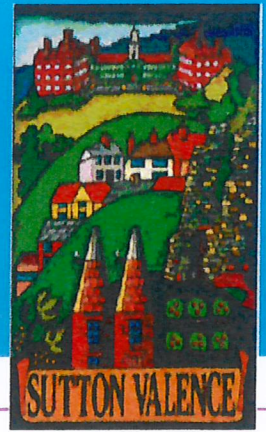


SUTTON VALENCE PARISH COUNCIL NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2025



Have your say about Sutton Valence

With the start of a new year, the Parish Council would like to hear your views on life in Sutton Valence. To that end, we would appreciate it if you could take a few minutes to complete the enclosed survey, which asks questions about different aspects of your experience of living in the parish.

Whilst a number of the areas covered, (including policing and traffic) do not fall under the Parish Council's area of responsibility, we are still interested in your views on these wider topics so that we can seek to represent community concerns better with the appropriate responsible bodies, (including Maidstone Borough and Kent County Councils). Your views and feedback will also help shape the Parish Council's priorities going forward, for those other areas over which it has more direct influence.

We encourage you to respond. The more responses we get back, the more we are able to take on-board views that reflect the whole community.

Depending on your preference you can complete the enclosed survey or access an online version by using the QR code provided. The survey includes information on different ways to return your completed feedback to us.

The information requested will only be used to obtain residents' views and to share back an anonymous summary of the feedback received.

The closing date for the return of completed surveys is 16th March 2025 and subject to us receiving back enough survey returns, an aggregated overview of the results of the survey will then be shared in the next Parish Council newsletter.

Partial road closure of the A274 to construct the entrance to the new Haven Farm housing development - 22nd January to 21st March 2025

Fernham Homes, the construction company responsible for the new Haven Farm housing development, have updated the information regarding the partial road closure required to facilitate the installation of the new foul drainage connection, incoming site mains, grounding of the existing overhead cables, installation of new footpaths, street lights, the pedestrian crossing and anti-friction road surface at the new entrance to the development on the A274 in Sutton Valence. Due to the nature of the works, KCC Highways have specified that the anti-friction surfacing will need to be completed on a separate closure, and Fernham Homes anticipate these works will be undertaken in the school summer holidays of 2025.

Fernham Homes said, "We understand that this closure may cause inconvenience, and we apologise for any disruption this may cause.

We aim to complete the works as quickly and efficiently as possible". For any questions or concerns that parishioners may have, you can contact Fernham Homes at: neighbourlymatters@fernham-homes.co.uk



Site of the new entrance to Haven Farm housing development on the A274, Sutton Valence.

PARISHIONER SURVEY

Please complete the Parishioner Survey, enclosed in this edition of the newsletter, to let us know your opinions on issues concerning our parish

Have your say about Sutton Valence !

Your Parish Council wants to hear your opinions on many local issues, so that we can plan ahead to make Sutton Valence a better place to live. Please complete our Parishioner Survey below and either return by post, email to clerk@suttonvalence.org.uk, or drop it into the post box at the Parish Council Office next to the village hall, or to one of our collection sites listed overleaf. You can also scan the QR code to give your answers to our questions online

QUESTION ?	YOUR ANSWERS
Community Do you feel part of the Sutton Valence community? and if not, how would you improve community feeling in the parish?	
Roads and traffic Regarding roads and traffic in the parish, what would you like to see to improve the situation?	
Anti-social behaviour Is anti-social behaviour in the parish a concern for you, and if so what would like to see done to address the problem?	
Sports facilities What sports facilities would you like to see in the parish?	

PTO - More questions and QR code on the other side ▶

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Young people In your opinion, is sufficient effort being made to improve the lives of young people in the parish and how would you improve the situation?	
Amenities Are you happy with local amenities such as bus services and parking in the parish, and if not, how would you like to improve them?	
Allotments & open spaces Are you happy with the way open spaces and allotments are managed in the parish, and if not how would you suggest things are changed for the better?	
Housing and accommodation What is your opinion on housing development in the parish, does a shortage of housing impact on you in any way?	
Your Parish Council We are constantly working to improve things in the parish. What would you like to see your Parish Council do to make our parish a better place to live?	

