Through PACT and the PCSO surgeries we have been able to highlight the importance of reporting crime and antisocial behaviour directly to the police using either the website or via 111 or 999 (for urgent calls) and various articles have been included in the Cuxton Noticeboard newsletter over the year to inform villagers on how to make contact and who to call if they see anything that is of a concern. Working together in this way ensures that any issues are escalated and dealt with by the police and trends can be identified if there are any patterns to crimes which are committed.

During lockdown PACT added information on potential scams to the Cuxton Noticeboards in the village, signposting villagers to potential online dangers.

As a result of the pandemic we are all unsure how long it will be before we get back to some sort of normality and so we are currently trying to organise a PACT meeting via video conferencing software so that PACT can continue. Liaising with Medway Council and the police in this way ensures that Cuxton issues are highlighted and the community is supported to address issues which are sometimes hard to resolve.

Cuxton PACT can be contacted at Cuxtonpact@gmail.com

Councillor Tracy Thorley

CUXTON PARISH COUNCIL

SERVING OUR COMMUNITY

Annual Report

2019—2020

Chairman's Report

May 2019 saw members of an Independent **minor** political party (Act for Cuxton Together [ACT]) elected unopposed to all of the 11 parish councillor places. ACT was formed late in 2018 in order to enable independent candidates to work together under one set of beliefs and values as identified below:

Members of the party (ACT) will be independent, and each member will therefore have and express their own view on matters to be decided by the party or by Council (Cuxton Parish Council). However, members of the party are committed to the following principles:

- *Attracting candidates for election to Council from a wider age range, background, experience and knowledge than in the past;*
- *Removing party politics from the proceedings of the Council;*
- *Removing from the proceedings of Council any and all control and influence exercised by political parties, pressure groups or whips;*
- *Using traditional "committee" and "working party" systems to support Council decision making;*
- *Ensuring that the party's vision for Cuxton and its future, and its policies and actions in pursuit of it, show a full understanding of and a proper respect for the character and history of Cuxton, and reflects the needs, wishes and aspirations of Cuxton residents.*

ACT councillors also committed themselves to:

A*cting for the people of Cuxton.* To this end we have been pursuing grants from the Football Foundation and government renewable energy fund to support the re-develop of the pavilion; engaged in lobbying Medway Council regarding their Local Plan and the Homestead planning application and actively participated in the Lower Thames Crossing and the Boundary Commission Consultation on behalf of the Cuxton residents.

C*aring for our community* by supporting local voluntary groups through Council grants and building community coherence by

PACT (Partners and Communities Together)

Prior to 2019, Parish Council representatives attended police liaison meetings held at Medway Council Gun Wharf offices in Chatham to discuss any police/antisocial behaviour issues arising in Cuxton . One outcome off these discussions was the decision to hold PACT meetings as a way of bringing together a variety of support to the village from organisations and teams within Medway Council and also the police

In July 2019 initial meetings were held in Cuxton with the police, community wardens, Medway Council representatives and interested residents to consider issues which were a concern to those living in Cuxton. Some of these issues included parking, speeding and antisocial behaviour. Working groups were set up to focus on each of these issues. Trevor East, who lives in Bush Road, is the lead on PACT and the Parish Council would like to thank Trevor for undertaking this role.

PCSO surgeries/drop ins were organised and held just before Christmas and in early 2020 which were attended by parish councillors, residents and our two PCSO's. These meetings provided an opportunity to engage more closely with the police and updates on these meetings were reported in the Cuxton Noticeboard newsletter. Future meetings were scheduled for 2020, but due to Covid-19 these meetings had to be cancelled. Meetings will be re-schedules as soon as possible.

Our PCSO Sophie Ward updates PACT monthly on crime and issues in the Cuxton area and our PCSO's also attended last year's Big Lunch and visit Cuxton to chat with residents and be a visible presence in the village.

Land Management continued

The two areas of woodland are generally inspected and managed by Cuxton Countryside Group on behalf of Cuxton Parish Council. Professional tree surgeons are recruited when large/dangerous trees or branches need attention. There is a woodland management fund to pay for any emergency work that is outside the scope of volunteers.

In 2020/21 this committee will work with Cuxton Sports and Recreation Association (CSRA) to renovate the bike track n the recreation ground. The plans have been approved and CSRA have raised 80-90% of the money needed to cover the cost.

The children's playground is in need of attention. Some equipment needs to be replaced and the safety surface needs to be repaired in places. These improvements will be funded from Council reserves.

