



Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting – Held Monday 30th April 2018

Abbotskerswell Parish Rooms – Meeting commenced @ 7.00pm

Present – Cllr K Eales, Cllr P Marino, Cllr Mrs W Grierson, Cllr Mrs A Allen, Cllr Mrs L Clowes, D Cllr D Smith.

Attended by - David Munden (Neighbourhood Plan), Mr Nick Taylor (Allotments), 4 members of the public, John Lewis (Tree Warden).

Apologies –Cllr Mrs M Colclough, Cllr K Farrelly.

1) Chairman’s Report – Cllr Mrs W Grierson

The Parish Council is made up of 8 Councillors and they represent the parishioners of Abbotskerswell village and the surrounding Parish. There are 5 standing committees which are the Abbotskerswell Recreation Association, Emergency Planning Group, Planning Committee, Communications Advisory Group and the Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group. The chairperson from each committee will shortly give a report on the years events, 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 thank them all for their hard work again this year , and to everyone involved in running and working on all of these committees.

The Abbotskerswell Neighbourhood Plan went to referendum on the 28th September and was voted through by the village residents. This was the culmination of a lot of hard work from the NP Steering Group and in particular thanks must go to David Munden and Kevin Eales for seeing this project through. The Steering Group has now finished and the Parish Council has taken on the implementation moving forward, David has kindly agreed to stay on and help in this implimentation.

David Wilds continues to maintain our footpaths and curbs and keep up with the rampant weeds. Trevor Howard will be spraying the weeds around the village hopefully this week or when we get a bit of a dry spell. Thanks to them both.

We managed to persuade the bus company that it would be a good idea to drive the busses on a one way route around the village so that they do not meet head to head on our narrow lanes. I think this has been a success and I no longer see busses reversing past parked cars outside my house which used to be quite a regular occurrence.

In the autumn we spent a couple of days crown lifting the trees on the green and at the top of the village. The grass will now have a chance to grow under the trees and it all looks a lot tidier and people at the bus stop on Wilton Way can also now see when a bus is coming.

The railings at the top of the village were hit and broken by a vehicle last year and after a lot of discussion with Devon County Council it was agreed that they could be put back as they were before, rather than having a new modern design installed. All councillors were in agreement that a modern design would not be in keeping for the entrance to the village.

We had two snow interludes this winter. On both occasions the village Emergency Plan was put into full force and our committee members and village residents did a marvellous job of clearing and gritting the roads around the village. Thank you to all who helped on those chilly days.

We recently distributed "20's Plenty" bin stickers to households around the main routes in the village. Vehicle speed through the village is a big concern and regularly brought up at the Parish Council. As we are unable to pursue a change in the speed limit through the village until Devon CC have finished their review, we thought that this would be another way to approach it. There are some stickers left over and so if anyone wants more they are kindly being held for us at the cafe and you can just pop in and pick one up.

Bob Chambers resigned from the PC at Christmas. We would all like to thank him for his many years of service to the village and for all the hands on work and maintenance he has done. He stood on the ARA as Chair for many years and was also on the Emergency Planning Committee. He was key in the upgrade and installation of the MUGGA sports courts and he will be missed. I hope he is now enjoying all his new found spare time, with his feet up!

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.

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

The Council has 5 Standing Committees:

Planning Committee: Mary Colclough, Kevin Eales, Kevin Farrelly, Wendy Grierson, Paul Marino, Ann Allen, Liz Clowes

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

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

Communications Advisory Group: Liz Clowes(Chair), Kevin Eales, Ann Allen, Kath O'Neill

Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group: Kevin Eales(Chair), Wendy Grierson, Paul Evemy(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	Kevin Eales & Wendy Grierson
School Governor	vacancy
Stoneycombe Liaison	Kevin Farrelly
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	Nick Taylor
Tree Warden	John Lewis
Volunteer Action Group	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 continues to work diligently to update our online presence. Kathy O'Neill recently agreed to join our Communications Advisory Group and is now keeping our Facebook page up to the minute.

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 and consultations follow every environmental standard correctly and that all statutory regulations are adhered to.

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 – no report given.

3) Emergency Planning Report (Cllr K Farrelly)

Well if 2017 was uneventful 2018 was the opposite .Two major snowfalls hit us firstly at the beginning and again around the middle of March. The gritter was well and truly tested, going out on at least four occasions. Trevor Howard and Barry Hedger who oversaw this, along with a team of willing helpers made a valiant effort to keep the village moving. This was the first real opportunity to enforce the emergency plan and it will allow us to fine tune going forward.

