

SUTTON VALENCE PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2024



Local Elections May 2nd what you need to know

The Maidstone Borough Council, Parish Council and Kent Police and Crime Commissioner Elections are scheduled for May 2nd 2024. In preparation for this date we'd like to highlight and remind you of the changes to the requirements and ways you can vote in these elections.

From May 2023, a change was introduced to make it compulsory for anyone voting, to bring acceptable photographic identification.

This can be a British passport or a driving licence, even if these items have expired, providing the photo is recognisable. Anyone without photo ID can apply for a Voter Authority Certificate free of charge via www.gov.uk.

Postal and proxy votes also have important changes. The law has changed where an individual cannot

hand in, in person, more than five postal votes plus their own. Election candidates and campaigners are also not permitted to handle postal votes other than their own or a close relative. Anyone handing in postal votes will now have to complete a form and make a declaration, however Maidstone Borough Council strongly advises those looking to vote by post do so by posting their vote in the usual way. Proxy rules detail that people can now only be a proxy (officially designated to vote on someone else's behalf) for a maximum of two people from the UK (four in total if including overseas electors). If you are not registered to vote, search "register" on www.gov.uk to get started. If you're not online you can contact the Electoral Services Team on 01622 602007.

Changes to Parish Council boundaries from 2nd May 2024

Following a review carried out by the Local Government Boundary Commission changes will be made to Maidstone Borough Council ward boundaries. The key aim for the review is to ensure that the ratio of electors to councillors in each electoral ward is equal throughout. This aim is balanced with the need to reflect local community identities and interests and provide for effective and convenient local government. The main aspect of this review affecting Sutton Valence is that we will be joining

Headcorn to form a larger ward. This means we have broken links with Langley Parish Council who will be in a ward with Leeds. Both Sutton Valence Parish Council and Headcorn Parish Council will retain their autonomy within the enlarged ward. The changes will come into force following the local elections on May 2nd 2024.

The map below shows how our neighbouring parish councils boundaries will also change following the review.



Boundary changes to Sutton Valence and neighbouring parish councils

Sutton Valence PC Annual Parish Assembly May 8th

The Sutton Valence Parish Council Annual Parish Assembly will take place on 8 May 2024.

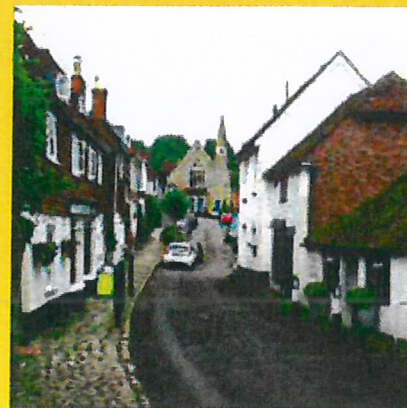
The assembly will start at 7pm at Sutton Valence Village Hall. Everyone is welcome and encouraged to attend the meeting.

Hear from local groups and organisations

The meeting starts with reports from the Parish Council and then opens up to hear from a range of different local groups, clubs and community organisations that are active within the parish.

Have your say!

The Assembly is also your opportunity to meet your Parish Councillors and to openly communicate and share information. It is a core community evening, so do please join us if you can. The meeting is followed by wine and nibbles.



Village speed survey results explained

Kent County Council recently conducted a speed survey for key roads of the village and the Parish Council were very concerned to learn that on North Street in both directions the percentage of vehicles complying with the 30mph speed limit were just 40.1% (Northbound) and 26.2% (Southbound), based on a survey of over 90,000 vehicles. Furthermore, 18.2% (Northbound) and 23.8% (Southbound) of all traffic are exceeding the enforcement threshold of 35mph. The Northbound traffic surveyed travels in the direction of the Warmlake Crossroads, which has been the scene of numerous accidents over the years, and the Parish Council would like to see measures in place to make the roads safer for all. The Parish Council had presented suggestions

of potential solutions to Kent County Council in an attempt to improve our highways and bring speeds down, including the recommendation of speed cameras and a mini roundabout at the Warmlake Crossroads.

To date we have been unable to agree a feasible solution with Kent County Council to mitigate the excessive speeds through the main road of the village.

If you would like to participate in future Speed Watch projects to help make the village roads safer, please go to www.communityspeedwatch.org to register your interest. Initiatives such as Speed Watch rely on volunteers to help reinforce our desire for improved safety on our roads, so don't miss your opportunity to get involved and contribute to the wellbeing of your village.

