

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting – Held Monday 24th April 2017

Abbotskerswell Parish Rooms – Meeting commenced @ 7.00pm

Present – Cllr K Eales, Cllr P Marino, Cllr B Chambers, Cllr Mrs W Grierson, Cllr K Farrelly, Cllr Mrs A Allen, Cllr Mrs L Clowes, D Cllr D Smith, C Cllr A Dewhirst.

Attended by - David Munden (Neighbourhood Plan), Margaret Crompton (Allotments), 2 members of the public, John Lewis (Tree Warden).

Apologies –Cllr Mrs M Colclough.

1) Chairman’s Report – Cllr Mrs W Grierson

I took over as Charman in October 2016. Before me, Richard Whiffin was chair for 3 months and prior to this Kevin Eales had been at the helm for over 5 years. The Parish Council is made up of 8 Councillors and they represent the parishioners of Abbotskerswell village and the surrounding Parish. They volunteer their time in many sub committees that all work towards keeping Abbotskerswell being a great place to live, play and work. There are 6 standing committees which are the Abbotskerswell Recreation Association, Emergency Planning Group, Planning Committee, Communications Advisory Group, Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group and the new Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group. You will shortly hear reports from the chairs of each of these committees, followed by the statutory body reports and then the general reports from the Tree Warden, Allotment Association and the Village Hall Trust. I would like to give my great thanks to them all for their hard work again this year , and to everyone involved in running and working on all of these committees. Much time is spent, often unseen, on keeping everything running on an even keel and in keeping our Parish such a lovely place.

The Parish Council said goodbye to Richard Whiffin who stood down in October. Thanks to him for all the work he contributed over recent years. We were lucky enough to fill this vacancy in Feb this year when Ann Allen was co-opted onto the council. Ann has been confidently and efficiently running Abbtalk since its re launch last year. We are all very happy to welcome her onto the council.

We celebrated the Queen’s 90th Birthday last June with a free street party held on Slade Lane which was shut for the celebrations. This was organised by Lynn Howard, Viv Bell and myself. A big thank you to Lynn and Viv for putting together such a successful afternoon. About 600 people came along to celebrate in the sunshine with games, music, food and drinks, and money was raised from the raffle which will be put towards future village events.

Over the last few years the services we have received from Teignbridge District Council have been cut and reduced which has meant that the Parish Council has had to either take over the responsibility for them or lose them. This includes our public toilet which the Parish Council now organises the maintenance and pays for. The upkeep and control of weeds around the village has also become a concern. It was decided that we must start to keep on top of the weeds as they were starting to take over in certain areas and were making our pavements and roads look rather untidy. We have now employed David Wilds for half a day every week and he is tackling the worst of it. I hope that you agree with me that there is a considerable improvement to the areas that he has covered so far. Gradually he is moving around and getting on top of most of the worst areas. We are also planning on a spraying regime very soon to abate any imminent re growth. The Volunteer Action Group has previously tackled some of the worst areas but it was decided that a more regular approach was needed. The Volunteers, organised by Celia Rose are thanked for their good work and I'm sure that there will be projects in the future where they will be called upon again.

The weather this winter has been quite fair. Not any extremes and our grit bins should still be fairly full. Pot holes still give us concern regularly and I would like to direct anyone who notices a pot hole, street lights out, fallen trees or other hazards to go to the Devon County Council website to easily report exactly where it is, directly to the relevant authority - <https://new.devon.gov.uk/roadsandtransport/report-a-problem/>

The more people who report the problem, the higher the priority it gets and hopefully the sooner it is dealt with.

We would also like to thank Alistair Dewhirst, our councillor in Devon County Council, who is always very willing and helpful in pursuing our County matters.

The Parish Council Team Structure

A big thank you again must go to Sharon, Clerk to the Council, for her support and guidance to the Parish Council. She is in an invaluable asset.

