

The MINUTES of the Annual Meeting of the Parish of Abberley at Abberley Village Hall

Held at 7pm on Wednesday 15th May 2024

Present: Cllr. Knight (Chairman), Cllr. Eden, Cllr. Jukes. Cllr. Nott, Cllr. Ballard, Cllr. Field, Cllr. Tassell
In Attendance: (Carole Hirst), Clerk; Cllr. P. Cumming MHDC, 4 members of the public

Apologies: Cllr. Eberlin; Cllr. Outwin, Cllr. Chambers WCC.

1. Welcome & Introduction: Cllr. Knight.

2. Abberley Reports:

2.a.i Abberley Pre-School –

Abberley Preschool is an Ofsted Outstanding setting and is for children from the age of two years through to school age. We provide a warm, stimulating and nurturing environment to help your child explore, learn and thrive.

We have a strong safeguarding ethos, along with our vision of keeping each child 'happy'. We strongly believe that if a child feels happy, safe and loved that they can reach their full potential. We offer weekly music sessions, yoga sessions, daily outdoor learning and a weekly cooking club. We also focus strongly on child's play, focusing on letting them learn through their interests.

2. a.ii. Abberley C of E Primary School –

Abberley Parochial V.C. Primary School has recently appointed a new headteacher (Mrs Claire Shelley) who is eager to lead the school to new heights and continue providing a nurturing and supportive environment for all pupils and staff.

The school link with the local church has been thriving, with Rev. David's presence greatly appreciated by both staff and pupils. Rev. David is a familiar face around the school and I know this will help deepen our community links.

At Christmas, children showcased their talents at St Mary's Church during an angelic Carol Concert. Our younger pupils impressed us all with their confidence performing the Nativity. Our collaboration with Abberley Pre-School for our Harvest Festival celebration and an Easter craft morning was a wonderful experience for all involved. Older pupils enjoyed a shared Easter service with their parents which was led by Rev. David with pupils undertaking readings. Last Saturday, pupils took part in a community spring concert at Lindridge Church. Abberley pupils performed wonderfully and again I am sure these local community links will develop further in time.

To develop Abberley pupil's understanding of the world and how we can make a difference, we have been involved in many events. These events have been driven by pupils and their desire 'to make a difference'. We have supported the community through organising a coffee morning for Macmillan, a sponsored bunny hop to raise money for Acorns and ate lots of cakes for Comic Relief! The CREW pupils have established strong links with the Salvation Army and pupils have organised 'hot chocolate and toast' weeks to raise funds to support the homeless in Worcester. Our Eco Group have been instrumental in organising events to support environmental causes, such as sponsoring a mountain gorilla through WWF. Pupils have been learning how we can protect gorillas and understand some of the biggest environment challenges facing our natural world today.

Behind the scenes, teachers have been working extremely hard to create a new and engaging curriculum to enhance the learning experience for all Abberley pupils. The new school curriculum aims to make learning more engaging and enriching.

As we strive for excellence in all areas of school life, we are proud to have achieved the Gold School Games Mark award for our dedication to sports and physical education through our commitment, engagement in school games. Abberley pupils have excelled in various sporting events, showcasing

their talents and teamwork across the whole school. In terms of achievements the girls football team reached the semi-finals in the West Worcestershire Under 11 Girls Football league. Abberley achieved 1st place in the Chantry School Girls Indoor Football Festival and we also were awarded 1st place in Quick sticks hockey. Last July, the Year 6 pupils showed excellent team work and paddling skills achieving a 1st place at the Worcester Bell Boating Regatta. The boys football team reached 3rd place at their football tournament at the Chantry with the netball team also gaining a 3rd position. As a small school, we are extremely proud of these sporting achievements and it reflects the continued commitment to sport by both staff and pupils.

In March to celebrate World Book Day in a fun and creative manner, pupils and staff all came dressed as a Roald Dahl character. The whole school was very colourful with creative costumes and it was even taken over by Miss Trunchbull for the day!

