

## **MINUTES of the CHART SUTTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING held on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> April 2021 via Zoom video conference.**

**PRESENT:** Cllr Steven Waring as Chairman and Parish Councillors P Forknall, V Underdown, M FitzGerald MBE, C Webb and Miss T Jenkins, Clerk to the Parish Council. They were joined by County Councillor Eric Hotson, Borough Councillor Steve Munford, three additional speakers and one parishioner.

**1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman welcomed all those present.

**2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted from PCSO Pete Gardner.

**3. POLICE REPORT**

PCSO report read by the Clerk. Chart Sutton Parish has continued to maintain a low level of crime during the past year. This has been possible through the support of the community and the Parish Council. The PCSO has dealt with a number of issues/activities throughout the year, such as providing a visible presence, regular speed checks in the Chart Hill Road area, joint agency work, several operations in the area around rural crime and scrap metal/catalytic converter thefts, following up on the victims of burglaries/breaks, giving crime prevention advice and information booklets and numerous follow up visits across the area on behalf of the border force in relation to quarantines. There were no reports in relation to any Covid issues in the village over the past year. Residents should pass on any information on anti-social behaviour and anything they deem suspicious, including descriptions of persons and vehicle registration numbers. PCSO Gardner can be contacted on the non-emergency Police number 101.

**4. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR – STEVE MUNFORD**

Cllr Munford spoke regarding the fantastic response we saw to support our communities during those dark days at the beginning of the first Covid lockdown, including the setting up of community volunteer groups. Cllr Munford gave his members grant to support both Chart Sutton and Boughton Monchelsea parishes. In the main the volunteers were doing the shopping, picking up prescriptions and taking people to medical appointments. This was quickly followed by MBC and KCC setting up their support hubs. Thanks to Mike FitzGerald and his volunteers for the fantastic job they did for this community. MBC stopped all face to face meetings however they went over to running the meeting by skype. Between June and December, Cllr Munford attended over 90 meetings representing his ward. Cllr Munford was heavily involved with a plan to address the climate change and biodiversity emergencies. One of the aims was to come up with a funded plan that would see MBC become carbon neutral by 2030. The funding over the period to put this into place is £1m. Another area Cllr Munford has been heavily involved with has been the Local plan review and how that will affect our ward. This preferred approach went out to public consultation in November and December. Many responses were made by the public which are now being considered by the planners. That was called regulation 18. Now Regulation 19 will be written and after going through the Strategic Planning Committee (which Cllr Munford sits on) will be going out for public consultation in the summer. This will be approaching the final plan which, if all goes well, will be adopted in early 2022. The main impact for this parish will be the inclusion of a site of 100 homes in Sutton Valence. While Cllr Munford would have little hope of preventing this going forward, he will be very focused on protecting the "Greensand Way" with semi natural open space. Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council are working with Eric Hotson on a 20mph zone, and Cllr Munford will be looking at something similar in Chart Sutton. There are many other projects that MBC are looking at.

**5. COUNTY COUNCILLOR – ERIC HOTSON**

County Councillor Eric Hotson reported on a year of sadness, frustration and desperation, but one where we continued to work for the benefit of all. Cllr Hotson drove home from County Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and hasn't returned since, carrying out his role in a virtual world. Astonishingly, within days of lockdown, residents of Chart Sutton and other villages, enquired of neighbours as to their wellbeing and in no time volunteers were everywhere. They ran errands, made up food parcels and provided a contact for elderly and those in need. Cllr Hotson gave £1,000 to the Parish Council to distribute accordingly. Chart Sutton PC is extremely fortunate to have the services of an excellent Clerk and this year Terri has excelled. There has been no 'easing down' on Councillor duties and Cllr Hotson is well aware of Councillor's efforts and workload throughout the year. Apart from speeding vehicles and HGV's not keeping to designated routes, our changing climate has caused several flooding issues to the east of the village. Highway officers have been made aware and plans are in place to carry out road surface levelling and other works to hopefully solve problems. The Highways Improvement Plan will prioritise schemes within the Parish and, as always Cllr Hotson will assist if problems occur. Whilst Chart Sutton may be a small village, motorists use its roads as a convenient short cut/rat run and we must constantly monitor usage for more restrictions may be needed. Trials are taking place of the use of longer lasting additives for paved and street resurfacing. They will be easier and cheaper to use and have a reduced environment/emissions impact. An introduction is hoped for before next winter. The Chief Constable gave a presentation to Kent County Councillors a month or two before the pandemic arrived. He advised that a large recruitment programme had taken place and the first consignment of recruits were being trained. Residents in Maidstone Rural South want to see a police presence – petty crimes are on the increase and there are pockets of anti-social behaviour being reported but no action taken. However, of greater concern is the lack of speeding and HGV route enforcement. In his presentation, the Chief Constable promised Rural Teams. They need to be seen.

