

Abbots Langley Parish Council

Council Offices
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4th January 2021.

To Members of the Parish Council

The next meeting of the Parish Council will be held virtually ^[1] on Monday 11th January 2021 at 7:30 pm when your presence is summoned for the purpose of transacting the business outlined below.

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. **Hertfordshire Police**
To receive a report from the Police (if present).
5. **To confirm the Minutes of the Meeting held on**
9th November 2020.
6. **Minutes for adoption**
To adopt the following minutes and approve publication on the Parish Council's website.
 - Planning & Highways Committee - 18th November, 2nd and 16th December 2020
 - Finance & Administration Committee - 23rd November and 21st December 2020
 - Staffing Committee - 2nd December 2020
 - Leisure Committee - 9th December 2020
7. **Fees & Charges 2021-2022**
To approve the Halls, Open Spaces and Sports Facilities charges as proposed by the Leisure Committee (min. 160iii). (enclosed)
8. **Budget & Precept 2021-2022**
 - a. To approve the budget for the financial year 2021-2022.
 - b. To set the precept for 2021-2022.Both of the above as proposed by the Finance & Administration Committee (min. 253).
(Clerk's report item 1 and budget book v6a enclosed.)

Abbots Langley Parish Council

9. External Audit 2019-2020

(Referred from the Finance & Administration Committee min. 251.)

To approve and accept the External Auditor's Report and Certificate as recommended by the Finance and Administration Committee. (Report and certificate circulated for the F&A meeting 21st December 2020.)

10. Internal Audit Report (First Interim) 2020-2021

(Referred from the Finance & Administration Committee min. 252.)

Members are asked to formally note the committee's review of the First Interim Internal Audit for 2019-2020 and that no significant items were raised by the auditors. (Report circulated for the F&A meeting 21st December 2020)

11. Meetings January - April 2021

To consider the arrangements for the above. (Clerk's report 2.)

12. Henderson Hub - Grant Application

To consider the above application which has been reviewed and is supported by the Managing Trustees. (Clerk's report item 3, grant application enclosed and refer to December Finance & Administration Committee meeting min. 250.)

F&A members refer to grant application circulated for the December committee meeting.

13. PC Freehold Land - Encroachment

To consider correspondence with the freeholder and a verbal update from the Clerk. (enclosed.)

14. Neighbourhood Plan

i. To consider the next stages in the production of the Neighbourhood Plan. *(Refer Parish Council, November 2020, min. 191.)*

ii. To consider the report from the Chairman of the Steering Group. (enclosed.)

15. District and County Council Member's Reports

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

16. Chairman's Report

To consider the Chairman's report.

17. Clerk's Report

To consider items on the Clerk's report not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

18. Monthly Statement of Accounts

To consider the monthly statement of accounts for November & December 2020 and approve their publication on the Parish Council website.

19. Exclusion of the Press and Public (Part II)

As the following items will consider a matter related to staff employed by the Parish Council a resolution to exclude the press and public may be required, under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 and the LGA 1972, s100.

20. Staffing Matters

To receive a verbal report from the Clerk.

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Clerk's Report - January 2021

1. Budget 2021-2022

There has been significant discussion on the budget and assumptions therein in previous Parish Council and Committee meetings. My reports to meetings October-December 2020 cover all the detail if members need to refer back.

- The Finance and Administration Committee are recommending a 2.5% increase in the precept for 2021-2022. A -1.72% drop in the Band D Base from Three Rivers District Council, means the change in an average Band D precept paid by residents will increase from £86.97 to £90.71 (4.3%) an uplift of £3.74/pa or £0.072/pw.

Full details are on page two of the enclosed budget book (v6a).

- The books for Q3 of this financial year were closed on 21st December 2020. Minor updates have been made to estimated year end expenditure and the 2021-2022 budget based on this latest data. The changes are not significant and overall total apx. £2,000.
- This is probably the toughest budget round with which I have been involved. In many respects luck has played a part. A higher than budgeted general fund balance at 31st March 2020, costs that generally came in at, or below, budget and no nasty surprises prior to the year-end made the starting position for the current financial year higher than planned. This made it possible to ride the income loss due to the pandemic better than would have been possible in other years. The pandemic related grant of £25,000 also certainly helped.
- If income does not recover in 2021-2022 then the budget round later this year will be a much tougher one. I wish well to all who sail in her.
- Members need to consider carefully long-term financial commitments into which they may entering. Expenditure that members may consider affordable today, may seem less so in the future.
- A comment I feel I must make. It does feel from where I am sitting that officers have been worrying a lot more about this budget than members. I appreciate members have confidence in officers to complete the technical and financial challenges of putting this budget together. But a new Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer will be at the helm next round and they will not have the fourteen years institutional knowledge that I have developed, much of it earned as longer serving members will recall, through some grim budget rounds when we needed to restructure the finances of the Parish Council.

Please ensure my successor has members full support through the budgeting process. It can be a tough and difficult time. This was undoubtedly the toughest.

2. Meetings January-April 2021

Members agreed at the September Parish Council that all meetings until end January 2021 would be virtual (min. 135.)

At the start of January, with Hertfordshire in Tier 4 restrictions, there appears no immediate prospect of returning to attended meetings. My suggestion would be:

- i. Members agree that all meetings to the end of the municipal year in April remain virtual. This is reviewed at the March Parish Council and a further decision taken based on the situation at the time.
- ii. The Annual Parish Meeting scheduled for 3rd March 2021 is cancelled and again a view taken at March Parish Council on rescheduling options. The emergency pandemic legislation removed the requirement to hold an APM, we did hold one at the beginning of March 2020 prior to lockdown one.

In "normal" times the legal requirement is to hold an APM between 1st March and 1st June, we have tended to hold ours in early March as this keeps it clear of any purdah periods ahead of May elections.

Plenty of other ways of skinning this particular cat, but the above seemed the most pragmatic.

Abbots Langley Parish Council
Clerk's Report - January 2021

3. Henderson Hub - Grant Application

Members should review the minutes of the Finance & Administration Committee on 21st December (min 250.).

I would also draw members attention to the comments being made in para. 1 of this report about the affordability of future commitments.

Something not discussed at F&A was pages 9 and 10 of the Hub's application and the financial projection option. The level of grants the Hub is expecting to raise from other sources is minimal, making the Parish Council essentially the only source of grant funding. Members need to consider if this is appropriate and again sustainable in the longer term.

4. Office Copies

Copies of the following are available in the office for member's reference.

Local Council Review - Summer (?) 2020, received in December.

Tim Perkins

Clerk to the Council

4th January 2021

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