All Key Stage Two pupils have recently participated in, or are soon to embark on, their residential trips. These experiences have allowed pupils to bond with their peers, engage in challenging outdoor activities, and showcase their skills in computing and science. The upcoming residential trip promises to be an exciting opportunity to create and star in their own wildlife film reports, further enhancing learning and creativity. We are proud of the achievements and growth displayed by our pupils during these residential.

Looking ahead, we are excited to welcome back Miss Hughes in July after her maternity leave, we have plans to improve our school grounds and update our EYFS classroom to provide a stimulating learning environment for our new pupils in September. We are also currently in the process of enhancing our school grounds, including the redesign of our forest school area and wildlife garden. These improvements will provide our pupils with a stimulating outdoor learning environment.

Abberley Parochial V.C. Primary School is a thriving environment to learn where pupils are excited to attend school.

2.a.iii Abberley Young Farmers Association- Sarah Coley

No report received.

2.a.iv Nora Parsons Day Centre – Ian Brown

The oil central heating boiler replaced a rather old faulty one which had proved to be hard to find parts and had a heavy usage of oil.

The electrics in the kitchen was up graded to encompass current safety standards.

The outside also had the Centres attention this being removal of 2 trees and reduction of hedges to give natural light into the lounge which had been lost over the years.

The centre took the members to Safari Park for the annual trip (this is paid for by Nora Parsons Centre) We also supply a Christmas lunch.

This year has seen the addition of an Exercise Lady once a month which complements a singer and a feet care service.

The Centre is still only charging £10 which includes a 2-course hot lunch with many activities this is only achieved by many giving the time for free and the kind donations from so many.

2.a.v Abberley Green Trust- Sue Coley

With no celebrations on the green this year it's been a matter of keeping it tidy for all those that enjoy walking, sitting on one of the seats and the many dogs that love having a run round. We did eventually get a dog poo bin which is emptied by the Council.

For safety reasons, a fence was put up on the green side of the non-existent hedge. We hope to eventually get the hedge to grow to the height of the fence.

Two carb apple trees have been planted in memory of one of our volunteers, the wildflowers continue to thrive. The daffodils were beautiful this year and the WI's Snakes Head Fritillary are increasing.

We have an amazing group of volunteers that look after the more strenuous jobs, but we desperately need help weeding the shrub beds. If you know anyone who can help, we're always working on the 2nd Saturday of the month. At the April working party an area from the oak tree around the top of the green was rotated and Councillor Outwin scattered the poppy seeds ready to celebrate 80 years of the D Day landings.

We now have a rota for the grass mowing, so it means it no longer falls to John Coley who has been doing it every 2 weeks for about 15 years which was much appreciated.

2.a.vi Abberley Parochial Church Council – Bill Ballard

Report from the Abberley Churches as Churchwarden for the period to 26 April 2024

New Vicar

Our new vicar David Morris has now been in situ since the 22 August 2024, and we are all delighted with him. He has already substantially strengthened our links with Abberley Primary School. He is now a governor there and has held various activities and church services specifically for the school using the village hall as well as St Mary's.

Coffee and Cake

Claire Furness continues to hold coffee and cake mornings at St Mary's on a regular basis. They are now held on the second Thursday of each month at the slightly earlier time of 11 am to 12.30pm. They are still well attended and are a benefit both to the church and the Abberley Care Farm. They raised almost £800 for the Church last year.

WI

The WI continue to use St Mary's on a monthly basis.

Clock Refurbishment

We have carried out some running repairs to the clock which cost about £2000. We still need to push for funding for the bigger repair work which will get all clock faces working and will cost about £14,000.

Pews

We have now removed some of the pews at the back of the church which has made the back of the church more user friendly. This has benefited the coffee and cake mornings, WI meetings and given a nice area to play in for the children attending church.

Organ

We have been looking at the organ in St Mary's which is apparently a very fine Hill's organ but has been badly serviced in the past, at some stage it will need renovating but to do this will cost over £30,000.