It was wonderful to see the village come together and just shows what a special place we live in. Devon highways also did a tremendous job in keeping the major roads open.

We used up all our stock of salt and the grit bins were all but emptied, these will be replenished over the coming months.

The emergency planning group met on a quarterly basis and Sue Collingsworth as secretary of the group updated the plan (contact names and numbers) no small task and she deserves a special vote of thanks.

The group also applied for and obtained a grant of over £900 to go towards new equipment, which came just in time for the bad weather.

The roles of flood and snow wardens are filled on a voluntary basis with Dave Wilds once again playing a pivotal role in this.

Well done to the group and volunteers.

4) Planning Report (Cllr P Marino)

In addition to the usual small scale domestic and business applications for new buildings, conversions, minor alterations, extensions and tree works, the major issue concerning the Parish Council over the last 12 months has been the mixed use major planning application submitted by PCL Planning Consultants on Teignbridge District Council's NA3 land allocation at Wolborough.

Although the majority of the application site involves land outside our Parish boundary, this hybrid application unusually comprised of two parts, one detailed relating to the conversion of Wolborough Barton Farm into a boutique hotel, restaurant, bar and spa and the other for outline consideration only relating to the provision of up to 1275 dwellings, a primary school, 2 care homes, employment units, community facilities, a local centre, open space and associated infrastructure with only the means of access also for determination in detail.

Following a thorough examination of the copious number of supporting documents submitted, the Parish Council in association with Wolborough Residents Association concluded that many of the complex environmental issues known to exist had simply been left unaddressed. As a consequence APC/WRA jointly commissioned two of the UK's most

eminent and experienced zoologists in the field of Bat Ecology and conservation to review the planning documents for the NA3 Wolborough development and their report similarly identified areas of concern with both the impact assessment and the mitigation proposals.

These findings and other shortcomings have subsequently been conveyed to the Planning Department in the form of objection letters, however despite an increasing hostile stance taken by PCL Planning Consultants, TDC have commendably taken a firm stance and even held a couple of update meetings regarding the application with the Parish in conjunction with other neighbouring councils that will also be affected by the proposals. To date, this mixed use hybrid application remains live yet undetermined despite having significantly gone past the maximum 13 week statutory period allowed for consultation purposes.

Other planning matters of interest affecting the Parish going forward include :

- The potential resurrection of the proposed exception site for the provision of affordable housing on land adjacent to Hillside Cottages.
- A proposed review of the Village's development boundary which will be issued shortly by TDC for consultation purposes.
- TDC's supplementary planning guidance for NA3 land allocation at Wolborough which is due to be published in the next couple of months.
- DCC's draft conservation planning guidance document concerning the habitat of the Greater Horseshoe bat which is currently open to consultation and is intended to replace the South Hams SAC (special area conservation) in which Abbotskerswell is partly located.

Finally, to summarise during the last year the Planning Committee has dealt with 20 applications together with 3 appeals, one which was dismissed, one that is current and the other upheld. 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)

With much more activity in 2017/18 for the Communications Committee, we were pleased to enlist the help of Kathy O'Neil, a Marketing professional, who volunteered her services to us, in particular for social media help.

In the past year AbbTalk has continued to be a useful information tool for the parish reaching around 676 homes and a 2,000+ readership. During 2017 it was used to give vital information relating to the Neighbourhood Plan and recently with the '20's Plenty' bin stickers. With the recent snow and via Facebook parishioners were encouraged to send in their photos to be used in the magazine. This proved so successful that to try and keep up the momentum of interest, in the latest issue we have asked for photos, which we may use, on the covers.

We also plan to contact all the smaller clubs and associations who meet in the village and encourage those who don't currently contribute to AbbTalk, to provide editorial in an effort to introduce new members and give them more prominence. AbbTalk needs to be seen as a source of information alongside the website and we will continue to keep this information relevant and timely.

There are lots of boring facts and figures that we can quote on the website, including the fact that we have had 257,556 visits since 4.12.15 which means that the last year had 50% more visits than the previous year, mostly driven by alerts on our Facebook Page (see below).