This year the general management of events has been delegated to a working party. This has allowed councillors and local volunteers to get together in informal meetings to plan events. The budget for events is still managed by the Land Management Committee, but using a working party promotes the engagement of residents who make a positive contribution to the quality of village events.

Plans for the re-development of the Pavilion have been submitted to Medway Council. There is a possibility of funds from the Football

Foundation to provide a meeting room, a cafe and public access toilets but Cuxton Parish Council need to find other grants to meet the total cost to include a small hall. A Pavilion working party is likely to be formed in the near future to move this project forward. Cuxton Parish Council would welcome residents with expertise to join this group.

hosting village events such as the Cuxton Big Lunch, Christmas Tree & Carols Event and supporting the annual firework display

T*aking Cuxton forward* is more concerned with the long term work we will undertake during our 4 years of office. The parish councillors are currently developing the Council action plan for 2020-2023.

The first year of office for the ACT councillors began with the election of officers (page 3) and the formation of 3 Committees; Planning, Land Management and Finance (see page 4 for details of membership). All was well until the end of June when our clerk resigned to take up a full time post in Boxley and Cllr Manning resigned. Time was then taken up by recruiting a new clerk and setting in motion the co-option of a replacement councillor. Although this was a setback the extra meetings and collaborative work involved did provide the opportunity for councillors to get to know each other and begin to work effectively together.

The new clerk started in August and Jakob Seger was co-opted onto the Council to bring the Parish Council up to full compliment. This period also coincided with the planning application for the development of a construction industry vehicle training site at 'the Homestead' land on Sundridge Hill. The joint efforts of residents and the Parish Council have resulted in significant challenges to this application that currently remains unresolved.

On behalf of Councillors and residents my thanks go to the new clerk, her assistant and our road sweeper for their hard work and dedication, and also to our wonderful voluntary groups; to Cuxton Countryside Group for keeping our footpaths clear, for the Wheel of Cuxton for the Firework display, Father Christmas sleigh and helping with erecting the Christmas Tree and setting up for the Cuxton Big Lunch. Without the generous gift of their free time amd expertise the village would be a poorer community.

Cllr Kay Hutchfield

The Coronavirus Pandemic

The outbreak of the Coronavirus has been disruptive to all our lives. It has been no different for the Parish Council. The Parish Office has been closed and both the Clerk and her Assistant are now working from home. This was a time consuming exercise that required the purchase of a second laptop and additional software in order to facilitate effective home working. The email contact for the Parish Council is unchanged at **cuxtonparish@btconnect.com,** but it has proved difficult to transfer calls to the Parish Office phone number to the Clerk's home. To resolve this situation a simple mobile phone was purchased (07895 940668) to receive calls that would normally be made to the Parish Office.

The national 'lockdown' meant that the April Annual Parish Meeting had to be cancelled as the current legislation made it unlawful for the council to meet in a virtual environment. Emergency delegated powers were agreed at the March Parish Council meeting that allowed the Clerk and the Chairman to make decisions if needed, without reference to full Council. Luckily the law was changed and the Parish Council have now held their first virtual Parish Council meeting using Zoom. It is hoped this will help the Council to return to normal functioning.

It is hoped to include the public in the June and July online meetings by requesting an invitation from the Clerk an hour (6pm) before each meeting. Planning application scrutiny has been delegated to the Clerk and Cllrs Burley and Porter. Any controversial planning applications will be brought to main Council to reduce the number of virtual meetings needed.

Sadly the 10th Cuxton Big Lunch has been postponed to June 2021. Hopefully the pandemic will be well behind us by then and we can gather together with friends and neighbours in the recreation ground once more.

and West Kent Downs Trust in removing fallen trees and branches form our woodland and footpaths.

During 2019 some of the Council reserves were transferred to an account that offered improved interest rates that have resulted in a doubling of the interest received on these reserves.

Full details are available on the Parish Council website and any queries should be addressed to the Responsible Finance Officer at the Parish Office.

I am sincerely grateful to the efforts of our new Clerk who used the new accounting software to provide informative financial information to the Finance Committee. This year's meeting of the Finance Committee broke all records as it was a marathon meeting ending after 11pm. Their hard work provided a clear framework within which the Parish Council were able to make budget decisions and set the precept for 2020-21.

The precept for 2020-21 was set at £60,800. This will result in a charge of £1,815.33/annum based on a D property. The amounts to approximately £61/annum/band D household, an increase of approximately £1/month on last year.

Management of Land and Property

The Parish Council owns the Pavilion, Recreation Ground and Six Acre and Millennium Woods. The Pavilion provides a small Parish Office and changing rooms used primarily by Cuxton'91 Football team. The land and buildings are managed by the Land Management Committee.

