

**Langley Parish Council**  
**Annual Parish Meeting**  
**Via Zoom Conference on Tuesday, 20 April 2021 at 7pm**  
**Under the Chairmanship of Councillor Cheryl Taylor Maggio**

1. Cllr Taylor-Maggio welcomed everyone to the meeting. There were no apologies of absence.
2. The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 2 April 2019 were approved.
3. A Report by Langley Parish Council Chairman

The announcement on the 16 March 2020 taking the country into lockdown also fundamentally changed how the way the Parish Council would work for the forthcoming year and now that light is at the end of the tunnel this is a great opportunity to reflect on this somewhat strange and challenging year.

**Annual Parish Meeting 2020** – This annual calendar event was cancelled and instead we produced a written annual report for 2019 which we published on our website.

**Annual General Meeting of the Parish Council 2020** – This also had to be cancelled and therefore the Council continued with its current set up of Cllr Taylor Maggio as Chairman and Jill Williams as Vice Chairman and ably assisted by 6 councillors. There remains 1 vacancy to be filled.

**Meetings** – On the 18 June 2020, we held our first Parish Council meeting using Zoom, a platform that was easy to use as people had started to become familiar with it in order to make contact with friends and family. It has proved to be a very effective form of communication and engagement by all parties has been very good thereby allowing us to continue with looking after the village and making any necessary decisions. Sadly, the Government has decreed that this online medium has to stop after the 7 May 2021, and we must meet again in person after this. There is however significant lobbying and a consultation has been held to see if the online medium can be utilised by Councils in the future, this does require a change of the law and so we will watch this space with interest.

**Coronavirus (Covid-19)** - We are grateful to all our residents who volunteered to help our vulnerable people who were shielding, with tasks such as shopping, collecting prescriptions, checking on their wellbeing with timed phone calls and also assisting the health services with the Covid-19 assessment centres, making masks and sewing scrubs. Our Kent County Councillor, Eric Hotson kindly provided a grant of £1,000 towards food boxes and with further financial assistance from the Parish Council we teamed up with Maria Mackelden of the Over 60's club and managed to purchase and distribute 31 boxes in total from the Haven Farm Shop to those in need.

**Planning Applications** - For the period April 2020 to March 2021, we have as a council dealt with 16 applications all relating to household changes.

The Maidstone Borough Council's Local Plan Review is currently at Regulation 18 with only one site along the Sutton Road (Site Ref 172) being included, however, what remains of concern to the Council is an initial proposal for a garden village in Langley Heath to fund a by-pass. The plan states "5.28 The Leeds-Langley corridor will be safeguarded to enable the potential future delivery of an improved transport connection linking M20, J8 and the A274.

**Police** – PCSO Shivan De Rose is always available by ringing 101 or 999 in an emergency. Monthly crime figures can also be found online via the Kent Police website at [www.e-watch.co](http://www.e-watch.co)

**Recreation Ground** – During lock down 1, the play area sadly had to remain closed but has stayed open since this ended in July. Our new play equipment (installed in 2019) has proved to be popular and has been well used by residents.

The outdoor gym equipment has been annually serviced and the hip twister foot plates have been replaced.

We also thank our contractor Steve Waring who keeps this area well maintained and has helped us out at short notice with the many odd jobs that require doing to keep the area safe for the public to use.

**Football Pitches** – sadly the football clubs have not really been able to operate at all this year and I am sure that they will enjoy getting back into the game very shortly.

**Allotments** – our plots along the Sutton Road remain well used and there is now a short waiting list of prospective tenants.

**Annual Tree Survey** – this was carried out in May 2020 to ensure that our trees in the recreation ground are inspected for any disease or damage and any issues can be addressed in a timely manner. Two trees were earmarked for some remedial work and this was duly carried out. Some additional smaller tree branch work has been identified in April 2021 to trees around the edge of the recreation ground which was impeding the mowing process, and these have also been seen too.

**Training** Councillors and the clerk have attended courses/conferences held by KALC and Kent Highways throughout the year via the online platforms. These again have proved to be a popular way of learning and it is hoped that this format may continue into the future.

**Donations** - We have given £500 to St Mary's Church to help with churchyard maintenance.

**Finance** - It was agreed to generate a precept of £20,985 (the same as 2020/2021) from the tax base figure of 531.5 which equates to £39.48 per band D property. This is a decrease to the charge to each Band D taxpayer by £2.51.

**Planters** – Once again a big thank you to our Councillor Sue Knowles for looking after our planters in the past year and for providing some necessary cheer.