The Parish Council value your opinions
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Closing date for the survey will be March 16th, 2025

Take a look at our parish allotments

Allotments to be renumbered

One of the Sutton Valence Parish Council assets, the Bowhalls allotments, will undergo a change in plot number designation to make for easier referencing for plot holders and the clerk's system. Recommendations for the updated numbering system were provided by the parish's Open Spaces Working Group, and they will work with the wider parish council to ensure that the transition is seamless when finalised.

The plots themselves will have clear

plot identifiers (method to be determined) on-site to aid existing and prospective new plot holders with navigation where required.

Current Bowhalls plot holders do not need to do anything and will be informed of their new number in due course. If you are interested in knowing more about the parish's allotments, or to be placed on the waiting list for either the Bowhalls or Harbour allotments, please get in touch with Emma Hull (Parish Clerk).

If you would like to be on the allotments waiting list, please contact the Parish Clerk on:

clerk@suttonvalence.org.uk



Aerial view of Bowhalls Allotments showing the new plot identification numbers



Aerial view of the Harbour allotments showing existing plot numbers

Protecting our parish open spaces

We are particularly blessed in Sutton Valence with a wide variety of open spaces; From sports facilities such as the playing fields and the tennis courts, to playground areas, general recreational spaces and of course the allotments as well.

Given our vantage point on the hill we are also afforded the opportunity of fantastic views of the Weald from many of these.

As a Parish Council we, recognise the importance of open spaces not just for our residents and visitors, but also for nature and as places to maximise biodiversity.

In October the Parish Council launched a new Open Spaces & Climate Change Working Group, to see how we can better protect, maintain and where possible improve not just the open spaces that are Parish Council land, but also work with the relevant parties on those spaces within the village that are the remit of others to look after.

We hope to bring you more information on projects proposed and progress on the Group's work in future newsletters. Our Working Group is made up of councillors as well as parishioners, so if you think this is something you would like to get involved in, do please let our clerk know.



Platinum Meadow showing young trees that will form a future woodland walk

Village Hall Committee is looking for new members

Our hall stands at the heart of the village and is used by a variety of clubs and societies every week. Children's dance classes, WI meetings, GP vaccination clinics and Polling - all take place at the village hall. It is also available for private hire just contact our bookings secretary on 01622 842024. All this is possible through the work of our caretaker, cleaners, bookings secretary and a committee of volunteers who ensure the hall runs smoothly on a day to day basis. Many hands make light work, and we really need more people on the committee who are willing and able to help us keep the hall running. Do you have a few hours a month that you could offer? Or would you like to find out more about what this involves? Contact our chairman Annie Wilkinson on 01622 842024, or via our facebook page or website - we'd love to hear from you.



Sutton Valence Village Hall (Photo Jeff Underwood)

Keeping the parish up to scratch

The Parish Council is responsible for the upkeep of land and equipment it owns. This primarily relates to the recreational playing fields, Bowhalls and the Millennium Orchard, the Harbour playing fields and Platinum Meadow. Typical tasks include maintenance of benches, grass cutting, trees, hedges, and playground equipment.

Recent maintenance initiatives by the Parish Council have involved repairs to the steps up to the Millennium Orchard and woodland walk from the top of Tumblers Hill, and reviews to enable better maintenance of Platinum Meadow and sections of the Greensand's path crossing Parish Council owned land.

To report any faults please use the link below.
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-a-problem>



Tumblers Hill steps

The parish has two playgrounds which are a popular resource.

Regular maintenance inspections are made of the sites and equipment alongside an annual independent health and safety audit. The results of these reviews inform repairs and improvements.



Village Hall Playground

Our recently reformed Open Spaces Group are looking at improvements to existing maintenance responsibilities alongside new open space initiatives to improve parish green space for the benefit of all in the community. If you are interested in joining the group, please get in touch!



