

SUTTON ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ELECTORATE

Wednesday 5th May 2021

Minutes of the meeting of the electorate Wednesday 5th May 2021 at 7pm via Zoom meeting.

Present: Mr M Inskip (Chairman of Sutton Parish Council)
Mrs R Hughes (Clerk)
Mrs M Wolland (Assistant Clerk)
Mrs L Amos-John (Sutton Timebank Coordinator)
Cllr L Dupre (CCC and ECDC)
15 Members of the public

1. Welcome from the Chairman of Sutton Parish Council - Cllr Mark Inskip.

Mr Inskip welcomed those present to the meeting.

2. To receive apologies for absence

Apologies were received from Mr Amner, Mr Newton and Mrs Partington.

3. To approve the minutes of the meeting of 21st July 2020

The minutes were taken as read, approved and signed by the Chairman as a true record of the meeting.

4. Report from Chairman of Sutton Parish Council on Council activities during the previous year

Welcome to Sutton's Annual Meeting of the Electorate. This is the second occasion on which we have had to adopt a virtual format for this meeting. Last year we delayed the meeting until the end of the first lockdown but could not meet face to face. Nearly a year on COVID-19 is still with us, and whilst the UK situation is improving, other parts of the world continue to face major problems.

At the end of this week the ability to meet virtually ceases and we will enter a period without parish council meetings until such time that it is safe to hold face to face meetings. It is hoped this could be as early as the fourth Thursday in June. Over the past year virtual meetings have allowed the parish council to continue meet, debate and make decisions. This has also enabled us to livestream meetings and to make meeting recordings available on YouTube. These recordings have had many more views than we had people attend meetings in person, enabled many more residents see their parish council discussions. Last year's Annual meeting of the Electorate hit 180 views.

As I already mentioned, the Annual meeting took place in 2020 just after the end of the first lockdown. I was able to say then how proud I am to live in a village which has shown tremendous community spirit in extremely difficult times. And that pride had continued over the past year with socially distanced community activities and the continued participation of volunteers.

We launched Sutton Timebank at that start of the COVID-19 pandemic, having successfully secure funding in 2019, and having completed recruitment of the Timebank Coordinator early in 2020. The Timebank had now been running for over a year and we will hear more about the progress made and future plans later in this meeting. It was a far from ideal time to launch a new Timebank in during a global pandemic however it was invaluable in helping coordinate the local volunteer response.

The past year has been a difficult one for the parish council's finances. We have two primary sources of income, the precept which is the charge placed on the council tax and income from hiring of the council's facilities. Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic has meant that for most of the past year those facilities have remained closed. In 2019/20 a total income of £27,016 was achieved from the hiring of those facilities, in 2020/21 that dropped to just £550 for the full year, a decrease of £26,466. When it came to setting the precept and hence the council tax for the current year this led to some difficult decisions. We carefully scrutinized all of the income and expenditure lines in the proposed budget. We have assumed the return of hirers to our facilities but have been cautious about how quickly this will happen. In order to keep the council's reserves at an acceptable level we needed to increase the precept by 4% this year. The district council also assumed that it would collect less council tax this year because of residents losing their jobs and relying on Council Tax benefits, this added a further 1.3% increase.

We are now starting to see hirers return as the lockdown restrictions are relaxed and hiring income returning, though we suspect we have lost some hirers for good, and we will therefore need to promote our facilities and encourage new users if we are to restore lost income.

Although finances are tight due to COVID-19, we are in the fortunate position of having around £120,000 of unallocated Community Infrastructure Levy or CIL. These are funds paid by developers when new homes are constructed to contribute to infrastructure improvements. We have a number of ideas to use this money, for example by resurfacing the Brooklands centre car park, improving the footpath along Bury Lane to Sutton Gault, purchasing a second Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign (MVAS), installing a youth shelter, electric charging points and picnic tables. We are limited in scope to add new facilities by the limited land owned by the Parish Council.

The Sutton Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in May 2019, is proving it's worth. The reserved matters, the details of the plan for the development of the land next to Garden Close, have been turned down because they did not conform to the Neighbourhood Plan. We wait to see the next steps from the developer, Abbey Homes, for that site. More constructively Linden Homes, the developer building homes at the top of Mepal Road, has constructively engaged with the Parish and District Councils to understand what is required of their next planning application to comply with the Neighbourhood Plan policies. They are proposing new playing fields and a new burial ground, amongst other items to accompany their outline planning application which is expected to be determined in the summer.

The Parish Council has commenced a review of the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan to ensure that it stays up to date and relevant. No substantial changes are expected but all sections will be reviewed and a consultation is expected to take place over the summer. The district council has already indicated that there will be no requirement for additional housing allocations beyond those already identified in the existing Neighbourhood Plan. A Design Code document will be developed and a housing needs assessment has been started which will help inform the requirement housing mix of any new developments. It should be possible to meet all costs with grant funding. It is expected that the plan will go to referendum in the first half of 2022. Look out for updates on the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan website <http://sutton-in-the-isle.org.uk/>.

We are continuing to address traffic issues, a few months ago we introduced our new vehicle activated mobile sign displaying traffic speeds and flashing red if the speed limit is exceeded. As already mentioned, we are looking to acquire a second sign. Our Local Highways Initiative bid was unsuccessful this time around, not quite making the cut. We were looking for a safer way to cross the Brook just north of the junction with the High Street. We will have another attempt to bid for this improvement later this year.

We have been working with village groups and the County Council to vary the grass cutting regimes to enabling plant to take place on grass verges and other land adjacent to roads in the village.

