

# Abbots Bromley Parish Council



# Annual Report

*June 2007*

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## Introduction

### The annual report

The purpose of this annual report is to make freely available information about the work of the Parish Council and other community organisations. The Council hopes that you will find the information useful and understandable.

This report aims to bring together in one place key details about the activities of the Parish Council in a manner recommended as good practice by the government for Quality Councils.

### Summary to all homes

A summary of this annual report from the Parish Council is to be included in the June 2007 ***Bromley Bulletin*** distributed to all households in the parish.

### Also available on-line

An electronic copy of this report is available on the village web pages where you can view it or print your own copy. Our web pages are at **[www.abbotsbromley.com](http://www.abbotsbromley.com)** and you will find the report in the Parish Council section under "Documents".

# Council Members and Officer (2006/7)

## Council Members

Philip Charles      840251      **CHAIRMAN**  
Poplar Farm, Bromley Hurst, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3AY

Clive Cook      840928  
Churchfields House, Bagot Street, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DB

David Eatough      840061      **VICE CHAIRMAN**  
Newsagent, Uttoxeter Road, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3EQ

Alan Elkington      841011  
Fairview, Ashbrook Lane, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DW

Bob Esling      840778  
Town End Farm, Lichfield Road, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DL

Linda Fox      840315  
Coleshill Lodge, Lichfield Road, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DN

Roger Jarman      840678  
Wheelwright House, Bagot Street, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DB

Kate McLoughlin 840409  
16 St Nicholas Way, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3EB

Jean Needham      840481  
Rose Cottage, Lichfield Road, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DN

## Officer

Eric Roy      840153  
31 Goose Lane, Abbots Bromley, WS15 3DE  
*Email: [parish.council@abbotsbromley.com](mailto:parish.council@abbotsbromley.com)*

# Working Groups and Representatives

## Working Groups

*The Chairman and Vice Chairman are entitled to serve, ex officio, on all groups*

<b>Working group</b>	<b>Member(s)</b>
Competitions	Cllrs Elkington, Needham
Finance	Cllrs Elkington, Fox
Newsletter	Cllrs Esling, Elkington
Recreation	Cllrs Cook, McLoughlin, Needham
Rural Housing	Cllr Jarman
Traffic & Parking	Cllrs Cook, Fox, Jarman
Village Property	Cllr Jarman

## Representatives

<b>Representative</b>	<b>Member(s)</b>
Finance	Cllr Fox
RCFS Governor	Cllr Eatough
United Charities	Cllrs Charles, Cook
Village Hall	Cllr Cook
Vital Villages	Cllr Elkington
Millennium Green	Cllr Cook
Almshouses	Chairman—ex officio
RISES	Cllr Fox
First Responders	Cllrs McLoughlin

**Reports to the Annual Parish Assembly  
Wednesday, 18 April, 2007 at 7.30 pm  
in the Village Hall, Abbots Bromley**



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**Introduction:** Again this year the Parish Assembly will take on a slightly different form replacing the numerous verbal reports with a written statement and giving some of the time to a presentation of local relevance. This document contains the reports submitted in advance of the assembly, and questions on the contents may be asked during the open forum.

**Contents:**

1. Parish Council report by Philip Charles
2. Parish Council finance by Eric Roy
3. Village Hall report by Mike King
4. Community First Responders report by Colin Palmer
5. Community Transport report by David Thompson
6. Richard Clarke First School report by John Hough
7. Under 5s Project Playground by Steve Coxon
8. Village Action Plan update by Eric Roy
9. Staffordshire County Councillor's report by Philip Atkins
10. Borough Councillor's report by Alex Fox, MBE

Parish Council Financial Statement

**Omissions:** The following were also given the opportunity to provide input to this report, but had not taken up the offer at the time this issue was produced:

- Inspector A Mason, Staffordshire Police

**Issue - Date:** 1.0 – 2 April 2007

**Changes:** This is the first issue

## 1. Chairman's report on Parish Council business by Philip Charles

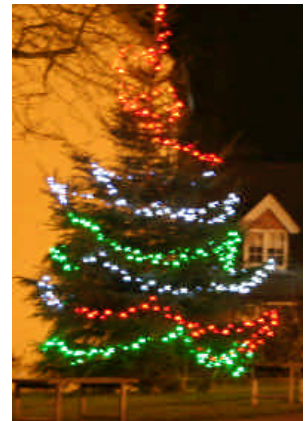
The increased attendance at the assembly last year has led to a decision to repeat the experiment again, learning lessons from the feedback in order to further increase the relevance and value of the occasion.

Hence this written document, intended to provide villagers with an opportunity to study the reports from various contributors and come prepared to ask questions on the evening.

During the year we have been consulted on 45 planning applications (compared to 58 and 73 in the previous two years respectively). These varied from tree removal to a proposal for substantial redevelopment of a rural site.

We were pleased during the year to have the opportunity to improve the presentation of the Bromley Bulletin newsletter – including the addition of photographs and a change to an A4 folded format. This was made possible by a grant of £1100 awarded from the Quality Council Fund to enable the purchase of an A3 laser printer and consumables for the first year of use. The grant was awarded from funds only available to the still relatively small number of Councils that have met the "Quality Council" benchmark criteria. Abbots Bromley Parish Council is one of the handful of Councils in Staffordshire that has achieved that distinction.

