

### The Chairman's Report

We live in changing times. Not so many years ago, the Annual Parish Meeting - or 'assembly' - was the one time in the Parish Council's year when our friends and neighbours — Members of the Public - could attend and speak at a meeting of the Parish Council. This was the public forum for comment, question and observation.

Today's pace of life is ever quickening. Abbotts Ann Parish Council, as are many in the land, now often uses the 'suspension of standing orders' as a means to include public comment or advice if appropriate to an agenda item. Or where possible, 'public participation' if agenda time allows. Prior notice to the Clerk is necessary. These means allow exchange between Council and Public far more rapidly, and is an enormous help towards efficient and 'open' business in our village.

I use this introduction as an encouragement to anyone who cares to, to come to Parish Council meetings - the first Thursday each month at 7 o'clock, and normally taking about two hours. You are warmly welcome to attend all or parts of meetings. It is encouraging to the Members to have your company, and we do our best to have lively, interesting and friendly meetings. Most importantly, to *properly* discuss matters of importance to us all. If you are not able to attend, at least please contact the Clerk or any Members to make your point of view known.

This year has been the first of a new term for the Parish Council, the Election having been held on the 1<sup>st</sup> May last year, the same day as that for the Borough Council. In the latter, Cllr. Mrs Margot Townsend was re-elected, and Arthur Peters was elected to the vacancy of Jack Taylor's retirement. Either, or sometimes both Councillors have attended nearly all the Parish Council meetings, which is invaluable for advice and an understanding of the particular issues discussed. The Parish Council is grateful to Cllr. Mrs Townsend, Cllr. Peters, and to his predecessor Jack Taylor.

In the case of the Parish Council Election, the Council was 'returned unopposed', meaning there was no need for a poll. Mr Robinson retired, after a remarkable 45 years service, and Mr Stanley Oram stood as the successor candidate. The other six Councillors stood for re-election. Ken maintains his contact with the village with his many friends here and his and Mrs Robinson's continuing association with the village Church. The other new addition to the Parish Council is our new Clerk, Kevin Lawton, who has taken over from David Downey, who happily for us all is now the Parish Council's Footpaths Officer and continues his attendance at our meetings.

The reports of Parish Council meetings which appeared in the Parish Magazine and sometimes in the *Andover Advertiser*, have given way to an edited version of the minutes of the meetings in the Parish Magazine, and, I believe a full version on the 'web-site'. The Members of the Parish Council think that in this way the business of a typical meeting and its agenda is getting more widely and easily known.

Having now mentioned the 'web-site', you already may know that once again under Keith Saunders' expertise, it won the Hampshire section in the Calor Village of the Year Competition. It

went on to be runner-up in the National Competition (Alderbourne in Wiltshire won). Many people help with the web-site - each contributor adds to the interest - so that it becomes a village team effort, and we are fortunate to have a core of dedicated experts who willingly help Keith. For the Parish Council, besides Kevin's (our Clerk's) regular contributions, Graham Whyte is our representative. He has been one of the prime instigators of the introduction of Broadband. The Parish Council is grateful for his work and experience that he shares. He is also our representative at Emergency Planning meetings when they are called by the Borough Council.

From the Parish Magazine reports, you will be familiar with the course of a Parish Council meeting. The Council does now contribute to the magazine costs for the greater space used.

Much of the Council's time is spent on Planning matters. These range from the future development of Andover Airfield, to the addition of conservatories, porches and alterations to listed buildings, even the use of a site in the village for a miniature railway - which was refused by TVBC; from the Parish's point of view this could have been prejudicial to the anticipated Gap status of Little Park. I am sure Abbotts Ann Action's report will elaborate on this subject, so great is its importance.

Planning matters in most of Abbotts Ann fall within the Conservation Area geographically, and thus 'benefit' from tighter controls. To a degree, this can be beneficial to the planning authority (at the same time as viewed as a hindrance by some applicants!) To this end the Parish Council is still keen to have the Conservation Area reviewed, with the intention of adding parts presently outside the boundaries.

This 'Conservation Area' review is still delayed by the Borough Council, in turn through the delayed progress of the Borough Local Plan. The Parish Council has lodged comments on the latest Borough Local Plan Review Stages, taking much advice from the wealth of expertise and technical knowledge within Abbotts Ann Action. Ray Lucas, Brian Wilkins, John Moon and Peter Gibson are four of a wider band whose efforts are very much appreciated.

Later in this evening's Agenda you will hear more detail of how the Parish Council spends its allocation of your Council Tax. On insurance, playground inspection fees, remedial work and repairs, audit fees, maintenance contributions to the P.C.C. towards the Churchyard and Church Clock, the Sports Field Management Committee, Footpath and Parish Property maintenance including our few street lights, salaries and National Insurance, and provision of new facilities from village name boards to playground equipment as some examples.

Some of these new facilities have not been straightforward. There was the saga of the first order for new village name boards, but with David Downey's perseverance, new name boards are installed at each entrance to Abbotts Ann. At Poplar Corner, with the scheme for the area that David envisaged now completed, the result is a proud display of this village's personality.

