

Abbots Langley Parish Council



Annual Report 2013-2014

Presented at the Annual Parish Meeting held on
5th March 2014 at Tanners Wood Hall,
School Mead, Abbots Langley.

www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

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1. Parish Council Chairman's Report Councillor Gloria Keaveny - Chairman of the Parish Council

A warm welcome to everyone and I would like to present the Chairman's report to the Parishioners of Abbots Langley Parish for 2013-2014.

Councillor Keith Williams' three "P"s to Protect, Promote and Provide for this wonderful, diverse Parish has been a huge honour to upkeep this year. I believe the Council, Members and Officers, have worked hard to assist our residents in their goals for their neighbourhoods. We will hear the achievements from the dedicated Chairmen of the individual committees, as to how this is accomplished. I thank them all for their time, diligence and endeavours.

Over the year we have succeeded in enabling residents to play games in the parks, grow things on their allotment plots and plant an orchard on the Primrose Hill site. They have put on various shows and people have attended all manner of classes, celebrations and met family and friends in our halls. There were special events for our Queen's 60th Coronation anniversary. We supported our familiar events, such as the Carnival, National Forces Day, Tough Ten race, Remembrance Day Parade and Carol concerts. Our Police Station continues to provide local support. We help fund new ventures - the home visiting and case worker for CAB, Carers Network and AIMS - all adding much to village life. My thanks to the Parish Council staff for facilitating all these activities. The Hub with the Henderson Hall Trustees are still not in a position, at this time, to proceed with their plans for a new Arts Centre in our village.

There have been many charitable fundraisers this year, but the one that has stood out for me has been the Tough Ten race on the first Sunday in October. Organised by a team of five, it encourages all ages and abilities to run for local causes and has grown over the years to help so many in a true Abbots Langley Village way.

Last year we showcased many of our community organisations at the Annual Parish meeting. I am pleased that those who could not take part then have been given an opportunity to show this year. I thank them for attending, as they are the focal points in the village for us all. Also, I am looking forward to Collette Holmes and Sarah Cunnane's presentation on the community production of the Herbal Bed, as part of the Open Stages project from the Royal Shakespeare Company.

We have continued to look at the services we provide, where we spend the money, using it to the best advantage. In the coming year we are planning to look to fund a new play area for the Manor House Sports Ground and more efficient use of our buildings, as our priorities. We value your input on these schemes. We will continue to monitor all that we do and thank all the hundreds of Parishioners for their enormous input into our village life.

2a. Planning & Highways Committee Report Councillor David Major - Chairman of the Planning and Highways Committee (from March 2013)

Fortunately, the Parish Council remain statutory consultees for planning applications submitted to Three Rivers District Council within the parish boundary, for comments and recommendations based on planning regulations, local knowledge and public reaction. Members have worked hard and had some success in trying to protect the parish from the pressure of urban sprawl and unacceptable infill development; nevertheless there have been some disappointments generally due to planning law or a successful appeal decision made by a government appointed inspector. However I do feel Abbots Langley has retained its community and village atmosphere despite enormous pressure for further development.

Temporary relaxation of the requirement for full planning permission for a single story rear extension to properties and allowing them as permitted development has not reduced the committee's workload, there seem to be more than ever two storey side and rear application permissions being sought, not forgetting the larger development sites in the district.

I know that members of this committee are very conscious of the strong public feeling regarding protection and enhancement of this parish. The committee will continue to relay matters such as the poor condition of the road surface, inappropriate housing and commercial development, including any general neglect of the area, to the respective authorities, including this council's own workforce, for action to be taken.

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2b. Leisure Committee Report

Councillor Jane Lay - Chairman of the Leisure Committee

As I write this report on February 1st I have just come back from helping plant 13 of the 30 fruit trees in the new Community Orchard on Primrose Hill. This has been a long time in coming to fruition and I am so pleased that our new Project Manager John Kersey has finally brought this venture near to its conclusion. This volunteer group had fantastic support from several villagers plus quite a few children. I would like to put on record our thanks for John's work in deciding which the best cultivars to plant, where and organising the tree planting. I am sure you will be interested in knowing that we planted assorted apples, plums, gages and pears and hope that they produce fruit in the 2nd or 3rd year and that we will be able to hold our own Apple Day in October in 2016 for everyone to attend and enjoy. Don't tell the squirrels!

