

**MINUTES of the CHART SUTTON ANNUAL PARISH MEETING
held on Monday 24th April 2023 at Chart Sutton Village Hall.**

PRESENT: Cllr P Forknall as Chairman and Parish Councillors S Waring, V Underdown, M FitzGerald MBE, R Sagrott, P Ward and Miss T Jenkins, Clerk to the Parish Council. They were joined by Borough Councillor Steve Munford, plus six additional speakers/attendees.

1. CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman welcomed all those present.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted from County Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid, Cllr Chris Webb, Mark Scholey (SVPS) and Carol Sagrott.

3. BOROUGH COUNCILLOR – STEVE MUNFORD

Cllr Munford reported that flytipping is a major problem within Chart Sutton and Boughton Monchelsea, however, John Edwards at MBC ensures that it is cleared swiftly, usually within 48 hours. There have also been issues with missed bin collections. MBC are the Local Planning Authority. Their Local Plan is dated 2017 and runs until 2031, however, every 5 years it has to be reviewed. They are looking to allocate approximately 6,000 extra houses over and above those already in the Local Plan. The Local Plan Review has gone through public consultation (regulation 18 and 19) and is now in the process of the Government Inspectors public examination. Phase 2 will resume in mid-May. Chart Sutton would become a 'Smaller Village' in the review, with the possibility of an extra 30 homes, but this has to have community support. The Gypsy & Traveller accommodation is being looked at separately and is going through the first stage of public consultation, and MBC would be looking to adopt in 2024. MBC are carrying out a governance review (last done around 20 years ago) and Chart Sutton Parish Council has requested a slight change to the boundary around the bridges on Chart Hill Road. This will mean some residents will move from the parish of Boughton Monchelsea to Chart Sutton, those affected have been consulted by Chart Sutton Parish Council, and Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council has given its support. The Government Boundary Review Committee recently reviewed MBC ward boundaries, and our current ward was due to be changed, however, both Chart Sutton and Boughton Monchelsea Parish Council put forward a case for the retention of the existing ward, which was accepted, with the addition of the Joy Wood estate. Currently each year one third of the council members go up for election, however, from 2024 MBC will hold 'Full Council' elections with all members being elected at the same time every four years. Cllr Munford has served his country for 25 years, his parish for 30 years and for 12 years has represented his ward. He has decided not to stand at the next election, and thanked the Clerk for her support over the last 12 years. Cllr Munford invited questions from the floor.

4. COUNTY COUNCILLOR – LOTTIE PARFITT-REID

Cllr Parfitt-Reid was unable to be present, but provided a full report. The Chairman read the following excerpt on potholes. Winter weather has taken its heavy toll on our roads. In the December/January period, highway reports were five times the level of the same period a year ago. While constrained by tight funding and inflationary pressures, we have, since January been stepping up the pace of repairs; Residents will, I think, have observed the increased number of local road closures that reflect highway works. 14,000 potholes have now been repaired and 68,414 square metres of road has been patched. The budget announcement of £200 million for roads funding, meaning some £6 million for Kent, is a welcome addition and we are looking to deploy it as quickly as possible.

5. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL MEETING HELD ON 25TH APRIL 2022

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.

6. PARISH COUNCIL REPORT

A copy of the Parish Council Report was provided to all attendees. Copies of the Report including draft receipts and payments figures for 2022/23 will be produced with the June edition of the Village News.

7. REPORTS OF LOCAL ORGANISATIONS

- (a) **Mr Mike FitzGerald, MBE for The Royal British Legion Sutton Valence and District**
We have slowly returned to something like normal following Covid in regard of our events and fundraising activities - organising successful coffee mornings, quiz nights and our Annual Dinner at the Weald of Kent. There was a strong turnout at the Remembrance Services. The poppy appeal raised £6,784.10 for our branch and £1,754.22 of this was raised by Chart Sutton. A huge thank you to everyone for their generous support. The 100th anniversary event has been organised for 16th May, with a visit to Leeds Castle then on to the Weald of Kent for a 3 course dinner. We still have a few seats to fill, so please contact me if you would like to join us. Sadly, we have lost some long serving members during the last year. We are struggling to attract new members. Membership is down to about 40, from 70 some 5 years ago. There have been a lot of branches closing in recent years and just at a time when the Legion is being offered the Freedom of the Borough. Membership costs £19 per year.
- (b) **Mr Peter Forknall for Mrs Joan Johnson Trust**
The Trust Fund distributed £90 each to 5 people in the village at Christmas. Applications to the Trust are always welcomed.
- (c) **Mr Steven Waring for the Chart Sutton Community Shop (Shop on the Green)**
The shop is still trading but it struggling to make a surplus of funds, especially with the increased costs in electricity etc. We now have a weekly cleaner. A small freezer and a small chiller were purchased to replace a larger freezer. We continue to look for new volunteers.
- (d) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for Speedwatch**
We have been trying to get out as and when we can but it has not always been possible, with so few of us to do the sessions. As you know we stand in the entrance to the orchard and during the summer this is a bit hazardous as there are very large lorries and tractors coming and going. Then of course we lost a lot of weeks with the gas works having the road up. Now that the good weather is (hopefully) on its way, we will endeavour to get out there and catch some racers!
- (e) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for the Chart Sutton Book Club**
The book club continues to enjoy our sessions once a month. We meet in the café at Millbrook Garden Centre to discuss the book and put the world to rights. Everyone puts forward suggestions as to what to read and I get the books from the library so there is no need to buy them as is the case with some book clubs.
- (f) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for the Amenities Committee**
The committee is really struggling to find events to hold that will attract participants. We have given up on bingo and even the dance we held for Halloween did not draw as many as we would have liked. Coffee mornings don't do too bad. The aim is to make money to pay for the Christmas dinner. This was held again in December and was thoroughly enjoyed by all who came.
- (g) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for Neighbourhood Watch**
Over the last few years there has not been much activity from NhW, I have not been to any meetings since before the pandemic. However just recently there has been some movement again and I now get regular emails from PHQ about frauds, scams etc. In the village we have recently set up an email group of residents who would like to be kept informed of this information and any other that could affect the village. E.g. roadwork notifications. We have had a slow response of people wanting to be part of the group but I have started passing on the info from PHQ and hopefully this is of help/interest.
- (h) **Mrs Valerie Underdown for the Village Tea Dance**
If you have read the Village News you will have seen this is an activity that we hold every Tuesday. Not many of us and definitely not enough men so if you feel like a bit of musical exercise, come along. Best to check with me first though, as if there are not enough of us to cover the cost of hiring the hall, we have to cancel.

