

## The **Minutes** of the **ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** of Upchurch held in Upchurch Village Hall on **Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> April 2022**

Present: Cllr Tyrone Ripley (Chairman), Cllr Pam Denny (Vice Chairman), Cllr Helen Boakes, Cllr John Bodycomb, Cllr Alan Horton and Cllr Gerry Lewin; and Mrs Wendy Licence (Clerk)

Also present were County Councillor Mike Baldock, Ward Member Richard Palmer and twenty members of the public.

### 1. Welcome

Cllr Ripley welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Cllr Ernie Berntsen, Cllr Gary Rosewell and Cllr Neil Sheppard.

### 2. Minutes of the last Annual Parish Meeting held remotely on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Cllr Horton **PROPOSED** to accept the minutes of the meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> May 2021 as a true record; **SECONDED** by Cllr Lewin: **AGREED UNANIMOUSLY**. Cllr Ripley duly signed the minutes as a true record.

### 3. Matters Arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising.

### 4. Report of the Chairman of Upchurch Parish Council

Cllr Ripley thanked Mr John Arnold for his sterling contribution during his time on the Parish Council. Welcome to our most recent Members- Ernie Berntsen and Helen Boakes who are worthy additions to the Parish Council.

Legislation which had enabled the Council to continue its business by remote meetings during COVID-19 ended in May 2021 and from June onwards the Council met in person in the Village Hall. The Council complied with the ever changing rules to keep everyone safe during the pandemic.

#### **PADDOCK and RECREATION GROUND:**

Thanks go to Cllr Pam Denny for her constant supervision of the Paddock and Recreation Ground ensuring it is always well maintained.

During the pandemic, the Recreation Ground and Paddock have been well used and have become much cherished local spaces for residents to take exercise and also to meet up with friends and family outdoors when Government rules meant meetings could not take place indoors.

The Parish Council was successful in obtaining four benches from Swale Borough Council's Welcome Back Fund; three benches were put in The Paddock, two were to replace the broken ones, with another being added to the area and the fourth bench was sited at the Recreation Ground.

The Council has secured funding from the Swale Western Area Committee and the Queenborough Fishery Trust for an exciting woodland trail in The Paddock; this will happen this year. The Council is currently working with the school to ensure that the project is

delivered to give maximum benefit to children in the village, Cllr Denny has met with children and staff from the school and the project has been received with great excitement.

#### STREET LIGHTING and HIGHWAYS:

Cllr Ernie Berntsen has taken over the responsibility of the lighting from John Arnold. The precept for a Band D property has been reduced by 20.5% as the lighting scheme had been implemented ahead of schedule thanks to Mr Arnold's work and budgeting.

Swale Borough Council considered stopping the lighting grant to Parish Councils and this would have impacted on the Precept. Swale eventually decided against this thanks to the support of the Ward Members Cllr Alan Horton and Cllr Richard Palmer meaning the Parish Council will still get the lighting grant this year.

#### VILLAGE LITTER PICK:

The annual litter pick took place again this year, thanks to Cllr Alan Horton for arranging the event. Thank you to the school, the Scouts, Guides, Brownies, residents and Councillors who all helped with the litter pick and made the village a better place to live. Thanks also to the ladies who regularly litter pick Oak Lane.

The Council has a supply of litter picking equipment which is available for residents to borrow if they would like to litter pick their local area.

#### PLANNING APPLICATIONS:

Thank you to Planning Committee members and particularly Cllr Gary Rosewell the Chair of the planning committee, he has continued to attend Swale Planning meetings representing Upchurch Parish Council on behalf of the village.

#### BURIAL GROUND:

Thank you to Cllr Pam Denny and Cllr Helen Boakes for their constant supervision of the Burial Ground. The Parish Council has carried out continued tree works in the Churchyard and Burial Ground and also repaired the fence by the hall car park when it fell down due to strong winds.

There have been rumours that there is no space in the Burial Ground, this is untrue as the Council created further space for burials by removing the rose beds.

#### CHRISTMAS 2021:

Thanks go to Mr Bob Friend for his kind and generous donation again of the Christmas tree, which is for the benefit of all in the village during the festive season. Thanks also to Councillors who assisted with erection of tree and the Christmas lighting.

