

HILDENBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

60 Knowsley Way * Hildenborough * Tonbridge * Kent * TN11 9LQ

telephone: 01732 832367

email: Clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk

website: www.hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk

Annual Parish Meeting of Hildenborough Parish Council held in the Jim England Hall of the Village Hall, Riding Lane on Wednesday 15 March 2017 at 7.30pm

MINUTES

1. Chairman's Welcome

Miss C Sheldon, Chairman of the Parish Council, welcomed approximately 55 residents to the meeting. She hoped everyone had had time to look at the displays around the room and enjoy some refreshments. She gave a brief outline of the evening.

2. Apologies for Absence

There were two apologies from local residents.

3. Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting of 16 March 2016

These were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

4. Matters arising

There were no matters arising.

5. Parish Council Report for 2016/17

The Chairman reported that there had been significant achievements during the past year. One was that of achieving a 30mph speed limit through the village. This, the Council had been trying to achieve since the 1930s. Two other important achievements were that of the 40mph speed limit along Stocks Green Road and the completion of the improvements in Leigh Road outside Stocks Green School. A questioner asked what these were and Miss Sheldon replied it was the raising of the platforms. Cllr Valerie Dagger was thanked for her help in achieving all of these improvements.

There was one matter which continued to be outstanding, that of the investigation into parking in Hildenborough by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. This had been put on hold due to the Borough Council having to divert resources to the replacement of all of its parking meters as a result of the introduction of the new £1 coin.

5.1 Open Spaces

Mr Baker, Chairman of Open Spaces Committee, reported that the Village Green continued to be developed as a meadow and that the diseased Horse Chestnut Tree which had to be

felled had been replaced by a Mountain Ash Tree and it was hoped that a second would be planted later this year.

He said the Parish Council were very grateful to Hildenborough Conservation Group for their work in West Wood. They had coppiced another section and recently, working with volunteers, had worked on ditch clearance.

The biggest project for some years had been successfully completed at the end of October 2016, that of the refurbishment of the old children's play area and the installation of a fitness area for adults. He said this would not have been possible without a very generous grant from Veolia and also from many other local individuals and organisations, all of whom are listed on the thank you board beside the fitness and play areas. The whole area is now known as the Hildenborough Activity Zone. The Council was hoping this new equipment would encourage everyone to become more active. Already there were fitness or similar groups using both the Recreation Ground and West Wood as well as the regular users from Hildenborough CEP School and the Village stoolball and cricket clubs.

Good news had been received about the War Memorial. It has now been listed by Heritage England as a building of Special Historic Interest, Grade II and also KCC have finally agreed to have the repairs carried out. The Parish Council will be overseeing this, although no date has yet been fixed.

The Recreation Ground will see a number of events this summer, the first of which is the Hildenborough Road Race on 1 May, followed by the Scout's Music festival on 24 June and the Great Kent Cycle Ride is to use the area as a stopping off point on 14 July.

The Parish Council is to take part in the Great British Spring Clean on 18/19 March and residents were invited to take part. He thanked all those who regularly litter picked throughout the village.

5.2 Flood Warden Scheme

Mr Haugh reported the scheme is now working effectively and thanked all the volunteers, although he invited anyone interested to become a new volunteer warden as some had moved away or were no longer able to undertake the role. He went on to say the Environment Agency had provided a training session early in the year.

It had been announced recently that the Government had given approval to extend the Leigh Flood Barrier and added protection for Hildenborough. Construction would begin within two years and was planned to be completed by 2022.

A request came from the floor for the Hawden Stream to be dredged behind Leybank. Householders were keeping their sections clear but once the stream entered farm land this had been left, apart from the cutting back of bank vegetation.

5.3 Planning Committee

Mrs Coles, chairman of the Planning Committee reported that the Parish Council had commented on 100 planning applications during 2016, a decrease of 29 over 2015.

She commented on one notable planning application, that of the Raphael Medical Centre who had applied for redevelopment of part of the site and also an extension. This had been refused by the Borough Council's Area 1 Planning Committee.

The biggest response from residents was contained in the Borough Council's call for sites to be developed and included in the next Local Plan. There had been a number of sites put forward but only three had been judged suitable and deliverable by the Borough Council. There was one off Stocks Green Road for 109 houses, one on land at Chequers Farm for 20 houses and a smaller development of 16 in Greenview Crescent. The consultation went out to residents and the Parish Council had sent in their comments. The draft plan would be published during the late summer/autumn.

A questioner asked where the proposed development of Greenview Crescent was and was invited to look at the plans which were available at the meeting.

5.4 Finance

Mr Baker, Chairman of the Finance Committee, reported that the budget for 2016/17 was currently on target. He said that the Council had an income of £125,400+ of which £42,235 was specifically for Hildenborough Activity Zone and that the majority of the vat refund had been in respect of this development.

The biggest challenge the Council had faced this year had been the changes to the Borough Council's Financial Arrangements with Parish Councils. This was in response to budget cuts to the Borough Council and the need for equity between the parish and unparish areas. This had resulted in all the allowances once allocated being withdrawn and these included a basic allowance, allowances for management of the churchyard and lighting all of which was based on the number of residents on the electoral role. This had amounted to a loss of over £10,000.

We had been informed that for Band D properties the overall Council Tax for residents in 2017/18 would be, £1,621.32, of which £30.39 would be the Parish Council portion. The Parish Council had the lowest rate in the whole of the Borough. The Council Tax included contributions to KCC, the Borough Council, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Police.

