

**Abbots Leigh Annual Parish Meeting  
held at the Village Hall, Church Road  
Wednesday 15th May 2024**

**MINUTES**

1. Attendance - Councillors Talbot-Ponsonby, Walker, Ho Marris and Delane, Parish Clerk Nic Rice and 14 parishioners.
  - Apologies – Kamala Das, Mel King, John Brewer, Paul and Elizabeth Whitehouse.
2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held in 2023 are available on the Parish Website.
3. Matters Arising - None
4. Chairman's Report – STP introduces PC's and their roles. Report attached.
5. Parish Council Reports:-
  - a) Ward Councillor Report – Jenna Ho-Marris reads her report.
  - b) Planning - STP reads his report. This included quite a few recent applications. Attached
  - c) Village Hall - STP reads his report. Attached
  - d) Financial - MW reads his report. Attached
  - e) Neighbourhood Plan - Covered by JHM report.
  - f) NSC Local Plan 2038 - Covered by JHM report.
  - g) Abbots Leigh Charities - RD reads her report. Attached
6. Any other business – Sophy Gretton gave a presentation on the background the Roots Allotments development, the current position and the local residents' reasons why they oppose it proceeding without planning permission with the legal advice supporting this.

## **Annual Parish Meeting 15th May 2024 - Annual Report - Simon Talbot-Ponsonby, Chair's Report**

Welcome to this Annual Parish Meeting or Annual Assembly of Electors.

I would first like to introduce my new fellow Parish Councillors, Jenna Ho-Marris, Kamala Das our vice chair, Martin Walker and Ros Delany. I would especially like to introduce you to our new Parish Clerk, Nic Rice, who is also the Parish Clerk for Pill and Easton in Gordano. Nic took over from Julie Smart at the beginning of the year when Julie Smart left after 8 years and established the beginning of the closer working relationship with Pill & Easton in Gordano Parish Council.

The duties of the five volunteer councillors are : Kamala is the vice chair and takes responsible for Highway matters; Jenna, liaison with District Council, Recycling and Rubbish, Community innovation; Martin, finance, Abbots Pool, Public Footpaths, Website; Ros, Community Groups, Civic Society Liaison, Communication Link Contributions, Village Green, Abbots Leigh Charities; myself, Chair, Planning, Village Hall, Old School Field. Nic our parish Clerk who works out of the Resource Centre in Pill is the responsible financial officer and covers the secretariat, Insurance, Police Coordination, Village Orderly

Thanks to Jenna our District Councillor who has been working tirelessly in her first year as the North Somerset Ward Councillor for Pill and Abbots Leigh, being the Executive Member for Homes, Health and Equalities. A year of baptism in the local political scene.

### **Review of the year**

**Finance.** The Parish finances are in good shape under the careful management of Nic Rice our Parish Clerk. Martin Walker who leads on finance on the Council will update you.

**Maintenance works for the Parish Council.** Kevin Weeks carries out most of the maintenance works around the Parish, grass cutting, hedge cutting dog bin emptying, repairs to equipment in the school field, small painting works etc. These are done when required and as instructed by the Parish Clerk. Kevin also works for Pill & Easton in Gordano Parish Council and other parishes. The verge outside Poundbatch Farm, opposite Sandy Lane, is currently being looked after by the Abbots Leigh Wildlife Group as part of a rewilding scheme.

**Litter Pick.** Thanks to the more than 30 volunteers with an age range of more than 90 years, who came and cleared rubbish from around the Village on a Sunday at the end of March. It looks much better as a result. It was good to find that there wasn't as much as sometimes but still a good haul. Thanks also to The George for kindly providing everyone with sandwiches afterwards which were very much appreciated.

### **Old School Field.**

New picnic benches have been purchased and are proving popular.

Replacement for the circular tree bench has been delivered and needs installing with addition support for the front legs

We have even installed a dog poo bag dispenser in the Old School field for those that forget. The poo bin is very well used, needing emptying every week. I would take this opportunity to thank Andy Cunliffe who voluntarily puts the rubbish out every fortnight, and tidies up after those that don't.

