

# LITTLE CHART PARISH COUNCIL

Page 1

## Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall, Little Chart on Tuesday 8 May 2018 at 7.00 pm

**COUNCILLORS PRESENT:** Mr R Brasier (Chair), and Mr A Diebel  
Mr C Stanley, Webmaster

**PARISH CLERK:** Mrs J Batt

**COUNTY COUNCILLOR:**

**BOROUGH COUNCILLOR:** Mrs C Bell

**MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC:** There were 2 Members of the Public present.

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

An Apology for absence has been received from County Councillor, Mr C Simkins.

**2. ACCEPTANCE OF MINUTES OF LAST MEETING**

It was unanimously agreed that Mr Brasier should sign the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 8 May 2017.

**3. MATTERS ARISING FROM 2017 APM**

There were no Matters Arising,

**4. PARISH COUNCIL CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

Mr Brasier reported that we have had more planning applications to discuss this year. Due to the fact that we were able to maintain the precept at the same level as last year, and we did not receive such a large Council Tax Support Grant, we are the only parish in the borough where the Council Tax went down.

The Data Protection legislation is taking up a lot of time and is somewhat excessive for a parish of this size.

**5. PARISH COUNCIL FINANCIAL STATEMENT**

The summary of receipts and payments was circulated. There were no questions or comments.

**6. BOROUGH COUNCILLORS REPORT**

Mrs Bell reported the following:

Ashford has been designated a growth area and as such there are a lot of changes taking place in the town.

The £26 million Ashford College campus opened in September with 1000 students and work on the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase is due to start soon.

The Elwick Place site is under construction as is the Commercial Quarter with over 80,000 of floor space where the rents will be 73% lower than London.

The extension to the Designer outlet which will provide 50 more shops has also started along with and Junction 10a.

Work to upgrade signalling at the International station has recently been completed and there was no disruption to services whilst it was taking place although there were a few teething problems following the launch event.

Chapel Down Winery is opening a brewery and visitor centre and big Aldi Supermarket is being built next to it in Victoria Road.

Construction has now started at Chilmington Green.

Next year is Year of the Environment with lots of events and a campaign taking place with a particular focus on plastic.

Aspire, Ashford Borough Council's Landscape Management Team is now in its 2<sup>nd</sup> year and the council has received compliments on all year round the appearance of the town

This year is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the First World War and there are to be various events and activities to commemorate this. Ashford has sponsored the outdoor photographic exhibition, Fields of Battle Lands of Peace which will be on display in the Memorial Gardens from 3 – 30 June.

The dualling along the A28 has been held up as the developer has not provided the bond to KCC. Work should start once 400 houses are build. This is more a KCC issue than ABC.

The Boundary changes come into force next year and Little Chart will be in Upper Weald, along with Pluckley, Hothfield and Charing Heath and in the Weald and Ticehurst constituency for parliamentary elections. One property on the edge of Little Chart will remain in the Ashford parliamentary constituency but will be in Upper Weald for local elections.

Park Mall is considered to be a success. The footfall is increasing and there is still scope for the development of flats above the shops.

Recycling has increased to 55%. Mr Brasier said that he thought it would increase even more if residents in flats had the opportunity to recycle. Mrs Bell said she would look into this.

Mr Brasier thanked Mrs Bell for her help and support over the year.

## 7. COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

Mr Simkins was unable to attend the meeting but sent the following report:

This year I am going to focus on three main areas which I believe are at the forefront of the minds of residents.

### Bus Services

Understandably considerable concern was expressed in December following a report that KCC intended to reduce expenditure on subsidised bus services. In the event it was agreed in the KCC budget for 2018/19 that savings on this area be made of £450000 compared with the originally mooted figure of over £2m. I would stress that no reductions in subsidised bus services will be made in the Ashford District in 2018. KCC is in the process of organising meetings with Parish councils which will take place in June in an attempt to understand what Communities want for their public transport service. The emphasis will be on school children and elderly people in rural areas and proposals will encompass possible alternative delivery models for rural bus services which would replace conventional subsidised bus services. These could include a taxi style bus service linking rural communities to main line commercial routes or a community led bus service. This programme, known as 'The Big Conversation', will be followed by a Bus Summit in the early autumn.

### Potholes

It is acknowledged that this is a nationwide problem, but we know that Kent with its large number of rural roads is in a particularly bad state. I am pleased to report that with the aid of £3.1m from the Department of Transport KCC is spending £8m on a pothole blitz which started in April. I would ask you to report all potholes on the KCC website and obtain a reference number. This is the best way of helping to solve the problem.

### Education

KCC has allocated 17447 school places at secondary level, an increase of 2300 in the last five years which reflects a large increase in the numbers of children going through the primary school years. There has been a large increase in 'out of county' children applying to Kent schools and this has doubled in the past five years. KCC has achieved a significant success in maintaining a high level of parental preference. 80% of children received first preference and more than 90% gained admission to one of their preferred schools. There will be new schools at Finberry and Chilmington Green and a small increase here in Charing. It is encouraging that 92% of Kent schools were rated outstanding in Ofsted inspections.

Finally, the growing trend by central government towards shifting expenditure to local councils is continuing with the Regional Support Grant being phased out by 2020. However, it has not all been bad news as KCC is one of the few counties chosen as a 100% business pilot which is worth £10m to Kent. On top of that KCC has been granted an additional Social Care Grant of just over £3m. It is worth pointing out that KCC is still owed £3.5m by central government for asylum costs incurred for the care of underage immigrants in the summer of 2015. Hopefully the lion share of this will be recovered eventually but central government is not a quick payer! From April councils were permitted to increase council tax by a further 1% with a 2% levy permitted for social care which is the fastest rising item in KCC's Budget. As a result, the KCC element of council tax has risen by 5%.

I will continue to do all I can to support your Parish Council and its residents.

Mr Brasier thanked Mr Simkins for his help and support.

**8. ANY OTHER SPEAKERS**

**Village Hall**

Mrs Gunther reported that income is up this year, but it does vary, depending on the amount of bookings. The usage is variable but the trend is upwards.

The Bridge Club is the main user and a new Yoga group now uses the hall on Monday mornings.

The committee received £50 from the bank when, after a lot of work and form filling, they were able to prove that the hall's tax base is in the UK.

The committee has purchased equipment to allow them to carry out their own PAT testing.

A future project is to upgrade the toilet area and include a unisex disabled toilet and baby changing unit.

Looking at the accounts, the committee has reserves of about £3000 which members consider to be sufficient.

The Committee is working to achieve the ACRE Bronze Level of Certification, which should help if they are seeking funding for projects.

The valuation of the hall has varied. The insurers offered a free survey, but this was only taken from Google Maps and so the committee asked a surveyor who valued it at £270,000 while the parish council suggested £375000.

It was agreed to ask a surveyor to look at the problem with the wall and give an estimate for the cost or repair.

**Bridge Club**

The Bridge Club continues to thrive. For some people it is their only outing of the week. It has between 24 – 40 members and generates about £25 per week.

**Flower Show**

This is one of the very few community events in the village and just about breaks even.

**Cricket Club**

No report received.

9. **FORUM FOR EXCHANGE OF INFORMATION**

Mr Stanley, the Webmaster reminded everyone that events can be publicised on the site along with photographs. He asked for more up-to-date photographs with captions.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 7.52 pm.

Signed ..... Date .....  
Chairman

DRAFT