This is the front page for the Parish Council; it holds the up to date repository of all the information and news that is need for the Transparency Requirements, plus the information that we think need to be out there. However, we are always looking for more input from our parishioners as to what they would like to know, thus much of the effort this year has been spent in developing the Facebook / Website interactivity.

The Parish council now has its own Facebook page, which means several users can have access to the page without needing to access personal accounts. We currently have 92 people that like the page and 102 followers of the page. This enables us to reach people instantly and also means people expect us to react instantly.

So far the page has mainly been used to advertise events but it would be great to broaden this to the work the parish council are doing such as the "20 is plenty campaign". I would like to take this opportunity to urge all Councillors to send anything they would like people to know that is happening and this in turn will build confidence in the parish councils work. To send anything to be published, please send a word document for the text and a jpg file for an image. Images do mean more interaction on social media.

It would also be great if all could like and share articles as this will help a wider audience to be reached. Thank you for all the support so far.

Members of the communications Committee are as follows:

Chairman Cllr Liz Clowes, Cllr Kevin Eales, Cllr Ann Allen, Kathy O'Neil,

6) Neighbourhood Plan (Mr D Munden)

The Neighbourhood Plan for the Parish of Abbotskerswell was finally approved by Teignbridge Council on 31st October 2017. This was the culmination of three years work by the Steering Group set up by the Parish Council to produce a blue print for the Parish to coincide with the period of the Teignbridge Local Plan. The Plan was a totally iterative process, with the residents and other relevant parties being consulted and involved throughout the whole exercise. The outcome of this was a brilliant result in the statutory referendum which took place on 28th September 2017 in which 88% said "yes" to the Plan and this was on a turnout of 30.5% of the electorate, a turnout which exceeded many other elections.

Not only was this a very satisfactory outcome but also the comments in the Independent Examiner's report on the Plan were extremely gratifying. In his summary he said:-

"The Steering Group and the Parish Council are to be congratulated for producing a well-focused and locally distinctive neighbourhood plan. The policies cover the matters which are of importance to the community but at the same time sit comfortably with the strategic policies in the Teignbridge Local Plan, including the large Wolborough strategic allocation which stands astride of the Parish boundary in the north of the Plan Area. The overall thrust of the policies and proposal have been clearly shaped by the constraints imposed by the wealth of ecological assets and networks that cross the Parish, especially in term of the Greater Horseshoe Bat, a European protected species. I consider that it will deliver sustainable development."

Since October, work has started on considering the many proposals for action contained in the Plan and trying to prioritise these. A report, detailing many of the action areas was presented to the February 2018 meeting of the Parish Council. It is now for the Parish Council to take these forward; some will be easier than others to fulfil, but the expectations arising from having a Plan, and one which has involved the whole community in preparing, means that there should be some early results. Equally importantly, is the need to communicate progress, or lack of it, on each of the policies contained in the Plan and to keep the whole Plan under constant review. With all the proposed development so near to us in Newton Abbot, it is even more crucial that the Parish Council implements the Plan to the letter.

Once again this is an opportunity for me to thank all the Steering Group for their work on the Plan and for achieving such a successful outcome. Now for the action!

- 7) **Natural Environment & Biodiversity Group (Cllr K Eales)** – copy of this report attached to the minutes.

- 8) **Police Report** – summary for the last 12 months, 40 incidents were recorded in Abbotskerswell, 11 incidents antisocial, 1 burglary, other thefts Manor Road and old Cider works, 1 public order incident and 6 vehicle crimes and 16 classified as GBH incidents. The Parish still remains a very low crime area.

9) County Councillors Report (County Cllr A Dewhirst)

In May it was great to be re-elected to the County Council in this new Division and then to have the support of Cross Party colleagues to be made Chair of Scrutiny. Because of the wide nature of the County Council's activities the scrutiny role is devolved into three areas – Children's, chaired by the Leader of the Labour Party; Adults and Health, chaired by a leading Conservative Councillor and finally my over-arching committee the Corporate, Infrastructure and Regulatory Services Committee. We lost no time in looking at the most pressing issues of the County Council – the Children's Directorate's move from Ofsted "Requires Improvement" to "Good"; Health and Adults looking at community hospital

closures, sustainability and transformation plans and integrated services and my Committee looking at Broadband provision and Mobile coverage in Devon, Neighbourhood Policing in the light of this government's debilitating cuts to police budgets, the desperate air quality in parts of our County, the safety of our public buildings in response to the Grenfell Tower tragedy, scrutinising the Local Enterprise Partnership – an undemocratic quango set up to direct development in Devon and Somerset - and flood risk management across our County and Districts.