The new Parish Council website at <https://www.sutton-cambs-pc.gov.uk/>, which had just been launched at the time of last year's Annual meeting, is now well used. A significant new feature has just been introduced, more of that later in this meeting.

There is much more I could mention but don't have time this evening. I will finish by thanking parish council staff for their hard work and dedication over the past year. I would also like to thank all of those parish councillors who have served over the past year, and to mention that we have two vacancies. If you have a few free hours each week and want to get involved in contributing to your local community, contact the Clerk for more details.

5. To receive report from County and District Councillors

District Councillor Mark Inskip

Introduction

Once again this has been a year dominated by the COVID-19 virus, alongside flooding at Christmas and the New Year which affected a number of residents, in some cases very significantly.

1 COVID-19

1.1 The District Council took an active part in the cross-county public health effort. Colleagues in South Cambridgeshire kept the two of us regularly briefed for which we were extremely grateful. The District Council was responsible for the distribution of a number of different COVID-related grants for local businesses and for individual support.

1.2 Following the initial lockdown in March, Ely Market opened to essential goods on 11 June, and to other stalls a month later. District Council operated play areas opened on 4 July, and the Council offered advice to parishes wanting to know how to reopen their play areas in a COVID-safe way.

1.3 Early in 2021 the District Council also took part in a new county-wide I for ensuring taxis and private hire vehicles are COVID-safe. This provides video training, and a subsidy for fitting a quality standard screen in the vehicle. A sticker in the vehicle will show which drivers have been trained. It is hoped that this scheme will be expanded to voluntary car schemes.

1.4 Following a proposal from our council group, the Council set up a COVID Recovery Working Group to help steer the district's recovery from the pandemic. This began to do some useful work but was closed down prematurely by the Council which was disappointing as there was so much more it could have done.

2 Mepal Outdoor Centre

2.1 In a surprise move in July 2020, the District Council's ruling group called a behind-closed-doors meeting of the Full Council to discuss 'an asset management matter in the parish of Mepal'. The local press quickly revealed that this meeting was to discuss a project that had already been taking shape in secret for eighteen months, to replace Mepal Outdoor Centre with a crematorium. To date approaching a quarter of a million pounds has been spent to progress this scheme, which has not yet reached the stage of a formal planning application.

2.2 The location of the proposed facility is just twelve minutes from the existing crematorium at March, which is hardly operating at capacity. A new crematorium at Huntingdon is also due to open imminently. A crematorium in Mepal will therefore only be viable by poaching custom from its neighbours in what is becoming quite a crowded market.

2.3 In April the Council's Finance & Assets Committee agreed by a majority to submit a planning application to demolish the remains of the structures at Mepal Outdoor Centre.

3 Planning

3.1 In summer 2020 the Government launched a consultation on radical changes to the planning regime in England. Councils' Local Plans would be shorter, quicker to produce, and restricted to 'zoning' of sites into three categories (Growth, Renewal, or Protected) and policies on design.

3.2 The District Council agreed three new Supplementary Planning Documents during the year, on the Natural Environment, Custom and Self-Build Housing, and Climate Change. The Council recently launched a consultation on a limited review of its current (2015) Local Plan, concentrating only on policy GROWTH1 in the Plan. This is proposed to show a housing requirement of around 8,922 dwellings between 2011 and 2031. The Council's view is that it already has a housing supply of 10,175 in this period, so that it will not be necessary to identify any additional housing allocations to 2031.

3.3 A planning application by Havebury for 55 affordable homes at Brick Lane Mepal was refused by the Planning Committee in March, on the grounds that development outside the village envelope was not permitted under the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan, and that it did not comply with the Council's design code. We made representations to uphold the Sutton Neighbourhood Plan and its policies, and Lorna spoke at the Planning Committee meeting.

3.4 Abbey Homes has now had two detailed applications for 'reserved matters' on its site at Garden Close Sutton refused by planning officers, on multiple grounds. Following a request from a local resident, the District Council's trees officer drew up a Tree Preservation Order for 57 trees on the site. Abbey Homes objected to the order which was therefore referred to the Planning Committee for determination. We wrote to nearby residents to explain how they could make their views known, and Lorna spoke at the Planning Committee meeting. The Committee agreed to the making of the Tree Preservation Order.

3.5 In Wentworth, landowners AgReserves sought to convert their planning permission for six self-build homes into full market price housing. We made representations against this request, as it would open up a loophole for applicants to gain initial consent for self-build housing as the thin end of the wedge towards easing their path towards achieving full market price housing on sites where it would otherwise be refused. Lorna spoke at the Planning Committee meeting, and the Committee refused the request on the grounds that the self-build opportunities had not been sufficiently advertised and the application therefore failed to comply with the Council's new Supplementary Planning Document.

3.6 The Sutton Co-op opened in February 2021, rather later than originally intended due to COVID and a hold-up with highways paperwork, which Lorna assisted in resolving.

3.7 A planning application has been submitted for change of use of the former Deli@65 to a hot food takeaway with one first floor flat (the latter already permitted). The application has yet to be determined.

3.8 Outside the Sutton ward, but of some general interest, a planning application has been submitted for the second phase of housing at the former MOD site at the Princess of Wales Hospital in Ely. An application for redevelopment at the hospital has also been submitted, and the two have become entangled with a proposed land swap between them.

4 Finance and assets

4.1 The Council once again froze its share of the Council Tax in its February budget. However, the Council's Medium Term Financial Strategy shows plans for an increase of £5 per annum at Band D, the maximum allowed by law, from 2022 onwards.

