

# Abbots Langley Parish Council



## Annual Report 2009 / 2010

Presented at the Annual Parish Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup>  
March 2010 at The Manor House, Abbots Langley.

[www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk](http://www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk)

**Abbots Langley Parish Council**  
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**1. Parish Council Chairman's Report**  
**Councillor David Major - Chairman of the Parish Council**

My name is David Major and I am privileged to be Chairman of Abbots Langley Parish Council for this council year.

My main duty is to chair the monthly full Council meetings. Please note that the Council have now introduced Public Participation and this allows members of the public who have requested to address the council, to speak on an agenda item at any of our meetings. Our meetings are open to the public and you are welcome to attend; to see what is happening you will find the calendar and the agendas and minutes of the meetings on the Parish Council website, or they are available in the Parish Council offices.

As Chairman I have the honour to be invited to, and represent the Council, at many of the local annual Parish functions such as the Carnival and the Carol Concert, as well as the Gardening Society Prize Giving, local charity AGMs, the local police 'Fun Day' at Leavesden and the Service of Remembrance at St. Lawrence Church. In most cases these are open air events and the weather was kind to us despite the generally disappointing summer. Unfortunately this year's November Fireworks was at the mercy of the weather and regrettably affected by the torrential rain, before and during the performance, despite all the hard work needed to organise this usually successful display. The Council's sincere thanks must go to the organisers who are mostly volunteers that put in such a lot of hard work to ensure all these events are successful.

All the main Village activities continue to be well organised and publicly supported; I am convinced this has helped to keep Abbots Langley's identity and village like feel, despite the strong threat of the Parish being consumed by urban sprawl and over development.

It's my privilege and duty along with my fellow Councillors to thank the Clerk for his hard work and management as well as the Staff and Works Team for their dedication in supporting the community and maintaining our open spaces, halls and other duties. I would also like to thank Councillors for their contribution to this Parish of Abbots Langley - Centre of the Universe!

**2a. Planning & Highways Committee Report**  
**Councillor Mike Morton - Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee**

Good evening Ladies and Gentlemen, my name is Michael Morton and I have had the pleasure of being the Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee for the past year.

Early in the year the terms of reference of the Parish Council's various committees were reviewed and it was decided that this Committee would deal with all planning matters and oversee highways, byways, footpaths, rights of way and transport issues, and also be responsible for bus shelters. We will be taking on responsibility for the Parish Council's notice boards and I expect we will also soon be looking after an ex-BT red telephone kiosk which has recently been adopted by the Parish Council. The list keeps us busy.

Looking at planning matters first, I mentioned last year the redevelopment of the Hillside Hall and you may have noticed that progress has been slow but all problems have now been ironed out and it is going ahead. The Breakspeare Public House, which is near Hillside Hall, is also the subject of a planning application which seeks to demolish it and replace it with 13 town houses. The Committee broadly supports this move. The refurbishment of the Community Centre has been successfully completed and the Three Rivers District Council's Local Development Framework Core Strategy is progressing and there has been public consultation on Further Preferred Options. A copy of the Parish Council's response is available from our website or the Parish Council offices.

You may recall that the Local Development Framework Core Strategy is the District Council's plan for how the district will meet government targets for housing and economic growth between 2011 and 2026. The Government target is 5000 extra dwellings to be built in Three Rivers in this period and the District Council has had to supply a fairly detailed plan of how it can reach this number. As reported previously Abbots Langley parish is expected to account for the lion's share and we have made it clear to Three Rivers Council that, whilst we accept that there must be development here, we expect other parts of the District to contribute in far greater numbers than have so far been allocated to them, bearing in mind the amount of development that there has been in the Parish in the last 20 years and the strain that it has put on the infrastructure. I should mention here the efforts put in by two Councillors who are not on the

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Committee but who have been the driving force behind our vigorous and detailed representations to Three Rivers, that is Keith Williams and Stephen Giles-Medhurst. Thank you gentlemen.

The latest large planning application that has come before the Committee is for the refurbishment and extension of Leavesden Studios for film production and associated activities with a new access from Aerodrome Way. The plans for the redevelopment of Francis Combe School into Francis Combe Academy are very ambitious; we are happy to give our support and it is estimated that the whole project might take 120 weeks. We also considered the Hertfordshire County Council Waste Development Plan documents and commented on the planning application for a wood-waste biomass-fuelled renewable energy plant at Potters Crouch for Navitas Environmental Ltd. Other interesting planning applications we have considered related to the location of nine dwellings in the land behind number 18 Gallows Hill Lane, where there is an appeal against refusal by Three Rivers District Council. An application to increase the number of caravans was allowed at the Oaklands Traveller site on the Bedmond Road and approval was given for a steel car park structure at Kings Langley Station.

