

Centre Piece for November Keys Magazine 2017

We were very lucky to miss out on hurricane Ophelia this week (quite a reminder of the damage caused during the storm of 16 October 1987 here) but what an amazing sky resulted! It was quite disturbing to see a yellow sky and having to put the lights on during the afternoon and did you notice the bright purple sky at sunset? It didn't last very long and I am sure many missed it.

The Parish Council Meeting on Wednesday 18 October proved to be very busy and productive. It was good to see that residents really do feel it is the place to bring their concerns forward. This month we had well over 20 residents, our County Councillor and PCSO attending.

One important concern was raised by our PCSO Toni Matthew. Although there were only three crimes to report in Hildenborough this month, one was of great concern as it had been perpetrated in other areas. This is the tampering of outside post boxes. Apparently fraudsters target these boxes by submitting applications for credit cards to be delivered to these houses and then breaking into them to collect them when they arrive. So if you have an outside post box please be aware that this could happen to you and take any necessary evasive action. Our PCSO (phone number in Keys Magazine) will give any advice or support you need.

There were three other issues of importance raised by residents at the meeting. You may remember last month I reported the Parish Council had concerns over keeping the Hawden Stream clear at the boundary of West Wood with Stocks Green Road houses. Following the letter sent to residents it became clear that the Parish Council and residents both were laying claim to ownership of the Stream. It was certainly not the intention of the Parish Council to cause upset and worry to residents that resulted from this letter and at their meeting they expressed their sorrow that this had occurred as it was only their concern to ensure as much as possible is done to protect houses in that area from flooding as had happened in 2013. The positive to arise out of this is that it is now established that residents of those houses with the Hawden Stream running along the boundary as well as those with the stream actually running well within their garden have ownership of the whole Stream and have given an undertaking to keep the stream clear of debris, with one resident volunteering to keep a watch on the offending culvert of 2013 to ensure its entrance is kept clear.

Another concern raised was that of flooding of gardens, blocked culvert and springs on the opposite side of Stocks Green Road. The railway embankment was repaired following subsidence a while back together with diverting the drainage system to ensure it didn't happen again. The Parish Council had raised this issue earlier with the authorities but it seems that no corrective action has been taken. They, will of course, be following this up again.

This led on to a related discussion on the Local Plan's proposal to develop the land in this area for housing. It was confirmed the Parish Council had already raised this issue in their response to the consultation on the Local Plan.

Finally there was a question of development of land behind houses in Tonbridge Road. This land had now changed its designation in that the owner had now expressed a view that they were willing for this to be included as housing development land. The Borough Council reported to the Parish Council that this was unlikely to be included in this Local Plan as the deadlines and consultations had passed and if this should be included the Plan would need to be delayed further.

One member raised yet again the question of the missing bus shelter outside the Vicarage. This is a heavily used bus stop and this week a number of residents were thoroughly soaked whilst waiting for a bus that had been delayed. The Parish Council has contacted the Borough Council over this matter and have been informed that it is 'top of the list' for replacement but action seems still to be some way off. It would help if anyone could give details of the vehicle which demolished the shelter in the first place when, instead having to wait for funding to become available, an insurance claim could be made to replace it. If you do know these, please contact me in the usual way – details below.

One decision taken at the meeting was that of removing the Leisure and Business Section off the Parish Council website. This is because it is out of date as contributors rarely inform us of changes to their details and it seems that most people 'Google' to find activities or services they require these days. The change will happen sometime during January 2018.

Did you have problems walking or waiting at the bus stop opposite the church during the recent burst water main in front of bus shelter? If you did SE Water has given an apology for this saying it should not have taken so long to address the problem. Apparently the inspecting engineer forgot to tick the 'urgent' box. However, they say they do not have plans to replace the water mains in that area in spite of the frequent leaks which occur. They do say they will monitor the situation.

The contractors are, once again, back in Hildenborough converting our sodium lights to LED. Soon they will be converting those belonging to the Parish Council along Noble Tree Road and Rings Hill as well as two outlying columns which were considered suitable.

Other good news is the rower in the fitness area has been repaired and replaced on site and the Parish Council decided to accept a quotation for the repair of wet pour in the older play area in the Activity Zone. Further attempts are to be made to get the roundabout working. If this fails the Council will need to consider replacing it. They are rather loathed to do this as the roundabout is so accessible to all being flush with the ground. A replacement roundabout would need to stand off the ground to avoid the problems experienced with the current equipment, that of flooding in the underground mechanism.

Finally, we have received an urgent appeal for volunteers to man the road closure for the Remembrance Day Parade. Several volunteers from previous years are not able to help this year.

Don't forget you can contact the Parish Council by email: clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk or phone us on 01732 832367 (do leave a message if the answer phone is on and I will get back to you as soon as possible). Two members will be at the Farmers' Market on Tuesday 14 November between 10.00am and 11am. when they will have the latest bus and train timetables (including the leaf timetable).

Pam Gow