed. The Trustees are very keen that all interest groups in the village are represented. If you would like to join the Committee please let me know, your input would be very welcome. Trustees have now received a Defibrillator from the British Heart Foundation that will be located at the Village Hall.
7. The meeting was asked if there were any volunteers to help with the implementation of the Village Plan Actions, unfortunately none were forthcoming.
8. The Distribution of the profits from the 2015 Fete was discussed and it was agreed that the profits from the fete would be distributed in equal proportion between The Chronicle, The Church, The Village Hall and The Recreation Ground.

9. AOB – Residents from Brickhill raised concerns over the tree cuttings that had been deposited on the Recreation Ground creating an eyesore for them and visitors to the area, they enquired how long the cuttings were anticipated to be there. Cllr Clarke explained that the cuttings were as a result of addressing another residents concerns over a dead cherry tree and various Safety issues. It was anticipated they would be removed/disposed of within the next 3 weeks weather and wind conditions permitting.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 9.15pm