The Council has 5 Standing Committees and one Steering Group:

Planning Committee: Bob Chambers, Mary Colclough, Kevin Eales, Kevin Farrelly, Wendy Grierson, Paul Marino, Ann Allen

Abbotskerswell Recreation Association: Bob Chambers (Chair), Ann Down, Dave Collins, Kevin Farrelly, Paul Marino

Emergency Planning Committee: Bob Chambers, Simon Crawshaw, Kevin Farrelly (Chair), Dave McNee, David Munden, Dave Wilds, Julie Kniveton

Neighbourhood Plan (AbbPlan) Steering Group: David Munden (Chair), Ian Arrow, Tim Collins, Charles Down, Kevin Eales, Wendy Grierson, Trevor Howard, David Kiernan (TDC), Brian Mackness, Paula Simmons, Richard Whiffin

Communications Advisory Group: Liz Clowes(Chair), Kevin Eales, Ann Allen

Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group: Kevin Eales(chair), Wendy Grierson, Paul Evely(WRA & CROWD)

The Council also has Councillors undertaking the following duties:

Village Hall Trust	Paul Marino
Liaison - DCC Environment & Highways	Alistair Dewhirst
Footpath Co-ordinators	Bob Chambers supported by Kevin Eales
School Governor	vacancy
Stoneycombe Liaison	Bob Chambers
Website and AbbTalk Communications Advisory Group (as above)	
AbbPast Liaison	Kevin Eales
Teignbridge Association of Local Council	Kevin Farrelly

In addition, the Council is supported by:

Allotments Association	Mrs Margaret Crompton
Tree Warden	Mr John Lewis
Volunteer Action Group	Mrs Celia Rose

Other matters

The Abbotskerswell website continues to inform the Parish about local news and events, clubs and groups. The new format is a great success and this is all down to the skills and hard work of Liz Clowes who has worked diligently to update our online presence. (www.abbotskerswell.org.uk)

The Parish Council still has very close links with our neighbours on Wolborough Hill, the Wolborough Residents' Association and also with our joint venture CROWD (Concerned Residents Opposed to Widespread Development). We continue to work together to ensure that all current and prospective local developments follow every environmental standard correctly and that all statutory regulations are adhered to.

The Neighbourhood Plan is just about to go to the inspector and you will hear shortly from David Munden on this, but in the mean time I would like to express our great thanks to both David and Kevin Eales for all the time and great effort they have put into getting to this stage.

Thanks again to all for your commitment and time given and I hope the year ahead is successful and runs smoothly. I hope I have thanked everyone. We have the AGM meeting next month in May, when the new council will be elected. We would welcome anyone wanting to join any of the committees to contact Sharon Raggett and come and get involved.

2) ARA Report (Cllr R Chambers)

Another year gone and the ARA has managed to give out several grants to local organisations due to the success of the annual firework display and the monthly draw. The playground and MUGA area continues to need regular maintenance, due to wear and tear and sadly vandalism. There is ongoing work to stop youngsters trespassing in the court this includes painting anti-vandal paint on the top of the court surround along with appropriate warning signs.

There have been several suggestions with regard to updating the play area, along with essential repairs. These will be discussed at the next ARA meeting. The firework display will be on Sat 4th November this year and all arrangements are in place. Many thanks to all the draw ticket collectors- an onerous task and all the volunteers who work hard to make the firework night such a success and special thanks to my colleague Kevin Farrelly for all his hard work. Finally this will be my last report as Chairman of the ARA as I am reluctantly resigning from the PC this coming Christmas. I will still be available to do noticeboard duties if required and help out the ARA with repairs at the MUGA. I have enjoyed my 15 year stint under several different chairs and would like to thank all members of the PC past and present for their support during this time.

3) Emergency Planning Report (Cllr K Farrelly)

Our new large storage shed was erected at the rear of the village hall, which replaces two small sheds that were in poor condition. This now means we have ample supply of sand bags and salt plus our as yet unused gritting machine under one roof. This year has been rather uneventful with only light frost and virtually no snow. Flooding was of no real issue in comparison to previous years. The emergency planning group met on a quarterly basis throughout the year to monitor and make any necessary adjustments to the plan and procedures.

Special thanks to Sue Collingsworth. As secretary she once again gives her time to keep the plan updated. The plan and contact details in case of emergency, can be found on the parish website. The roles of flood and snow wardens are filled on a voluntary basis. Once again special thanks to Dave Wilds and well done to the whole team.

4) Planning Report (Cllr P Marino)

In addition to the usual domestic and business applications for new buildings, conversions, minor alterations, extensions and tree works, the major planning issue concerning the Parish Council during the early part of last year was the appeal lodged by Linden Homes following Teignbridge District Council's decision to refuse planning permission for the erection of up to 53 new homes on the field adjoining the Old Cider Works off Manor Road.

