

ABBOTS BROMLEY PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting
Held on Wednesday 28th January 2026 at 7.00 pm.
Held at Abbots Bromley Village Hall pursuant to notice having been given.

Present:

Cllr R Love, Cllr E Rodway- Bowden, Cllr K Baker, Cllr R Garth, Cllr T Froggatt, Cllr N French

In attendance:

Miss L Parsons (Clerk)

Members of the Public Attending: 27

No.	Item	Action
1	Apologies for absence	
	Apologies from Cllr Lockey and Cllr Round	
2	Public Session	
	<u>Community Shop</u>	
2.1	Residents have been considering plans to open a community shop, following the closure of Top shop. Local residents have been consulted, and they now have a potential 20 volunteers.	
2.2	The organisers of the community shop have approached the PC for funding of £1k to allow the purchase of stock, this will be repaid once the shop is up and running efficiently.	
2.3	Cllr Love considers this an excellent initiative, and the PC would like to support. The PC agreed a loan of £1k with no interest to be repaid when up and running. The PC will support and help publicise this and could help with signage.	
2.4	Residents thanked the volunteers for the work and fully support the initiative.	
	<u>Proposed Development Ashbrook Lane</u>	
2.5	Residents attended to discuss the emerging proposal for a residential development on Ashbrook Lane. A resident living opposite the proposed site attended, representing a group that previously campaigned against development at the rear of Ashbrook Lane.	
2.6	The residents sought clarification on the Parish Council's position and how the community should prepare in anticipation of a formal planning application.	
2.7	A previous development proposal for this location was refused on the grounds that it lay outside the village settlement boundary and that the surrounding lanes were too narrow to support additional traffic. Other significant concerns included: • Impact on village character • Flooding and drainage risks • Highway safety issues Residents noted that another proposal may be forthcoming and that clarity on the council's approach would be useful.	
2.8	Cllr Love confirmed that the Parish Council is guided by its Neighbourhood Plan, which supports development only when it is <i>proportional</i> and <i>in character</i> . The PC feels it does not meet the needs of our Neighbourhood plan. As the proposed site is outside the settlement boundary, the PC would not be in favour of such development. If the developer continues pursuing the scheme, they will be encouraged to consult with the village at the earliest opportunity.	
	<u>Local Planning Authority Context</u>	
2.9	Cllr Baker updated those present on discussions with the Chief Planning Officer:	

- ESBC has demonstrated a five-year housing land supply, which reinforces its ability to uphold the Local Plan.
- The Local Plan identifies where development should occur, and the Ashbrook Lane proposal does not meet the criteria for building outside the settlement boundary.
- The development does not qualify as a *rural exception site*.

The developer has suggested that ESBC does not have sufficient housing land, which could undermine the Local Plan. However:

- ESBC maintains that sufficient land is or will be available through other applications already progressing.
- Any new homes approved, such as the Friel development, will help meet future requirements.

Community Concerns Raised

2.10 Residents expressed several worries:

Traffic and Highways

- Each new dwelling is likely to bring two vehicles, significantly increasing traffic on a lane that a resident advised already has 1,000 vehicle movements per day.
- Highways impacts were noted as potentially the strongest grounds for objection.
- Village infrastructure was described as crumbling and additional pressure on roads, drainage and amenities are viewed as a significant risk.
- A resident commented that “a village bypass” would be necessary to alleviate traffic levels.
- The Surgery currently has capacity but is looking to develop services, pressure on the surgery would be a concern.

Process, Consultation & Information

2.11 Residents asked what actions they should take.

- Cllr Love advised waiting to see the developer’s next steps; they may delay until the Local Plan expires or may simply be testing community response.
- The PC will contact the Strategic Land Group again to request more meaningful consultation.
- The PC will also seek to invite the Chief Planner to a future meeting.

Concerns were raised about limited and potentially misleading information in the developer’s leaflet.

Consultation would need to include education providers, health services, and other statutory agencies.

Land Ownership

2.12 A resident queried whether the developer had purchased the land, the PC believes this is unlikely at this stage.

Next Steps

2.13 The Parish Council will:

1. Request further consultation directly from the developer.
2. Engage ESBC and reaffirm its objection based on the Neighbourhood Plan and Local Plan.
3. Seek involvement of the Chief Planning Officer at a future meeting.

Residents are encouraged to:

- Prepare to submit individual objections once a planning application is formally submitted, focusing particularly on highways impacts and non-compliance with planning policy.

LP

Fire Station update

The station currently has five personnel, with three members over the age of 50, making recruitment and long-term sustainability increasingly challenging.

Although two new recruits (both women) have recently joined and successfully completed their training, the station ideally needs around 12 personnel to ensure reliable coverage.

There are no active recruitment leads from within the village despite repeated efforts.

The station's ability to attend incidents has been significantly impacted:

- October availability: 7%
- November availability: 32%, an improvement attributed to the two new recruits completing training.

It was stressed that although the fire engine is physically present at the station, it is operational only around one-third of the time due to staffing limitations.

An additional 2–3 new crew members would make a substantial difference to improving response capability.

Despite ongoing recruitment campaigns, outreach, and engagement attempts, local interest remains low.

The station team has “run out of ideas” on how to inspire residents to get involved or raise awareness of the severity of the staffing shortfall.