Quinquennial Review

As I expect you are aware, every five years a church needs to have an Architect's report on the structure of the building. One of our concerns is that it can still be quite damp in the church, and we are beginning to wonder whether the roof needs some work. We anticipate that the report will tell us what needs to be done.

Church Numbers

Although the churches can be full for a wedding or funeral, regular attendees (attending a service at least once a month) number about 20 at St Mary's and 10 at St Michaels. This is out of a village

population which I believe to be over 800." I said what was in italics last year's report and the numbers are still fairly modest that attend church regularly. We do see some new faces at Christmas, Easter etc but we could do with some younger attendees!

Parish News

The parish news continues to be delivered to 450 households in Abberley 10 times a year free of charge. We do charge for the adverts and also seek donations which some parishioners respond to. Andre Mawby the editor still works very hard to produce the magazine.

Others

We continue to run the 100 club and Phil Congreve organises a quiz night at least once a year. We are trying to hold other events in St Mary's. We held the church bazaar last year which raised almost £1000 for the churches.

We recently held a joint event with the Village Hall, which was one of Tony Jervis's photographic presentations which had almost 80 attendees and was very well received. This raised almost £400 for the church.

We have reinstated the church bazaar which will on 23 Nov 2024.

2.a.vii Abberley Village Hall – Sue Coley

Another successful year for the hall. All our regular hirers continue, and we now have a weekly Zumba Class. Unfortunately, we get asked for weekday bookings, but we cannot accommodate this which is a good thing.

We did our annual spring clean and inventory check in February. The paint was touched up and the brown doors were painted to match the rest of the colour scheme, with many negative comments.

At our May meeting, the hiring charges will be discussed. There will have to be a significant increase. We now have to pay tradespersons for any work as our volunteers are now past the age to do this work. We've had to significantly increase the hourly rate for our booking secretary and cleaner as well as all the oil, electricity, water and insurance increases. We've just had an invoice for £2500 to update the fire system which we have no choice but to do.

After our article in the Parish News we were hoping to encourage some younger people to join the committee but we only had one reply and she has joined us.

Councillors commented that the paintwork including colour scheme for the main hall doors was all looking great!

2.a.viii Hester Severne Trust – no report received.

2.a.ix District Councillor's Report- Cllr. Paul Cumming

The Parish has been part of the much larger ward for the past year, represented by two councillors and consisting of 31 square miles and some 14% of the district by area. This has generally worked well but workload has increased as we both represent an area of eleven parishes covered by eight Parish Councils, each with their own individual issues as well as the overall matters that arise in a large rural ward. We continue to ensure that the rural voice is put forward at every opportunity, given our physical distance from Malvern.

Planning has been at the forefront of consideration with the lengthy delay in the revision of the SWDP making it easier for developers to get permission for speculative developments, which often fail to consider the necessary infrastructure. On appeal, 145 houses have been approved in Astley, but 15 houses rejected in Abberley with a further seven being refused permission by the Planning Committee – in both the latter cases contrary to Officers' original recommendations. We have been working on

the issue of planning performance and improvement is at last under way, helped by the recent appointment of a new Chief Planner.

The Council has been given large sums of money from central government (some of which we have been successful in getting allocated to an infrastructure fund to accompany new housing) and a number of local organisations have been awarded grants which should result in more successful rural businesses and greater employment. The rural economy continues to be promoted through the economy panel.

We are aware of the need to ensure that local people are given priority for new affordable housing and have been in discussions with the Housing department to strengthen this.

Across the District. Officers have been developing native wildflower meadows and community orchards as well as establishing a natural network with the RSPB on the land purchased at Hallow. Unfortunately, the Council has fallen behind in reaching their net zero target.

Most important are the individual issues in each parish and we should be pleased to hear of any other matters that require attention. Once again, we have our ward grants to allocate, so we would be grateful to receive details of worthy local activities that might benefit from a small injection of funds.