I am pleased to report that most of the new allotment plots have been filled at Primrose Hill. Several plots holders have changed their plots from other council allotments site which allows new plot holders to lease the more local and easier to access village sites. Unfortunately we were not able to hold our usual annual allotment prize giving this year and were very grateful to the Abbots Langley Gardening Society for presenting the trophies at their Christmas social evening.

In July we had an extensive Tree Risk Assessment done on all the trees on the Manor House grounds. This provided recommendations for necessary work to the trees, including suggested timeframes, required in order to bring the risk that the trees pose to a level which is considered to be defensible. Each tree was surveyed and only those trees assessed as being unacceptably high risk of causing harm were recorded by metal numbered tags and recorded in the report as to what condition they were in and what work was necessary. We had quotations for the work and it was agreed that all this would be done in 3 months rather than over the year. You may have noticed and heard the work being completed on the grounds during the winter months.

I am sure that over the winter months you may have walked on any of the Council's playing fields and found them to be absolutely saturated and shimmering with rain water. I cannot believe that in a month or two cricket will start and that the earth will be dry enough to play on again. Unfortunately we still have those people who indiscriminately walk their dogs on all our fields and still do not pick the excrement from their trust friends. May I remind you that scented dog poop bags can be obtained from the Parish Council office for £1 for 50 or perhaps use an old carrier bag. We want to prevent any possibility of a child or adult contracting toxocara and go blind, so please work with us to ensure all dog owners collect their dogs' excrement and not leave it for others to do the job for them.

You may have seen the temporary orange fencing along the Manor House car park to prevent any cars from driving onto the soil between the trees. Unfortunately our arboriculturist informed us that we cannot lay down any grasscrete to extend the car park southwards as this could destroy the roots of the trees so we will be putting post and rails up to smarten the area.

The time is getting closer when the Manor House play area will be refurbished. The Parish Council set aside £53,000 last year towards this refurbishment and plan to put a further sum into the pot together with Three Rivers District Council's grant we plan to modernise the children's play area as soon as possible. Over the summer months the two councils hope to be holding public consultations to see what you and your child/children would like to use in this play area, similar to the consultations for the South Way, Langleybury and Primrose Hill play areas. We hope that you will attend these events so that we can give our village children a fun and safe place to play in.

On the Kingsfield Allotment site we have agreed to refurbish the top half of the main path as it could be a trip hazard. The paving stones around the field side of the Manor House and patio will also be relaid and replacement of some of the slabs will be necessary to prevent the constant puddling and trip hazard. We have installed lighting on the footpath from Primrose Hill road across the playing field to the canal bridge which is a very popular walk to and from Kings Langley. We have installed a new fence at Bedmond playing fields to prevent the footballs going over into Meadow Way which will give protection to the cars and houses. The car park at Primrose Hill Playing fields is also to be resurfaced due to the general bad state it is in especially when unauthorised parking has taken place which has increased the wear and tear of the surface and the money for this will be taken from reserves. I am pleased to report that the footpath towards the Langleybury War Memorial has now been re-laid as the path had sunk in parts and slabs had been broken over the years and is ready for the WW1 commemorations taking part this year.

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We are sure you would want to recognise the work that AIMS, working under the Council's supervision, is performing in the village gardens and how much better they look for us all to enjoy. If you want to join in please let the Clerk know and he will pass on your name to them.

We are having problems with all our car parking areas where there are people making use of them and not for what they are intended for the actual users of the playing fields. My committee are looking into ways to alleviate matters especially at the Manor House where users are being put off holding functions in the Manor House during the day due to the quantity of cars parking there and no room for parking for events in the Manor House. This will not be easy but we all agree that something must be done to prevent indiscriminating car parking especially as we have the free TRDC big car park in the village centre.