Although the Christmas tree on Abbots Bromley village green has been lit up in the past, this year saw a significant improvement following a grant from local golfers. The Parish Council were delighted to accept a kind offer from "Abbots Bromley Challenge", to help fund replacement lights. They are a group of golfers from the village and surrounding area who organise a golf day each year to raise funds for local causes. The rather limited string of large bulbs used in recent years made way for more contemporary strings of LEDs in different colours. The large tree was kindly donated by Mr Brandrick, and the replacement Western Red Cedar arrived in time to pose as part of a "little and large" display.



Last year I reported plans for re-aligning the hedge at the Newton turn to improve visibility for traffic making the turn into the lane. I am pleased to say that this has now been completed and we hope will prevent further accidents at this junction. Credit is due to Blithfield Parish Council for their persistence in seeing this project through.



Towards the end of the year, the Parish Council was able to use some surplus funds to replace the signs at the entrance to Paget Rise with more informative boards giving names of the subsidiary roads and drawing attention to the fact that this is not a through road. East Staffordshire engineers designed and

supplied these signs and have also helped at other points around the parish by providing additional signing at Pinfold Lane and Seedcroft Lane during the last year. We are also

considering some other improvements in Clarks Crescent to help ensure the emergency services are able to quickly locate properties.

We continue to be aware of the fact that speed through the village is a major concern for many residents and have instigated further meetings with County Highways to try and identify possible solutions. I am sorry to report that these attempts have been fruitless since existing County policies seem to inhibit any of the practical measures we would like to see. It is therefore difficult to see any potential improvements in the foreseeable future.

Our bi-monthly Saturday morning surgeries at 10am in Church House have continued to provide regular access to Councillors. These have created a useful additional means of communication.

Our entry in the Best Kept Village competition last year resulted in a creditable second place, despite failing to repeat the achievement of the previous year as the Best Kept Village in East Staffordshire. The support of all those in the village who made an effort to keep their area tidy and well presented is much appreciated. The real benefit from this competition is that it helps to make our village a more pleasant place to live.

We are entered again this year, and judging of the competition will start from 1<sup>st</sup> May. Your help in ensuring that the village looks its best is again vital if we are to beat off the stiff competition from other villages in the area.

The present Parish Council stands down after the election on 3<sup>rd</sup> May and the new Council faces some interesting challenges as the role of local councils continues to evolve and develop. Central Government continues to indicate an increasing role for Parish and Town Councils with their strong links to the community. This is evident in an ever increasing opportunity to influence regional plans and strategies, but the challenge of engaging with all of these new opportunities is significant. There are also indications of new powers for those councils which have achieved Quality Status and Abbots Bromley is well placed to take advantage of these.

I would like to end by offering my congratulations to the dedicated team who have recently completed the Under 5s playground at the Nuttery in Schoolhouse Lane. Their persistence over the period of the project in finding funding and overseeing the construction and initial operation demonstrate what is possible when a small team set their sights on a clear objective.

## **2. Clerk's report on Parish Council finances by Eric Roy**

The Parish Council finances are managed in accordance with a set of Financial Regulations available for inspection in the Parish Council section of the village web pages. This includes the employment of an independent internal auditor who visits twice each year to review the Council books and transactions in line with the national recommendations on the conduct of council finance. At the end of each year an annual report, internal auditor's report and supplementary information are submitted to the Audit Commission which carries out an external audit.

Unapproved financial statements are attached as an appendix to these reports, and will form the basis for the annual report of the Council. Where considered necessary and helpful, additional notes are included in those statements.

Current best practice for management of Council finance recommends that reserves not earmarked for specific projects should normally be maintained at around 20% of annual expenditure unless there are exceptional circumstances. Noting this, the Parish Council has continued steps, started in previous years, to reduce the level of reserves.

The budget for the year just ended was prepared on the basis of a deficit of approximately £2000 in order to further reduce reserves. However the year ended with a surplus of over £6000 – a deviation of some £8000 from the budget. There are a number of circumstances contributing to this:

- Despite best efforts by the Parish Council, they were unable to engage County Highways in any constructive dialogue on speed reduction measures that could use the £2000 set aside for this purpose
- The closure of the Bagot Ward Vital Villages project fund at the year end, resulted in the return of £2128 which could not be re-assigned at that stage in the year
- Grants from ESBC towards the cost of printing the Village Design Statement combined with a very competitive price, resulted in the Parish Council saving over £400 compared to the forecast cost
- The Parish Council chose not to distribute £900 included in the budget for grants to local organisations
- Phasing of payments on a number of items such as *Devolved maintenance* and *Hall hire* resulted in cash surpluses in this financial period, and the remainder is made up of lower than forecast expenditure in a number of areas.

The Parish Council made a grant of £1000 to help with the cost of repairs to the Scout and Guide Hut.

### **3. Village Hall report by Mike King (Chairman of the Management Committee)**

The Trustees of your Village Hall were concerned that revenues for 2006 were under threat and decided, after consultations with regular users, to hold 2005 fees for the next twelve month period.

Unfortunately this did not prevent some of our customers being lost to alternative venues and this together with a drop in Casual Bookings resulted in a reduced income of £2318.00 over the twelve month period.





Conscious of this drop in revenues even greater efforts were made to reduce our costs, with committee members carrying out even more unpaid voluntary work on your behalf.

A small positive contribution was achieved from reduced revenues and this was transferred to our sinking fund against known expenditure required in the future.

Those who use the Hall will be aware that interior re-decorations have been completed with the considerable financial help of our Borough Council who have, as in the past, been most helpful with substantial grants towards expensive ongoing maintenance costs. The costs and grants received for these latest improvements are not included in our accounts as both were not concluded until early in 2007.

