

Abbots Langley Parish Council

Council Offices
Langley Road
Abbots Langley
Herts
WD5 0EJ

Contact Details for Meeting Link
01923 265139
clerk@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

4th May 2020.

To Members of the Parish Council

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held virtually ^[1] on Monday 11th May 2020 at 7:30 pm when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

The meeting will be held on the Zoom platform. Login details are available from the Clerk to the Council.

This is a meeting of the Parish Council and not the Annual Parish Council meeting which is not required to be held this year. ^[1]

The press and public are welcome to attend the meeting.

Tim Perkins

Clerk to the Council

^[1] *Permitting legislation - The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020.*

AGENDA

1. **Apologies for Absence**
To receive and accept apologies for absence.
2. **Declarations of Interest**
To receive declarations of interest in items on the agenda.
3. **Public Participation**
To note if any members of the public have requested to speak at this meeting, in accordance with the Parish Council's Public Speaking Arrangements.
4. **Chairmanship Arrangements from May 2020**
To consider the above. (Clerk's report item 1,)
5. **Hertfordshire Police**
To receive a report from the Police (if present).
6. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on 9th March 2020.**
7. **Minutes for adoption**
To adopt the following minutes and approve publication on the Parish Council's website.
Planning & Highways Committee - 11th March 2020
8. **Annual Parish Meeting**
To note the draft minutes of the above held on 4th March 2020.
9. **Calendar of Meetings**
To consider a revised Calendar of Meetings in light of the pandemic lockdown. (Clerk's report item 2.)

Abbots Langley Parish Council

10. Financial Grant - Henderson Hub

To consider the reports from the Clerk and Chair of the Henderson Hub. (Clerk's report item 3 and report from Hub enclosed.)

11. Summerhouse Way Garages

To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 4.)

12. Pandemic Update

To consider the report from the Clerk. (Clerk's report item 5.)

13. Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group Report

To note the report from the Chairman of the above. (enclosed.)

14. District and County Council Member's Reports

To consider any reports submitted by members of the above authorities.

15. Chairman's Report

To consider the Chairman's report.

16. Monthly Statement of Accounts

To consider the monthly statement of accounts for March & April 2019 and approve their publication on the Parish Council's website.

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Abbots Langley Parish Council

Clerk's Report - May 2020

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3. Financial Grant - Henderson Hub

The above was considered and recommended by the Finance & Administration Committee in December 2019 (min. 282) and an award of £37,400 approved by the Parish Council in January 2020 (min. 35). The grant was scheduled to be paid by the end of April 2020. I have put a hold on the payment.

The grant to the Hub always attracts the attention of the internal Auditors as it usually appears as a single large expenditure item. They review the application, supporting papers and that the Parish Council has properly considered and approved the grant. We have never received anything but positive comment in this regard.

The business plans submitted by the Hub in support of the grant application have been impacted severely by the lockdown and the subsequent cancellation of significant revenue earning events. The Hub is currently mothballed.

I have spoken to Stuart Pollard our Audit Principal and he agreed with my view that the grant should not be paid as agreed, as the business plans of the Hub submitted in support of the grant, have been so fundamentally affected by the lockdown as to render them irrelevant.

The grant needs to be reconsidered, in light of the revised plans business plans of the Hub and the short and medium term prospects for the on-going viability of the Hub.

Members will recall that the Hub have a five-year break clause in their lease, this is effective 1st May 2021 but the Parish Council has to be notified by 1st November 2020, six months in advance, if the break is going to be exercised.

4. Summerhouse Way Garages

For the benefit of new members. The Parish Council has for many years leased the above from Three Rivers District Council. They were used for storage. (*image following page.*)

It was agreed that the garages would be handed back as the lease had expired and we could not reach an acceptable agreement on rent. (*Les. Comm. 06/2018 min. 79 refers, see below.*)

"The current rent for the Summerhouse Way Garages is £990/pa, following review a Three Rivers District Council are proposing a new rent of £2,000. Members agree with officers that this is unacceptable.

The Clerk was asked to advise Three Rivers District Council that we will not be seeking a renewal of the lease. There will be end of lease dilapidations costs which will be subject to agreement with Three Rivers District Council."