We have had problems with over playing and unauthorised playing of football on our pitches. It seems that the public do not realise that we put in several thousands of pounds in reseeding and slitting these areas and still the footballers keep on playing on these surfaces. When the winter time comes they are surprised that the football pitches are not up to standard. We appreciate that boys will be boys and men will be men and want to play football but it would be appreciated that they think before using pitches to play on especially when remedial work has just been done.

We are very pleased to announce that we are planning to install at least 2 defibrillators in the village, possibly one outside Henderson Hall and the other at the Manor House. These boxes have codes held by the Ambulance Service and are released as part of a 999 call. We are being told by the media that chances of survival decrease by 10% a minute when someone has a cardiac arrest and quick access to a defibrillator is the best chance of survival.

You may have noticed that the Council has erected the promised flag pole in the Millennium Gardens in the summer. We are planning to fly a flag marking special days in the calendar and with the WW1 commemorations starting this year on the 4th August I expect this will be in use to remind us of the terrible war as well as other events.

We would like to thank the Watford Lions for putting on another fine Carnival in June for all of us to enjoy and then followed by the firework spectacular in November. We should also thank the Abbots Langley Tough Ten for staging the race again through our village and for collecting money for local charities, and not forgetting MK Ginder and Sons for contributions to both events and their donations to charity.

We would also like to thank all those Representative from the Allotments, Sports and Halls who have given up their time to stand on our Leisure committee to keep us informed and of course the Clerk, David Abbott, Mark Ellis, the office staff and workforce who have had to work out in all the torrents of rainfall we have had recently.

2c. Finance & Administration Committee Report **Councillor Jeff Hill - Chairman of the Finance and Administration Committee**

The remit of the Finance & Administration Committee includes the effective monitoring of the Council's budget, finances, assets and investments.

As the financial year has not quite yet come to an end, the final outcome will not be available for a few weeks, but the concluding figures should be in line with our budget forecast. Once again it has been a tough year, but with prudent administration by all concerned we can once again produce a well balanced set of accounts. To this end I would like to thank the Clerk to the Council, Tim Perkins, Carolyn Byrne our previous Finance Officer who left last year, her successor Gail Kiely, who has done a sterling job in the short time she has been with us, Councillor Keith Williams the Vice Chairman and the rest of the Committee without whose help my first year as Chairman would have been a lot more difficult.

Once again the Parish Council has a clean bill of health from our external auditors, BDO LLP and our internal audit has also been creditably signed off by Auditing Solutions Ltd., again thanks to Gail and also David Abbott for the work he puts in to the financial management of our facilities.

The Parish Council's revenue budget for the year 2014-2015 will be £808,062. The Council is budgeting for an income in 2014-2015 of £214,455, which comes mainly from the hire of facilities and bar receipts. The amount raised through the precept next year will be £575,400. This is collected via Council Tax Bills on behalf of the Parish Council by Three Rivers District Council. The result for the year 2014-2015 means that there will be **no increase** in the amount residents pay within the Council Tax for Abbots Langley Parish Council.

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As you may or may not know, the Finance Committee is responsible for the grants allocation scheme. In 2014-2015 the amount allocated to grants will be £14,000, of which £2,000 will be for small grants of up to £250. These small grants will be allocated during the 2014-2015 financial year as and when requested and approved by the Committee.