Financial Matters

The precept for 2018/19 was set at £60,200 This resulted in a charge of £1,815.33/annum based on a band D property. This amounts to approximately £60/annum/band D household. The precept funds the salaries of the clerk and assistant clerk, office administrative costs, training and IT, maintenance of the Pavilion, the recreation ground, playground, bike track, allotments, Six Acre and the Millenium Woods.

The Precept is also used to support the production of the village newsletter, maintenance of the church yard and to support the work of Cuxton Countryside Group. In addition £4000 was awarded in grants to local groups to support their activities. This included Cuxton and Halling Scout Group. The Council also managed and sponsored the Cuxton Annual Big Lunch and Christmas Carols Singing and Tree Lighting event.

This year has seen some new costs. The Parish Council website has been out of date for some time and Cllr Jackson has been closely involved with our new website supplier to ensure the new website is more informative and user friendly for residents and councillors. This change in web site is very welcome and the contribution of Cllr Jackson has greatly reduced the cost of the work required.

The Clerk has required training on the accounting software purchased last year, but this has been a positive investment as we are receiving increasingly more informative financial reports at our monthly Council and committee meetings, and information on individual budgets is readily available. Using the new accounting software has also resulted in a successful end of year reconciliation of the Council's finances, with no extra work needed to close the end of year accounts.

There has been an underspend in some budgets such as woodland management thanks to the work of the Cuxton Countryside Group

Cuxton Parish Council

Cuxton Parish Council consists of 11 elected or co-opted councillors. The 4 year term of office for the current parish council ends on 8th May 2023

Councillor	Elected/co-opted	Committees
Kay Hutchfield (Chair)	Elected May 2019	Land Management, Planning, Finance
Tracy Thorley (Vice-chairman)	Elected May 2019	Land Management, Planning (Chair), Finance
Martin Burley	Elected May 2019	Planning (Chair) Finance
Natalie Jackson	Elected May 2019	Land Management, Finance Web site advisor
Elizabeth (Buffy) Maisey	Elected May 2019	Land Management (Chair)
John Manning	Elected May 2019	Resigned June 2019
Edwina Morrell	Elected May 2019	Finance
Julie Porter	Elected May 2019	Land Management (Vice Chair) Planning
Pat Reynolds	Elected May 2019	Finance
Hilary Savage	Elected May 2019	Land Management Planning
Jakob Seger	Co-opted September 2019	To be agreed
Simon White	Elected May 2019	Finance

May 2019 Local Elections

There were 11 nominations for the 11 parish seats. All the nominations came from Independent candidates campaigning together as the minor party of Act for Cuxton Together (ACT). This resulted in all the ACT candidates being elected unopposed. They became the official members of Cuxton Parish Council on May 8th

Councillor	Party	Elected
Martin Burley	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Kay Hutchfield	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Natalie Jackson	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Elizabeth Maisey	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
John T. Manning	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Edwina Morrell	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Julie Porter	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Patricia Reynolds	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Hilary Morgan	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Tracy Thorley	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019
Simon White	**Independent:** Action for Cuxton Together	May 2019

All 11 Cuxton Parish Councillors are unpaid.

Parish Council Employees

Parish Clerk: Mrs June Nicholson (22 hours per week)
June joined the Parish Council in August 2019. She was due to begin the CiLCA training in March 2020 in order to become a qualified Clerk, but the start of the course has been delayed as a result of the Coronavirus pandemic. However, June has experience working in a range of roles within local government that will be an asset to the Council.
June is also the **Responsible Financial Officer** and is responsible for the financial management of Parish Council resources. She has undertaken extensive training in the use of the Parish Council's financial software, which provides detailed monthly information on the Parish Council's finances for each Parish Council meeting.
Clerk's Contact: 01634 730951 or cuxtonparish@btconnect.com

Assistant Parish Clerk: Mrs Josie Griffiths (10 hours per week)
Josie supports the clerk with office administration, administers allotment agreements, manages the Parish Council Facebook page, co-edits the Cuxton village newsletter and co-ordinates it's delivery.

The Parish Council extend sincere thanks to Josie for taking on additional responsibilities and working additional hours during July and August 2019 when the Parish Council were without a Clerk.
Assistant Clerk's Contact: newslettercuxtonparish@btconnect.com

Road Sweeper: Mr Bill Drake (20 hours)
The Parish Council have opted to employ a village road sweeper and receive an annual sum of money from Medway Council to cover Bill's salary, equipment and sundries. Bill is an invaluable member of the team, and the Parish Council are appreciative of his hard work in keeping our streets clean in all weathers.