A contract has been placed with Safety Green to improve the entrance gate area and build a path to the boules pitch and then to the lower play area and the pavilion. Depending upon the contractors other commitments this should be completed by August

**Abbots Pool.** The Parish Council have continued to work with Jason Cox of North Somerset Council in order to keep Abbots Pool in good condition for the local community. The monthly volunteer working parties organised by Jo Chiverton have continued and our thanks are to her for the hard work that she and the volunteers put in.

The car park needs serious repair works doing and the parish are liaising with North Somerset Council to ensure that the works can be done, but the costs would more than soak up all the budgets available for Abbots Pool

**The website** is a very valuable asset to the village. Martin Walker has kindly taken over from Paul Whitehouse as webmaster

If you haven't already signed up for occasional emails letting you know what is going on in the village, please do so on the website. You can always unsubscribe at any time if you don't want to continue to receive them.

**Climate Emergency.** I have been asked remind the village that the parish council did declare a biodiversity emergency in 2019 following the lead from North Somerset Council. This should be reflected in all of our decisions. Jenna will talk about this later

### **Communications and The Link**

Delighted that Mick Scanlan of Dennyview Road has taken over as the editor of the monthly Link Magazine which is run by the Church for Abbots Leigh and Leigh Woods. John Butler has taken on the task of the distribution and thanks to the 20 or so distributors who collect them from the church and deliver them across the whole village every month.

Surgeries for PC and district councillors. In the cafe on second Saturday morning once a month

### **Highway Matters.**

Community Speedwatch has started this year managed by Oliver Delany, for which we are very grateful. Difficult to get enough volunteers to come out in threes and

give up an hour at a time. It does make a difference at the time and people exceeding the speed limit get warning letters, as some of you may well know!

Smiley Sid (Speed Interactive Display ) on loan from Pill and Easton in Gordano Parish Council and is now off sick. It was used just below Sandy lane Junction and at the junction with Harris Lane for a few weeks, can not stay in place permanently without additional costs. It does remind people and they do slow a bit.

Dennyview Road junction, has always been a problem for residents on account of the poor visibility up hill and the speed of the traffic. The SLOW road marking is worn and needs replacing, NS are investigation whether and additional road junction sign with concealed junction beneath could be used in association with a reinstated slow marking.

Trial of locally sourced timber bollards at Poundbatch layby to stop damage to the verges.

Kamala and Ros, together with Nic Rice have been investigating using the services of the Community Payback teams for a number tidying up works around the village.

Investigations have been carried out with North Somerset Council Flood risk engineer to identify the problems of flooding down Blackmoor Road, and hopefully some remedial actions can be taken before too long.

## **A) Ward Councillors Report Jenna Ho Marris**

### **Ward Councillor Report**

I am enjoying being a ward councillor! Thank you for the chance to represent you at council, and take on this role with Homes, Health and Equalities for North Somerset.

**What do I do:** For your interest, I receive an allowance of around £27,000 (with no pension), and I don't work out my hourly rate! I spend a lot of my ward work time on Pill (but not Easton-in-Gordano which is a different ward), for Abbots Leigh I spend much of my "ward councillor" time on the flooding in the A369 & blocked soakaways, drainage issues and damage in Sandy Lane, dealing with NSC's Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) works, there is a street light in Glen Avenue that has taken months to fix, and of course Roots Allotments which Sophy will speak about later.

**Roots:** This is to acknowledge the massive team effort, there are 62 people on the Roots Concerns Whatsapp, and I would not have been able to support this work without many others, including yourselves here. I especially want to thank Sophy Gretton & Rob, Gino, Chas, Simon & Pip, Roz who lives in Dennyview Road, Alice, Amanda Weekes, Tommo, everyone pushing back Roots' nonsense on social media. A special mention goes to our Leigh Woods team, Emma Burgh and Jenny Stoodley who have taken charge of the essential, legal advice and media.