This last application brings me onto highways matters as there have been a lot of problems regarding cars parked around the area of West Herts College on Home Park Road. It is hoped that the extra parking space being created at the station will help to alleviate the problem and parking restrictions on the roads in the vicinity are being introduced.

I reported last year on the success the local pressure groups had had in persuading Herts Highways to make safety improvements to the Bedmond Road and Primrose Hill/Station Road. Progress here has also been slow but you will have noticed that the pedestrian crossing islands are being built in the Bedmond Road, and work is about to start on traffic lights and a pedestrian footway for the railway bridge between Primrose Hill and Lower Road.

We have recently been consulted on plans for variable speed limits on the M1 between junctions 6a and 10, and you will probably have noticed that the M10 has now been downgraded and re-numbered as the A414. The widening of the M25 has started and a Public Exhibition on the widening of the next section of the M25 through the parish up to Junction 21a is being held in Henderson Hall on 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> March 2010.

One item of very good news is the retention of the 318 bus route into Watford which has proved to be very popular. As a spin-off from this, Mullanys, who are the operators, offered their passengers a day trip to Southend and enough people took-up the offer for them to run 3 coaches.

The Parish Council have replaced their bus shelter on Gallows Hill during the year and a new notice board has been installed at Lemonfield Play area.

We are still concerned with traffic problems in Abbots Langley Parish and are keen for a 20 mph limit to be brought in where it would be suitable. We hope that new signage for the car park will help to stop people trying to park in inappropriate places.

One of the most unusual matters we were consulted upon in the year was Three Rivers District Council's licensing policy for Gambling. We were happy to give our feedback and I can report that TRDC's policy at present is not to allow any casinos in the District. Bizarrely the Parish Council are not part of the consultation process at present when Alcohol and Entertainment Licences are being considered. We are pressing to have this position changed.

I hope my report has given you an idea of what we have been involved in in the last year and it just leaves me to thank the members of the committee for their help and support, especially my vice-chairman, Ivy Young, who has stood-in for me when I have been absent, and, of course, our Committee Clerk, Ann, without whose help and advice we would often be all at sea. Thank you all.

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**2b. Leisure Committee**

**Councillor Jane Lay - Chairman of the Leisure Committee**

My committee has met for some 16 hours over the past months and comprises of 9 councillors as well as representatives from allotments, sports organisations and from our halls. These representatives keep the committee informed of any problems that may occur with our venues and we welcome their views.

**Last year's successful projects**

As reported at last year's annual meeting we gave a £25,000 grant to the refurbishment of the Community Centre. This project has now been successfully completed and was opened in October by Graham Taylor. We also invested £22,000 towards the refurbishment of the playground at Lemonfield Drive and this too has been successfully completed and local children are now enjoying these new facilities.

**Halls**

**Henderson Hall**

We have completed the redecoration the Henderson Hall which makes it much brighter and a more pleasant place to use.

This year we have been in consultation with the Trustees of the Henderson Hall regarding financial separation of the Trust and the Parish Council accounts. Although the Parish Council have been running the Hall since the 1980's we have now been advised by our Auditors that the hall should be run by the Trustees and not the Parish Council but we can be hired to do this on behalf of the Trustees. This split will enable the Trustees to apply for various grants to assist them to run the Hall which the Parish Council cannot do. This is an ongoing situation which will hopefully be regularised during the year.

**Hillside Hall**

This exciting project has, at last, been handed over to the development company who is going to demolish the old hall and rebuild a brand new one with flats above it. All at no cost to the Parish Council, this hall will be purpose built with plenty of storage and a kitchen for the users. This should, if kept on target, be operational at the beginning of 2011. New equipment and furnishings for the Hall of £20,000 will be funded by the Section 106 contribution from the School Mead development.

**Manor House**

Since the Council has purchased a drop down screen and microphone facility it has been very popular with those hiring the hall for conferences as well as local societies for talks and speakers. The Manor House is still our most used venue for weddings and anniversaries especially at weekends and gets very high ratings for service by our staff.