Despite being expected within 5 to 6 weeks of the original hearing which was held on the 26th of January, this decision was not handed down by the Planning Inspectorate until July of last year. Although the resultant resolution to dismiss the appeal has enabled Abbotskerswell's Neighbourhood Plan to progress, it is interesting to note that when coming to his decision the Appeal inspector focused on three main issues:-

- Whether the proposal would harm the settlement pattern of the area in the light of development plan policy and the social and economic needs of Abbotskerswell.
- Whether the proposal would harm biodiversity and fail to provide adequate habitat mitigation and offsetting.

- Whether there are any material considerations, particularly in relation to the provision of housing, sufficient to outweigh any harm or conflict with policy in relation to the adopted local plan.

Of these three, the Planning inspector considered the appellants proposals to compensate for the loss of biodiversity habitat at the site with other smaller areas scattered nearby, to be acceptable because in his opinion it would not conflict with national and local policies. This thought process and ultimately the Inspectorate's decision to uphold a similar appeal for a residential development site at Whitehill's, with comparable biodiversity issues for the same appellant, is a cause of concern especially in the light of future proposals relating to NA3, (TDC's land allocation at Wolborough) which of course will have a bearing on Abbotskerswell.

Finally, to summarise during the last year the Planning Committee has dealt with 33 applications together with 4 appeals, all of which were dismissed. To access the documents associated with all of these applications it is possible to view them on Abbotskerswell's dedicated web site pages (www.abbotskerswell.org.uk/index.php/neighbourhood-planning/planning-latest).

5) Communications Advisory Group (Cllr Mrs L Clowes)

2016/17 was the year that the AKPC Communications Committee came of age with its own terms of reference and a great deal of activity on AbbTalk, the Website and on Facebook.

TRANSPARENCY; There is government guidance for public bodies to publish and be transparent about the conduct of their business, and the AKPC Communications Committee main brief is to ensure that we comply with this guidance, which we now do, through the publication of our documents and activities on the Website and through the auspices of the Parish Magazine AbbTalk. There are some areas on which we can improve, such as providing wider information about the Parish Rooms and Village Hall as well as the activities of the Abbotskerswell Recreation Association (ARA), and these will form part of the plan for 2017/18.

ABBTALK; Since AbbTalk's reintroduction, it has become an essential information tool for the village, dovetailing with the information on the Website. During the last twelve months, the 800 print run covered around 676 homes and several public meeting places within the parish, ensuring a readership of approximately 2,000+ people and downloadable versions of the magazine were placed on the parish website as an archive.

The magazine has been published regularly every month and delivered within 2-3 days of receipt from the printer. This is thanks to the AbbTalk committee who work hard to ensure we have relevant and timely content with a good distribution team and sufficient advertising revenue to produce a quality, readable magazine.

WEBSITE; The need to further promulgate the workings of the PC and volunteers on the Neighbourhood Plan also drove much activity on the Website that acts as a portal to the multitude of supporting documents that sit behind the plan. The activities on the Neighbourhood Plan have proved the most visited place on the Website with more than 500 visits since January 2017 when we published the final submission phase.

The website as a whole, since its inauguration on the 4th December 2015, has received over 90,000 unique visits.

Another objective of the Website was to remove redundant material from the old website and to renew the content, making it fresher and more accessible. This we have achieved with the help of our providers and designers, Clystnet, to whom we pay a small monthly retainer for on-going support and maintenance.

FACEBOOK; We introduced Facebook as a means of bringing people, particularly younger parishioners, to the Website and to highlight activities and news that is topical, such as a recent Litter Pick organised by DCC Cllr Alastair Dewhirst at which over 20 people turned up. The highlighting of news items on Facebook has proved its worth in raising the profile of activities and in getting parishioners to share the news amongst friends.

Members of the communications Committee are as follows:

Chairman Cllr Liz Clowes
Cllr Kevin Eales
Cllr Ann Allen

6) Neighbourhood Plan (Mr D Munden)

The Plan, and all its supporting statements and evidence, is now with the Independent Examiner whose job it is to ensure that it meets all the legislative requirements, and national and local planning policies. He is expected to report back by the end of May and, subject to any amendments he requires, it then needs to be formally approved by Teignbridge District Council as the responsible Planning Authority before being put to a referendum of the residents of Abbotskerswell Parish. Residents are defined as “anyone who is entitled to vote in an election of any ward councillor of the relevant council whose ward is in the referendum area and whose qualifying address for the election is in the referendum area.”