#### NEW FACILITIES FOR OUR YOUNG PEOPLE

The Trustees have been very keen to support the group who are campaigning for improved facilities for our young people in the area adjacent to the tennis courts. Once established, this facility would mean increased insurance premiums above and beyond the £1430 we currently pay. After consulting our advisor it has been decided that the Trustees could give approval to the scheme and take responsibility for the facility in the future. The revenues from the hire of the Hall will have to cover the additional expenditure as and when required.

#### THE FUTURE OF THE HALL

As Chairman I must thank our committee members for their dedication and hard work. At the same time make a plea to our village for volunteers to come forward to help fill the vacancies of those who have served us well in the past but wish to stand down after many years of service. Ongoing maintenance of your village amenity, without the promise of this new support, will mean the Trustees will be unable to continue to keep this facility open. PLEASE COME FORWARD WITH YOUR HELP.

#### THE CARETAKER

During 2006 our hard working Caretaker stood down from her duties. Geraldine Sweeting did a wonderful job in keeping the Hall in prime condition and we thank her most sincerely. We also welcome our new lady, Rose Maidstone, who we know will continue the high standards achieved in the past.

#### CONCLUSION

The cost of operating the hall is in excess of £1100 per month, with most fixed costs increasing above the rate of inflation in 2007. Without the support of the Village, the Local Council, East Staffs. Borough Council and an energetic Committee this important facility would not be available to all comers.

### **4. Abbots Bromley Community First Responders report by Colin Palmer**

Report on Activities 2006/2007 – registered charity 1108902

ABCFR continued its activities assisting Staffordshire Ambulance Service throughout the year. Availability of the responders was nearly 100%, covering 24 hrs per day 7 days per

week. 480 responses were made throughout our nominal response area. This brings the total since the group started to 887.

Currently we have nine active responders, with one in training.

ABCFR benefited from several substantial donations from grateful patients, village public houses and from Abbots Bromley Parish Council.

Several local organizations are actively supporting the charity these include The Red Lion at Newborough, The Chadwick arms at Hill Ridware and Roos Shoot at Hamstall Ridware. Charity tin collections continue to substantially assist our efforts.

The group made presentations to several local groups during the period, including Hamstall Ridware WI and Roos Shoot, and attended open days at Staffordshire Fire Service Headquarters, Admaston Summer fete and Colton Christmas Fare.

The group have set up a fund dedicated to supporting the renewal of our response vehicle at some time in the future. Fund raising efforts include applications to local authorities and Grant making Trusts.

Currently we are inviting members of the community to donate unwanted saleable items to the charity, these will be then sold, if possible on "E Bay" and will contribute to our vehicle fund. Several such sales have already proved useful.

The period has been particularly difficult for CFRs throughout Staffordshire due to the ongoing merger with West Midlands Ambulance Service. Several of the drugs we administer were withdrawn. Some were subsequently reintroduced after representations from local groups.

Abbots Bromley parish council have actively supported our group throughout this period of transition.

ABCFR are looking for new recruits to our group, either as responders or people acting in a support role contributing to fund raising or other activities.

## **5. Community Transport report by David P Thompson**

Demand for transport during the financial year for 2007, has again been steady, with one lady going to Rugeley on a weekly basis. Burton Hospital and Stafford being the most used as well as trips to Lichfield and Stafford Stations plus quite a lot of journeys up to Abbots Bromley Surgery. Other destinations included Cannock, and once again we have been pleased to assist Staffs Association for the welfare of the Blind with regular monthly runs to Uttoxeter for their meetings.

The scheme has lost a few drivers so we have now got eight drivers, but ill health has limited the availability of some on occasions.

The insurance cost of the Employer's Liability cover has provided a considerable problem, this year, and whilst our County Council grant has for the last three years been fixed at £450, insurance this year has come down to £180, and as the majority of journeys have been single journeys, resulting in less return fare paying passengers.

Consequently with the financial year, another month off, the budget is exceeded by £100.

David Thompson is now operating as co-ordinator, and anybody requiring transport should ring 841093.

## **6. Richard Clarke First School report by John Hough, Chair of Governors**

Here is a brief summary of key facts, events and issues of the past 12 months.

**Financial:** The budget for 2007/2008 has yet to be set and so I can't quote the final figures as I usually do. However, it is expected to be in line with previous budgets. Income is almost entirely driven by the number of pupils on the roll (each child attracts revenues of about £2500) plus special Government grants for curriculum support. By far the largest contribution to costs is staff salaries. Once we have paid the salaries, rates, maintenance, insurance and mandatory professional service fees from Stafford, we have very little discretionary spend left. Nonetheless, we have managed to save a few hundred pounds by being careful with energy costs and renegotiating the grounds maintenance contract.

Our budget is always finely balanced and we never plan to have a deficit budget, nor to have any unspent funds. We firmly believe that money received for children on the roll should be spent while they are at school and not squirreled away for a future rainy day. In any event, we are fortunate to have the RCFS Endowment Fund at our disposal when we need to increase spending.

**Number of Pupils:** The number of pupils on our roll varies widely from year to year, and it is this that determines our funding. In 1998 our number on roll was 145; in 2000 this had fallen to 123; and for 2001/2002 it fell to 107.

The current number on the roll is 106 and we expect that this will fall in line with national trends over the next few years. We presently have a very small intake scheduled for the next academic year. However, we take account of this in our financial planning and are confident that we can weather a very low intake in a single year. We couldn't cope, however, with a sequence of lean years.