4.2 The Council's waste company ECSS requested and was awarded an increase of £91,000 in its management fee for the first six months of the year to cover agency staff costs due to COVID, though it is not clear on what contractual basis this was granted. Meanwhile the Council's other trading company ECTC was not in a position to repay either of the loans due to the Council in March 2021. The Council agreed various changes to its current loans.

- The original £5M loan due to be repaid 31 March 2021 at an interest rate of 5.22 per cent will be replaced with a new loan with a final repayment date of 31 July 2023 and a reduced interest rate of 3.5 per cent.
- The loan for the MOD properties in Ely due to be repaid 31 March 2021 at an interest rate of 5.22 per cent will be replaced with a new loan with a final repayment date of 31 March 2023 and a reduced interest rate of 3.5 per cent.

The Mayor's Combined Authority has also agreed a request from the Council for a re-profiling of loans in respect of housing schemes in East Cambridgeshire.

- Haddenham: to extend the loan until March 2023 (current balance £2.8M) with an interest free period of twenty-two months between April 2020 and March 2022.
- MOD Ely: to extend the loan until March 2023 (current balance £24M) with six month interest free period between July and December 2020.

4.3 The Finance & Assets Committee made the decision to appoint the Leader of the Council as a 'Custodian Member' of the 'East Cambs Community Land Trust', and that this Trust should be listed as an 'outside body' from which the Council should receive annual reports. It seems extraordinary that this body should claim to be a community-led independent 'Community Land Trust' when it has no genuine community connection, is top-heavy with councillors from the Council's ruling group, and shares office space at Fordham with the Council's own developers Palace Green Homes.

4.4 The Finance & Assets Committee oversees the Council's working group considering bus travel, cycling, and walking in the district. The results of the March-May 2020 survey were eventually collated, and councillors on the working group (including Lorna) have been considering these. A request was made to the Combined Authority for support for improved bus provision. Lorna suggested the responses on walking and cycling improvements be grouped on a location basis and shared with parish councils to draw on their local knowledge.

4.5 The Council has decided it wishes to remain one of the handful of local authorities left in England where onstreet parking is still enforced by the police and not by the council. Because parking enforcement is not a police priority, the Council has decided that its preferred way to introduce some enforcement of on-street parking in the district is to use Council staff acting as police volunteers, who would operate under police control. This seems a very strained set of arrangements to avoid doing what all except eleven councils in England outside London do.

4.6 A motion from our group to the Council recognising that 'black lives matter' was referred to the Finance & Assets Committee where it was subjected to an amendment to remove all reference to black lives mattering.

5 Operational services

5.1 Having been pressed into declaring a Climate Emergency in October 2019, the Council has been working on its Climate Change Action Plan. Mark successfully proposed a number of changes to make the plans for tackling climate change more ambitious. The Council has achieved a few 'quick wins', moving to a 100 per cent renewable energy 'green' tariff and aiming to replace all its street and car park lighting with LEDs by the end of the year. The council noted a 75 per cent drop in business mileage since March 2020 due to COVID-19 related restrictions—there is no guarantee that this will be sustained.

5.2 Mark successfully proposed that the Council join the growing number of local authorities signing up to support the Electricity Bill, a proposed piece of legislation which would allow electricity generators the right to become local suppliers and sell their energy directly to local people.

5.3 We have continued to liaise with the local police over night-time joyriding at the Elean Business Park. The police successfully requested additional resource to address this issue. In August, drivers were banned from the Elean Business Park for meet-ups as police imposed a three-day dispersal order. And twenty-two warnings have been issued for anti-social driving around Witchford, Ely and Sutton, including the Elean Business Park.

5.4 Mark submitted a motion to the February Full Council meeting calling on the Council to formally endorse the Fens Biosphere project. Disappointingly this proposal was significantly watered down, so that instead of supporting the Biosphere application, the Council is now committed only to request further information about the implications and benefits of designation of the Biosphere, and to write to Cambridgeshire ACRE to seek further information. This is all the stranger as Cambridgeshire ACRE is based in East Cambridgeshire, in Council managed premises in Littleport. However, it is good news that Mark managed to get this issue on to the agenda for public debate by the Council for the first time.

6 Administrative issues

6.1 The Council's ruling group has decided to introduce a new Audit Committee with effect from May 2021. Our preference would have been to reorganise the Council's committees by establishing a new Strategic Planning & Economic Development Committee to deal with the pressing issues facing the future of our district, and to avoid the conflict of interest in having the same committee dealing with finances and planning, but this was defeated.

6.2 Face to face appointments for Council services were reintroduced in April 2021, but only for a very limited range of services: EU settlement scheme interviews, homelessness issues which cannot be dealt with remotely, training for taxi drivers, essential appointments, and Environmental Health PACE interviews. All such appointments need to be prebooked, either online or by phone.

7 Finally

7.1 We have replaced our regular monthly face to face surgeries in Sutton with online Zoom surgeries. These are advertised on Facebook, with an email address for residents to use to book a slot.

County Councillor Lorna Dupre

Introduction

The year has continued to be overshadowed by COVID-19, with infection rates rising and falling, and restrictions tightening and easing. The arrival of effective vaccines has been transformational, and their rollout an impressive piece of work by the NHS, but we must continue to be vigilant. Meanwhile the period between Christmas and New Year saw flooding seriously affect a number of local communities.

1 The council

1.1 I have remained Deputy Leader of my political group for the whole of the last year, as well as being my group's lead member on the County Council's Environment & Sustainability Committee, and a member of the General Purposes Committee and the Health Committee. I have also remained Chair of the Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee.