**Environmental Matters**

**Community Orchard**

We are very keen to become an environmentally friendly Council. With that in mind we are proposing to have a community orchard of a small number of fruit trees somewhere in the parish. We have been looking at several suitable places and have asked if anyone is prepared to run this project. So far a site at Primrose Hill playing fields has been suggested and an area at the bottom of South Way playing fields.

**Bees on allotments**

We have been asked to consider allowing bee hives to be installed by plot holders on our allotments sites. This we welcomed and have been in progress looking into how this can be done safely and under the National Beekeeping Association guidelines.

**Composting**

We are encouraging our workforce to compost all green and woody matter. We are looking at having compost bays by the Manor House allotments so that the compost can be used mainly on our community flower beds and grounds, and possibly by the residents.

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**Environmental Audit**

The Full Council have agreed to having an environmental audit carried out to decide the best way on how to proceed in doing our bit to deter global warming.

**Tree Audit**

The Council has had a tree audit carried out by the Tree Rivers District Council Tree Officers at Roman Gardens, Langleybury and Manor House grounds. The Officers did highlight the need for a short, medium and long term woodland management plan and maintenance, ground clearance, ivy reduction and felling of some trees to ensure the health of others will be done. We are hoping to start a trial run at the west end of the Manor House grounds in the near future.

**Playing Fields**

**Primrose Hill**

We have had considerable problems with moles burrowing under the senior and junior pitch which have made us cancel all football games for Health and Safety reasons. Every day mole hills have appeared and the work staff have flattened them but the main problem is the tunnelling underground which can cause injury when people run and play in these areas. We have been looking into ways and means of controlling the moles, or even eradicating them, but nothing we have done at present has helped. The future of these playing fields looks very bleak for sport and the committee will be looking at other ideas for the use of these fields. We are also looking at repairing the car parking area to remove the puddle areas at a cost of £4,000.

**Evergreen Football Club**

We were very excited at the suggestion from Ron Smith, the Chairman, of providing a Youth Club at Evergreen and we look forward to supporting him in this project.

**Manor House**

We have budgeted to replace all the bounce boards at the Multi use Games Area (MuGA), the multi sports games area, on the Manor House grounds due to constant vandalism. We are also planning to have work done on the patio where the path comes across the field which is always flooded when the rain falls. This will cost £5,000. The water rushes off the field onto the path and then runs to lowest point creating ponding and prevents pedestrians walking in that area. We are also going to install CCTV to help prevent vandalism to the Manor House Pavilion at a cost £4,000.

**Kitters Green**

Due to the indiscriminate car parking by the users of the Royal Oak Public House we are going to provide bollards to prevent parking on the grassed areas on Kitters Green. We have had several complaints about these cars as this is one of our beauty spots in the village and we hope to preserve this area for those to sit and enjoy.

**Depot**

The committee are seeking professional advice on how to go forward with the project of looking into how the Parish Council provides ground and property maintenance to our property and whether the current site is the most appropriate location. We also have had to budget £25,000 for a new triple mower for mowing all the large grassed areas.

**Fun for residents**

We are delighted that the Abbots Langley Carnival, Fireworks and Christmas Carols are such a success each year, and I believe we should give all the staff involved a vote of thanks for all their hard work and long hours to make these events very enjoyable for everyone.

Finally I would like to thank all the members of the committee for their work over the past year but also to Tim Perkins, the user representatives, David Abbott, Mark Ellis and the work force for their support.

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**2c. Finance & Administration Committee**