The misconception persists among residents that because the fire engine is stationed locally, it is always available — which is not the case.

The PC acknowledged the seriousness of the staffing situation and the potential risk to community safety.

The PC recognised the need to support efforts to improve engagement and explore ways to:

- Increase visibility of the recruitment campaign,
 - Correct public misconceptions about availability,
 - Encourage residents who live within response distance to consider joining as on-call crew.
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3 Declarations of Interests

None received.

4 Report from County/Borough Councillors

See ‘Other meeting documents’.

5 To approve Minutes of meeting of 26th November 2025

Amend date on draft minutes and spelling mistake in 3.3.

Resolved.

6 To agree the Budget, Ear-marked reserves and Precept for 2026/27

Budget-

6.1 Councillors were presented with Quarter 3 budget monitoring and forecast outturn position for 2025/26, draft budget report comparing budget and outturn for the previous 3 years.

6.2 Budget was agreed as per 2026/27 budget attached.
Expenditure was largely unchanged, 3% was applied to salary costs, 5% to insurance costs and minor variations to other ad hoc spending.

6.3 A loan for £1k was agreed to the Community shop to fund set up costs.

6.4 Grounds Maintenance is to be retendered for 2026/27.

Ear-Marked Reserves-

6.5 It is forecast that the PC will have reserve levels of £29k as at March 31st 2026, having previously held very low levels of reserves this is a healthy balance and ensures the PC resilience for any unexpected expenditure.

6.6 It is noted the expenditure within Abbots Bromley PC differs to some parishes as we own our own parks and the costs of this along with village assets and trees are significant.

6.7 Ear Marked reserves are confirmed as-
£5,000- Park Repairs, additions or replacements.
£5,000- Highways Plan
£3,000- Parish Tree works

Parish Precept-

6.8 A tax base of 840.8 was advised by ESBC, this is a small reduction from 850.30. The Household rate (Parish rate) in 2025/26 was £42.98.

- 6.9** Councillors discussed the precept and agreed that as there are now sufficient levels of reserves and residents were subject to a small increase in previous year that the Household rate should remain the same.
- 6.10** A freeze on the household rate results in a slightly reduced precept of £36,136 compared with £36,544 in previous year.

2025/26- Tax base- 850.3 x Household rate £42.98= £36,544

2066/27- Tax base- 840.8 x Household rate £42.98= £36,136

- 6.11** Resident to be updated with a bulletin article in the next issue.

7 To review matters arising

- 7.1 See Matters arising attached.

8 To discuss best kept village competition

- 8.1 Best kept village competition is coming round quickly, Clerk has emailed village organisations to request photos and evidence of community activities. Clerk to arrange another meeting to convene a working group and arrange clean up days, application assistance and any other BKV tasks.
- 8.2 Cllr R Love advised that BKV shouldn't be the task of the Clerk or Parish but should be overseen by a working group of village representatives.

9 Traffic, Parking, Highways

- 9.1 Cllr E Rodway-Bowden continues to proactively report any issues on SCC's Report it application, requesting-

*Highways repairs (pot holes, street light issues, road markings refresh, street sign repair/replacements)

*Reporting floods

*Drain works required

And any other task that is the responsibility of SCC.

- 9.2 Cllr Rodway-Bowden has had a number of successes this month with potholes being filled on Swan Lane and Newton Hill Lane, road signs ordered for Callowhill road and refresh of some road markings.

Highways working group-

- 9.2 Cllr Baker advised that the Highways working group is made up of 5 members with a range of excellent skills, A meeting was held in January to discuss priorities for the traffic plan and there is another meeting scheduled for beginning of February.
- 9.3 A SID device has been put up on Lichfield Road by Amey to carry out a traffic survey, it will record speed, volume of traffic and the length of the vehicle. It is advised that Highways no longer use the tubes. It is very positive that this is being carried out.
- 9.4 Cllr Baker advised that a report on SID devices in London area found that a SID reduced speed by 1.5mph for the first few weeks and recommended moving the SID device every 3 weeks between 3 different sites.
- 9.5 County Council are not responding about SID devices, a resident has submitted an FOI for the criteria for sighting a SID sign.
- 9.6 The hedge on the Highview development on Lichfield road is overgrown, log this with Highways. LP

10 Recreation & Village Property

- 10.1 Cllr R Love to ask Mr Friel for assistance to get Bark down. RL

11 Communication & Engagement

- 11.1 Discussion about the Bulletin, was due for December but has not been completed, the Cllr who edits the Bulletins is currently away. Cllr R Love advised that Co-pilot could be used to create the formatting if required as the PC do not have the software currently used.

12 Planning

- 12.1 Discussion around the new planning website for ESBC it is hard to navigate and ensure that all applications are captured. There are 2 parishes for Abbots Bromley to search in.
- 12.2 Please see attached planning documents.

14 Representative Reports

ABSA-

14.1 Nothing to report.

Village Hall-

14.2 Community shop is being organised and will run from the Village hall. The Tennis club are working on applying for grant funding to resurface the Tennis courts.

Almshouses-

14.3 Cllr R Love is confirmed as the PC representative for the Almshouses and will sit on the Board of the Almshouses.

15 Financial Matters

Payments approved.

16 Agenda items for next meeting

Village Charter 2027

17 Date, time and place of future meetings

25th February 2026- 7pm Village Hall.

DRAFT