In the last year a massive amount of work has been undertaken and completed by the Steering Group to bring the Plan to the required outcome. The Plan itself, is just one of a myriad of documents which are required to be produced in order to satisfy the planning legislation – anyone who visited the Orchard Deli to inspect the documents would know that the folder which contains all - this is some 10cm thick! My thanks go to the Steering Group for their support throughout the entire process but in particular to Cllr. Kevin Eales who has done most of the hard graft in getting all this information into the required format and consolidating it both in paper form and on our website. This is all the more remarkable as, apart from a few months help on the original draft Plan from a professional planning consultant, none of the Steering Group had any background in planning. However, this is not to underestimate the amount of help and support which was given in the last year to the Group by David Kiernan, TDC’s Neighbourhood Planning Officer, so my thanks are very much due to him as well.

The Parish Council formally adopted the Plan at its meeting on 30th January, and once approved it will become its responsibility to put it into action. A reminder of some of the key points in the Plan:-

- *To safeguard the natural and built environment of the Parish*
- *To protect identified local green spaces, Devon banks and hedgerows*

- *To promote measures to reduce flooding*
- *To direct and shape the design and character of small scale developments, particularly for affordable homes and self build opportunities*
- *To understand and minimise the impacts of the proposed development at Wolborough*
- *To encourage off road parking provision and seek measures to improve traffic management in the Parish*
- *To pursue improvements to public footpaths and investigate possible cycle routes*
- *To promote and support local employment opportunities*
- *To safeguard community facilities and seek their enhancement*

David Munden (Chairman, Neighbourhood Planning Steering Group)

7) Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group (Cllr K Eales)

At the May 2016 Annual General Meeting, the Parish Council resolved to form the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group, with its defined objective as:

On behalf of the Council, to consider and make recommendations on the Parish's natural environment and its biodiversity in order to protect, maintain and enhance Abbotskerswell Parish's rural environment and green spaces.

Although the group initially met irregularly, Cllrs Wendy Grierson and Kevin Eales and Paul Evemy have:

- 1) contributed to the Neighbourhood Plan programme;
- 2) responded to consultations on biodiversity matters; and
- 3) attended liaison meeting with other organisations with similar objective, namely:
 - a. Wolborough Residents' Association,
 - b. NA3 Wolborough development interested parties, including Teignbridge District Council, Newton Abbot Town Council and Devon County Council; and
 - c. Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE).

Consultative activities on the Greater Exeter Strategic Plan; the South Hams SAC Mitigation Strategy for Heart of Teignbridge and Bovey Tracy; and the NA1 Houghton Barton Local Development Framework, which all had concurrent 6-week consultation periods and closing dates of April 10 2017, were intensive, but responded to by the deadlines.

During this coming year, the Group looks forward to advancing the following Neighbourhood Plan policies:

- To secure the identified Green Spaces through negotiation with their respective landowners (Policy NE3)
- To undertake a survey of Devon Banks and Hedgerows to identify those requiring protection, being species rich (Policy NE2)
- To reconsider the impact of NA3 Wolborough development once the outcome of the current Scoping and other Planning assessments are known (Policy PH2)

The Group is pleased that David Munden has volunteered to join the Group.

8) Police Report – no report given.

9) County Councillors Report (County Cllr A Dewhirst)

After being contacted by a resident I was pleased to help steer a successful Motion through Devon County Council in support of Women Against State Pension Inequality and supported our contention that some women who have lost up to £42,000 in pension entitlements should get a fair settlement from central government. Although Devon and Teignbridge, supported by many other County, Borough and District Councils wrote to the Pensions Minister – sadly they were rebuffed by a Government that appears to know the cost of everything and the value of nothing. The County Council showed the huge improvement in their Children's Services since Ofsted declared them not fit for purpose in 2013, when a number of young people from the refugee camp in Calais arrived in Devon, many with little more than the clothes on their back – some even wearing flip flops. The Council arranged for support including language skills and translation, medical assistance, and sports and other activities for the young people – I am pleased to say most of these young people are now settled in college and fitting in well. Through my role on the Children's Overview Standing Group I enjoyed Christmas lunch with a number of them.