Father Christmas was due to visit the children in the village in 2021 but unfortunately this had to be cancelled because of the pandemic. A date has been set for 5<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

#### VILLAGE IN BLOOM:

Every summer the village enjoys the beautiful blooms in the cascade planter in the heart of the village and the barrier baskets along the fence line at the Recreation Ground by Oak Lane and by Chaffes Lane. These make a colourful display throughout the village and will have a Jubilee theme this year.

#### QUEEN'S PLATINUM JUBILEE:

As mentioned, an oak tree was planted last Autumn to commemorate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. The beacon will be lit on 2 June and there will be a village celebration on that evening which is not to be missed as the Jubilee is a truly unique historic event.

Nationally street parties are being encouraged on 5 June, the Council recognises that this is not possible for some residents so we are making the Recreation Ground available so that they can hold their "street parties" at the Recreation Ground.

The Council has given a grant of £760 to Holywell School to purchase Jubilee medals for pupils, staff and Governors.

#### LADIES THAT KNIT:

A note of thanks for the time and effort given by the ladies that knit who have continued to put on the amazing displays we have seen in the village, this wonderful act of creativity lifted people's spirits throughout the pandemic and continues to do so.

#### DEFIBRILATOR:

The Council successfully secured funding from Swale Borough Council to be able to install a public access defibrillator outside the surgery. The defibrillator from The Three Sisters pub has been moved to Beckenham Park.

IT IS EXTREMELY IMPORTANT THAT IN AN EMERGENCY, 999 IS CALLED FIRST so that an ambulance can be dispatched, the code to the cabinet will then be given to the caller. The village now has five defibrillators including one at the school and one at the village hall.

#### REMEMBRANCE DAY

The Council had a wreath laid at the service in Upchurch and also in Ferques, thanks go to Cllr Gerry Lewin for organising this important event. Last year, poppies were put on every lamp post in the village thanks to the help of Councillors.

#### VILLAGE SIGN

The sign has been refurbished and, thanks to Mr Louis Newbery, a copyright image of it has been made. The image is available free of charge to organisations in the parish to use.

#### WEBSITE

The Parish Council's website not only holds the important documents but it is also a place for information. I would like to encourage residents to keep in the loop and sign up for email alerts to planning applications, events and news.

Finally a note of thanks and gratitude to all the Councillors serving on the Parish Council none of these achievements would be possible without their dedication. As Chairman of the Parish Council, you are only as good as the team you have supporting you and I can certainly say I have the best team around. Thank you.

Cllr Lewin said that on behalf of all Councillors he would like to thank Cllr Ripley for his stewardship of the Council.

#### 5. To receive reports from local organisations

##### Upchurch Cricket Club

The Cricket Club also has football teams playing at the ground. There are excellent facilities including a bar and the venue runs great events. The clubhouse is always open when there is sports being played at the grounds and it is open to all; the clubhouse is also available for hire. The club is a charity run by Trustees. There are three men's teams which play on Saturdays; girls' teams; Kent over 50; Kent over 60. Under 18's, it is a very busy club. The club also has a defibrillator.

Cllr Boakes said the facilities are amazing and the venue is stunning, the village is fortunate to have such a facility.

#### Upchurch Horticultural Society

The Society has been active in the village for sixty-seven years and currently has twenty-five members and are hoping to attract more members. The Society is continually being promoted; there are three shows and the biggest event is the Annual Plant Sale which raises money to pay for speakers. There are ten meetings per year including the Annual General Meeting and there are also guided tours of local farms.

#### Upchurch Players

The first show was Cinderella and was held in 1990, there have been thirty shows including one online called Goldielockdown, the next show is Pinocchio. The Group has a wide range of ages from 8-80 years, there are lots of roles such as acting, scenery, costumes and refreshments. The Group is inclusive and welcomes people with mental and physical disabilities.

#### Upchurch Active Retirement Association (UpARA)

The Association has been in existence for eight years and currently has 180 members, it can have 200 members. There are approximately eighty Active Retirement Associations in Kent which is the only county to have the Associations. The Associations started when Pzifers closed their social club and they started a retirement association in Thanet.

UpARA is a big supporter of the village hall and uses the venue as much as possible. It is a very active group with activities throughout the week including soft tennis; coffee mornings; table tennis; line dancing; monthly speakers; ten pin bowling; petanque; an art group and a walking group.

UpARA donated a defibrillator to the village hall thanks to the help of a grant from Swale Borough Council

The Association is open to people over 50 years and guests are welcome to come along.