- (i) **Mr Peter Underdown for Chart Sutton Village Hall**
The hall is a very popular venue and we have a varied amount of lettings from yoga, dog training, flower arranging, art classes, short mat bowls and children's dance classes. There is also a tea dance on Tuesday afternoons and parties at the weekends. People like to hire the hall as they say it is cosy and friendly.
- (j) **Mr Peter Underdown for Chart Sutton Short Mat Bowls**
I also run the short mat bowls club. We have 11 members and it has been running since 2000. Valerie, myself and Mary Underdown are the only founder members left. It is a bowls and social club so there is quite a bit of banter. So, if you would like to come along and have some fun on Friday night, you are more than welcome.
- (k) **Mrs Christine Parkes for the Three Suttons Helpline**
The Three Suttons Helpline is a group of volunteer drivers who give lifts, mainly to medical appointments, to the people in Chart Sutton, East Sutton, Sutton Valence, Langley and Kingswood who would otherwise find the transport difficult. Following the pandemic, after a slow and tentative re-start we are now operating fully again. During the past year, over 240 lifts have been given, which whilst being many fewer than the 400 we did pre-pandemic is encouraging. By far, most of the lifts have been to Maidstone Hospital, then to Sutton Valence Surgery, and then to Langley Surgery. Other lifts have been to Pembury, Ashford, Medway and other local hospitals, and to clinics, opticians and dentists. Some help has also been given with essential shopping and a visit to a hairdresser. Joy, one of the people who answered the telephone and coordinated the lifts wonderfully, has retired after many years of helping us. Fortunately, Pamela volunteered to take over her work and she and Sandy now work together. We have also been delighted to welcome four new drivers, which has helped – although far from completely – to replace some of the people who were unable to return to us after the pandemic. We are always in need of extra people to help. We are extremely grateful to Chart Sutton Parish Council for their continued generous donations and support towards this service.
- (l) **Sutton Valence Preparatory School (report read by Peter Forknall on behalf of Mark Scholey)**
The School remains a vibrant and happy place to grow up and to learn. The School role has grown by around 5% in the last year, although it still remains circa 15% smaller than it was in 2014-5. The new nursery building has received planning permission (thank you!). The School has recently purchased an area of land to the West of the site which is being made into a forest school, outdoor play space and land for growing food for use on site. The School had a visit in November from the local MP, Helen Whately. The School had a successful inspection visit from ISI. The School continues to be very successful locally and even nationally on occasions with our sporting, musical, artistic and dramatic endeavours; the Chamber Choir even featured on BBC Breakfast when singing a carol to raise money for Ukrainian refugees. The School continues with various outreach work to local businesses, charities and schools, and will shortly host the Orchard Run on 12th May for local primary school children. The School is marking King Charles III's Coronation with a series of events on Friday 5th May. The roads around the School continue to be a challenge to navigate, with potholes, low-hanging branches and a lack of obvious passing places. I do regularly remind our parents to drive considerately though.
- (m) **Sutton Strollers (report read by Peter Forknall on behalf of Chris Webb)**
We are a walking group that meets most months on the 3rd Sunday of the month. We often start from the Chart Sutton Village Hall car park at 1.30, but occasionally we go out of area, just for a change. Our walks normally last 2 to 2 ½ hours and sometimes end with tea. Membership is free and we currently number some 40 individuals, from teenagers to 80 year olds. We are always open to new faces not just from the 3 Suttons, but from further afield. Simply give us your contact number or email and you will be included in our monthly announcements. I should also mention the first Thursday of the month walk from Chart Sutton down to the Lord Raglan for a sandwich and then back. Again we assemble in the Village Hall car park, but at 1100 and we are normally finished at 1400ish. So we are doing our best to keep you all moving and fit! Come and join us.
- (n) **Miss Catherine Hampson for Sutton Scouts**
We currently have 11 Beavers, 20 Cubs and 12 Scouts. The Beavers recently visited Leeds Castle and have an outing planned to Lower Grange Farm. The Scouts have already held a hike and sleepover event. The St George's Day parade had a good turnout despite the dismal weather. The leaders provide a varied and active programme and we are always looking for more leaders. The group is opening up Hamlet Wood Scout Camp to the public on the 8th May for the King's Coronation Big Help Out day.

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

8. OTHER BUSINESS

Clr FitzGerald raised concerns that despite the Clerk requesting a report for the APM from Kent Police regarding the new policing model, this has not been forthcoming. Communities are being asked to pay more for services, but the PCSO resource is being lost/reduced. It was also noted that we have seen nothing of the Community Warden for some time.

The Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.13pm.