We still take nearly 40% of our children from outside the catchment area, and without these we would have to change the structure of classes. We are limited in what we can do to market the school but our new web site seems to be attracting interest over a wide area.

**Staffing:** We have just advertised and recruited a new member of staff. The interviews took place on March 28th and an offer was made and accepted. Incidentally, one part of

the interview was for the applicants to answer questions from the School Council – scary! We had enormous interest in the advertised post. Nearly 100 teachers asked for information and we had over 40 applications, of which we short-listed four excellent candidates. We know of schools in Staffordshire who have received no applications for advertised posts and some who have received fewer than our short-list. There is clearly something very attractive about the combination of Abbots Bromley and Richard Clarke First School.

**Premises:** There are at least two generations of former pupils of RCFS who have spent time in the strangely named ‘mobile classrooms’ for Years 3 and 4. It has been the long-term ambition of staff and governors to be rid of these cosy but unsuitable buildings. Now it is about to happen. Starting just before the end of term, the existing buildings will be demolished and new ones will replace them. These are also ‘mobiles’, I’m afraid, but at least they are much more modern and better equipped for delivering today’s curriculum. We are trying to minimise disruption, electing to have any disturbance at the end of this term rather than at the start of the new term.

**OFSTED:** We have just been subjected to the new-style OFSTED inspection. We were given three days’ notice of the inspection and asked to have very comprehensive information available on the day. We did this perfectly, to the delight and surprise of the inspector. The Inspection Report is available at the school, on our website and on the OFSTED website. We were graded Good in every single category (of 30). I will give you a few selected observations from the inspector that are by no means untypical:

*“Richard Clarke First School is a good school that is continuing to improve.”*

*“There is good leadership and management and the head-teacher has been instrumental in bringing about many important improvements.”*

*“Staff are eagerly embracing new ideas and are very keen to improve even further.”*

*“(The staff) are behind the head-teacher’s huge commitment and exciting vision.”*

There were also several suggestions as to how we could improve further – every one of which was already included in the School Development Plan.

#### Other news

**SAFTAS:** You may not have heard of this award but it is a BAFTA equivalent awarded by Staffordshire County Council for digital movie-making in the county. Last year RCFS won one award and were runners-up in another. This year they won the Key Stage 1 Fiction award (Years 1 and 2) and the Key Stage 2 Non-fiction award (Years 3 and 4). The awards were presented to the children at a red-carpeted (and black tie) event at the Gatehouse Theatre in Stafford. This is obviously a fun event, but it recognises the excellent and creative use of ICT that takes place in RCFS every day.

**School Self-Review:** Parents’ Questionnaire: We conducted our annual survey of parents’ views and received an excellent response.

Here is a summary of the results. Parents are asked to agree or disagree with each of 12 statements about the school.

<i>Statement</i>	<i>% Agree</i>
My child likes school	98.0%
My child is making good progress at school	98.0%
Behaviour in the school is good	100.0%
My child gets the right amount of homework	90.0%
The teaching is good	96.0%
I am kept well-informed about my child's progress	92.0%
I feel comfortable approaching the school with a question or problem	100.0%
The school expects my child to work hard to achieve his or her best	100.0%
The school works closely with parents	96.0%
The school is well led and managed	100.0%
The school is helping my child to become mature and responsible	100.0%
The school provides an interesting range of after-school activities	98.0%

Note: We had 51 responses, so each individual response is worth about 2.0%

Yet again, the subject of homework is controversial. Some parents want more; some want less. Communication issues are also important. The ratings show a slight improvement in almost all categories. These were given to the OFSTED inspector together with a summary of the views of children at the school.

#### Review of Primary Education in Staffordshire

Nothing further has happened in this area since my last report. The study into the structure of primary education in Staffordshire suggested that the three-tier system should come to an end but, as far as we know, there are insufficient funds available to implement the change. We would expect RCFS to emerge with a stronger role in primary education in East Staffordshire.

### **7. Under 5s Project Playground by Steve Coxon**

After considerable effort and hard work by all involved, the playground was officially opened on the 28th September 2006 by Simon Davies. This event was attended by children and teachers from Richard Clarke School, a number of the supporters and contributors, parents and pre-school children.

The construction took marginally longer than anticipated over the summer and a number of issues with the civil contractor resulted in some re-work. The support and patience of the neighbours was appreciated during this period. Mike King played a key role in ensuring the quality and standard of the final product.



The project has been delivered within the original budget, with minor funds remaining to complete the agreed landscaping, which forms planting and screening to two sides of the

area. The objective is also to produce an area as a 'wild' garden to attract birds, etc. This should be completed during the first half of 2007 (time permitting).

Feedback from parents has been extremely positive and the site appears to be well attended and respected.



It was debatable, during the earlier stages, whether the site should be secured at night and initially this was trialled on key nights of the week. However, a sustained spell of abuse (e.g. 5 teenagers on the roundabout, to name one) last year has resulted in the site been locked on most nights (where practicable). This is still reliant on my good will and the Parish Council has not yet resolved a longer term solution for this activity.

## 8. Village Action Plan update by Eric Roy

The "Abbots Bromley Parish Action Plan" was published in 2004 and identified fourteen actions grouped into eight key issues. This was the main output from the detailed questionnaire survey carried out the previous year and reflected the major priorities of the 57% of residents who participated in the survey. Anyone wishing to discover more or remind themselves can access all the key information on the village web pages at [www.abbotsbromley.com/vv](http://www.abbotsbromley.com/vv).