1.2 The composition of the Council has changed only slightly in the last year following the move of one Labour councillor to Independent. The Council currently consists of 35 Conservative councillors, 16 Liberal Democrats, six Labour, two St Neots Independents, and two Independents. However, the County Council faces elections for all 61 seats on Thursday 6 May so this may change.

1.3 Plans for the County Council's move from Shire Hall in Cambridge to Alconbury have been held up, leaving the Council homeless until the autumn. The Government decided not to extend the power for councils to meet online, and at the time of writing this is being challenged in the courts—so whether the Council has a physical council chamber matters! The new Alconbury building, which we were repeatedly told would not be a replacement Shire Hall, has now been named—New Shire Hall. Public transport to the new HQ will be negligible, with just one bus a day at 8:00AM from Cambridge North Station and Tesco Bar Hill to the new HQ, and one bus back at 5:15PM.

1.4 The Government kicked its plans to impose unitary (single-tier) councils in most places into the long grass, so Cambridgeshire is likely to have both District and County Councils as well as the Combined Authority for the foreseeable future.

1.5 The Council increased its portion of Council Tax in February, by 1.99 per cent for general services, and one per cent for adult social care. The Government has announced that Councils can increase adult social care precepts by three per cent over two years, so it is likely that a one per cent increase this year means a two per cent increase next year.

1.6 The long-running story of 'Farmgate' (the controversial award by the Council of a farm tenancy to the Deputy Leader of the Council, and the decision to borrow a large amount of money to do up the farmhouse) culminated in the resignation from the Council of the Deputy Leader at the point at which an audit report on the matter was finalised for the Council's Audit & Accounts Committee to consider. The full contents of this report have still not been made public, despite long-running demands for transparency and accountability.

2 COVID-19 and health

2.1 The County Council continues to play a key role in joint arrangements with the local NHS and other bodies for local management of the pandemic. A Local Outbreak Control Plan was drawn up, and a joint Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Local Outbreak Engagement Board meets regularly. The Council has continued to work with District Councils and local community support groups to assist residents in need with food, medicines and fuel.

2.2 We are sadly losing our longstanding Director of Public Health Dr Liz Robin who retires at the end of April. Interviews have taken place for her successor.

2.3 In other health news, the County Council's Health Committee has been kept informed of major developments planned for the Addenbrooke's campus, including a new Children's Hospital and a Cancer Research Hospital.

2.4 Meanwhile, plans have now been published for an overhaul of the facilities at the Princess of Wales Hospital in Ely, including new buildings; more day surgery, outpatient, diagnostic, and urgent care services; more joined-up care across health and social services; and a new multi-level car park.

2.5 The East of England Ambulance Trust was placed into special measures in October 2020. Inspectors from the Care Quality Commission found a 'negative culture', poor leadership, and a service in which bullying was 'normalised'. Thirteen cases of sexual misconduct and predatory behaviour, including claims of staff abusing patients, had been reported to police in a single year. Former staff had spoken of a 'toxic work environment'.

3 Children and schools

3.1 Local schools, parents, and pupils have coped impressively with everything that has been thrown at them by the pandemic this year. There has been much confusion at Government level about opening of schools, not least in January when schools were told to be fully open for just one day before the Government reversed its decision. National exams and their eventual replacement with other measures were a major issue over the summer.

3.2 A national campaign spearheaded by footballer Marcus Rashford forced the Government to ensure children from low income households were fed over the school holidays. The County Council has issued vouchers to large numbers of

families over the holiday periods, and there is also a Winter Fund to support vulnerable households with other costs such as fuel.

3.3 A proposal for recommissioning mental health counselling services for children and young people in Cambridgeshire was rejected because it would have removed access to these services from young people aged 18-25, leaving them to find unspecified alternative services elsewhere. The proposal was brought back the following month in a much-improved form, with an additional contribution of £70,000 per annum into the programme to enable 18-25-year-olds to continue to access services.

3.4 All Cambridgeshire secondary schools and a small minority of primaries are now 'academies' which means that the Council has no jurisdiction over them. The County Council retains responsibility for the well-being of children in academies though it has no formal role in intervening if things go wrong. Costs in schools have continued to increase, and independent research confirms that in real terms funds available to schools have been cut by nine per cent in the last ten years. In particular, funding for children with special needs has not kept up with demand. The 'High Needs Block' of funding to support children with higher levels of need in Cambridgeshire now has a deficit of £28M. This problem is not unique to our county.

3.5 In December I successfully proposed a motion to the Full Council calling on the Council to endorse the call of the Local Government Association for the release of National Citizen Service funding and the Government's promised (but not delivered) Youth Investment Fund to local councils like Cambridgeshire to spend on improving youth services.

3.6 I have recently given my approval for council officers to use their delegated powers to approve the extension of the permission for the seven-bay mobile classroom at Sutton primary school for a further three years, to 31 August 2024.

4 Adult Social Care

4.1 Cambridgeshire and Peterborough is one of the last thirteen areas in the country to establish an Integrated Care System, a new partnership between health and care providers across the area to coordinate services.

4.2 A pilot project has been established, and a contract awarded to social enterprise Community Catalysts, to increase the number of microenterprises providing social care and support in local communities.

5 Highways and transport

5.1 Travel and transport patterns over the last twelve months have been heavily affected by COVID. Initially car use declined in the first lockdown, but has rapidly increased since then. Many people have been understandably distrustful of travelling on public transport. The Government has provided some grant funding to invest in infrastructure for sustainable travel, but this has been slow to materialise in practice.

5.2 The Ely Area Capacity Enhancement programme is ongoing, with the aim of upgrading the railway to allow more trains to run through Ely. The aim is to improve connectivity and reliability for passenger services and meet the demand for more rail freight between the Port of Felixstowe, the West Midlands, and the north to support sustainable, long-term economic growth. The first round of public consultation took place between September and November 2020, and the next round of consultation is expected this year.