In addition to this work I sit on the Public Rights of Way Committee, the Devon County Farms Estate and the Corporate Parenting Board as well as being a Local Government Association Mentor to a Scrutiny Chair in another Council. Finally, I represent the County Council as a visitor to the Atkinson Therapeutic Secure Children's Home in Exeter and in that role I was pleased to join Baroness Elizabeth Butler-Sloss, Patron of Northbrook Community Trust, in formally opening the new £1.1 million extension of the Atkinson Unit. I am part of a team that includes professionals, educationalists and of course Ofsted who visit every six months – I am pleased to have been able to lobby for the many changes that have taken place at Atkinson over the last five years – not least of which are the changes to the school terms to ensure that all young people who attend are able to benefit from the inspirational teaching available at the home.

Of course the Budget is the high point of the year at Council and I took part in all three Budget Scrutiny Committees, prior to the Council ratifying the Budget in February. At Children's Scrutiny we heard that Devon continues to be one of the lowest funded Education Authorities in the Country despite a miserly addition of £7.5 million to our budget and despite years of lobbying to our MPs at Westminster. It needs repeating that our children are funded £268 per child less than the national average and yet Westminster Council who have far lower levels of SEN receive 19% more per child – quite obviously this government considers them more important.

At Adults and Health we heard that the budget of £227 million will enable the Council to commission 36,000 hours of care per week for our increasingly elderly population as well as our Public Health function. Parishioners will have heard over the last five years my great concerns about the extremely high levels of skin cancer melanomas in the County and high the level of incidents of self-harm by our young people – issues covered by the Public Health function. I am sure that Parishioners will be appalled to learn that Devon is the 6th worst funded local authority in the UK for Public Health and that this government is proposing to reduce that by 2.2% until 2020.

My committee scrutinised a budget of £124 million for Highways, Communities, Environment and Economy. We heard that there was a proposal for a 2.7% reduction in the Highways budget on the year before. Our Committee could not accept this level of service

reduction on our sadly neglected highway infrastructure and requested the Cabinet look again at their figures. You will be pleased to know that an additional £6.5 million was found for our roads to be directed towards drainage and ditching on the highway – crucial issues in the light of the recent weather.

We finally came to the Council Budget meeting and my Group's proposals included an additional £223,00 to protect young people's mental health services, £½ million for the education of children with special educational needs, restoring the £2.2 million cuts to Devon's School Budgets made last year and proposing a £50,000 hardship fund for post 16 home to college transport. This was all funded by cutting £750 k from the budget for consultants, cutting £850k from the spin and media budgets, reducing spending on outside room hire by £260k, saving £64k from car allowances (143 staff are paid to drive their car to work but drive less than 10 miles per week on council business). Additionally we would transfer £899k from the economic development budget by working closely with the Local Enterprise Partnership and District Councils and finally cutting the Development Planning budget by £150k by making planning agreements with District Council colleagues. Finally, we called on the County Council along with District colleagues to ask Government to urgently review Second Home Council Tax to ensure that the system is robust and much needed revenue is not lost.

Sadly, our amendments were lost and we saw yet another austerity budget passed through on the nod – the best we got was the Conservative Deputy Leader complaining about unfair government funding from his own colleagues in Westminster!

10) District Councillors Report

(District Cllr M Colclough & District Cllr D Smith)

Cllr D Smith

At the Annual Meeting of Council in May 2017 Graham Price and John Nutley stepped down from their roles as Chairman and Vice-Chairman of Council. They were replaced by Tim Golder and Charlie Dennis respectively.

This has been a somewhat unusual year for the council in that as part of a senior management restructure the role of chief executive held by Nicola Bulbeck ceased and was replaced temporarily by a Head of Paid Service position held by Phil Shears. That position has since morphed into the role of Managing Director of Teignbridge District Council as we seek to develop a more business-like philosophy. Phil has taken on that role.

More recently Sue Aggett will be leaving her role as Director at Teignbridge District Council, today in fact. Sue joined Teignbridge in 1996 and, prior to holding the Director role, she was

the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer for a number of years. The Council wants to place on record its thanks to Sue for her hard work and commitment during her time at Teignbridge and wish her all the very best for the future.