2.a. x County Councillors Report – Cllr. David Chambers

1. Following my previous reports identifying budget overspends within the County Council's budget, large savings have been made due to efficiencies and changes in procedures, which have reduced budget concerns considerably. It should also be noted that the County Council enjoys healthy reserves, which have increased in recent years and which now stand at £100million. This may seem a reasonably large reserve but not when annual expenditure within the Council is approximately £430 million.
2. A few recent Worcestershire statistics which may be of interest:
 - a. Worcestershire County Council's Council Tax is in the lowest 25% in the UK.
 - b. Worcestershire's economy is £2 billion bigger than in 2015 with 34,000 extra jobs and 17,360 more homes.
 - c. Over £100 million has been invested in road and pavement improvements.
 - d. Greener Worcestershire with 150,000 new trees planted.
 - e. Schools are performing above the national average for results. In July 2023, 84% of Worcestershire Schools were judged good or outstanding. No maintained schools were judged to be inadequate.
 - f. Worcestershire has seen its first new train station for over 100 years which is performing ahead of plans.
 - g. More homes and businesses are now protected from flooding with more defences being planned – not least in Tenbury!
3. Worcestershire County Council's Environment Improvement Plan is now live and aims to deliver:
 - a. A greener future.
 - b. Our commitment to achieve Net Zero by 2050.
 - c. A resilient transport network.
 - d. Reducing our waste.

There are eight key priorities:

- a. Natural Environment
- b. Energy
- c. Resources and Waste
- d. Transport
- e. Net Zero Council
- f. The Green Economy
- g. Reducing the impact of climate change (flooding)

h. Communities and Wellbeing

2. a. xi Abberley Care Farm – Claire Furness

Dear members of Abberley Parish Council and interested parties.

Abberley Care Farm has continued to thrive with a diverse cohort of children benefitting from their time at the farm. We have approximately 8 children visit each day. Many with Special Educational Needs, Autism, High Anxiety, or childhood trauma related difficulties which means they benefit from a break from their school demands, supporting their mental health and wellbeing. We work closely with our local schools and the local authority. While at the farm the children work with therapeutic animal intervention to gain confidence and overcome barriers, learning valuable life skills, enjoy forest school activities, gardening, and Art based projects.

We have a healthy interest in supporting our local community and the children volunteer to clean St Mary's church in January & June and regularly sweep the foredraft. We are registered with Malvern Hills Adopt-a-Street and regularly litter pick Suffolk Lane, Village Green, School Road and Village Hall areas.

The pop-up teashop in St Mary's church has continued to be popular and an absolute delight to see our children flourish and gain confidence. They are settled into the routine now of setting up and eagerly await the customers, showing them to their seats, taking orders and serving cakes and hot drinks, before clearing away and washing up and squeeze in time for a chat and cuppa themselves. They have gained so much from this work experience, and it is giving them the life skills and confidence to enter the working world. We must say a massive thank you to the local community for supporting us by visiting, making cakes and being so kind and patient, it really is a most enjoyable couple of hours for all!

The teashop is not a profit-making enterprise but has a very healthy kitty thanks to the generous donations we receive each teashop and more than covers its running costs, at the end of the summer term we were honoured to give £750 profit to the PCC for St Mary's upkeep.

We are pleased that the Orchard we planted in 2022 in the Hill Field with MHDC grant money, supported by Councillor Cummings and The Tree Council hedging plants are doing really well and everyone enjoyed apple pie in the autumn! We have continued to work hard to keep the field tidy and are delighted with the regeneration of some lovely ancient ferns on the woody bank.

We enjoyed creating our "Crowns" for the Kings Coronation and had lots of fun doing the trail around the village.

We have enjoyed some really interesting trips this year we are fortunate to be able to apply for free tickets to take the children to the Three Counties show every June and also to attend the Three Counties Careers fair in January, both very valuable educational resources.