5.3 In February I uncovered a £7.5M reduction in Government funding for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Road maintenance for this year, from £35M down to £27.5M.

5.4 The County Council has been reviewing the first two and a half years of its 'open book' highways contract with Skanska. £456,000 in overpayments has so far been identified, representing some 0.4-0.5 per cent of the contract value for the period. This sum is being refunded by Skanska and allocated in part to works on the dangerous Wheatsheaf crossroads on the B1040 between St Ives and Somersham, and to additional gully cleansing.

5.5 A proposal was pushed through the County Council in December to downgrade the whole length of the A1123 from an A road to a B road. This was presented directly to a Full Council with no evidence to support its claims that this would discourage lorries, reduce injuries, and improve safety. The proposal would lose the Council some quarter of a million pounds each year in Government funding to maintain the road. Officers have sought the views of parish councils and other bodies along the route and will bring a report to the County Council's Highways Committee in due course.

5.6 This year has seen changes made to the BP and Lancaster Way roundabouts. Billed by the Combined Authority and the County Council as 'improvements' they are nothing but, for the many pedestrians and cyclists for whom the BP junction in particular is now even more hazardous. Equestrians are also badly affected. The official answer to these concerns is that once the A10 is dualled, a safe crossing will be installed. The problem is that even if dualling of the A10 were a good idea, there is currently no funding to implement it, and even if there were it would take many years to complete. I and others persuaded the County Council to support the installation of a Pegasus crossing at Lancaster Way, but this was refused by the project board. The verge north of the Lancaster Way roundabout has now been severely reduced, there is no safe crossing for equestrians, and an opportunity has been sadly missed.

5.7 I was appointed this year to a working group of the County Council investigating the issue of heavy vehicles in villages. This group has started to interview interested parties such as the police and the Combined Authority, and will report later in the year. I am pressing for the County Council to retain its Advisory Freight Route map, updating it as necessary, and to find ways to implement appropriate restrictions. I have raised the issue of the County Council's 'covenant' for parishes to persuade local hauliers to sign. No central record is kept of which hauliers have signed this covenant with which parishes, rendering it effectively useless. I have pointed out that if this information were published

centrally on the Council's website, residents would be enabled to monitor lorry movements through villages and know whether individual hauliers were breaching agreements or not.

5.8 The Council's budget for this year includes initiating a two-year project to remake the B1050 between Earith Bridge and Willingham. This will cost £7M over two years and include a new alignment for the road along part of its length.

5.9 When the County Council announced it was going to propose new arrangements for verge management, I persuaded officers to include proposals on better and less restrictive working with parish council and on how community groups can be assisted and supported with wild flowering. The new arrangements also change the pattern of verge cutting where possible in line with Plant life principles.

5.10 The County Council set up a working group this year to review the operation of its Local Highway Improvement process. This review recommended less significant changes to the process than had originally been thought.

5.11 Three parishes in the Sutton division (Little Downham, Coveney, and Witchford) have had Local Highways Improvement schemes provisionally recommended for approval this year. Road resurfacing has recently taken place in Witcham and Mepal, and is planned for Cross Lane Little Downham, and Elizabeth Court, The Orchards and The Brook in Sutton this financial year. The Sutton Gault footbridge was repaired just in time for winter. Works at New Road Witchford to provide access to the new housing there are coming to a conclusion—this project has been problematic ever since its inception several years ago. Other works have taken place on Main Drove and Gravel Head Bridge in Little Downham, and elsewhere.

5.12 During the year I have dealt with a number of other highway issues including dumping of hazardous materials by contractors on the old Mepal Road alignment, and the blocking off of a right of way behind the Mepal Outdoor Centre.

6 Environment

6.1 The floods at Christmas and New Year were a major wake-up call for all agencies involved. Most of the impact was felt in Huntingdonshire, but a number of properties in this part of East Cambridgeshire were affected. The decision by the County Council some years ago to cease routine clearing of gullies gave surface water in many places nowhere to go, while the Environment Agency set up pumps and generators towards Welches Dam to pump water from the Counter Drain into the Washes. The waters reached record levels at Sutton Gault, where the barriers were closed at the causeway, and also at the Jolly Bankers. A strategic group met twice daily for several days to assess the severity of the incident, with a tactical group also meeting to cover the need for practical intervention. Following these events, a multi-agency group has met monthly to identify issues to be followed up, publishing notes from its meetings on the County Council's website. At national level, a committee of MPs has published a series of recommendations on flood risk, for the Government to respond to.

6.2 The Environment Agency's barrier bank works did not complete by the end of last autumn as required, so following an inspection a revised deadline of autumn 2022 has been established, and a fresh work plan published. The road at Welney Wash will be closed in July and August 2022 to install a demountable flood barrier.

6.3 The County Council continues with its energy projects including replacement of school gas boilers; solar carports at Park & Rides and at its new Alconbury HQ; and the community heat project at Swaffham Prior.

6.4 The County Council's new Waste & Minerals Plan has passed through its inspection stage and the Council has received the inspector's modifications. The Plan is expected to be approved by the County Council in the summer.

6.5 The independent Climate Change Commission for Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, chaired by Baroness Brown, published its first interim report this spring. It contains many challenging statistics and over thirty recommendations. Greenhouse gas emissions in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough are approximately 25 per cent higher per person than the UK average, and our 'allowed' share of emissions to 2050 could be exhausted within just six years if no action is taken. The Commission has recommended that a committee be set up specifically to examine the issue of peatland.