North Street (30mph speed limit)					
Direction	Number of vehicles	Average speed over 7 days	85 percentile speeds	Percentage of vehicles under threshold of 35 pmh	Percentage of vehicles complying with the 30mph speed limit
NO	50427	31mph	35.7mph	40.1% (20237)	81.8% (41254)
S1	40845	32.3mph	36.3mph	26.2% (1.0692)	76.8% (31361)

Volunteers still needed for Speed Watch

The Parish Council would like to re-start the "Speed Watch" survey to gather traffic speed data in the parish.

The Survey would be used to show the extent of the traffic speed problem in the parish.

If you would like to volunteer as a helper in the scheme, please contact the Parish Clerk for further details.

Full training will be given on the equipment operation, and high-visibility clothing will be supplied.



Speed Watch equipment in action

The Three Suttons combine for D-Day 80th Anniversary Event June 6

Chart Sutton, Sutton Valence and East Sutton are combining to commemorate and celebrate D Day 80. Our community involvement is part of a national and international celebration. However it does take place on a Thursday, activities will therefore be mainly held in the evening so that all generations can come together and participate. Below is an overview of what the Three Suttons organisers are envisaging and now planning in detail to take place on the Sutton Valence War Memorial Playing Fields.

At this stage we are simply asking you to put this anniversary event in your diary. So far what is happening on this historic day has not really hit the media headlines, but you will certainly be hearing and reading a lot more in the run up to early June.

Whatever your age, you can be part of this local, national and international commemoration of D Day 80. It is, a worthy recognition of what many of our parents, grandparents and great grandparents took part in or witnessed.

It's a shame that the still surviving veterans are so few and pushing 100 years old. But if you know of anyone let us know.

If you have any further suggestions or ideas for our Three Suttons event, or you would like to assist the organisers in any way, then do please contact your own Village Parish Clerk (clerk@suttonvalence.org.uk – same for East Sutton- or chartsuttonpc@gmail.com).

We look forward to seeing you all.

- D Day 80 Proclamation being read out by Town Cryers at 8am, this to be held at our local schools, and soon afterwards Church Bell Ringers to join in the national ringing.

- Lamp Light of Peace at 9pm followed by the lighting of a beacons across the nation at 9:15pm, taking place in our village on the War Memorial Playing Fields. Local VIPs are being invited to attend this.

- From 7pm on the War Memorial Playing Field there is entertainment, food and refreshments, as well as a Flag Raising and Lowering Ceremony assisted by our local Cadets, Scouts and Guides, and school children.

- A Sing Along.

- The Celebrations conclude at 10pm.



Upgrade to Parish Council notice boards

Your Parish Council is constantly looking for ways to improve communications with parishioners. Our parish notice boards located around the village are an important channel for letting parishioners know what we are doing on their behalf. Some of these notice boards have fallen into disrepair and now need replacing. The notice boards are an expensive item and we are very grateful to our KCC representative, Councillor Lottie Parfitt-Reid, who arranged a grant that will go towards the cost of the replacement boards. The Parish Council is also looking at upgrading our other channels of communication including the village website and our other social media outlets.



Litter pickers unite

Would you be willing to volunteer a couple of hours as part of a parish litter pick? Littering is an unfortunate fact of life within the parish. There are a number of existing litter picking champions who routinely sacrifice their time to help keep on top of casual littering that would otherwise blight the parish. However even with the efforts of these unsung heroes, litter can build up to levels where a more united effort to keep the parish clean is needed. Please let us know if you would be happy to participate in litter picking at various locations in the Parish. We would suggest you bring your own protective gloves or litter picker if you have one, however litter pickers can also be arranged through Maidstone Borough Council on a first come, first served basis. Please contact clerk@suttonvalence.org.uk for more information and to let us know when and where you could help to keep our parish beautiful.



Councillors take Carbon Literacy Course to fight climate change

Three members of the Parish Council have just completed a course on Carbon Literacy. This has given us ideas as to how we may be able to use what we have learnt within the Parish to limiting our Carbon Footprint by making small changes, sometimes. We would also like to invite parishioners to offer their views on measures we could take in the battle against Climate Change, so please get in touch with your ideas.



Anyone for tennis ?

The tennis courts located on the playing field adjacent to the Village Hall are operated by the Parish Council. Tennis is an excellent way to get some exercise and is fun to play. The three courts are available for use by parishioners.

The Tennis Club are also ready and able to welcome new members. For more information contact Gordon at: ggalexander@hotmail.com

SVPC Precept unchanged for another year

Your Parish Council has decided to keep the amount of the Parish Precept unchanged at the same level it has been for the last three years. We are pleased to announce that we are able to keep this Precept at the same level against a background of rising costs throughout our national economy. The Parish Precept is the annual amount of money taken from the local Council Tax to fund the operational costs of the Parish Council, which includes responsibility for street lighting, allotments, playing fields and open areas, war memorials, woodlands, children's play areas, litter clearance and community safety. Your Parish Council is constantly researching other sources of funding outside of the Precept to ease the pressure on hard pressed budgets. Proper financial management of resources is a fundamental element of our management of parish affairs.