The new playground equipment in the War Memorial Hall grounds is causing concern to the Parish Council and the Nursery School as the safety surface is often found to be contaminated by broken glass. But this matter should be resolved soon and the Parish Council hopes to welcome a Nursery School Representative to its next meeting to agree a solution.

On the subject of play equipment, you will know that the Borough Council was going to lend a

‘roving’ skateboard ramp for older children and the ‘youth’ of the village. Its loan was keenly anticipated, but frequently delayed by the Borough Council. Eventually Mrs Penny Wilkins - acting as the Parish Council’s contact between the enthusiastic youngsters and the Borough Council - became the instigator of a project to acquire a ramp of the village’s own. A Youth Committee has been formed to raise funds. Skateboard ramps are expensive - but enthusiasm seems equally keen.

Some of the Council’s business may seem mundane to the casual observer, such as a new sewer from Monxton to Abbots Ann and beyond which for a time caused much annoyance to the staff at Manor Farm nearby. It often didn’t keep in what it shouldn’t have leaked out. If something is out of order, please let us know as the Parish Council can press the responsible authority to get something done. However, it is your advice of details amiss which helps our village to run smoothly.

At the start of this report I referred to ‘Public’ involvement at Parish Council meetings. Early in the Council’s past year a group of residents from Abbots Ann Down visited a meeting with a renewed request for road safety measures on the A343 Salisbury Road near their homes. The Parish Council agreed with their suggestions — indeed they featured on the Parish Council’s list when the then M.P. David Mitchell was shown the places all around the village in need of better road safety measures. Abbots Ann Down is now signed on the Salisbury Road. The Hampshire County Council Highway Authority does not agree that the white-lining needs changing, but the requested light at the bus stop has been arranged.

Even blocked drains and ditches causing excessive puddles and flooding cause a danger on the main roads and the lanes of this village, and need to be reported quickly. We all know of regular spots from Red Post Lane to ‘the 343’. Sheets of water are no deterrent to speeding drivers.

Rain or shine, main road or lane, increasing and speeding traffic is becoming a major hazard. To people, children, animals and even verge erosion and pavement damage. Speeding motorcycles on the Salisbury Road and motorists racing down Red Rice Road have resulted in Police speed checks. In the latter case the Parish Council has asked the Constabulary to come again and choose a busy period, rather than the drowsy dog-days of August during holiday time. The Parish Council has once again asked that the speed limit from Andover to the Garden Centre be set at safe and logical levels. I have no success to report; not yet.

However, within the village at Jubilee Oak junction you cannot have missed the *trial scheme* presently installed. The earlier trial white lining recommended by the Highway Authority had no effect in an attempt to make it safer for those living nearby, using the shop, and simply driving or walking by in regular use of the junction. There was no effect in instilling care and consideration in travelling motorists for the village through which they pass.

It is a trial. The Parish Council has discussed it over a long time, and this is the present result. Much has been said already. The Parish Council will be very grateful for ideas and suggestions that you may care to make. You are all well-situated to judge the effect of this trial. If you could write to the Clerk with your observations and suggestions it would help us to form an agreeable and practical solution to this village danger. The Parish Council can then refer this to the Highway Authority for a discreet and rural remedy, rather than what is presently described as an ‘Urban Intrusion’!

At the close of this report, thank you all for your individual contributions towards the happy, vigorous life of this village of ours. If you have recently moved in, I hope you are quickly gaining a

welcome, and a good impression. Thank you to the P.C.C. for initiating a Welcome Party in this Hall. I hope that you will soon take pleasure in joining in village life (there is a vacancy for a Chairman of the Fête Committee at present). “Thank you” to Liz Dell, and the Fête Committee, Sue Hancock, W.I., and helpers for ‘gardening’ around this War Memorial Hall and its resulting attractive appearance, and thank you to the Hall Committee for keeping the building the fine village focus that it is (and for providing storage space for Parish Council records!). To David Downey, Footpath Officer and Nick Harding, former, and Trevor Hook current, ‘maintenance-man’, Dr John Moon our Tree Warden. To Ray Lucas and the Members of Abbotts Ann Action. To Penny Wilkins, Fun Ride and her team who do so much through Riding for the Disabled, The Abbotts Ann Players for entertainment, the P.C.C., Rector and Staff of St. Mary’s for our spiritual welfare, the Headmistress and Staff of the school, and Paul Stanton and the Governors, for the welfare of the children, and the Sports Field Management Committee for our pavilion and recreation ground. Mike Butt and Neighbourhood Watch and our local Police towards our personal and village safety.

Last, but not least, to the villagers who have helped, and who now run the Village Shop. It is also through you that all that visitors gain a first impression of our village. This must be one of the greatest success stories for miles around, and long may it be so.

Above all to each of you, friends and neighbours who contribute when and what you can to turn a village into this community – an enthusiastic group – a large group – of friends with a common interest in caring, happy village life.

Muster at 10.00 a.m. tomorrow morning, outside this hall for the Village Litter Collection and Tidy Up.