6.6 In February the County Council published its annual carbon footprint for 2019/20. The carbon contribution of purchased electricity reduced by one per cent on the previous year as more energy from the National Grid was from renewable sources. However, the Council's direct 'Scope 1' emissions were higher than last year, due in part to more complete data and in part to a colder winter. The Council has decided to start introducing shadow carbon pricing, noting the carbon impact of relevant business cases to enable councillors and officers to take this into account when choosing between options. University of Cambridge researchers have suggested the establishment of a Decarbonisation Fund to help reduce Cambridgeshire's carbon emissions. The Council also ran a Solar Together scheme with provide iChoosr to help reduce Cambridgeshire's carbon emissions. The Council also ran a Solar Together scheme with provide iChoosr for the bulk purchase of solar panels and battery storage. The scheme generated significant numbers of enquiries and final figures will be confirmed in late summer.

6.7 I proposed a motion to the Full Council in March on the Fens biosphere application by Cambridgeshire ACRE. The motion was somewhat watered down by the ruling group, but at least got the Council debating for the first time this UNESCO level application in the Council's own area.

6.8 Councillors received a number of briefings during the year, including one on the county's scheduled monuments, of which there are 263 listed on the ancientmonuments.uk website. We were all keen to see the County Council promote these more effectively.

7 Commercial

7.1 The County Council's house building enterprise This Land has repeatedly found itself in the columns of Private Eye as questions continue to be asked about its viability and strategy. Croydon and Merton councils have both closed down their equivalent companies.

8 Libraries

8.1 Cambridgeshire's libraries closed during lockdown, but are currently open for limited browsing. Returns are quarantined for several days before being reshelved, and though visitors can browse the stacks there is currently no option to sit and study.

9 Police

9.1 A new Police & Crime Commissioner will be elected on Thursday 6 May 2021. A proposal for the Police & Crime Commissioner to take over the running of the Fire Authority has been delayed, as the Home Office has said it will not be able to consider a revised business case until after the Police & Crime Commissioner is elected. Meanwhile plans to build a new police hub next to the Park & Ride at Milton have been given the go-ahead subject to confirmation from the Secretary of State.

10 Combined Authority

10.1 In March the Local Government Minister wrote to the Mayor saying that the Government would not be paying the Combined Authority the outstanding £45M of the £100M originally promised for affordable housing. The Minister said "I have concluded that the programme has made insufficient delivery progress and that the value for money being achieved is below our expectations. I will not be extending the timeframe or continuing to fund the programme on its current basis." The Government has offered to make an unspecified sum available to the Combined Authority for some affordable housing up to March 2022 but with very much more stringent conditions.

10.2 The Combined Authority has started granting funds to the area's market towns to implement the 'Market Town Masterplans' drawn up by consultants.

10.3 The Combined Authority has now taken on full and direct responsibility for the public transport services previously managed by the County Council, including staff being transferred. In previous years the Combined Authority passed the money back to the County Council to manage these services on its behalf.

10.4 The Combined Authority has agreed to undertake a 'refresh' of its Local Transport Plan in the second half of this calendar year.

10.5 The Cambridge Autonomous Metro or CAM itself remains unfunded, though it now has a company structure (One Cam Ltd) with a Chairman and Chief Executive, and a considerable revenue budget.

10.6 The Combined Authority's bus strategy has been delayed. The Combined Authority's Overview & Scrutiny Committee which was tracking its progress has stood down its 'task and finish' group scrutinising this piece of work, and will renew its attentions as and when the strategy moves forward.

11 Finally

11.1 My usual face to face monthly surgeries have now been replaced by Zoom surgeries. These are held on the second Tuesday of each month, from 6:30PM to 7:30PM.

11.2 My monthly county councillor reports are at www.tinyurl.com/lornasreports

6. To receive an update from Lucy Amos-John – Sutton Timebank Coordinator. - Sutton's Timebank.

The Time bank celebrated its 1st birthday on 17th March. In the 1st year 1721 hours have been volunteered. During this period most of the volunteered hours was for covid support.

Through our covid support we have seen the need for some residents to continue getting some support to be able to live independently. Those that need support will continue to get it even when restrictions are fully lifted. Our friendly phone call scheme will also continue and we are looking to develop this further.

As restrictions start to ease and we can start 'normal' timebanking, we have had members helping with planting blubs, gardening and running errands for those that unable to get out.

While restrictions have limited meeting in person, we have been able to meet virtually with coffee mornings and have had a cheese and drinks evening and celebrated our 1st birthday with a quiz.

Our Christmas Cheer project was a great success. We were hoping to fill 24 bags with Christmas treats to go out to older residents in the village. We had so many wonderful donations that we were able to fill 45 bags. We held a 'Why we love Sutton' art competition and had some beautiful entries.

The PPG have been fantastic support to the Time Bank and we are hoping to work together on some new projects. We have also worked closely with Ely Food bank in helping food be delivered while their distribution centres have been closed.

Next week we are planning a whole village leaflet drop to let residents know of our upcoming projects. These are buddy walks, Garden cuppas and phone friends.

Once restrictions have eased, we hope to have some more in person events and timebanking exchanges.

7. To receive reports from village organisations

Sutton Brownies – Lucy Amos-John

The Brownies have been meeting weekly on Zoom since March 2020 and the sessions have been really successful. One of the favourites for all have been the cooking sessions. The Brownies have been achieving their badges with the most recent being their Space Badge which was gained by the girls sleeping out under the stars. We are looking forward to starting face to face meetings soon

Sutton Scouts – Jane Green and Ali Wells

Jane reported on the fundraising efforts and update on the Scout Hut.

