

LITTLE CHART PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Little Chart on 14 May 2019 at 7.00 pm (Draft)

PRESENT: Cllr R Brasier (Chair), Cllr A Diebel, Cllr J Ladds, Cllr C Beck, Ms J Kelley, Ms C Gunther, Mr S Clarke, Ms A Fowler, Mr K Godden, Mr P Tate, Mr R Fowler, Mr J Fowler, Mr S Kelly, Mr H Chamberlain, Mr M Sharpe (minutes) (15 attendees for whole or part of the Meeting)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Parish Councillor Scott Rivolta, (unavoidably away on travel), County Councillor Charlie Simkins and Borough Councillor Mrs Clair Bell (both due to prior engagements at similar Parish Meetings).

2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

It was unanimously agreed that Cllr Brasier should sign the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 7 May 2018.

3. MATTERS ARISING FROM 2018 APM

There were no matters arising.

4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

Cllr Brasier reported that fewer planning applications and decisions seemed to have arrived for discussion this year. He gave the good news that the long-standing issue of trees adjacent to the Village Hall grounds had received attention. He also introduced the new Clerk to Little Chart Parish Council, Michael Sharpe, who succeeded to Mrs Batt's roles as Proper Officer and Responsible Financial Officer on 1st May.

5. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT

Mr Sharpe distributed a single-page summary of receipts and payments for the year 1st April 2018-31st March 2019. A question from the floor inquired as to plans for The Plantation, in particular to limit further damage from passing vehicles by erecting low-level posts or fencing. The discussion then ranged over parking problems in the village, access to Ford Mill for commercial vehicles, and particular events causing congestion. A question also arose on the cost and success of tackling Japanese Knotweed on Parish Council land or boundaries. The conclusion was a guarded assessment of 'success'.

6. BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT Unfortunately not to hand at the meeting.

7. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT Unfortunately not to hand at the meeting.

Mr Sharpe undertook to display the printed reports on the Village Notice Board and arrange for them to be available through the website.

8. ANY OTHER SPEAKERS

Village Hall Committee

Mrs Gunther reported that the Bridge Club is the main user on Tuesday afternoons, and has in the past directly supported the upkeep of the Hall. Costs are rising, including those incurred from surveyors' fees. The Hall breaks even financially with support from the Parish Council. Having refurbished the kitchen, the Committee wishes to improve the toilets, and is awaiting an appraisal against the Bronze Hallmark for Village Halls administered by Action with Communities in Rural Kent (ACRK). This certifies a good level of legal compliance and management, and is encouraging to prospective hirers of the Hall.

Bridge Club

Mrs Gunther also reported that the Bridge Club continues to thrive. It has between 24 - 40 members and generates £28 per week. The committee is not aware of any issues relating to the inevitable parking congestion on Tuesday afternoons, and The Swan pub nearby kindly allows members to park there.

Flower Show

Mrs Gunther concluded her reports by stating that The Spring and Summer Shows have continued, and have attracted many entries. They provide an opportunity for village socialising. New committee members are now needed to help with the running of the shows, or they may not be able to continue.

Cricket Club

No report received. The Chairman thanked the Club members for maintaining the Forstal, which is in Parish Council ownership and forms a Conservation Area.

9. FORUM FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION

Participants at the meeting debated the current perceived parking problems within the village, and asked if the lower part of the Plantation might be used. Preservation of the green space was being diminished particularly by agricultural vehicles, it was felt. Difficulties in sight-lines for vehicles trying to turn right over the River Stour bridge were strongly pointed out, as were the limitations of the Swan pub car park. It became clear that the Plantation is not designated as a Village Green.

A resident spoke in favour of a computer app called 'Nextdoor' which could be used to publicise the Village Hall, but lack of community engagement could be at the heart of the low usage figures. This was agreed as a useful idea to be taken forward by tech-savvy helpers at the Village Hall.

It was announced that the Parish magazine, centred on Charing but including Little Chart, has ceased publication.

Mention was made of dog fouling within the village, in particular on the public footpath by the mill race. A plea was made for correctly-worded signs to discourage this illegal activity, and also for a dog waste bin to be sited appropriately.

A resident asked who carries out Grounds Maintenance for the Plantation, and it was stated that Ashford Borough Council trading as Aspire Landscape Management currently carry out this work, as well as other specified areas with the Parish. Willingness to tender for the work when the contract comes up for renewal (in 2020) was expressed by a local resident. It was felt that debris collection (prior to mowing the Plantation) and pruning of shrubs are currently unsatisfactory. The meeting concurred that seeking best value in public contracts was an important principle.

The Chairman thanked all for attending and declared the Annual Parish Meeting closed at 7.50 pm.

Signed Date
Chairman