On 31st March this year, after sixteen years of underwhelming performance, South West Highways lost their contract to maintain Devon's roads and Skanska Construction took over the highways contract. The contract will run from 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2024, with extension options for a further three years. Skanska Construction's proposals, as part of its winning bid, include a range of initiatives to tackle potholes, job creation for Devon residents, introduction of an efficiency and performance manager, an affordability review every three years to target investment, and improved communications. The County Council's new Head of Schools, Dawn Stabb, has been very active in raising the issue of our Devon schools' funding problems. Under the Governments "Fairer Funding" programme we learnt that while 212 schools in the county would benefit (Ipplepen for instance received £6,000) another 129 would be far worse off than they are now. As if this was not bad enough the County Council voted to cut a further £2.2 from her budget in February despite the Heads of Devon Schools writing personally to every Councillor begging us not to. So on Thursday 16th February the County Council agreed yet another maximum increase Budget taking our Council Tax up to £1,267.92 for this year. Council Leaders put out a press release saying that their 4.99% "Council tax rise would fund care for elderly and vulnerable" - and yet only five days later came a TV statement saying "We are seriously concerned that the final local government settlement announced yesterday provides no new funding for councils in 2017/18 and has totally failed to address the crisis in social care. Whilst we welcome the ability to raise additional council tax this income will not bring in anywhere near enough money to cover the costs of the services needed to protect the old, the young and the vulnerable." The background to all this is that the Adult Services Budget will increase in monetary terms to £216.493 million – an increase of £18.7 million. This sounds good but the reality is that it is mostly inflation, increases in pension contributions and the National minimum wage. We calculate these huge budgets by breaking them down into numbers of services users and at a time of "Unprecedented increases in demand" we are planning on increasing from 14,500 service users to 14,685.

With huge increases in previous years, without the closure of local hospitals, I suspect that with closures taking place our budget will be blown apart pretty quickly later on in the year. So key figures

from the budget agreed are £216.5m for adult services, £118.1m for Children's services, £35.2m for communities, public health and environment, £33.4m for Corporate services and £56.4m for Highways – that is a 3.5% real terms reduction by the way – making a Service total of £459.6 million. This means that the Council budget has reduced by £208 million since 2011 – five short years! At the end of the year my County Locality Budget has been fully spent. It went on the following: -£250 for a strimmer for Coffinswell PC; £325 for a grit bin in Abbotskerswell; £500 for a coffee station in Ipplepen Village Hall; £500 for nets at Ipplepen Cricket Club; £250 to the Kingskerswell Directory and £250 for the Kingskerswell Fete; £500 for lights to the Kingskerswell Village Hall; £4,095 for defibrillators Broadhempston, Coffinswell, Denbury and Ipplepen; £1,000 for planting on the Aller Interchange roundabout; £500 to Buckland football club juniors; £500 for Teignbridge Titans Netball Team; £1,000 for Hits foodbank when they were in crisis; £200 for the Devon Youth games and £130 to a Christmas Lunch for local care leavers. In addition to that I allocated through Investing in Devon £2,000 to Ipplepen tennis club for a new court surface; £2,500 for improvements to Ipplepen Village Hall and £5,500 for new windows to Kingskerswell village hall. Finally I would just like to say it has been the greatest pleasure to work with you over the past four years and I truly hope to see you all again after 4th May.

10) District Councillors Report

(District Cllr M Colclough & District Cllr D Smith)

Cllr D Smith

During the past year, your district council has worked up its 10-year strategy to include but not limit itself to: - Supporting businesses, encouraging entrepreneurs and providing skills training and opportunities for local people to find the best jobs. Continuing to help local employers grow their businesses and aiming to be the first district council to achieve 100% super-fast broadband. Our region remains a popular destination for retirement and we want to preserve the balance by ensuring that there are affordable homes and employment opportunities for our young people to build a secure future here too.

Your District Council has and will continue to ensure that future development is high quality, blends well within our precious landscape yet provides much needed homes for local people. The Council is delivering well on affordable houses and currently 90% of homes built have been sold to local people.

Quality design and green spaces have been and will be paramount and we are in the vanguard for imaginative self-build projects. We will continue to promote active, healthy lifestyles by enhancing and increasing public open space to improve health and wellbeing - for local people and visitors alike.