During the last year the community has continued to support the Scouts and have enjoyed Cream teas throughout lockdowns and have still managed to raise £8000 towards the scout hut fund which is currently standing at over £50,000.

The Scout hut has had the planning application approved and we are in the process of purchasing the strip of land adjoining the scout hut to increase the size of the site. Quotes are being obtained to demolish the old scout hut and the team are looking at grant funding to continue with the project.

Ali reported that they have managed to carry on throughout the last year via Zoom and some face-to-face sessions last year and there has been a good uptake. They have enjoyed virtual sessions with scavenger hunts, cooking, quizzes and gaining their badges.

We are pleased to say all units, Cubs, Beavers and Scouts are back to face-to-face sessions and look forward to this continuing.

Sutton Feast Committee – Stan Smith

The feast committee was set up in the millennium in conjunction with other groups and has been going strong since then. Moving from the traditional Feast week celebrations to events throughout the year.

Last year nearly all events were cancelled, we managed to hold a covid safe Duck Race and the Beast Run was held virtually with 220 entrants competing in a variety of exercise.

Looking to 2021 the Feast committee are hoping to hold Party in the Park on Saturday 4th September and events like this couldn't happen without the community.

Sutton Garden Club – Alison Beale

The Garden club has around 60 members and is a friendly thriving group. In normal times we held meetings once a month and conducted normal business but also had guest speakers. We also organized coach trips, festive lunches, open gardens and much more. In 2019 we helped organize the Village Open Gardens and raised £750 which was donated to the Open Spaces Group.

We have a newsletter to keep members updated, small group meet ups when the restrictions allowed us to and updates in the Pepperpot magazine. We are relaunching in July and will have meetings when we find a suitable venue and will have many guest speakers.

6 Sutton Gardens will be opening to public under the National Garden Scheme this year which is on the 30th May, more details can be found on in the Pepperpot or on posters around the village,

Sutton Cricket Club – Jon Megginson

We are cautiously welcoming the return of grass root team sport for youngsters and adults to begin from late April. The ECB have published their Covid Response Roadmap which sees the return of outdoor sport being phased in from April 12th.

All the safeguards we developed last year will need to be in place for players, coaches and spectators. The club is very lucky to have the strong support from a number of local sponsors and businesses which will be of great help in getting ourselves ready for the new season. We also welcome back to living in the village club captain Mike Grady and his brother Dan who coaches the U11 Dynamo boys and several girls.

We have a wide age range of playing club members this year, so we have

- 23 no. Adults playing Saturday league cricket
- 10 no. Adult friends of the club but now not playing so regularly

- 8 no. Under 13's playing competitive youth cricket with some friendly games to be arranged for Sunday mornings in June/July
- 9 no. Students and apprentices (U21) playing in adult league cricket
- 8 no. Under 16's playing adult cricket and having 10 Sunday afternoon games organised
- 16 no. Under 11's playing "Dynamo" cricket (Sunday mornings) with some 30 parents in tow

We are very lucky to have a lot of volunteer help with ground and machinery maintenance and pitch preparation. The club were donated a now refurbished square mower from a supporter at the end of last season. It is also pleasing to report that since putting in our own 24x7 CCTV we have had very little evidence of vandalism. Having a good cross section of youngsters 9-18 also helps us all.

With increasing use of facilities by village residents, young and older, we are hoping for next year to put in a second surfaced net. This will involve substantial expense and sources of grant aid are currently being investigated.

We would like to thank members of the Conservation Society and the Open Spaces group for their help with planting a new hedge and some wild flowers down the side of the field and our landlords Martin & Wendy Ward for supplying the hedging plants. We thought we had lost our large old pollarded Elm tree to the wind and age, but managed to retrieve it by propping it up with some (skillful!) tree surgery. It is showing signs of life as we speak. It's probably one of the oldest trees in the village (200 y.o) so we do want to keep it going. It is hollow and had a bat colony evident last year, ! Another local resident and friend of the cricket club has made several barn owl and tawny owl boxes for various parts of the village as well as a kestrel box and several hedgehog boxes. We would also like to thank the Sutton Scouts who are offering to help us with BBQing at our 6 a-side on Sunday July 25th.

Thank you for listening and thanks to all supporters across the village. We may not win too many prizes and cups for our cricketing but we do believe we have a great community-based club here in Sutton with club members from 8 to 94 years old. Results so far this season Played 3, Won 2, Lost 1. Not a bad start.

Open Spaces Group – Ruth Brown

The open spaces group was formed a few years ago and we have been responsible for planting trees, shrubs, wildflowers and litter picking to name a few to make Sutton a brighter place.

Most recently we have planted over 1000 bulbs at the brook corner which have successfully flowered, planted hedging, bulbs and wildflowers along the 100m stretch of verge opposite the Co-op. We have also litter picked and are grateful for the support with this and have also wood chipped footpaths in the village that had become muddy and look forward to having a better network of footpaths in the future.

The open spaces group will continue to work with other groups and the parish council to improve and increase the areas of wildflowers etc.