The cost of care is very high with a need for more facilities, there will be a new care act coming out soon. Local government re-organisation is around the corner. If a Unitary Authority is put in place, there will be an elected Mayor, with no Borough or District Councils as we see them now, we do not know what the future of Parish Council's will be. These are just some of the issues considered and covered over the past year. Finally, Cllr Hotson congratulated the Parish on its Village Newsletter. It is an excellent production and I am sure much appreciated by all residents.

**6. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 29<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2019**

It was discussed and resolved **"that the Minutes be agreed as an accurate record"**. This was **Agreed** and the Chairman was authorised to sign off the official copy.

NB. There was no Annual Parish Meeting in 2020, due to the Covid-19 pandemic.

**7. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT**

The Parish Council Report was read out by the Chairman. Copies of the Report including draft receipts and payments figures for 2020/21 will be produced with the June edition of the Village News.

**8. REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS**

**(a) Miss Claire Corkran for Sutton Valence Preparatory School**

We feel as though we have reinvented school countless times over the course of the last year. First, in March 2020, we found ourselves offering care to the Key Worker children throughout the Easter break and at the same time, the staff were trained to deliver online lessons via the Sutton Valence virtual journey. After half term, we welcomed back our youngest pupils and our Year 6 children and by the end of term, all children had spent some time back in School. It was great to get all the children back in on 8<sup>th</sup> March and this term we are hopeful that life will start to look more normal as restrictions continue to be lifted. The pandemic has not prevented us from pushing on with various developments and we were very excited to re-launch our Nursery, now called Little Lambs Nursery, back in May 2020. We now offer care for children from the age of two and it has been incredible to see how quickly word has got out and our Nursery is busier than it has ever been before. As well as having our Early Years quality mark renewed, we were also delighted to learn that we are to receive a quality mark for our English and Maths teaching and learning. Given the circumstances of the last year, this is particularly pleasing. One of the sad things about the pandemic has been the fact we have not been able to offer some of the events we usually provide for the local community. We can't wait to be able to reinstate our popular primary schools' cross-country competition 'The Orchard Run' and our mixed hockey tournament. We will also be pleased to be able to share our facilities again with, for example, the Scouts and the RAF association. We have also missed being able to have services in St Michael's Church. We have, however, had a successful year with regard to supporting a range of charities and these have included local ones such as Dandelion Time and the Salvation Army as well as national and international charities. We are involved with a charity called United World Schools and have raised money to support a school in Nepal. This is a partnership we hope to continue for many years to come. I finish, as ever, by saying that we remain keen to work with, and alongside, the local community going forward, helping, and contributing where we can and I am open to any suggestions members of the Chart Sutton community may have!

**(b) Miss Heather Knowler for St. Michael's Church**

The main issue experienced over the last year, as for everyone, has been the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and the restrictions on congregating and meeting others. Early in the first Lockdown these were centred around a "Thought for the Day", which were recorded in advance and released on Facebook and the Benefice website. Every Sunday there has also been a pre-recorded service and these have, where possible, been live-streamed on Facebook and then placed on the website. Finally, three times a week, there has been the opportunity to join together on Zoom to participate in evening prayer in a more interactive service. In Chart Sutton we have managed few services actually in church but we did hold a Christmas Service at the end of the year – no singing aloud allowed! Sadly, most weddings and baptisms have not been possible, but funerals have happened. With no services and no real opportunity to actively fund-raise, our income has fallen significantly - about £4.5k below our outgoings in 2020. We still have to pay our Parish Share (which pays for the Vicar and Diocesan services), insurance and electricity etc. We did manage to open the church for the Ride & Stride and a couple of individuals walked / cycled to raise some funds. In addition, many of the congregation and people in the village make regular monthly contributions – which have been so valuable to help keep things going. The one major item we achieved in 2020 was the repair of the lightning conductor. In addition, a number of hardy souls spent a lot of time and effort in keeping the churchyard under control – an escape from Lockdown! I would like to thank everyone who has helped to maintain the church over the last year – all those who have cleaned, strimmed, trimmed and sponsored. We are very grateful for the support the Parish Council have given on a regular basis. In the near future we are hoping that the life of the church will get back to somewhere close to normal, with a pattern of services in place and some fund raising ideas starting to be worked upon.