We believe in the importance of work/life balance and will ensure that recreational space and facilities are enhanced and preserved for current and future generations. With your help we are well on the way to becoming the best District Council in Devon for recycling. We have an excellent reputation for recycling and since the new system was implemented households are thinking more about what they throw away and wasting less. It is our aspiration to maintain this teamwork and continue to improve. As the revenue support grant from central government reduces to zero by 2020 district councils around the country are having to become more business-like in the way they go about their business. Basically, going forward everything we do will need to generate a return on

investment. Purchasing Market Walk, which is anticipated to give an 8% return over ten years, was fortuitous in its timing but that will only be the tip of the iceberg. Over the past twelve months our staff are becoming much more proactive in helping to seize opportunities as they arise and that is an indication of the type of council we are having to become without disenfranchising our residents.

Cllr Mrs M Colclough

The structure of the Council has been changed over the last year. Due to the sad and unexpected deaths of three servicing Conservative Councillors these have been replaced by three lib dems. So the make up of the council is now 27 conservatives, 14 lib dems & 5 independents. Nicola Bulbeck remains as chief executive and the Chairman has been Conservative Councillor Graham Price. Jeremy Christophers continues as leader. Again there has been a rise in council tax agreed at the February budget meeting. The Teignbridge band D council tax for 2017/2018 is increased by 3.22% or £5 to £160.17 per annum. The revenue budget is £16.3 million and includes a statutory increase in the national living wage for 2017/2018 and 1% nationally agreed increase for all other staff from 1st April 2017. There will be an increased parking income of £100,000. Rural Aid is continuing at £40,000 plus the ongoing £25,000 Dartmoor grant fund for Teignbridge villages in the National Park. The capital programme again includes increasing jobs and homes through continuing support for community led planning and infrastructure delivery plan investment contributing to improving education, transport links, sports and open spaces. TDC is allocated just 9% of the council tax with DCC getting 72%, police 10%, Fire 5% and the parish average being 4%. Planning is led by the local plan and every help and encouragement is given to Parish Councils to develop and submit neighbourhood plans.

Provision of new homes is well on target with work on major developments underway and even completed. Two large developments have been agreed affecting Newton Abbot. Firstly Houghton Barton, north of Newton Abbot an area of approximately 160 hectares with delivery of at least 1800 homes with a target of 20% affordable. A new vehicular route is needed connecting the A382 with the A383. There will be the provision of a childrens centre, local shops, community facilities and a 420 place primary school. The draft development framework plan is undergoing public consultation. The other large development is south of Newton Abbot and concerns the Wolborough area where 120 hectares of land should deliver at least 1500 homes a 20% target for affordable. There will be a further employment development and again a new vehicular route connecting the A380 South Devon link road with the A381. TDC vision making Teignbridge a healthy and desirable place where people want to live, work and visit in the publication of a 10 year strategy 2016-2025.

Ten super projects will be to

- 1) Provide more and better affordable homes.
- 2) Keep the district clean.
- 3) Invest in town centres.
- 4) Provide great places to live and work.
- 5) Improve health and well being.
- 6) Create jobs & wealth.
- 7) Improve travel options.
- 8) Provide opportunities for healthy active lifestyles.
- 9) Liaise with, help and support our communities.
- 10) Reduce waste and carbon emissions.

I like to think that I am a member of a council who is making every effort to carry this out. Finally I will mention the results of the new electoral arrangements for the District of Teignbridge as provided by the Local Government Boundary Commission for England, which will commence at the next election in May 2019. The aim is to create electoral equality for councillors and each having the same number of voters. Teignbridge should be represented by 47 councillors, one more than at present. There should be 24 wards, one fewer than there is now. The boundaries of most of the

wards should change, five still staying the same. Ambrook ward has a 7% deviation caused by removing Woodland. I continue to be proud to be a member of TDC and as always will work to ensure that the Council provides the residents with the best possible services at the best value for money.

11) Tree Wardens Report (Mr John Lewis)

Considering the extreme conditions of rain and wind experienced this year it is remarkable that we, in Abbotskerswell, have escaped major tree damage. A few of the old dead elms finally fell with no problems to vehicles or parishioners. Throughout the year there have been many trees taken down or pruned for the usual reasons, overgrown their location, effecting buildings or other structures, or just died. Those, within the conservation area, were removed with the permission of TDC Planning. There were, however, two incidents that were of concern. First, a tree was felled illegally in the woodland behind Wilton Way. We never found out who did this or why. Second, was a mature oak, close to Water Motor and just beyond the electricity substation. This appears to have been taken down and cleared away over a weekend. Neither TDC or the Parish Council were aware of this situation till after the event. Who authorized this, or for what reason, has never been satisfactorily explained.