**Councillor Keith Williams - Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee**

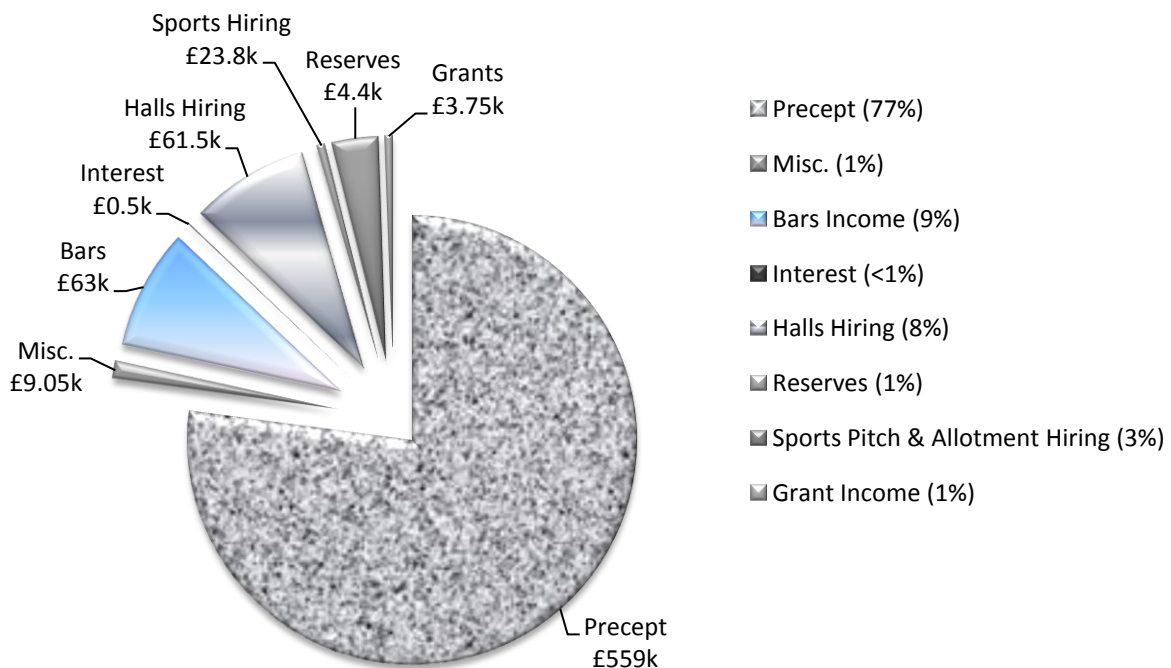
The remit of the Finance and Administration Committee includes strategic monitoring of the Council's finances, budget and investments together with overseeing the effective use of the Council's assets and other administrative matters. Abbots Langley Parish Council is one of the largest Parish Councils in the country, both in terms of the services it provides to its Parishioners, as reported elsewhere and in terms of its budgeted expenditure.

The financial year 2009/2010 has yet to end and the final figures will not be available for a few weeks; the Finance and Administration Committee has monitored budgetary performance throughout the year and expect the final results to be in line with our agreed and published budget. In particular I was very pleased that in a tough year for the economy, the Parish Council has been able to make a substantial contribution to the refurbishment costs of the Community Centre and also, along with a grant from the District Council, refurbish the Lemonfield play area.

The Parish Council continues to receive a clean audit from our external auditors, BDO Stoy Hayward, in all areas except for the operational relationship that exists between the Parish Council as Custodian Trustee for Henderson Hall and the appointed Trustees of Henderson Hall. There is a long historic relationship between the two bodies, which is no longer acceptable to the auditors. The Finance and Administration Committee, along with the Leisure Committee who oversee halls, are working with the Trustees of Henderson Hall to regularise matters to the satisfaction of the auditors.

The Parish Council's budget for 2010/11 is £724,788. This is a reduction on last year's figure, which was artificially high because it included the capital receipt from the sale of the Fire Station that has now been transferred to the Capital Reserves Fund. The Council is budgeting for an income in 2010/11 of £161,000 from grants and trading, the balance comes from reserves and £559,000 is raised through the precept, which is collected in Council Tax bills on behalf of the Parish Council by Three Rivers District Council. The Parish precept in 2010/11 amounts to £68.10 for a Band D property. The Chart below details where the Parish Council's funds will come from:

**Parish Council Income (£k)**



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Parish Councils do not receive any income from Government Grants, nor any income from local businesses through their business rates - the only income Parish Councils receive is from the domestic Council Tax and trading activities.

After many years of playing catch-up bringing our systems and facilities up to date, the Parish Council is now able to look forward and has been making spending plans for improvements to the Parish. The most significant plan is the commission of an environmental audit to firstly look at the way the Parish Council delivers its services and make sure we do this in the most eco-friendly and carbon neutral way, and secondly, to see how we can, through the Parish Councils Community Leadership role influence our local environment; reduce pollution; improve recycling and generally make Abbots Langley a Greener, Safer and pleasant place for current and future generations.