Small grants were awarded to the following organisations in 2013-2014:-

- Abbots Langley Carers Network - £200
- Breakspeare Community Pre-School - £206
- 1st Abbots Langley Rainbows - £250
- Hillside Residents Association - £250
- Tough Ten Road Race - £250
- Abbots Langley Orchestra - £130

The following organisations have applied for grants for 2014-2015:-

- Royal Air Force Association
- Abbots Langley Cricket Club
- Abbots Langley Women's Institute
- Abbots Langley Bowls Club
- Abbots Langley Festival of the Arts
- Abbots Improvement Group
- St. Pauls Church Langleybury
- St. Lawrence Church
- Lions Club of Watford
- Abbots Langley Players
- CAB in Three Rivers
- The Abbots Langley War Memorial Fund
- Royal British Legion Abbots Langley Branch
- Bedmond Women's Institute

The amount of applications exceeds the budget available so some tough decisions will be required. Grants will be considered by the Finance and Administration Committee when it meets on 28th April. Grant cheques and certificates will be issued as soon as practical after the meeting.

2d. Staffing Committee Report

Councillor Belinda Phipps - Chairman of the Staffing Committee

The Staffing Committee meets as required to consider matters related to the employment of the Parish Council's staff. Significant parts of the committee's meetings are confidential, as they relate to individual members of staff.

The committee continues to work with the Clerk and our advisors on employment related matters, monitoring changes to legislation and the impact these may have on our staff.

2e. Review Panel Report

Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst - Chairman of the Review Panel

This committee's principal role is to review complaints against the services provided by the Parish Council, which have not been resolved through discussion with officers of the Parish Council. Complaints are reviewed in line with the Parish Council's published complaints policy.

The committee did not meet during the year as no such complaints were received.

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Councillors

Councillor	Ward	Email
Councillor Sara Bedford 100 Kindersley Way Abbots Langley WD5 0DQ 01923 270469	Leavesden	cllr_sara.bedford@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Jean Bowman 9 Bell Close Bedmond WD5 0QU 01923 270190	Bedmond	No email
Councillor Martin Brooks 17 Margaret Close Abbots Langley WD5 0NN 07896 787261	Leavesden	cllr_martin.brooks@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Derryck Croker 196 Coates Way Garston WD25 9PE 01923 673719	Leavesden	cllr_derryck.croker@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Jeff Hill 61 Summerhouse Way Abbots Langley WD5 0DX 01923 263184	Leavesden	cllr_jeff.hill@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Gloria Keaveny 45 Hazelbury Avenue Abbots Langley WD5 0DE 01923 267595	Tanners Wood	cllr_gloria.keaveny@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Brenda Kersey 30 Abbots Road Abbots Langley WD5 0AZ 01923 266954	Abbots Langley	cllr_brenda.kersey@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Angela Laval 61 Toms Lane Kings Langley WD4 8LB 01923 291766	Primrose Hill	cllr_angela.laval@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Mrs Jane Lay The Gleanings 31 Marlin Square Abbots Langley WD5 0EG 01923 447281	Abbots Langley	cllr_jane.lay@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor David Major 10 St Lawrence Close Abbots Langley WD5 0AU 01923 265570	Abbots Langley	cllr_david.major@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

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Councillor Ms Belinda Phipps 30 Gypsy Lane Hunton Bridge Kings Langley WD4 8PR 01923 260905	Hunton Bridge and Langleybury	cllr_belinda.phipps@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor Owen Roe 31 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	sgm@cix.co.uk
Councillor Keith Williams 4 Furtherfield Abbots Langley WD5 0PL 01923 268873	Tanners Wood	cllr_keith.williams@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Councillor John Wyatt 122 Tibbs Hill Road Abbots Langley WD5 0LL 07762 135451	Abbots Langley	cllr_john.wyatt@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

The Parish Council is made up of fifteen members, all of whom were elected at the ordinary elections held in May 2011 or in subsequent by-elections.

Councillor contact details are correct as at February 2014.

Please refer to the Parish Council website www.abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk for any updates.

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Senior Staff

Name	Position	Email
Tim Perkins	Clerk to the Council and Responsible Financial Officer (Senior Officer of the Council)	tim.perkins@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
David Abbott	Facilities Manager	david.abbott@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Mark Ellis	Works Manager	mark.ellis@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk
Gail Kiely (apt. July 2013)	Finance Officer	gail.kiely@abbotslangley-pc.gov.uk

Parish Council Offices

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