#### St Marys Church

The church is the oldest body in the village, the church is the building and also the people. We want the building to be used for the community and not just for worship and prayer but for it to be a resource for the village. The intention is to create a flexible space at the back of the church to enable greater use. We also run the Rainbow coffee morning. We want the church to be a living space for the community and for working with other groups. Christian sense is a concern for the vulnerable within the community and we are looking at how we can work alongside that.

The church as a people: think of us as being a community who wants to pray for the welfare of the people in the village, praying for God's blessing. God is at work in this community. We are also there to help people explore deeper, the questions of life as well.

#### Upchurch Choral Society

The origins of the choir go back a long way, there has always been a tradition of singing in the church, not just in the last century but also in the century before. In 1967, the vicar, Father Bradshaw, was very musical and wanted to perform extracts from the Messiah with a small group of musicians and choristers and people from various organisations in the village were invited to perform in church. Afterwards, the group wanted to continue, there were twenty to twenty-five members and the group increased as the village grew. The Society has a constitution and there are 45- 50 members.

A concert had to be abandoned because of Covid and there was concern that members might be lost. Singing is good for our health and we also support each other in times of trouble. All members returned after Government restrictions were lifted.

It is an adult four-part choir and we have a professional conductor and accompanist. We make donations to the church towards heating and lighting and we are grateful to Councillors for funding from their Members' Grants towards concerts. There are also members from Rainham, Gillingham, Sittingbourne and the Island. It is a friendly group and we rehearse

every Friday. New members are also welcome. The next concert is *Jubilate Regina* on 15 May and will celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

#### Upchurch Village Hall

The facility is used by a number of groups in the village. Since the last report, the hall has been guided through difficult times especially through Covid and lockdown which meant there was no revenue for many months. The Committee raised money to undertake refurbishment of the hall. In August 2021, we ran a successful afternoon tea event which attracted village groups and reminded residents of the groups within the village.

The Management Committee is made up from members of the organisations in the village and each group can have two representatives, there are currently thirteen people on the committee.

Last December, ACRE Hall Mark II was achieved, ACRE helps village halls throughout the country. Hall Mark II status ensures the hall complies with charitable status and standards including Health & Safety. This reduces our insurance premium so is a financial benefit to the hall. There is now an online booking system. Since the major refurbishment work in the Summer of 2020, further plumbing work in the kitchen has been carried out; the asbestos has been removed; the back hall has been refurbished and sound-proofed making it a separate room; and digital coin meters have been installed. A defibrillator has been installed with funding from a Swale Borough Council grant and a contribution from UpARA. This has been registered with SECAMB.

The hall will continue to be maintained to high standard. There are regular group bookings as well as party bookings at weekends and wedding receptions.

The Committee wants to ensure the hall is used for its original intention, for the benefit of the community for cultural, social and physical wellbeing.

#### Upchurch WI

Upchurch WI is part of the East Kent Federation and has been going for ninety-one years. During Covid, the group embraced Zoom. 2021 was the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of Upchurch WI, we have records from 1931. During lockdown, members continued to knit squares for the dementia unit and now we are knitting teddies, these are for patients to take away with them. Formal meetings started again in January 2021 and we had a full programme of events. We retained all but three members during the pandemic and members are aged from 22- 85 years old. New members and visitors are always welcome.

#### Poppy Appeal

2021 was at the end of an interesting year because we were a cashless society because of the pandemic, despite that the total amount raised in Upchurch was the largest ever, thanks to the generosity of people in the village. There is a team of collectors in the village and the Scouts and Guides also help under supervision. The school is also supportive.

The need continues and the appeal will run again this year and help is needed with this. The Parish Council always lays a poppy wreath at the church on Remembrance Sunday with the words "*Lest we forget*"

Cllr Ripley thanked all those who had given reports to the meeting.

#### 6. To receive questions and comments from parishioners.

A resident asked for an update on the plaque for the bridge to remember the train crash during the war.

Cllr Lewin said the request had come from the Historical Research Group of Sittingbourne. The Council supported it being there but could not get involved. A doodle-bug blew up the bridge just before the train reached it and could not be stopped.

Cllr Horton said the Council has litter picking equipment which is available to residents who would like to use the equipment.

7. Presentation of the KALC Community Award

Cllr Ripley said the KALC Community Award is to acknowledge and give recognition to someone who has made a significant contribution to the parish. The award this year goes to Mr John Arnold who has been involved with the Fete; served the Council as Vice Chairman and has implemented the upgrading of the village lighting. A truly worthy recipient.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9pm.

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