Following the detailed update on the plan actions included in this report last year, there have been no new offers of help to implement the outstanding recommendations and it therefore appears that any further activity in pursuit of the objectives is unlikely.



## 9. Staffordshire County Councillor's report from Philip Atkins

Uttoxeter Rural Division Annual Report April 2007

As Conservative Group Leader on the County Council with the Shadow Cabinet I scrutinise the County Council's performance and look to the future.

I am also a member of the Combined Fire and Rescue Authority, Resources Scrutiny Panel and the Pensions Panel.

Over the past year I have spent a lot of time in the background talking to the District Councils on the Local Area Agreement, which starts to bring public services such as local

government, police, NHS, Fire and the Voluntary Sector together in delivering common objectives. The County Council is the Accountable Body but a Strategic Board, chaired by Alex Fox, oversees the project.

Another theme I have spent time on is the Government's Bill on local government which has also arrived. At least the various authorities in the County have not bid for unitary status but decided to remain two tiers. Whether unitary or two tier is better would under the current climate be a distraction from delivering better services. I do not believe the organisations involved have the capacity to make changes of that magnitude at the moment.

**The Council Tax**, which forms some 85% of your bill, has risen this year by 5%. Last year Staffordshire County Council overspent by £19 million and the books were balanced by raiding reserves and balances of £7.5m, not repairing buildings and putting a stop to replacing vehicles. The repair bill now stands at over £20 million for the next 3 to 5 years. To balance the books for the coming year the controlling Labour Group will raid reserves and balances again by £12.5m, use all unspent earmarked capital receipts of £6.7m and borrow a further £24.2m in unsupported borrowing. They will also have to deliver efficiency savings of £5m this year, £10m next and £15m the year after just to balance the books. If the Residential Care Homes had stayed open a further £8m extra, then £10m and then a further £12m the year after would have been needed. The interest on the £24.2 million is over £40 million spread over 25 years.

Local government has also been hit by a double whammy of the government failing to recognise the soaring cost of elderly people's provision to Councils and the demographic increase in elderly people. The need for adult care is increasing by 6% each year and the government provide just 2.5% extra funds for next year.

The principles behind Changing Lives are correct, the method of putting that policy in place is I believe wrong. The initial consultation last July was poor.

Staffordshire has continued to run some Adult Residential Care Homes when most authorities have put them in the private sector. 2,333 elderly people are funded by the County Council in private residential care homes and 460 in Council run homes to exactly the same quality CSCI standards. The cost of keeping someone in a Council run home is £100 a week per resident more than a private home. This is because of generous rotas, pay and conditions, and having three managers instead of one.

Because of their weak political leadership, poor performance management and bad budgetary control the controlling Group has been forced into accelerating closure of Residential Care Homes and Day Care Centres.

The facts are Staffordshire county council is the second largest Local Authority employer per head of population after Derbyshire and the numbers of Full Time Equivalents employed by the Council have risen by 31.8% since 2000, from just under 17,000 to around 24,000.

Job Evaluation (JE) or Single Status is the next looming financial headache. The proposal was rejected by staff in January, and with only £30 million in the financial strategy to cover costs, any extra costs will have to be funded by redundancies. The reasons for job evaluation are complicated, but the effect on services and the finances of the County Council will be

immense. The national cost of JE is £3 billion with £1 billion going straight to the Treasury in Income Tax, National Insurance, reclaimed Working Family Tax Credits and Housing Benefit.

Schools are funded directly now by the Direct Schools Grant, which includes what the government thought the schools should have with the £11 million the County gave in addition, school reserves stand over £30 million and cannot be touched by the Council. With changes the LEA now have responsibility for Looked After Children and the numbers of children in looked after care after peaking at over 700 and are now at nearly 670 at an annual cost of over £40 million. Our fostering payments are now being altered to match our regional comparators.

Approximately £27 million is spent each year on Highways maintenance, which sadly is not enough to stop roads getting worse. It needs an additional £5 or £6 million per year to do that and nothing like that can be found without cutting other departments or asking the Council tax payer for more money. £1.35m of LAGBI grant has been used to prop up this budget as a one off.

Despite all this financial mismanagement the controlling Group also wanted to spend £42 million on new Central Office Accommodation. The project has been quietly abandoned. The Service Review is slowly discovering what SCC should be doing and what the County Council should not. Only after that and a property review will we know what sort of accommodation we shall need.

And on top of that the controlling Group is spending £330,000 on a feasibility study to build a £20 million Arts Space in Stafford. It will be a wonderful facility for Stafford, funded by the whole County. The members championing it are all from Stafford of course!

To change the direction and culture of the County Council takes time and 16 major items/projects are in progress, to name the largest ones.

1. Service Review
2. Change Management
3. Job Evaluation
4. Adult Residential Homes
5. Day Care Centres
6. Adult Disability Review
7. Looked After Children
8. Lyons Review
9. The White Paper (City/Shire Region)
10. Local Area Agreement
11. Customer First
12. Customer Access
13. Waste Management
14. CSR 2007
15. Children Learning Partnership
16. Building Schools for the Future

I have recently met the Parish Council over highway matters and continue to support the village whenever I can.