Last year the Parish Council's Council Tax made a substantial contribution towards the new Activity Zone and this year the Council is intending to upgrade the kitchen in the Pavilion which is now very dilapidated, unhygienic and outdated. A substantial sum has been set aside for the conversion to LED of the council's lighting columns along Noble Tree road and Rings Hill. The cost of this will range between £8,500 and £18,000 depending on how much work is entailed in fitting the new fittings. The Council is looking into the possibility of providing a further 23 car parking spaces in its car park, but this will not be possible during the current financial year.

6. Kent Police Report

Sgt. Mark Ginsberg of Kent Police attended the meeting with PSCO Kim Hockey. Sgt Mark Ginsberg reported that crime was up by 14.4% during the past year, 12% in Kent as a whole. He said the biggest increase was in violent crime (35.4%). This was because there was far better reporting of domestic violence which included harassment on line. There had been 129 violent crimes reported in Hildenborough during the past year, but residential burglaries were down. He said that this year there had been no crime spikes as in the previous year. Crime continued to be centred around the station area with damage to and stolen vehicles.

Speed continued to be a big issue and the police had carried out enforcement operations during the year. Along the B245 there had been a joint operation with Kent Fire and Rescue when drivers of 40 vehicles had received penalty notices, mainly to local residents.

He said that continued austerity had resulted in a reduction in constables and that policing had changed considerably during the last few years. Now police did not have time to investigate all minor crimes and PCSOs were now undertaking more roles. Kent Police continued to target specific crimes as reported last year and in addition better safeguarding of victims and working with other agencies was now included. They had set up safeguarding hubs working with other agencies.

He said he was retiring this year after 30 year's service. He reflected on how the service had changed over the years since his initial appointment with the Metropolitan Police in 1987. The police nowadays cannot do everything they historically covered and the PCSOs have become the local eyes and ears, monitor crash and crime schemes. He made a plea to all present to be tolerant to this new approach.

There were two questions from the floor. A request that cycle paths are marked as such so pedestrians know where it is safe to walk, and the possibility of double yellow lines around the pinch point in Leigh Road to help alleviate congestion. Both these were matters which need to be raised with the Borough Council.

A further query was raised regarding cars parking on the pavement. Sgt Ginsberg said that it was not an offence to park on the pavement only if it resulted in obstruction, but it was an offence to drive on the pavement. Consequently in order to report an offence there had to be a witness to the driving up onto the pavement.

Another request was for a speed check along Leigh Road as residents, it was alleged, from the new houses were speeding along the road making it very dangerous.

7. Hospice in the Weald

Mr David Briggs, came to talk about the services provided by the Hospice in the Weald at Pembury.

He said they currently have 15 rooms all ensuite which cater for a wide range of terminal illness, cancer only accounting for less than 50%. They provide treatment such as blood transfusions and in all deal with 500 people a year. They also provide support for 800 people in their own homes. The aim is to try to make people's life more comfortable. The cost of running the Hospice was currently £7.1 mill. with only 11% being state funds and the rest being raised by themselves.

Currently they were planning to establish 10 Cottage Hospices across the area which covers Heathfield to Knockholt and Beneden to Edenbridge. The first site is in Five Ashes which now has planning approval for 10 double rooms to allow for carers/family to stay and help. The maximum stay will be for 14 days and will be via self referral supported by GPs. This should be open late 2018 or beginning 2019 to take the strain off Pembury.

Currently they are seeking sponsorship for The Herd of the Hospice. They have 25 horses, 8 of which are currently under sponsorship. They will be on display around the County between July and October and will then be auctioned.

Mr Briggs then went on to relate his own personal experience of using the Hospice services and facilities. He said the chaplain had provided great comfort which had resulted in him volunteering to become an Ambassador. He said the Hospice was there to provide support for the family long term, even years afterwards and to provide support for the patient to get as much benefit as possible from their life.

He left information leaflets for those attending.

He concluded by saying the Hospice have 1,300 volunteers in a variety of roles and invited residents to visit and to look around the gardens.

8. Cllr Mark Rhodes, Mayor of Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council

Cllr Rhodes began by saying that he was deputy Mayor during the previous year and took on the role as Mayor of Tonbridge & Malling in May of last year.

He said that the Mayor has many duties and opportunities to meet people across the Borough and wider afield and said he would show photographs of the events he and the Mayoress had attended to date and this totalled in excess of 130.

There were many events covered which included opening events such as the Tonbridge Food Festival, Tonbridge Winter Festival, being invited to school productions, attending the Remembrance Day services and attending various celebrations within the Borough. He also attending county wide events, such as the Civil Service at Rochester Cathedral, Gravesham Pocahontas Celebration and nationally, for instance an invitation to Buckingham Palace.

Events covered a wide range of subjects which included sporting events such as football and kick boxing, music festivals, health events raising awareness of diabetes, high blood pressure etc, carnivals, school events such as opening of a new gymnasium and library. He also undertook to support two charities himself as well as supporting events organised by the Lions and Rotary clubs.

9. Closing comments

The chairman, concluded by thanking the speakers, Cllr Valerie Dagger, the Borough Councillors, all the members of the Parish Council and their caretaker for all the work they had put in during the past year to support and improve the village. She went on to thank Pat Davies and the Management Team who looked after the Village Hall, our PCSOs and volunteer Flood Wardens and finally those manning the tables around the hall.

She made special note to thank Maurice Nairne for the work he had put in to produce the book Tales from a Kent Village which were ready for collection by subscribers or on sale to others.

Finally she thanked everyone for attending and wished them a safe journey home.