**Buses** – This year long bus pilot was launched by KCC for the new revised number 13 bus which went live on 17 February 2020 stopped being monitored during lockdown 1, however, the smaller minibuses continue taking residents from Langley to an interchange at Sutton Road, Maidstone on a frequent basis throughout the day. We hope that residents will continue to support this project going forwards as the data showing use by the public will still be required once the project resumes monitoring again.

**Speed Indicator Device (SID)** – Following our own concerns along with various resident comments regarding the use of Heath Road and Horseshoes Lane as being rat runs with increased vehicular speed, we began a conversation with Kent Highways to look at options for traffic calming these areas. The topography of Heath Road and to some lesser extent Horseshoes Lane, sadly proved that there were very limited options available, we were recommended to consider a Speed Indicator Device or what is normally referred to in the trade as a SID. Kent Highways surveyed both roads along with Leeds Road for suitable locations for the equipment to be set up and rotated on a regular basis. Once this was done, we carried out a resident's consultation on our proposals and at our meeting on 16 March 2021, the Council agreed to purchase a 'mini SID' at the cost of £7,678. A £2,000 grant towards this has been given from our Kent County Councillor Members grant and the remainder will be funded from CIL funds due from planning application 19/503912 Land at Bicknor Farm, Sutton Road.

**Communications** - We have a new Parish Council website which was launched in February 2021 and can be found at [www.langleypc-kent.org](http://www.langleypc-kent.org). This website is fully compliant with the WCAG (website content accessibility guidelines). We continue to use our 4 village noticeboards situated around the Parish for meeting information or other points of interest.

**Litter** - We like many other parishes have to deal with the blight of litter. We would like to thank everyone who throughout the year has taken the trouble to pick this up on their daily walks. The Parish Council does have litter collecting equipment available (pickers, gloves and bags), please do contact the clerk. Heavily blighted roads can also be reported online to Maidstone Borough Council on

<https://maidstone.gov.uk/home/do-it-online/report-it/top-6/report-a-street-cleansing/report-litter>

**Thank you** to our Borough Member Councillor Wendy Young and Kent County Councillor Eric Hotson who have given their support to our Parish Council throughout the year and I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Councillors and our Clerk for their input, support and willingness to look after our village.

#### 4. Report from County Councillor Eric Hotson

A year of sadness, frustration and desperation, but one where we continued to work for the benefit of all.

I drove home from County Hall on 15<sup>th</sup> March 2020 and have not returned since. I, like you and many others, have been carrying out my role in a virtual world.

Astonishingly, within days of lockdown, residents of Langley and other villages, enquired of neighbours as to their wellbeing and in no time volunteers were everywhere. They ran errands, made up food parcels and provided a contact for elderly and those in need.

I willingly, from my Member Grant facility, gave £1,000 to the Parish Council to distribute accordingly. And still the volunteer work continues. Truly remarkable.

I hope that when we see the end of this terrible pandemic, we can, if need be, also have quarterly daytime meetings as we have had in the past.

Langley PC is extremely fortunate to have the services of an excellent Clerk and this year Helen has excelled. My sincere thanks to Helen.

There has been no 'easing down' on Councillor duties and I am well aware of your efforts and workload throughout the year. I believe we work well as a team and I am truly thankful for the support given.

On Housing, I have supported residents and the PC in their objections to further housing. The next Call for Sites consultation is due in July/August and, hopefully, your policy considerations and Village Plan evidence will be taken into account and supported by Maidstone Borough Council.

I based much of my objections to further housing growth on the lack of employment and highway infrastructure. In 2020 MBC and KCC jointly commissioned a Transport Modelling Assessment. A key recommendation from the study was that the Local Plan review should move away from a reliance of allocating sites in Rural Service Centres (Marden and Staplehurst) and large villages (Langley, Boughton Monchelsea and Sutton Valence) which are less likely to be able to deliver significant sustainable transport improvements. Reference is also made to existing congestion and air quality issues along the A229 and A274 corridors.

Your HIGHWAY Improvement Plan will prioritise schemes within the Parish and, as always I will assist if problems occur. I was happy to make a grant of £2,000 towards the Speed Indicator Camera, presently positioned on the Leeds Road.

Trials are taking place of the use of longer lasting additives for paved and street resurfacing. They will be easier and cheaper to use and have a reduced environment/emissions impact. I hope we see the introduction before next winter.