Locally last years my **Local Members Initiative** Funds went to:

Uttoxeter Rural PC Vital Villages	£1,000
Kingstone Local News	£500
Blithfield and Admaston Village Hall	£700
Uttoxeter Rural PC Sports field	£300
Uttoxeter Guides	£300
Uttoxeter Mind	£1,000
Uttoxeter Arts Festival (Flourish)	£1,320
Kingstone PC Community Speed Watch	£450
Dove Valley First Responders	£3,500
Uttoxeter Choral Society	£250
Tom Boden Memorial Sports Trust Playing Field	£1,082
Rocester Parish Council Leaflet	£298

Last year I tried to have £700 allocated to Newton Hurst turn improvements and the £700 has been allocated to this year and spent on Admaston Village Hall, so freeing up other funding opportunities.

If anyone wants to apply for funding from this year's £10,000 for local schemes, the forms are available either from me or the County Website.

## **10. Borough Councillor's report from Alex Fox, MBE**

I am pleased to report that the local community has received considerable support in the last twelve months.

Grants have been given to the Village Hall Trustees to cover much of the cost of resurfacing the entrance road and redecorating the hall. The hall has been in use now for seven years and all those involved in running this valuable asset are to be congratulated on the care and attention they have given to maintaining the facility in such good condition for all the enjoy.

The Borough has tried to support the First Responders during this year of crisis and I have done my best to do so behind the scenes. The future now seems secure and helped by a contribution from the ESBC of £3200 towards the cost of a replacement vehicle. First Responders deliver an excellent service to the more isolated rural areas and whilst the current battle may have been won the war is not yet over as the NHS looks for new ways of saving money.

The Vital Villages Scheme has come to the end of the first phase. The Village Plan was a well executed document and many actions identified in it have been completed. Some are still ongoing and where possible progress with be made to influence these more difficult areas. Some examples are the improvements to the bus services and care for the elderly – two issues that many residents commented upon. On the other hand additional traffic calming has been installed, the village streets have had extra cleansing and whilst not solved there has been less dog fouling in the public areas. After some delays the planners signed off the Village Design Statement and with a grant of £600 from the council the finished plan

has been circulated. Once again my thanks go to the dedicated few who worked so hard to produce this well researched piece of work.

As many will know I am Leader of East Staffordshire Borough Council. In this capacity I have been driving through major changes that have an impact not just on us in Abbots Bromley but across the whole borough. It has been no mean feat to rejuvenate Uttoxeter. The £80 million inward investment has given our agricultural market town a new future. In the next four years the old cattle market site will be finished having created a new heart for the town. The High Street hopefully will have many more visitors and, in time, along its length a thriving modern market bringing a new sense of urgency to the place. The JCB site should have been resolved with all that is planned for this important site well on the way to completion.

In Burton over £150 million has come into the town the feel of the place is one of success and growth. We have worked really hard to tackle some of the serious inequalities that exist in the inner wards. One new health centre is up and running and a second is almost completed. We have lobbied Government Ministers to put Burton on the map for major funding to tackle the very poor housing that exists in many areas.

As far as it impinges on our lovely village, we have reorganised the council structures, we have reduced the running costs by £500,000 with the result that operations are more stream lined, services are improving and council tax increases have been kept to 2.5%. It should be noted that the County, Police and Fire have all declared their increases at 5% or just under.

What of the future. In Bagot Ward it is vital that ongoing encouragement and support are given to our hard working community leaders. Without their hard work the village would be the poorer. I am particularly keen to ensure that the Churches are not forgotten, the Village Hall continues to thrive, the Scouts and Guides are supported, the Cricket Club maintains its appeal for the village youth and our many other activities continue. In this regard we do have to work at community support and encourage more people to join in the running of our activities, for without many will shut down. It is also important for voluntary groups to learn about the many opportunities that exist for cash support and I will be happy to help any who are looking for some assistance.

7:30pm Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2007

## Annual Parish Assembly in the Village Hall

This annual meeting for electors of the Parish provides an opportunity to come along and ask questions, or raises local issues, with your Parish, Borough and County Councillors.

This year there will also be displays and a short video presentation to address the issues of sustainable living. Representatives of local organisations will be present to provide information on the work of their groups.

Come along at 7:30pm and enjoy some refreshments, pick up some information and join in the debates – or just listen!

Minutes of the Annual Parish Assembly  
held on Wednesday, 18 April, 2007 at 7.30 p.m.  
in the Village Hall, Abbots Bromley, pursuant to notice having been given

Present:

*Councillors:* PJ Charles (Chairman), C Cook, RT Esling, A Elkington, L Fox, RSV Jarman, J Needham

*Residents:* Philippa Roy, Suzanne Hindley, Graham Hindley, Elizabeth Palmer, Helen Wilson, Mike King, John Hough, Marilyn Shaw, Barrie Waring, Linda Waring, Bernard Grundy, Gill Grundy, Steve Coxon, David Shorthose, Jill Shorthose, Len Ferguson, Enid Ferguson, Simon Wilson, Anthea Blower, Shirley Mann, Kevin Mann, Lesley Purden, Colin Palmer, Bill Douthwaite

*Guests:* Borough Councillor Alex Fox

*Apologies:* Simon Tonking, Mithra Tonking, Rebecca Jones, Doug Moore, Cllr D Eatough,  
County Councillor Philip Atkins

The Clerk, Mr EA Roy was also in attendance

## **1. Chairman's welcome**

The Chairman welcomed all present to the 2007 Annual Parish Assembly.

## **2. Presentation of the Jubilee Cup**

The Chairman invited Mr Ferguson to receive a certificate commemorating his award of the Jubilee Cup in 2006.

The Chairman presented the Jubilee Cup for 2007 to Helen Wilson and Colin Palmer as representatives of the Community First Responders. In doing so he reminded those present that the Parish Council was instrumental in setting-up the CFR group and continues to actively support them in their voluntary effort to provide a service to our community.