We are also welcomed regularly to Mawley Town Farm to show the children real farming and underpin the knowledge of how our food arrives on the plate, a recent highlight was being able to watch and welcome "Heather the Holstien heifer calf" into the world whilst we were visiting, an experience that will make a truly lasting impression.

We also thank Tenbury Community Police, Abigail and Paul who regularly pop into the farm to give our children sound advice and enlightenment on lots of subjects that are so prevalent in the modern society as well as teaching them that the police are not scary and are to be treated with respect, it has been a very positive experience for all.

Many thanks for your continued support

2. a. xii West Mercia Police Annual Report

Two Officers attended and gave a verbal report.

2. a. xiii Abberley Women's Institute Annual Report

Since our last report in April 2023, we are pleased to say our WI membership has increased. We have about 50 members not only from Abberley but also from the outskirts of Abberley. Having a delegated committee member with a Social Media role has certainly contributed to this. We continue to try and change the old image of WI and encourage the younger population. We have a variety of interesting speakers but also some fun activities. We encourage members to put suggestions forward of any local speakers they may know or friends/family who may have something we would enjoy. We have popular sub groups, a Walking Group, Book Group, Bridge Group, and the Craft Cafe. We also organise regular outings, a garden party, and Christmas meal. Members have opportunities to take part in WI events at a county or national level.

This year we started supporting a local charity for one year then each year members will choose another charity. We will raise funds by having coffee mornings, raffles etc.

We have replaced the original Knit & Natter with Craft Cafe which is held once a month at St Mary's church. It allows us to accommodate more members and be more creative. We encourage members to just come along for a cup of tea cake and a chat, loneliness and mental health are issues we are very aware of.

Last May we started issuing certificates to members that had 25 years and upwards in the WI. We felt these members are the backbone of our WI and it is nice to have recognition. We now use the Manor Arms for our committee meetings helping to support our local pub. The use of WhatsApp that all members have access to has become a great avenue of communication for all manner of things. Any event in the village for all different groups is passed on, along with requests for help, recommendations, updates etc.

2. a. xivTeme Valley Neighbourhood Watch- Ning Kedwards. No report received.

2. a. xv Abberley Hills Preservation Society – Lisa Walker

Since taking over as Chairman in December 2022, I feel the Society has achieved quite a few advancements, despite there being a seemingly slow start to our progress for various reasons.

At the General Public Meeting in April, which was well attended by over 40 people, Angela Thompson, founder member and former Chair of the Society gave a very interesting talk about the history of the Society, We have now made Angela a Lifetime Member. Lisa reported on our application to make Abberley and surrounding areas an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now renamed as "National Landscape"). We are indebted to Lisa for her hard work with this. I would also like to follow up on suggestions made during the Public Meeting in April. Special interests/reasons to get involved with AHPS, other than for general support in the National Landscape (AONB) applications and other planning/development issues, the events and interests mentioned by people included: -geology, archaeology, history, natural history, Church history, flora and fauna, wildlife painting, surveys, walks, talks and bird watching. We have also begun a regular activity of Litter Picking around the area. Our first session was on Saturday 27th April –we cleared the main road area from Wynniatts Way to Great Witley Garage. As this was successful, we aim to make this a regular event, on the last Saturday of each month.

Thanks to Paul Shotan, website designer, we now have a comprehensive website; all Agendas and Minutes of Meetings are now available to view on this website along with relevant news items, a full report on the progress of the National Landscape application, and announcements for events etc.

We now have around 40 members. We have simplified subscription through the website or through membership forms for those who prefer.

Thanks to Joanna Moyle, (who we are also indebted to for her work as Treasurer), we have a beautiful new logo. This can be seen on our car stickers, which are free when joining the Society. Also on bookmarks, which are available for purchase, as is an excellent booklet written by Lisa-"Abberley-A Walk Through Time". Sales of these have already raised funds for the Society.