We have been asked by TDC, to look out for signs of various problems now effecting Oaks, both Horse and Sweet Chestnuts, Ash [dieback], and Elms. I am glad to report that to date none of these problems have been found in Abbotskerswell. However, I understand that there have been two incidents of Ash Dieback reported in our region which has resulted in a movement restriction orders being imposed. This means I think that the effected trees must be destroyed, presumably that means being burnt, in situ or at least at a defined location within the area. TDC to date does not appear to have a plan to deal with such an event within Teignbridge. Let's hope it never happens here. Finally my role is as always to act as a link between parishioners with tree problems and the Parish Council / Teignbridge D.C. / Devon Council.

12) Allotment Association Report (Mrs M Crompton)

We have had a busy year with three of the founder members deciding to put their spades away. John Watts also retired as Treasurer, this left a vacancy on the Committee, Nick Taylor was voted on as Chairman, John Lewis remaining as Secretary and myself taking over as Treasurer. There has been a good uptake on vacant plots with two more families from the village being involved, its good to see younger people interested in the allotments. The NGS open gardens was a success and we will open the allotments again in the weekend of June 3rd & 4th. There are some maintenance plans for the coming year and a project of the composting on the allotments to keep the bottom area more tidy. At present there are three plots vacant but the open gardens weekend usually generates some interest.

13) Village Hall Report (Cllr Paul Marino)

During 2016 the Village Hall Trust has continued to build on the successes of previous years. Items of note are:

- The village May Day event which again was successfully run by the PTFA and enjoyed by all those who attended.

- The Garden Show - the main annual event organised by the Trust which is run by a dedicated 'show' steering group, led by David Wilds, who were by virtue of early engagement with the School able to encourage many entries contributing significantly to the show's success. Similarly the Garden Show lunch, a delicious and well-presented meal, prepared predominantly for the show's judges was once again excellently delivered by Maggie and Leo Gibbs' and their support team.
- Apart from the contribution of all the Trustees make to the wellbeing of our community by maintaining an important facility for sports and social activities, we also support the Parish Council by accommodating sandbag storage, salt storage and gritter on behalf of the Emergency Planning Group. This year all storage sheds to the rear of the Hall were replaced. This project was yet another example of Kevin Farrelly's exemplary work. Other successful projects delivered by Kevin include replacement of the heating system (paid in part by a TDC rural aid grant); LED energy efficient ceiling lighting upgrade in the main Hall; replacement of the entrance lobby doors; new level threshold drainage; installation of a new commercial grade dishwasher; internal repainting, plus many other task and items required in the continuous programme of maintenance works.
- Not all is always smooth in the running of the Hall but day to day problems are quickly resolved with the assistance of our hall manager and caretaker, David Wilds, who has contributed significantly to the Village Hall's wellbeing once again this year.
- We also benefit from Lynn Howard's hard work who apart from being tactful and tenacious in her role as booking's manager has also been instrumental in securing new repeat users following her successful attempts to publicise and promote the Village Hall.

What does go unnoticed, and often un-thanked, are the myriad of small tasks and duties that are essential to the smooth running of Abbotskerswell's community hall. These tasks nevertheless get quietly done by cleaners, event supporters, and Trustees. However a special mention nonetheless needs to be made in recognition of the tireless and dedicated work undertaken by Kevin Eales, who after 14 years of sterling service in various leading roles has decided to step both as Chairman and a Trustee.

So to summarise, 2016 has been another good year for the Village Hall Trust and I am sure with the strong team of Trustee's in place, 2017 will be equally as successful.

14) Annual Report to all Parishioners – this will now be circulated in Abbtalk.

15) Parishioners' Questions

Mr David Munden – Community renewable energy projects seem to be the way ahead and it would have been idea to ask about this within the neighbourhood plan. C Cllr A Dewhirst confirmed there is money available to invest in these local projects and it would be worth looking into further. This was duly noted by the Parish Council.

Meeting closed @ 7.45pm