

## **Centre Piece for February Keys**

At last the rain seems to have stopped to be replaced by some beautiful sunshine and heavy frosts. Outside it looks like a picture card of winter. It was very cold to turn out for the Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 20 January which had also, presumably, put off any residents from attending – or maybe everyone is either happy with what the Parish Council is trying to achieve or had no suggestions for improvement!

However, PCSOs Toni Matthew and Kim Hockey did attend and reported on the latest crime figures. These included three burglaries in various parts of Hildenborough as well as theft of and from a vehicle. A timely reminder for us all to make sure vehicles are secured and valuables kept elsewhere.

On this occasion the meeting was well within the 2.5 hrs agreed as the limit for meetings, finishing just before 9pm. This did not mean that matters were not thoroughly discussed. There were quite lengthy discussions on financial matters as the third quarterly accounts and end of year projections were presented. It looks as if the budget at the end of the year will be within that set in December 2014 which was pleasing news. There could, of course, be an emergency situation where all this may change before the end of March.

The Council had to consider quotations from insurance companies this year as the end of the three year agreement had been reached. There had been much preliminary work towards the provision of four separate quotations, all of which were very close not only in price but in coverage. The result was that the Council decided to accept the lowest quotation for a one year contract.

Have you noticed the new artificial surface around the slide in West Wood? You may wonder why it is covered in sand – I did. The suppliers said this should not be removed because it helps the new surface to bed-in. When members looked at this they felt that the surface would have been even better had it been extended further out at the bottom and consequently this is being looked into.

The annual tree safety survey has recently been undertaken and this has found a lot of dead wood overhanging footpaths. It is recommended this should be removed together with three trees which should be felled because of decay. This, of course, is expensive but nonetheless the Parish Council take the safety of residents very seriously and has accepted a quotation to undertake the work. It should be pointed out that the likelihood of a tree causing injury or death is very unlikely almost as unlikely as winning the lottery should you purchase a ticket. We are so lucky to have West Wood and all the trees around the Recreation Ground to enjoy but it does come with responsibilities so if you notice anything untoward within the woodland or any of the play areas do let me know. The areas are regularly inspected but things do go wrong in between these inspections.

On a bright note we welcomed Peter Richardson as our new caretaker at the beginning of January. He is now getting to grips with the many and varied responsibilities associated with his role. He, together with another member of the Parish Council, will undergo training for risk assessment to ensure all safety aspects are covered when the regular risk assessment inspections are undertaken.

Another problem yet to be resolved is that of the road improvements in Leigh Road outside Stock's Green School. By the time you read this the traffic calming measures should have been rectified to the original plans. However it is thought some of the parking problems may not have been resolved.

The Parish Council has requested the Borough Council (who are responsible for parking issues) to include this in the review of parking across the village. They have further requested KCC to look into rerouting the distributor route via Watts Cross to the B2027, supported by our County Councillor, although investigations into this will be long. This, of course, would contribute enormously towards a safer road for residents and school children alike both in Leigh Road and Stock's Green Road and for the installation of more stringent traffic calming measures.

The question of litter was raised again – members are very concerned about the accumulation of litter around the village in spite of the number of litter pickers who have volunteered over the last two years. One of our members who regularly collects litter on refuse collecting day usually gets at least one sack full. As a consequence members felt it would be a good idea to join in with the Borough Council's campaign to be held during the week and weekend of 4/5/6 March. Members are asking if any groups, schools or individuals would be willing to participate. Equipment, such as litter pickers, will be provided – **so do come and join us**. If you are willing to volunteer please contact me either by email or phone (contact details as usual at the end of this).

The Annual Parish Meeting creeps nearer. I hope you have it in your diary already, **Wednesday 16 March** in the Village Hall. We have two exciting speakers already confirmed and one further, hopefully, by the end of the month. Those already confirmed are Rev'd Tim Saiset who will talk about his time in the forces and include a little magic and a speaker from Hever Castle on its history. We do hope also to have a speaker from Balfour Beatty to update us on the construction of the dual carriageway for the A21. There will, as usual, be a report on the activities of the Parish Council during the past year, an opportunity to ask questions and there will also be an opportunity for any club, organisation or business in the village to display what they have to offer (not to sell services or products though). Members wanted to get the evening off to a sociable start by serving refreshments from 7pm so do come along and have an enjoyable and informative evening.

Don't forget you can contact us at the Farmers' Market on the second Tuesday of the month, 9 February is the next time between 10.00 and 11.00 am. or ring me on 01732 832367 or email [clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk)

*Pam Gow*