

Centre Piece for February Keys Magazine

Following Christmas and the New Year festivities the Parish Council met on Wednesday 10 January 2018 for its first meeting of the New Year. It was, by previous standards, a short meeting but nonetheless very productive with agreement being reached on several important issues.

There were many items covered in the Finance section of the meeting including confirmation of the return of the precept claim to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. The Council has, this year, kept the increase to below inflation at just under 2%, the rate for Band D properties being £30.93 compared to last year of £30.39.

The list of Assets owned by the Council was updated to include replacements and new purchases made during 2017/18 which included a second bench for the Activity Zone and extended wetpour for West Wood play area, a mower to keep the edge of the Village Green tidy, a fridge, kettle and new chairs for the Pavilion and an update on IT equipment for managing the Council's affairs.

The third quarter accounts were also circulated to members with projections for the financial situation at the end of this financial year provided there were no unexpected emergencies or occurrences.

The Internal Auditor had presented his report which showed everything to be in order on procedures and accounting. There were recommendations to look into updating the banking system which the Council has undertaken to do.

As has been reported earlier the Council is going to extend the West Wood play area during the coming Spring/Summer and replace the troublesome roundabout in the Recreation Ground. The latter has been a source of much frustration over several years, constantly seizing up and refusing to run freely for any length of time after greasing. The problem is the level of groundwater in the area which results in the bearing frequently being flooded or wet which in turn results in rusting.

The Council is looking to get input from local children as to what equipment they would like on both sites. The roundabout does not have to be replaced with another if children would prefer, for instance, a see-saw. The space is limited so it would have to be something of that nature to fit the area. If another roundabout was selected it would have to be a different design whereby the bearings are above ground, so sadly it would not be accessible for wheelchairs as is the current one.

In West Wood there will be sufficient funding for two small pieces of equipment and suggestions put forward were junior swings, a see-saw, cone climber and monkey bars. However, the Council is happy to take other suggestions made by children into consideration (price being the consideration!). If your child would like to take part in the selection please look on our website at the short questionnaire and let me have their response before 8th February. There is a very tight schedule if this equipment is to be in use by the summer. It would also be helpful if a small number of children would like to take part in the final selection of pieces of equipment, for instance, although swings are much the same, roundabouts and other equipment have many different designs. If your child (preferably 9 years old or above) would like to be included please contact me by email: clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk giving details of how I can contact them or by phone 01732 832367.

There is still great controversy on the proposals to cut the subsidies given to bus companies to provide services which are not financial viable. Two members attended a recent meeting on the subject and reported that there is to be a major consultation on this subject soon which the Council will be looking at.

The Annual Parish Meeting is now not far away. The date for your diary is **Wednesday, 14 March 2018**. Please note this is one week earlier this year because of the change to Parish Council Meetings being on the 2nd Wednesday of the month instead of the 3rd. There will, as usual, be an interesting evening for all residents. There will, of course, be the usual Parish Council Annual Report and report from Kent Police on matters concerning the village. This year our special guest will be from Riverhill House who will be telling us about its history and what is on offer to visitors today. The Council took the view that it would be better to reduce the number of speakers to just one in order they can have more time, there is more of an opportunity for residents to look at the displays provided by local organisations and so preventing the meeting going on too long.

Please do contact me if your organisation would like to put up a display to give information on what is on offer. Tables will be available, providing they are booked through me by 7 March 2018.

There do seem to have been a number of highways related problems recently. It all started with a vehicle flattening part of the hedge near to the BP Garage across the cycle path near to Fairfield Way. Kent Highways has now cut this back and will be replacing it in the Spring together with a protective fence. Other matters being looked into include the flooding which has again started to occur across the B245 near to Orchard Lea – it is thought this is due to a blocked ditch/drain and multiple potholes either side of the pedestrian crossing near to Hilden Avenue, not to mention the out of action belisha beacon near to the Medical Centre. The latter has a broken part which needs to be replaced which is currently out of stock – not for too long hopefully.

And, finally, a reminder that copies of Tales from a Kent Village are still available from me, price £10 (cheques payable to Hildenborough Parish Council). There have been many compliments about this popular publication, so if you are interested in Hildenborough's history this is going to be of interest to you. Copies are also available at the Farmers' Market on the 2nd *Tuesday* of the month when two Parish Council members will be there to listen to your queries and ideas as well as provide a selection of information including bus and train timetables.

As ever, do contact me if you have a query or idea on 01732 832367 or email clerk@hildenboroughpc,kentparishes.gov.uk

Pam Gow