He went on to say, "It remains a harsh fact of life that a rural parish such as ours will always be a long wait away from an ambulance and there is no alternative but to look to volunteers to fill that gap. The CFR group has now attended around 750 incidents in our own and neighbouring parishes since going 'live' in February 2005.

"Although you may not realise it, the group of some nine active members has maintained a virtually continuous 24 x 7 cover since it went 'live'. This is a tremendous achievement and an extremely valuable service to our community. It is important to remember that it is a totally voluntary activity. All the volunteers give whatever time they can to the rota and we must acknowledge that, in this day and age, time is a very precious commodity to give to others.

As a Parish Council, and on behalf of the community, we sincerely thank all the volunteers for their contribution.

"In particular today, we want to recognise the exceptional contribution of Helen Wilson and Colin Palmer. Helen is the Secretary and Colin the Co-ordinator. Their contribution is

not just resource provision and administration. Basically when all the other volunteers have committed their time to the rota, Helen and Colin cover between them whatever is left of the 24 x 7 hours. They choose to do this because they fervently believe in giving that all-hours cover to the community.

“It is with great pleasure and thanks that I ask them to receive the Jubilee Cup in recognition of that service to Abbots Bromley Parish”

In accepting the cup Colin pointed out that he and Helen were part of a group, and each of the members was a valued contributor. He also thanked the Parish and Borough Councils for their continuing support.

### **3. Accounts of United Charities**

The accounts of United Charities were presented by Mr Grundy and were signed by the Chairman of the meeting.

### **4. Shirley Mann**

The Chairman introduced and welcomed Shirley Mann and invited her to address the meeting.

Shirley introduced her role with Sustainable Staffordshire and gave a brief background to her invitation to speak to the Assembly. Some application forms for people to join Sustainable Staffordshire were available – membership is free.

Before showing a recently made video, she gave a short presentation “Sustainability – lifestyle choice or necessity”. This outlined some of the significant effects that were predicted if the present trends continued and gave some of the more local examples recently observed in Staffordshire.

Shirley then went on to give some examples of changes that we could personally make in order to make a contribution to controlling the overall impact before giving a brief introduction to Sustainable Staffordshire and then showing the video.

(A copy of the slides from Shirley’s presentation is available to be downloaded from the village web pages at [www.abbotsbromley.com/go-green](http://www.abbotsbromley.com/go-green))

The Chairman thanked Shirley for her contribution.

### **5. Open forum**

The Chairman invited questions from the meeting on any topics relevant to the parish:

- On the Uttoxeter Road there is an overgrowth of the hedge that is preventing use of the footpath beyond the Rugeley junction.
- Could a cycleway between the village and Uttoxeter be achievable? Although there is a growing network of cycle tracks around the country, we seem to have no local connection. To make such a project feasible would need funding from County that is unlikely in the current climate where highway maintenance is under funded.
- What is the current situation on the wind farm? There is some talk of a new application for fewer larger turbines, but no actual evidence yet that an application is being made.
- Is there any update on developments at the Blithfield reservoir? It seems there has not been any progress.

- Would it possible to put some surface on the path from Schoolhouse Lane into the top of the village hall grounds? This is the sort of project that should be achievable with local funding.
- Noted that the maintenance of footpaths around the village is not the responsibility of a single organisation but varies according to the ownership and type of path. The path from Hillside to Ashbrook Lane should be maintained by the County Rights of Way team.
- Bor. Cllr. Fox spelt out some of the implications of the future landfill tax increase and the way that it was hoped this could be minimised through the development of “waste into energy” initiatives. Although these had high capital costs, they did have the potential to reduce the use of landfill significantly.
- At present there are no plans to reduce the frequency of waste collection, although this could be reviewed in the future when the amount of food waste going into brown bins for composting becomes evident.
- Finding volunteers to run village organisations seems to be increasingly difficult. There is no instant solution, but a need to continually encourage people to accept their role in building community. County and Borough funding for community projects can also be targeted in order to encourage participation in such groups.

## **6. Chairman’s Closing Remarks**

In closing the meeting, the Chairman thanked Borough Councillor Fox for his answers to questions and those who had contributed written reports.

The meeting was brought to a formal conclusion at 21:10 pm.

Chairman .....

Date: .....