**Local Plan:** The Executive Committee have agreed to delay submitting North Somerset's Draft Local Plan for 2025-2039. In December 2023, the central government updated the National Planning Policy Framework, which changed

how local plans are assessed according to the housing requirement and use of the Green Belt.

The new partnership administration at NSC (Lib Dems- Labour- Green- Portishead Independents) pushed for a "constrained approach" to housing numbers, and the updated NPPF would be more favourable to this. This is a difference between 15,000 homes vs 21,000 homes built in 15 years and whether they can be in the greenbelt.

The council was unable to get clarity from central government about whether the LP would be assessed according to the old NPPF or the new NPPF. They have therefore decided to delay submitting the LP for several months and carry out another round of consultation, which will ensure that the LP would be assessed against the new NPPF.

The updated LP draft will be voted on at 19 June Executive meeting to go out for consultation which will be for six weeks ending in August, and the LP will hopefully be passed by the Planning Inspector early 2025.

**Priorities this year:** Looking ahead we have another BSIP programme to deal with at Rownham Hill. I am also very interested in taking forward a review of the Bristol Clean Air Zone impacts on our area, which residents have said include more HGVs and air pollution. I have asked council officers to give me regular updates on this and so far their data shows the numbers of vehicles is still below that of pre-Covid but we continue to monitor.

Regarding air pollution, there are only two monitors for PM2.5 (the smallest and most harmful pollution particles) in NS, both are within the area of Bristol Port (at Portbury). I am keen to work with public health and Bristol City Council on this but I will need help from residents so please contact me if you are interested.

My Executive role includes health and wellbeing, I chair the North Somerset Health and Wellbeing Board, next year I will chair the Bristol North Somerset South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Partnership (BNSSG ICP). For all those who have any experience or views of health and care, I need your input, and I will be following up with you individually!

Finally I am really pleased that some of you have spoken in public participation before Full Council, the Executive Committee and the Planning Committee (multiple times) about issues important to us. It's really important. With your direct support, we are holding the council to account.

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Councillor Jenna Ho Marris (she/her)  
Green Party Councillor for Pill Ward, North Somerset  
Executive Member for Homes, Health and Equalities

Tel: 07385010137

**B) Planning. STP** The council have commented on a number of Planning Applications through the last year. I will therefore quickly update you about some of the key issues

Enforcement Vowles Bottom. Landowner is a civil engineering contractor has been using the site for landfill of excavated material and stone, although they say that the stone is being stored for building walls,. The Enforcement team are keeping a close eye on this

Kingcott Farm Conversion of large steel frame barns into accommodation and also offices, both refused

Denny House, conversion into three flats surprisingly turned down

New Entrance onto A369 for 2 large new houses Leigh Warren bungalow, still not decided,

Solar Farm. The solar farm planning application has been approved in the fields behind Haberfield Farm. After consultation with many people on the village and having studied the full public consultation held in the Village Hall before the application was submitted, the Parish council did not oppose the application. Sadly there were not that many people who attended the full day's public consultation.

Proposed allotments. Continuing battle since October 2022, we are all very angry about the way that Roots are ignoring everyone and the council being ineffective. Sophy has kindly offered to do an update specifically later

### **C) Village Hall STP**

All is going well at present with a lot of positive feedback from our customers who are well cared for by our caretaker Mick Dillon, thanks to him

The income from bookings this year are the highest that we have seen. Martin will talk through the financial aspects of the hall when he talks through the finances and budgets later

We have tightened up on the billing and deposit where process for when people sadly leave the hall in a mess on rare occasions. The way we manage the deposits and when payments are due are clearly defined on the website and displayed in the hall.

We are looking at options for possibly replacing the dishwasher which may be several hundred pounds. We need to establish the level of use.

We are actively considering putting an array of solar panels on the Village Hall Roof considering its size and ideal orientation. We would also install battery storage so that the supply can be used for the hall, flat and skittle alley Will be seeking grants with the promise of a contribution from the Solar Farm contractors

#### **D) Financial Martin Walker**

I am Martin Walker and I work very closely with Nic, our Parish Clerk, to monitor our finances.