The Chief Constable gave a presentation to Kent County Councillors a month or two before the pandemic arrived. He advised that a large recruitment programme had taken place and the first consignment of recruits were being trained.

Residents in rural Maidstone tell me they want to see a police presence – petty crimes are on the increase and there are pockets of anti-social behaviour being reported but no action taken.

However, of greater concern is the lack of speeding and HGV route enforcement. In his presentation, the Chief Constable promised Rural Teams. They need to be seen.

These are just some of the issues considered and covered over the past year.

My very best wishes to you and all Langley residents.

##### 5. A Report by Borough Councillor Young

Since March 2020 Covid 19 and the resulting pandemic has had a devastating effect throughout all aspects of life and has touched every corner of what we have always termed as `normal`. Our hospitals have nearly reached breaking point and our care workers and NHS Staff have had to cope with unprecedented pressures and difficulties. Our sincere thanks goes to all essential workers who have contributed so much over the past months and will continue to do so in the coming months. But, at last there is a way out of this crisis with the roll out of the incredibly successful vaccination programme that will take us back towards our normal way of life.

Maidstone Borough Council's response to the pandemic has helped to ease some of the hardships for our Residents. The Officers have had a particularly difficult time and have risen to the challenge with an unprecedented level of commitment and expertise. The MBC Community Hub provides easily accessible information ranging from help for the vulnerable to obtaining Covid 19 Business Grants. Many volunteer groups including food banks and support groups have also provided much needed assistance to families suffering hardship as a result of business closures and severe illness.

Mote Park has remained open and welcomed many hundreds of visitors to its beautiful grounds although the children's play area was closed for a short period but is now open once again.

The Government provided a grant for the Council to install cycle lanes in the town centre but this unfortunately led to problems for the Taxi service and disabled access at a bus stop. There is now an ongoing consultation as to the positioning and feasibility of these road works.

The most important event during 2020 and of course ongoing, is the MBC Local Plan Review. The preferred approach or otherwise known as Regulation 18, was published in November 2020 and the responses to this consultation and latest evidence available will be reviewed for the next stage of the consultation which is due in June 2021. The June consultation, known as regulation 19, is on the draft Local Plan Review documents that will be submitted for Independent Examination. There will be pre consultation meetings with the Members and Parishes before the June consultation.

The Council is also pursuing large scale projects within the Town Centre including refurbishing Granada House on Gabriels Hill and Lower Stone Street and also Maidstone East train station both of which will greatly improve the appearance of both sites.

Extensive works have also been carried out within Mote Park to protect the park, lake within the park and Turkey Mill, from the threat of flooding. These works have required the removal of many mature trees but thankfully there is a programme of replanting to replace those lost as well as providing many more.

As you are well aware, there are local elections taking place in May with candidate standing for Wards in Maidstone Borough Council, Kent County Council and also elections for the Kent Police & Crime Commissioner. Social distancing precautions will be in place at all Polling Stations and no doubt many people will use the convenience of postal voting.

There will not be an election for an MBC Councillor in Langley and Sutton Valence Ward as it is not due for another 2 years.

MBC are undertaking discussions as to the possibility of changing to 4 yearly elections in all Wards. This has mainly come about because the Government Boundary Commission has begun the process of reviewing the Ward boundaries and number of Ward members required in each Ward. MBC meets the commissions criteria for electoral inequality with 8 of the 26 Wards or 31% having a variance outside 10% and 1 Ward with a variance outside 20%. House building has obviously been one of the main contributing factors to the variances.

Legislation requires the Commission to review all Councils from time to time and as Maidstone was last reviewed in 2000 it also meets this criteria. The Commission seeks to deliver electoral equality for voters in local elections.

Finally, I would like to thank the Parish Clerk, the Chairman and Parish Councillors for their work and commitment to Langley over the past very difficult year.

Virtual meetings are now normal practice, but it will be nice to return to face-to-face meetings, I hope, in the not too distant future.

6. A Report by Kent Police - No report was received at the time of the meeting.
7. A Report by KCC Community Warden - No report was received at the time of the meeting.
8. Three Suttons Helpline – A verbal report was received from Christine Parkes:-

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, we have been unable to provide any transport services. As lockdown begins to ease, we have just been able to start a small service covering essential shopping and collection of prescriptions only. We hope to resume in full as soon as we are able to.

9. Open Forum – No issues were raised.
10. KALC Community Award 2021 – This has been awarded to Mr & Mrs Neves for their dedicated efforts in helping to keep our village tidy.

The meeting closed at 7.40pm