TRDC had a couple of interim managers covering the Head of Property role and it was not possible to get this resolved. A new full time Head of Property joined last year and he had a number of more pressing items in his in-tray.

There have now been some discussions on dilapidations, which had previously been initially quoted at c£10k-12k.

My concern has always been the Parish Council carrying out repairs under the dilapidations clause and then in the future TRDC to decide to demolish the garages. This would be a complete waste of money.

Following discussions with TRDC I have proposed that instead of making a dilapidations payment, or carrying out works, the Parish Council instead demolish the garages and clear the site.

Quotes have been obtained, the best of which is £6,235. There will be a further cost as yet unquoted to safely terminate the electricity supply.

Members approval is sought to proceed on this basis.



5. Pandemic Update

Office

When the lockdown was announced we immediately went to operating with only one person in the office at any one time, this was due to it being pretty much impossible to keep 2m distancing in a small office, but also as two members of staff had underlying conditions that placed them at higher risk from the coronavirus. We also did not allow any visitors to the office.

We have maintained service throughout with one member of staff being in the office all days and the generic info@ and bookings@ emails being managed remotely. There was very high customer call and email volumes in the early days as bookings were cancelled and rearranged, these have tailed off with any recent booking enquiries being for dates well in the future, mostly for next year.

The Finance Officer has been keeping that side of the business ticking over. The internal audit will be carried out remotely and the submission dates for external audit have been pushed back from end July to end September with rumours circulating that this will be pushed back further.

There have been a few grumbles about allotment plots not being worked. We are pretty much fully tenanted at the moment and given the situation I have put a stop to all allotment inspections and lettings. Despite this clearly irritating a couple of tenants.

We were due to move to the new IT set up on 23rd March, when the country pretty much hit the buffers, so this was delayed, which was unfortunate, as one of the benefits of the new set up was it made remote working, particularly access to stored data much easier. The change will be rescheduled when we return to whatever normal may be.

The inability to access voicemails remotely has been a pain. This is due to a software upgrade automatically applied to the phone system under our service contract. I had been thinking about a change to the system and this will be prioritised.

The office boiler is being nursed along, we have now got an expert engineer assigned and he is working through a few options, but there is a lot of head scratching. We have heating and hot water but if the problem cannot be fixed there may be a need to install a new boiler, but we are trying to avoid that at the moment.

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Works Team/Community Warden/Facilities

The Works Team are working a revised rota, prioritising litter runs and grass cutting. The Community Warden is carrying out routine inspections of all the open spaces.

Minor maintenance issues are being resolved as they arise.

The planned summer pitch maintenance will be delayed, but the pitches having not been played on for getting on for two months, plus good amounts of rain and sun has meant Mother Nature is doing a good job for us. Who would have thought less games played on the pitches would aid recovery?

The Facilities Manager has been in regularly and is supporting operations.

We have kept our car parks open. A lack of communication within our parking contractors meant eleven penalty notices were issued, despite them being asked to suspend enforcement. These have been cancelled.

Unfortunately, Three Rivers District Council have kept car parks closed. Any residents around Leavesden Country Park will be particularly aware of this due to the displacement parking, which one weekend meant emergency service vehicles would have found it impossible to access the end of Harlech Road. I have raised the matter with TRDC and have been told it is "under review".

Revenue

Clearly the pandemic will have a serious impact on revenue.

The impact on the financial year that ended 31st March 2020 has been minimal, but essentially since the new financial year started revenue has collapsed. Whilst a decision will have to be taken on pitch fees, as I suspect a lot of the clubs will have significant cashflow challenges, if we assume we will not be able to invoice any fees for at least the first quarter of the new financial year and also take into account lost bookings across Manor House and Tanners Wood Hall, plus the lost Manor House bar income, I currently estimate the lost revenue Mar-Jun 2020 to be around £31,000.

Even when the recovery starts it will probably be a large part of this financial year before bookings return to anything like past levels.

Which is why we have reserves.

6. Small Grants

£250 - Abbots Langley Legionnaires, to support the costs of the annual Veterans Lunch. Thanks for the grant were emailed from the group Secretary.

Tim Perkins

Clerk to the Council

4th May 2020