You should have access to a copy of the accounts for 2023-24 which are currently subject to an internal audit before they are then reviewed by our external auditors as we are lucky enough to have been picked up as part of a random 5% sample of smaller accounts.

Firstly, I must apologise to the eagle eyed among you that may have spotted the brought forward sum of £29,173 in the January Budget numbers. This is of course incorrect (I incorrectly omitted the balance of CIL monies at that time) but had no bearing on the budget setting process in January this year before our precept for 24/25 was agreed with North Somerset.

Secondly the numbers do look fairly healthy, but you need to bear in mind the CIL figures, shown separately at the bottom of the page, which do add over £11k to the opening balance for 24/25. As you may remember from last year, the CIL is money we receive from certain new house builds in the Parish. The monies have to be earmarked for Parish improvement projects – so far we have put new equipment in the playground (a combination of NS, Civic Society and CIL monies) and bought new picnic benches and a new circular seat for the School Field. CIL monies will also be used for the first phase of providing better access to the top level of the School Field where we have been working closely with the civic society to agree the best option.

I am delighted to be able to report that the Village Hall bookings are well up this year – under the careful stewardship of our Caretaker, Mick Dillon, who is building a good rapport with our regular users. The hall is of course used in addition for a number of principally charitable or village events with no charge and as a Parish Council we are keen to encourage even greater usage. We have received some good ideas for this further usage, but felt unable to proceed with these at present as they could have led to security issues for lone workers in the hall – however with more community support and involvement there are certainly possibilities for much greater use.

Our main unknown expense as we move into 2024-25 is the cost of electricity – we are currently benefitting from a fixed price contract we entered into a few years ago, but that expires shortly and we await the new rates to see the impact of that on our figures. One possibility we shall be considering is a ‘winter surcharge’ on prices to offset additional costs – the use of the radiant heaters we have is expensive and could cost us an additional £2 an hour compared to last winter.

We will be undertaking a review of all the rates that we charge – especially for commercial organisations - but we are conscious that we cannot price ourselves out by comparison with other village halls. We also do not want to build too much complexity into the system as this is difficult to define and administer. Some people have lobbied for cheaper rates for Parish residents, but unfortunately that has been abused historically. So, we are open to ideas, but there will be limitations on what we consider to be viable considering all factors.

For the future we have a balance of approximately £50k excluding the CIL which exceeds the recommended minimum for PCs (1x annual precept). We will certainly be keeping this balance under review in the light of possible future Parish projects - which might include improving the footpath network in the Parish – or putting Solar Panels on the Village Hall - among other ideas.