Parish Council is looking for a new Councillor with a special interest in open spaces.

We still have one vacancy on the Parish Council, and we would particularly like to recruit someone who has an interest in open spaces. This would include overseeing maintenance of parish woodlands, playing fields, children's play areas and other open spaces under the control of SVPC. The ideal recruit would enjoy hands on activity and have a practical mindset. Please contact the Parish Clerk if you are interested in taking on this role.

Alex Castle has joined the PC

Alex Castle is the newest addition to your Parish Council, joining as a Councillor in December. She has lived in the village since 2007 and raised her family here. With her children flying the nest, and having attended a few meetings as a resident, she was keen to get more involved.



Councillor Alex Castle

Care home appeal dismissed by Planning Inspector

Following a hearing on 27th February 2024 and subsequent site visit, the appeal regarding plans for an 87 bed care home and 12 assisted living apartments intended for Forsham Lane has been dismissed by the Planning Inspectorate. When presenting its findings, the Inspectorate focused its decision on policies within Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan seeking to protect the countryside appearance. The Inspector particularly noted that the rural aspect of the land and surrounding areas would be impacted by the urbanisation from this development. It would also be visible from several locations including Headcorn Road. The result being that the scale of the scheme in the planned location would be "visually jarring". Additionally, the Inspectorate found the proposed development's location would result in an unacceptable reliance on private cars for occupiers with regards to accessibility.

The Parish Council and local residents had contested these plans throughout on several points including the isolated location in relation to village access and amenities, transport links and most of all the harmful effect it would have on the character and appearance of the area. The Parish Council also questioned Cloverdown Limited's experience, knowledge and capacity to deliver the scheme as per the plans, especially with no care home operator in discussion with the developer. Cloverdown Limited had made assurances in their plans including a minibuss service to be provided for staff and a room dedicated to a visiting GP, however despite these proposed benefits the Inspector determined that the significant harm of the development would not be mitigated enough by these factors.

Councillor Mike Gammon

Help us save Sutton Valence Youth Club

KCC has announced that due to funding cuts, they are no longer able to fund youth clubs, which has devastated so many children across the county.

Youth clubs have been around for decades, and for many that attended a youth club it is a safe haven. For others it is an opportunity to stay in contact with friends considered as part of an extended family, a place where they can receive invaluable advice from those who understand what they're going through. The kids have been through so much lately as many of us know, COVID-19, loss of family, friends and now they stand to lose their youth club. Some parents in Sutton Valence have clubbed together to exchange ideas, others are finding ways to help raise money via charity events where they can start to get the ball rolling. For more information on how to help Sutton Valence Youth Club you can find them on their Facebook page.

Councillor Melanie Dawber



Extension to Sutton Valence Conservation Area confirmed by MBC

Following a public consultation exercise, Maidstone Borough Council has agreed the extension of the Village Conservation Area to the east of the village.

The extended area now gives extra protection to the historic Sutton Valence Castle and its environs. Any proposed future development in the area would have to take special regard of any as yet undiscovered archaeology which may remain within the castle site.

Platinum Meadow Project update

Since the trees were planted in December 2022 they have had quite a bad time with extremes of weather. The trees were planted in initially very cold weather and partly frozen ground, this was followed by heavy rain which caused the ground to become waterlogged, and then drying winds which burnt off some of the tender new growth. This was followed by a prolonged hot dry spell in the summer and early autumn which put the trees under stress due to lack of moisture. As we know we have had record levels of rainfall each month since October. The ground at present is very wet but there are signs that many of the trees have survived and hopefully will show clear signs of growth in the next few weeks.

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership (MVCP), who planted the trees and are responsible for maintenance for the first three years of the project, cut the grass and did some tidying up work in July and September 2023. They will be carrying out some more work, this will include replacing damaged/lost tree guards and doing a count to see how many trees have survived, with a view to replacing some of the lost trees during the next planting season in winter 2024/25.

John Davis, Volunteer



Contact the Parish Council

For further information regarding Sutton Valence Parish Council and its work for the parish community, please contact the Clerk, **Emma Hull** on 01622 844135 or email clerk@suttonvalence.org.uk or visit our website on

www.suttonvalence.org.uk

Derek Eagle
Sutton Valence and Langley
Ward Councillor
DerekEagle@Maidstone.gov.uk

Lottie Parfitt-Reid
Kent County Councillor
lottie.parfitt-reid@kent.gov.uk

Helen Whately
Your Constituency MP
helen.whately.mp@parliament.uk

(Note this information may change following the local elections May 2nd 2024)