We held our first event in October 2023, a Guided Walk over Abberley Hill. This was enjoyed by all who took part. Thank you especially to Joanna and Lisa; this was a great success-there is a full

report and photos on the website. We had plenty of help –eg from Julie Grainger and Jackie Berry, and sponsorship- Sam at Abberley General Stores, Jude at Abberley Garage, Paul at Cook's Gardening Centre, Fred Shellis, and John Lewis-Stempel. As the walk was so successful, we would like to hold similar events at least annually- we have talked about a possible "Ghost Walk" in October this year.

We have written to Malvern Hills District Council to support objection to proposed developments in Abberley and surrounding areas, including Great Witley. We have attended meetings at Malvern, including a representation at an Appeal Meeting. We will continue to support objections to applications which we consider inappropriate, and assist interested residents on how to register their objections effectively with Malvern Hills District Council. On June 11th, we will hold our second public meeting. This will concentrate on planning issues. Paul and Pam Cumming will hold a "Question and Answer" session.

I would like to recruit more members to join the Executive Committee, in order to "spread the load". I am obviously open to other suggestions in order to improve the Society.

3. Annual Report of Abberley Parish Council – Cllr Catherine Knight (Outgoing Chairman)

To quote Shakespeare,

"Time travels in diverse places with diverse persons. I'll tell you who Time ambles withal, who Time trots withal, who Time gallops withal, and who he stands still withal..."

I am definitely in the galloping category. It is hardly believable that another year has come and gone. And in that time so much has happened that is beyond our control with international hostilities reaching a level that has taken us almost to the brink of something dreadful. Yet here in Abberley we are, perhaps, a little more in control of our destiny and are so fortunate to live in a place which is both outstandingly beautiful and tranquil; tranquility being a priceless commodity in this very noisy world.

For the Parish Council the past year has seen business as usual with parking, speeding and planning, light pollution and litter being the most important issues for Parishioners. Solutions are being constantly sought although these problems are ongoing and universal. And we have welcomed a new Councillor, Libby Tassell, who has fully embraced her role.

It should be noted that the Neighbourhood Plan – the voice of the community - has played no small part in the outcomes of various planning decisions and it is finally being acknowledged as one of the principal planning documents when considering applications, big and small. The Parish Council also uses the document to inform actions when presented with issues throughout the year.

Events this year have included another Climate Change evening which also saw a presentation by Tenbury Transport Trust and the seeding of poppies on the Village Green in memory of the fallen of D Day.

Bleed kits have been purchased to accompany the defibrillators located at the Village Hall and the Manor Arms.

And speaking of purchasing, our acquisition of land and wood, thanks to 106 monies, has been a very exciting development. Although we are still at the exploratory stage the chance to enhance this fantastic space over the next few years for the benefit of the village will be both challenging and rewarding.

The reports from the various groups and organisations give testament to the fact that we have a thriving, active community in Abberley so a big thank you must go to all those who willingly give up their spare time to keep these organisations running. However, more volunteers are always needed so please keep that in mind. Nothing happens without that constant support.

I should also take the opportunity to thank those individual members of the community who are willing to stand up and be counted from letting the Parish Council know of concerns to speaking in public on their behalf.

I must now formally resign as Chair of the Parish Council and announce my intention to quit being a Parish Councillor from the July meeting this year.

Before I stand down, I would like to thank our District Councillors, Paul and Pam Cumming and our County Councillor, David Chambers for all the sage advice over the years and the willingness to support us, as a Parish, wherever they are able.

I must thank each and every Parish Councillor for all the time and energy spent and initiative in serving this community. It has been said before but absolutely needs repeating that a lot of work goes on behind the scenes and that sometimes we are successful and sometimes not, but we work very hard, always, to ensure that the whole community is at the heart of everything we do.

And a very special thanks go to that person who ensures the correct functioning of the Parish Council on a day-to-day basis and who, even from her sick bed, was willing to offer advice and guidance when required. That is a fine example of dedication to duty, a dedication that I am supremely grateful for. Thank you, Carole.

That concludes my Annual Report for the year 2024.

The Meeting concluded at 7.27pm