**accounts for 2023-24 Follow**

**Abbots Leigh Parish Council**  
**Actual 2022-23. Budget/Actual 23-24. Budget 24-25**

	2022-23 Actual End March 2023	2023-24 Budget	2023-24 Actual to End March	2024-25 Jan 24 Budget	2024-25 Revised budget
<b>Brought Forward</b>	40,288.52	30,834.99	30,834.99	29,173.93	48,047.10
<b>Receipts</b>					
NSC Precept	31,550.00	31,550.00	31,550.00	31,550.00	31,550.00
Grants inc CIL	15,646.75	1,000.00	3,319.35	1,000.00	250
Donations	1,041.00	500	0	500	250
Village Hall Bookings	12,512.88	12,000.00	15,286.75	12,500.00	15,500.00
Former Skittle Alley Rental	4,205.00	5,000.00	4,820.00	5,000.00	5,000.00
Former Skittle Alley Services	2,205.04	4,000.00	2,364.33	4,000.00	6,000.00
Bank Interest	0	0	187.61	100	700
Refunds - VH Capital Reimbursement	1,056.86	322.15	322.15	0	0
VAT Refund	1,305.08	5,002.87	5,086.27	1,200.00	1,230.00
<b>Total Receipts</b>	69,522.61	59,375.02	62,936.46	55,850.00	60,480.00
<b>Payments</b>					
Admin, PAYE & Expenses	8,534.82	11,000.00	11,236.36	11,000.00	12,000.00
Use of Resource Centre	1,000.00	500	500	500	500
Bank Charges	72	72	72	72	72
Advertising	750	350	140	350	250
Subs & Donations	701.49	600	306.58	800	500
Professional Fees	300	350	435	450	450
IT & Website	551.98	750	876.31	1,000.00	1,000.00
Election Expenses	0	1,332.00	1,334.66	0	0
Village Hall Booking Deposit Refunds	1,017.50	1,000.00	1,097.05	1,000.00	1,000.00
VH Electricity	2,166.00	2,300.00	1,108.86	3,000.00	2,500.00
VH Telephone & Broadband	754.29	800	836.97	800	1,000.00
VH Maintenance & Improvements	8,020.78	5,000.00	2,580.18	5,000.00	5,000.00
VH Flat Refurbishment	26,741.72	0	0	0	0
VH Caretaker costs	3,914.99	10,000.00	9,294.17	10,000.00	10,000.00
VH Council Tax & NDR	1,733.92	0	0	0	0
VH Performing Rights & NSC Licence	244.72	300	264.88	300	300
VH & PC Insurance	3,048.16	3,352.55	3,352.55	3,500.00	3,500.00
VH Supplies	87.58	300	289.97	300	300
VH Water	328.58	350	263.22	300	300
VH Fire prevention	289.98	400	244.36	300	300
Village Street Lighting Electricity	1,485.30	1,500.00	1,122.77	1,500.00	1,500.00
Village Street Lighting Maintenance	0	250	0	250	250
Village Improvement	0	0	0	1,000.00	0
Village maintenance	1,803.86	1,000.00	3,112.63 **	1,000.00	9,500.00 ***
Village Hall Septic Tank	0	200	0	500	300
New Play Equipment	5,191.85 *	0	0	0	0
Village Play Equipment & Repairs	645	750	0	750	750
Village Play Equipment Inspections	383.75	450	385	450	450
Grass & Hedge Cutting (Playing Field)	2,305.00	3,000.00	4,872.00	3,500.00	4,000.00
Dog Bin & Weekly Emptying	550	560	768.75	600	600
Village Contingency	0	0	0	0	0
Neighbourhood Plan Implementation	0	0	0	0	0
Road Safety	1,350.00	1,500.00	0	500	0
VAT on Expenditure	5,002.87	1,500.00	1,230.08	1,500.00	1,500.00
<b>Total Payments</b>	78,976.14	49,466.55	45,724.35	50,222.00	57,822.00
<b>Surplus (Deficit) to Budget</b>	-9,453.53	9,908.47	17,212.11	5,628.00	2,658.00
<b>Carry Forward</b>	30,834.99	40,743.46	48,047.10	34,801.93	50,705.10

Community Infrastructure Levy - included in the above

CIL Income b/f			9,645.61		11,771.67
CIL Income in the year	11,172.54		3,206.06		
CIL Expenditure	-1,526.93 *		-1,080.00 **		-6,000.00 ***
<b>Balance</b>	9,645.61		11,771.67		5,771.67



**E) Neighbourhood Plan** nothing more until after the new Local Plan is in place

**F) NSC Local Plan 2038** Included in **Ward Councillor's report**

**G) Abbots Leigh Charities – Ros Delany**

The Abbots Leigh charities comprise three small charities which were set up in the C18 for parish residents. Inevitably, over time the scope of the grants has been widened to reflect changes within society. As an example, the Apprentices' Charity now awards grants to students who live in the village to help them with the purchase of books or towards their training expenses.

There are eight trustees - the parish vicar is ex-officio. four are co-opted from village residents and the remaining three from the Parish Council and currently are STP, Martin and me. The previous Chairman was Steve Livings who stood down after 30+ years in the role. On behalf of the Parish Council, I would like to thank him for all his hard work.

This group meets once or twice a year with the last meeting being in November 2023. At that November meeting it was agreed to donate a total of £600 at Christmas (from the Poor Account) to the more senior members of the parish. If anyone would like to know more about the charities or would like to make an application then please contact me via the village website.

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