Sue wishes to recognise and record her thanks to and respect for her Teignbridge colleagues, partners, businesses and members of the public with whom she has worked over the past 22 years to deliver Teignbridge's priorities.

In accordance with its strategy document Teignbridge continues with its contributions to community life. The council works with a variety of voluntary and special interest groups to support our local communities. Financial assistance comes in the form of grants and service level agreements (SLA). As government funding reduces, our communities are asked to become more self-reliant, and the need for local support will increase. Without the council's financial support many of these groups would become unsustainable.

Service Level Agreements

Teignbridge Community & Voluntary Service (CVS): We invest in CVS core costs so that it can support over **four hundred small voluntary groups**, providing funding advice and running the Teignbridge Volunteer Service.

Teignbridge Citizens Advice Bureau: We help this service to provide information and advice and advocacy to over **eight thousand people** a year www.citizensadviceteignbridge.org.uk/

The CVS and the CAB are our two biggest SLAs and the funds we provide contribute to key staff salaries to ensure sustainability.

Newton Abbot Community Transport and East Teignbridge Community Transport: Provides community transport and shop mobility services to thousands of users each year www.dawlish-mobility.co.uk/ and www.newtonabbotcta.org/

Intercom Trust: Provides services across the South West rural peninsula to address issues relating to LGBT people and raising public awareness of issues around sexual orientation and gender identity. www.intercomtrust.org.uk/

Plymouth & Devon Equality Council: Promotes equality of opportunity and works to eliminate racial discrimination. They have contributed particularly to **our Gypsy and Traveller forum**. www.plymouthanddevonrec.org.uk/

Newton Abbot CIC: This is a two-year SLA which ends July 2017. The Community Interest Company have been developing key interventions to help tackle issues faced by the community in Buckland – unemployment, education and skills, health improvement etc. www.newtonabbotcic.org.uk

The BID team administrate the grants, and holders must produce regular performance reports on their work.

Equality

We also depend on these organisations to help us meet our responsibilities to residents under the Equality Act 2010. Beyond SLAs, the BID team maintains relationships with a variety of community groups representing disabilities, rurality and older people, ensuring people have a voice, making sure any service changes do not cause undue disadvantage.

Rent Subsidies

Teignbridge supports some community organisations by renting, at a reduced rate, council-owned property e.g. Teignmouth Coastguard lookout point, Dawlish football club. Applications are scored by BID depending on need/accountability, working with the Economy & Assets team, to make the best use of council resources.

Rural Aid

This grant of £40,000 a year is allocated to rural parishes outside of the DNPA to fund local projects, community facilities, the support of social inclusion, and enhance life in a rural setting.

The council has worked hard over the past 12 months to increase recycling rates - currently best in the county and reduce landfill – zero to landfill. It also has a program for using renewable energy on its buildings to reduce carbon emissions. It also introduced a 'we are watching you' campaign to discourage littering that seems to have had some success in certain 'hotspots'. Delivery of housing is ahead of target but, as yet delivery of employment not so much.

Enjoying our green spaces

The Green Spaces team recently published the events guide for April – June 2018. There's loads to do including guided walks, woodland trails, bracken bashing, scavenger hunts and apple tree pruning! Visit the Green Spaces page on the website to find out more.

The work of Green Spaces educates and informs children and adults about the environment around them, something which encourages them to use and understand our open space assets and look after them for future generations. This falls under the Out and About and Active Council Strategy project but is also linked to the work we do to improve the health and wellbeing of our communities, something Health at the Heart looks at achieving.

The new GDPR (General Data Protection Regulations) come in to force on 25th May this year and staff have been receiving training whilst members have been attending workshops. The main issues seem to be around the type of information you collect, what you use it for and whether and how long you need to keep it for.

Coming up we have the first review of the local plan and the Issues public consultation takes place from Monday 21st May to Monday 16th July 2018. As last time there are to be a number of Public Exhibitions/Roadshows. These will take place in various communities between 2nd June and 27th June. No doubt the Parish Council will be advised of the dates and venues.

11) Tree Wardens Report (Mr John Lewis)

Considering the extreme conditions of heavy rainfall and high wind, not to mention the snow, we experienced this year, it is remarkable that we, in Abbotskerswell, have escaped major tree damage.