- (c) **Mrs Christine Parkes for the Three Suttons Helpline**  
Unfortunately, the Three Suttons Helpline has not been able to be very active this year because of the pandemic, especially with the early advice to those of certain ages (covering most of our drivers) to stay at home and the rules not allowing people to give people outside their households lifts in cars. Fortunately, parish councils and communities have very much rallied to help those who have needed it, particularly with neighbours, families and friends working from home able to assist with things the Helpline has often done. As the situation is seeming to improve, we are starting to help more with shopping and collecting and delivering prescriptions again – although we are unable to offer lifts yet. Very sadly, Gill Smith, one of the ladies who organised the lifts, died last year, so we are now operating with two ladies answering the phones. (Tel nos. 842346 and 844301). We are very appreciative to Chart Sutton Parish Council for their continued support over many years.
- (d) **Mr Mike Fitzgerald for The Royal British Legion Sutton Valence and District**  
Like all local organisations Covid 19 has influenced our activities, and our ability to fund raise. It restricted the Annual Remembrance Services to a few people who could lay wreaths on behalf of the branch and the wider community. We were supported as ever by the Sutton Valence School's Combined Cadet Force and we thank the Church for making it happen in Chart Sutton. We have tried to keep communication alive with our members and we did hold a short service of remembrance at the Recreational ground on the anniversary of V.J. Day. We also managed to hold a belated Annual Award Dinner at the Weald Golf Hotel in September all socially distanced. Also, because of the Covid guidance we were unable to collect house to house for the poppy appeal, but we did set up a table on the village green and asked people to collect a poppy and our thanks go out to everyone who donated so generously. Please continue to support the Legion in who are still facing challenging times. The care we are providing for all our service men and women goes on and is even more essential during the pandemic especially while fundraising opportunities are limited.
- (e) **Mr Peter Forknall for Mrs Joan Johnson Trust**  
Last year the Trust Fund had an income of £456 with £400 distributed to 5 people in the Village. Applications to the Trust are always welcomed.
- (f) **Mr Steven Waring for the Chart Sutton Community Shop (Shop on the Green)**  
It has been a difficult year, however the shop has managed to stay open with reduced hours. The ramp into the shop has been replaced and now has a non-slip surface. A portaloos has been placed on the village green for use by the volunteers. The defibrillator has been re-located onto the shop to allow it to be heated in the winter.
- (g) **Mrs Valerie Underdown as Kent Messenger Village Correspondent**  
There have been no village news pages in the paper during lockdown, and these are yet to recommence.
- (h) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for Speedwatch**  
Speedwatch was suspended during the pandemic, and the go-ahead has just been given to go back out. However, there is now a lot of red-tape on booking online slots.
- (i) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for Neighbourhood Watch**  
All meetings have fallen by the wayside, however, Mrs Underdown gets a lot of emails about scams, some of which are reported in the village newsletter.
- (j) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for the Chart Sutton Book Club**  
The book club continued with comments being given via email, however, they did manage to meet a couple of times in the break between the two lockdowns last summer. Libraries have now re-opened, and the book club is hoping to start meeting again in May.
- (k) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for the Chart Sutton Village Newsletter**  
Mrs Underdown often asks for contributions with little response. Any reports or information would be welcome.
- (l) **Mr C Webb for the Sutton Strollers**  
We have existed since the 1980s and attract walkers not only from the 3 Suttons, but from quite a wide local area. We have an email mailing list of around 40 and aim to meet monthly on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday, starting at 1330. Covid restrictions have impacted activity this past year. We were unable to walk together during Lockdown 1, but managed June, July and September 2020. We did not resume again until 18 April 2021, when 11 of us walked for 2 ½ hours through the bluebell woods close to Langley, Kingswood and East Sutton in dry conditions and bright sunshine. There are an abundance of footpaths in our local Parishes and many are now well marked, even upgraded by the KCC PROW, especially footbridges. If you are interested in joining our very informal and sociable group, please contact me on 01622 842629 or at [jcmwebb@aol.com](mailto:jcmwebb@aol.com) There is no membership fee and our very accessible countryside and evolving nature is wonderful. The first Thursday of the month Lord Raglan lunchtime walks from Chart Sutton will recommence from July 1<sup>st</sup>. Mr Webb also reported that the village carol singers could not collect house to house. Therefore, the carols were held on the village green, with approximately 30 singers, which raised around £200 for Demelza.

**(m) Mr S Waring for the Suttons Scout Group**

The Scout Group as a whole decided, after consultation with leaders and parents, not to have meetings via Zoom etc as everyone was spending a lot of time in front of a computer during the day. In the meantime, the Scouts Group arranged for a clothing bank to be placed in the village hall car park, with the proceeds being split 50/50 between the Scouts and Chart Sutton Parish Council.

The Clerk to the Parish Council holds copies of the full reports made to the meeting by some of the Local Organisations.

**9. OTHER BUSINESS**

**There being no other business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.32pm.**