Councillor Lesley Flint presents John Wilding with the commemorative plaque

Wildings Oaks commemorated

Mr John Wilding is rightly proud of the 8 magnificent oak trees he planted over 40 years ago around the edge of the Village Hall playing field.

What a gift that was to all in the village. Never have we been more aware of the importance of trees in our world.

We have Simon Kirk, the Head of Design and Technology at Sutton Valence School to thank for his skill and generosity in producing this beautiful plaque which will shortly be placed at the entrance to the Village Hall.

News from our Maidstone Borough Councillors

Dear residents of Sutton Valence

To describe last year in short and simple terms with only potted summaries would be nigh impossible as Headcorn and Sutton Valence Ward is such a diverse and active area. The ward was large enough but became bigger with the addition of your own Parish of Sutton Valence earlier this year.

Conversely, the number of Borough Council Members is smaller. Seven fewer in fact. Combined with a move to four yearly elections from yearly, when a third of seats were decided, MBC has saved nearly £220,000. It does mean a lot more work and effort for all. Both Sutton Valence and Headcorn have grown in size with new homes, and the three Parishes of East Sutton, Ulcombe and Boughton Malherbe/Grafty Green all add to the increase in workload. There has also been lots of population change, with many new people joining the community.

The early part of 2024 was taken up with the local elections in May, that resulted in a new Leadership of the Council by the Green Party, supported by some of the Liberal Democrats and some Independents. This has led to some inaction, as a large number of councillors were inexperienced. Hopefully the new councillors will start contributing to the council chamber soon. The local elections were closely followed by the General Election.

We spent a lot of time out and about talking to residents and noting the feedback, which we assure you is very important to us when we represent you in council.

As a result of some unexpected departures as a result of the electoral process, the originally intended "mayoral line" had to be reset. As a result, Headcorn and Sutton Valence ward Member, Martin Round, was inaugurated as Deputy Mayor to assist John Perry from Staplehurst as Mayor. Martin hopes to serve

as Mayor from May 2025. He has plenty of events, celebrations, anniversaries and special activities planned and to attend, particularly in our home ward and parish.

In the last year we have probably heard about more housing issues than ever. We have been pro-active in sorting out problems of damp and other maintenance in a number of residents' homes and have called into account the companies that are responsible for looking after them.

Planning for new homes and other developments is another area of our involvement and can always be controversial, however that work must go on. Our Local Plan, which was agreed in April, defines the bulk of where housing goes. Whilst realising everywhere must have new housing we need to see some advantages to the increase in built-up areas.

We need improved infrastructure and services, especially in recreation and better/safer traffic flows, and both of us are working with parish councils, developers and MBC to maximise the advantages that new developments can bring with them.

Two other areas of major concern to us have been the pot-holes and the water leaks, both of which lead to road closures, which sometimes are lengthy both in extra distance travelled, and time to complete the repairs.

We have been lobbying the water companies as the many leaks are one major cause of the pot-holes and are now pleased to report that some dialogue is starting to take place.

At least one of us has attended all of the Parish Council meetings, unless they have clashed with MBC meetings, and feel we have contributed positively and assisted to resolve some of the problems raised by residents.

Martin Round and Ziggy Trzebinski

Retirement of Rev Fiona Haskett

Our vicar Fiona Haskett has retired from the church, she said goodbye to the Parish in September last year.

Since 24th February 2015 she has ministered among us, and we shall miss her enormously, her sermons were inspirational.

Plans are in place to ensure that we manage as best we can through the vacancy period.

We wish Fiona a very happy and long retirement with her husband Graham.

Gover James

Church Warden, St Mary's Sutton Valence

COULD YOU BE A PARISH COUNCILLOR ?

We are currently short of four councillors on the Parish Council. If you feel you could do this important work for your community contact our Clerk on the number below.

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

Martin Round
Headcorn and Sutton Valence
Ward Councillor
martinround@maidstone.gov.uk
Ziggy Trzebinski
Headcorn and Sutton Valence
Ward Councillor
ziggytrzebinski@maidstone.gov.uk
Lottie Parfitt
Kent County Councillor
lottie.parfitt@kent.gov.uk

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