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.

You will be aware we have been asked by TDC, to look out for and report signs of various problems now effecting Oaks, both Horse and Sweet Chestnuts, Ash [dieback], and Elms. It is at this time of the year, at leaf burst, that any problems become obvious. I am glad to report that to date none of these problems have been found in Abbotskerswell.

There are two incidents / situations worth mentioning:-

- A large, tall, ash tree, on the boundary between the allotments and Fairfield, was diagnosed by TDC as rotten at the roots and must be taken down. Experienced tree surgeons, dealt with it using a climbing method, and it was disposed of on and off site. This was both difficult and costly. What if it had been Ash Dieback as first thought. TDC to date does not appear to have a plan to deal with such an event within Teignbridge . Could a private owner manage such a situation. Let's hope it never happens here.
- If you look round the village you will find trees in the grass verges adjacent to the highway. Some obviously existed before the area was developed, others planted by well meaning people, others by nature. When they become a problem the difficulty is to know who is responsible. There is no easy way to find who that is specially if cost is involved.

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 (Mr Nick Taylor)

Sadly Joanna Westgate passed away and her garden will be made as a memorial wildflower garden to encourage insects and to maybe involve the school as an education project. The Association made a donation of £100 to the school for the Hare & Tortoise project. A compost area has been made this year, the shed door needs replacing and the entrance gate to the football field needs attention, we would like the Parish Council to consider helping towards this. A tree on the recreation side and the fence needs some attention. National Gardens Scheme 9th/10th June will be supported.

13) Village Hall Report (Cllr Paul Marino)

2017 has been another successful year for the Village Hall Trust.

The Village Hall remains a well-used facility by members of our Parish and various other social groups which as a result of improved advertising has led to an increased number of bookings. The income that has been generated as a consequence has enabled the Trust to continue with the ongoing programme of re-investment in the fabric of the premises and also improvement in the facilities available to potential users/hirers.

During this year for example, Wi-Fi has been installed, the main hall stage and clerestory window curtains replaced, new chairs ordered, boundary fences and external benches renewed together with the installation of replacement LED energy efficient external lighting to the car park areas.

As previously reported the Trust has also decided to instigate Project Eat which involves building a new kitchen and chair store extension along the rear of the main hall. Having found a viable solution to a historic drainage problem it is the Trust's intention to submit a planning application very shortly. The estimated costs for Project Eat are currently projected to be in the region of £60,000 and so far a ring fenced grant of £1000 has been gratefully received from Abbfest, with that sum possibly being matched should this year's festival make a profit.

A well-attended concert held last Friday saw one of the Hall's new users The Chordettes perform along with Abbotskerswell's other two choral groups, AK singers and Tapestry, also raised another £780 toward Project Eat's target. With the benefit of this money, some of the Trust's own savings and if a number of proposed grant applications prove to be fruitful, it is hoped that a start at least on the groundworks of the new extension might be possible during the latter part of next year.

Other items of note that have occurred during 2017 include :

- The village May Day event which for a third year was successfully run by the PTFA and enjoyed by all those who attended.
- The Garden Show - which is the main annual event organised by the Trust, was again well supported with a healthy number of entries in most classes thus contributing significantly to the show's success. One slight disappointment however was the fact that the number of entries were down in some of the children's classes.

So, as part of the planning for this year's show, which is to take place on the 4th of August, Lynn Howard, one of our Trustees has kindly offered to hold some craft classes, in conjunction with Paula Simmons at the school with the hope of improving entry numbers.

As advertised in the latest issue of AbbTalk Lynn will also be holding a 'scarecrow making' workshop in the Village Hall on the 12th of May prior to this year's competition which has a Royal theme. The intention is to have scarecrows ready for

the Open Gardens weekend with those judged to be the best to be announced at the Garden Show.

So to summarise, 2017 has been another good year for the Village Hall Trust and I am confident with the current team of Trustees in place, the remainder of 2018 will be equally as successful.

- 14) Annual Report to all Parishioners – this will now be circulated in Abbtalk once the minutes have been agreed at Mays Parish Council Meeting.**
- 15) **Parishioners' Questions** – although the Parish has a very low crime rate Parishioners were still surprised at how many crimes had been reported in a 12 month period within the Parish.

Meeting closed @ 7.45pm