

Chart Sutton Parish Council

Report for the year to 31st March 2008

This was the fourth year of the four-year term of the Council. At the Annual Meeting in May 2007 the Council re-elected Mrs Ann Rollinson as Chairman and Mr Mike FitzGerald as Vice-Chairman. Chart Sutton Councillors have all undertaken to act in accordance with a Code of Conduct based on a national model and there have been no complaints to the Standards Board about their individual or collective activities.

Following the departure of Tony Brook last year creating a vacancy, Mrs Valerie Underdown was co-opted on to the Council in June. In November it was with great sadness that the Council lost Sandra Clayton to illness and she is missed by all. Following advertisement of the vacancy, Mrs Lucy Majin was co-opted to the Council in January.

Activities of the Council are regularly reported in the bi-monthly Village News, which is distributed free to all households in the parish. Fortunately, one or two local businesses have taken advertising space, although more would be welcome. The income from the advertisements helps to cover the cost of producing the Newsletter. In addition, the Council has a web site at www.chartsuttonpc.kentparishes.gov.uk where Minutes are published and a lot of useful information is displayed. The Council is grateful to KCC for providing the web site free of charge. The Council also has a Publication Scheme required under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, whereby copies of particular Council documentation are available upon request.

The following are brief comments on some Council activities:-

The Council was mainly financed in two ways. Firstly, a precept of £11,000 was raised on local householders, collected with the Council Tax. This amounted to £27.43 for a Band "D" property. Then, the Borough Council provided general allowances to assist with such matters as maintenance of the Memorial Playing Field and grass cutting around the village, as well as maintenance of our one street light. The draft Receipts and Payments Accounts for 2006/07 were reproduced with the June 2007 edition of Village News and these were subsequently audited unchanged. A first draft of the figures for 2007/08 is given overleaf. Copies of audited Annual Returns are available under the Publication Scheme.

There was no major expenditure during the year. Small donations were made during the year to a number of charities, including the Three Suttons Help Line and two new benches were installed at the Memorial Playing Field. The Council is keen to retain reserves to fund the proposed replacement of the pavilion at the Playing Field, a large project. The Council has been moving this project forward and quotations have recently been received and are being considered. Another project that the Council are keen to progress is the provision of more parking spaces at the lay-by at Amber Bank, another costly project, for which preliminary enquiries have been made.

During the year the Council was consulted on thirty planning applications. The largest of these is the application for the Kent International Gateway Project – a proposal for a road/rail terminus at Bearsted and Thurnham alongside the M20 between Jct 8 and Jct 7 - and while this proposed development is not in Chart Sutton, the Council feels it will have a detrimental effect on the surrounding areas with regard to increased vehicle movements and environmental pollution. The Council therefore felt it was important to join forces with other Parish Councils to oppose this planning application and the Joint Parishes Group was set up and now consists of 15 Parish Councils representing over 23,000 residents. Details of planning developments are given in each edition of Village News. The Council's Planning Committee meets regularly to consider new planning applications and details of these meetings can be found on the Council website, on the noticeboards or by contacting the clerk. In considering its views on planning applications, the Council continues to put forward recommendations that it feels best represent the interests of local parishioners, but the Borough Council does not always agree with us!

The Council meets regularly at the Village Hall at 7.30pm on the second Monday monthly (with the exceptions of January which is held towards the end of the month and February and August when there is no meeting) and parishioners are welcome to attend. Parishioners are given an opportunity to raise matters at the start of every meeting. Councillors or the Clerk can be contacted direct when more urgent issues arise. Their contact details appear on the village noticeboards and in Village News.