PPG

Covid 19 restrictions affected our Campaign for Better Health

- Suspended Healthy Living Group Sessions at the Surgery
- Suspended our Healthy Heart programmes with the Scouts
- Exercise classes cancelled

Able to focus mainly on Social Prescribing for patients referred to the PPG by the surgery

- Started "Chatterbox" Social Contact Group
- Involve patients in Kitchen and Sensory Garden projects

Supported development of Fenland Group Practice (FGP)

- Assumed leadership of Manea, Wimblington and Doddington PPGs
- Assisted in design of new practice website

Supported isolating patients

- Delivered veg boxes
- Delivered prescriptions

Established close working relationship with Timebank

- Agreed to blend programmes

Prepared updated Action Plan for remainder of 2021

Priors Field PPG Action Plan 2021" Promoting Health and Well-being through self-care for better patient outcomes and better use of NHS resources, while reflecting patient community views to the Practice"
Engage with GP partners over shaping the practice post Covid19

- Review FGP priorities for PPG Expansion
- Develop PPGs for Wimblington, Doddington & Manea surgeries

- Involve Sutton Time Bank
- Support Doddington Vaccination Centre

Support Social Prescribing

- Maintain Kitchen and Sensory Gardens
- Develop "Chatterbox" (Social Contact Group)
- Resume Exercise classes
- Renew focus on patients with learning disabilities

Communication

- Support development of new website
- Rationalise Campaign for Better Health Facebook pages
- Resume Type 2 Diabetes Prevention Programme
- Resume "Healthy Living" Group Sessions
- Start "Healthy Mum + Baby" programme
- Develop engagement with younger people e.g., Scout and Air Cadet groups

Finance

- Fund & purchase multiple COPD support equipment for patients' home use

Sutton WI – Anna Wilson

In 2020 we were looking forward to a packed programme but as with everything else these had to be cancelled and some are still having to be. The WI have had to find alternative ways to engage with the group and keep going whilst supporting each other.

We have been sending out a monthly newsletter which is now an amazing 16 pages. It is filled with poems, stories recipes, quizzes and much more.

The WI have a cautious approach to reopening in 2021 and will be looking for new meeting location to give the 29 members more space.

Sutton WI is alive and well and welcome new members.

Sutton Poores Land

The Sutton Poor's Land Charity, No 204546, was established by a group of Farmer/Landowners in 1872 with the sole purpose of providing relief to those people of the parish of Sutton who find themselves in need of assistance.

The charity is administered by a group of Trustees, villagers who volunteer their time and expertise in the administration of the Charity, ably assisted by our Clerk, Emma.

The Charity gets its income from the renting of land bequeathed to it by the founders, in the form of agricultural plots, recreation land, and smaller garden allotment plots. This being our main source of revenue, apart from personal bequests and donations.

Where a need exists, individuals, families, and groups, can apply for aid. In the first instance by emailing suttonpooresland@gmail.com.

Question: Is there a list of criteria that people would need to meet to get help?

There is no criteria or list, please get in touch if you need advice or assistance and the requests are reviewed confidentially.

Sutton Conservation Society

Sutton Conservation Society was down to three committee members when the first lockdown happened in March 2020 and no possibility of talks or working parties So Alan Revill, Liz Hawkins and myself decided, with the agreement of the members, to cancel the membership fees but keep the members updated with any news.

We and the Open Spaces group were keen to introduce more wildflowers and bulbs around the village but needed a different cutting schedule. So, the Parish Council set up the Public Spaces Working Party to look at how the grass cutting could be changed, this has enabled us to start to plant up many wildflowers and bulbs along Station Road and members have been very generous in providing bulbs, plants and even donations to help with the costs.

We have continued to keep the old Churchyard in order and cleaned up the war graves for Remembrance Day again. The paths have had two cuts this year so far.

Stankers Pond had a major renovation last December, mainly due to Terry Sparrow, who had a big digger and kindly came along to dig out the front part of the pond. This saved us many hours of digging out by hand. Terry also made 2 of the seats around the pond which have been well used during lock down and we have had some lovely comments about the site. Sadly, we have had a few acts of vandalism there.

The Millennium wood, and the Old Play Copse are doing well and regularly maintained and a few trees planted to replace those that have died. More wildflowers and bulbs were planted as well. The ground in front of Sarah's Seat at the Old Play copse was in a bad state so the hole was filled in and woodchip covered the soil, so villagers were able to sit there again. We added two small benches to the area as villagers were keen to have more places to sit down there.

We cleared a lot of bramble and scrub from the orchard in the Paddocks this winter and pruned the existing trees.

Footpath 2 became very muddy during the wet weather earlier this year so with a few members of the Open Spaces group, we wood-chipped the path, kindly donated by Sutton Tree Services.

All these areas were being used a great deal by the villagers during lockdown so it was great to hear how our efforts to improve the area was appreciated.

We and the Brook Sutton Roundabout group are having discussions on ways to improve the Brook Roundabout, especially the Summer Months, and allowing space for the fantastic displays put up during the winter months. We will be contacting the County Council and Parish Council when we have plans to put forward to them

We hope to be able to have a walk down the Gault in the Summer to record the wildlife seen, and more working parties. We continue to look at ways to improve the village for residents and wildlife, and look forward to the time when more supporters can be involved

8. To present details of the new Village Events Calendar.

A Community Calendar has been set up on the Parish Council website after conversations with other groups in the village.

The calendar will allow village events and meetings to be found in one place and will be a great platform to share with the community what there is on offer. Groups can email info@sutton-cambs-pc.gov.uk to add an event to the calendar and the link to the website is www.sutton-cambs-pc.gov.uk

9. To discuss and set up a Village organisations group.

The clerk reported that further to the conversations about the community calendar that it was felt that a group should be set up to meet up and discuss up and coming events, share ideas, list assets that can be shared and used and assist each other. Helping to promote a community spirit and work together.

The clerk can add a segment to the Parish Newsletter that is sent out in the summer to encourage groups to get involved and set up a first meeting.

Meeting closed at 8:54pm

Signed.....

Cllr M Inskip
Chairman of Sutton Parish Council

Date..... 28th April 2022.....