**Abbots Bromley Parish Council**

# **Financial Report 2006/2007**

Prepared by: *Eric A Roy*

**Eric Roy**  
(Responsible Financial Officer)

Date: 2 April 2007

This financial report was submitted to the Council for approval on 25 April 2007

Chairman: *Philip Charles*

Date: 25 April 2007

## Abbots Bromley Parish Council General Fund - 2006/2007

	Last year actual £	This year budget £	This year actual £	Next year budget £	Notes
Balance brought forward	13734.37		<b>6405.98</b>		
<b>Income</b>					
Precept	18200.00	18800.00	<b>18800.00</b>	19500.00	
Interest	388.48	337.50	<b>377.22</b>	224.66	
Allotments	65.00	100.00	<b>100.00</b>	100.00	
Grants received	871.44	0.00	<b>4613.78</b>	0.00	[1]
Devolved maintenance	225.00	0.00	<b>697.66</b>	0.00	
Horn Dance trader licences	275.00	100.00	<b>265.00</b>	200.00	
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>20024.92</b>	<b>19337.50</b>	<b>24853.66</b>	<b>20024.66</b>	
<b>Expenditure</b>					
Clerk salary/expenses	5858.37	5930.00	<b>6218.12</b>	6110.00	
Insurance	1054.51	1500.00	<b>1332.96</b>	1600.00	[2]
Audit fee	330.00	330.00	<b>320.00</b>	370.00	
SPCA/SLCC membership	422.00	435.00	<b>483.00</b>	498.00	
Local Council Review	42.00	43.00	<b>40.50</b>	45.00	
Stationery	110.29	160.00	<b>76.84</b>	160.00	
Travel expenses	0.00	100.00	<b>0.00</b>	100.00	
Training/books	55.50	175.00	<b>38.50</b>	100.00	
Hire of hall	352.00	345.00	<b>172.50</b>	300.00	
Newsletter	75.50	106.00	<b>1193.88</b>	120.00	[3]
Miscellaneous expenditure	1059.11	675.00	<b>268.21</b>	675.00	
Devolved maintenance	350.00	0.00	<b>411.20</b>	0.00	
Footpaths	1022.40	0.00	<b>0.00</b>	0.00	
Speed reduction	130.00	2000.00	<b>0.00</b>	0.00	
Grass cutting	1523.20	1569.00	<b>1552.60</b>	1776.00	
Other village maintenance	3583.72	1500.00	<b>1046.47</b>	1500.00	
Millennium Green	0.00	250.00	<b>40.00</b>	300.00	
Grant towards Under 5s	800.00	0.00	<b>0.00</b>	0.00	
Church floodlighting	0.00	600.00	<b>0.00</b>	640.00	
Floodlight repairs/maintenance	231.84	168.00	<b>179.16</b>	185.00	
Churchyard maintenance	752.00	775.00	<b>775.00</b>	800.00	
Church clock maintenance	100.00	120.00	<b>120.00</b>	130.00	
Village Hall - loan repayment	3322.54	3322.54	<b>3322.54</b>	3322.54	
Section 137 (see below)	3855.19	3715.00	<b>3217.63</b>	3055.00	
Net VAT - Outflow/(Inflow)	2,323.14	-2374.31	<b>(2,091.40)</b>	282.91	
<b>Total Expenditure</b>	<b>27353.31</b>	<b>21444.23</b>	<b>18717.71</b>	<b>22069.45</b>	
Surplus/(Deficit)	(7,328.39)	(2,106.73)	<b>6,135.95</b>	(2,044.79)	
<b>Balance carried forward</b>	<b>6405.98</b>	<b>4299.25</b>	<b>12541.93</b>	<b>10497.14</b>	

## Notes regarding General Fund

General Fund balance held as follows at 31 March 2007:

Lloyds TSB current account	977.98
Lloyds TSB deposit account	12387.78
Less fund held for Recreation	(400.00)
Less funds held for RISES	(423.83)
<b>Total</b>	<b>12541.93</b>

### Explanatory notes (refers to numbers on General Fund statement)

- 1 Includes grants for VDS printing, Bulletin improvements and return of unused Vital Villages funds
- 2 Increased costs due to addition of Under 5s play area
- 3 Includes purchase of new printer funded by external grant

### S.137 Payments

Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended) enables the council to spend up to a fixed sum per elector for the benefit of people in the area on activities/projects not specifically authorised by any other powers.

The limit for the year 2006/7 was  $(1355 \times £5.44) = £7371$

Payments were made for the following purposes:

Grant for Village Design Statement Printing (Part funded by £750 grants from ESBC)	1332.50
Grant to Scout and Guide hut renovations	1000.00
Grant to Blithfield PC for Newton turn improvements	800.00
Grants to St Giles (£20 for certificate by K Cadman)	20.00
Refreshments at Parish Assembly	20.13
Best Kept Village competition	15.00
AB Royal British Legion (remembrance day wreath)	30.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>3217.63</b>

### Publicity

Section 5 of the Local Government Act 1986 requires the council to disclose payments on publicity. Payments were made during the year for the following purposes:

Bromley Bulletin newsletter (Mostly funded by external grant)	1193.88
<b>Total</b>	<b>1193.88</b>



## **Abbots Bromley Parish Council Recreation Fund - 2006/2007**

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Balance brought forward	8078.45
Income	
Staffordshire Environment Fund grant for Under 5s	6038.00
Staffordshire Environment Fund grant for Under 5s	4372.00
Project Playground grant for Under 5s	8357.00
Cricket Club loan repayment	1000.00
Bank interest	161.32
Expenditure	
Lappset installation for Under 5s	20237.00
Westcott path surfacing for Under 5s	1828.00
Surplus/(Deficit)	(2,136.68)
Balance carried forward	5941.77

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The Recreation Fund balance was held as follows at 31 March 2007:

Lloyds TSB savings account	5541.77
In general fund accounts	400.00
Total	5941.77

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## **Bagot Ward Vital Villages Fund - 2006/2007**

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Balance brought forward	4565.30
Income	
Blithfield PC	243.00
Abbots Bromley PC	256.50
Dispersal of residual funds	
ESBC	1600.00
Abbots Bromley PC	2128.59
Blithfield PC	583.77
Kingstone PC	752.44
Surplus/(Deficit)	(4,565.30)
Balance carried forward	0.00

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## **Abbots Bromley RISES Fund - 2006/2007**

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Balance brought forward	0.00
Income	
Recycling payment - Oct-Mar	412.78
Recycling payment - Apr-Sep	423.83
Grants made by RISES committee	
Newton turn improvements	300.72
Replacement tree on Green	112.06
Surplus/(Deficit)	423.83
Balance carried forward	423.83

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