For some years the Parish Council has been looking to reduce the reliance on grants from the Parish Council for running costs of some voluntary organisations and encourage them to be more self-sustaining. Working in conjunction with County Councillor Goggins, through his Community Grants Program a diverse range of organizations are now well funded and offering a varied program of activities. The following organisations will receive financial support from the Council's grants program in 2010/11:-

- **St Paul's Church Langleybury** - £2000 for the purpose of maintaining the churchyard.
- **St Lawrence's Church** - £2750 for the purpose of maintaining the churchyard.
- **St Lawrence's Church** - £2500 for the purpose of resurfacing two footpaths within the church grounds (second of four annual installments) - this is part of an ongoing program between the Church and Parish Council over several years to improve these well used footpaths.
- **Lions Club of Watford** - £2000 for the purpose of the Abbots Langley Carnival and Firework Display.
- **Abbots Langley Cricket Club** - £500 for the purpose of maintaining the cricket square.
- **Langleybury Cricket Club** - £500 for the purpose of maintaining the cricket square.
- **Royal British Legion (Abbots Langley branch)** - £250 for the purpose of subsidising their hall hire costs so our local Veterans can meet.
- **Bedmond Women's Institute** - £200 for the purpose of subsidising their hall hire costs.
- **Abbots Langley Women's Institute** - £200 for the purpose of subsidising their hall hire costs.
- **Abbots Langley Players** - £350 for the purpose of meeting production costs.
- **Abbots Youth Football Club** - £500 for the purpose of subsidising their pitch hire costs.
- **Abbots Langley Performing Arts Society** - £200 towards the Cost of Abbots Langley Festival of Arts 2010.

My thanks go to Caroline Byrne our Finance Officer for her diligent work in keeping our books straight and our bills paid and also our wider team who often work miracles with the very bare minimum of resources so that we can keep the council tax to affordable limits and provide a good service. I am also grateful for the work and wise counsel of members of the Finance and Administration committee through a very difficult financial year.

## **2d. Staffing Committee**

**Councillor Belinda Phipps - Chairman of the Staffing Committee**

The Staffing Committee met twice during the year and considered a number of matters concerning the employment of the Parish Council's staff. On a day to day basis the Clerk to the Council, as the Senior Officer, continues to manage the staff with support from his management team. The Clerk is supported by a company that provides expert employment advice and updates on employment legislation.

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**Councillors**

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Councillor Geoff Emery 5 High Street Bedmond WD5 0QP 01923 265083	Bedmond	<a href="mailto:cldr_geoff.emery@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">cldr_geoff.emery@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Jeff Hill 61 Summerhouse Way Abbots Langley WD5 0DX 01923 263184	Leavesden	<a href="mailto:cldr_jeff.hill@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">cldr_jeff.hill@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Mrs Jane Lay The Gleanings Marlin Square Abbots Langley WD5 0EG 01923 447281	Abbots Langley	<a href="mailto:cldr_jane.lay@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">cldr_jane.lay@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
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Councillor David Major 10 St Lawrence Close Abbots Langley WD5 0AU 01923 265570	Abbots Langley	<a href="mailto:cldr_david.major@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">cldr_david.major@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
Councillor Michael Morton Stathmore The Nap Kings Langley WD4 8ES 01923 269085 077400 27528	Primrose Hill	<a href="mailto:mikemortonthenap@hotmail.com">mikemortonthenap@hotmail.com</a>

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Councillor Owen Roe 12 Lauderdale Road Hunton Bridge Kings Langley WD4 8QA 01923 262257	Tanners Wood	No email
Councillor Stephen Giles- Medhurst 25 Tudor Manor Gardens Garston WD25 9TQ 01923 893661	Leavesden	<a href="mailto:sgm@cix.co.uk">sgm@cix.co.uk</a>
Councillor David White 12 The Retreat Kings Langley WD4 8LT 01923 262187	Abbots Langley	<a href="mailto:cldr_david.white@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">cldr_david.white@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
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Councillor Miss Ivy Young 39 Langley Lane Abbots Langley WD5 0LX 01923 673609	Leavesden	No Email

Councillor contact details are correct as at February 2010. Please refer to the Parish Council website [www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk](http://www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk) for any updates.

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**Senior Staff**

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Mark Ellis	Works Manager	<a href="mailto:mark.ellis@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">mark.ellis@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>
Caroline Byrne	Finance Officer	<a href="mailto:caroline.byrne@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk">caroline.byrne@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk</a>

**Parish Council Offices**

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