

Centre Piece for August Keys

The Summer holidays are fast approaching and by the time you read this will be underway. It is always a good time of year to get out and about, enjoy the outdoors be it in your own garden, in the countryside or beside the sea.

Members, at the recent Open Spaces Committee Meeting, experienced the leisure areas provided by the Parish Council. They commenced their walk-about in West Wood with the recently extended play facilities. Members wondered whether it was possible to extend the seating within the play area to make it easier for parents to oversee their children's use of the wide range of equipment and this was subsequently agreed at the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 10 July. Parents can now look forward to two new benches later in the year. Although they are about to be ordered it takes a while for them to be delivered and installed.

The Village Green was the next stopping off point which all looked to be neat and tidy. Members wondered if some added feature could benefit the area. Several suggestions were put forward but did not meet with wholesale approval. If you have any ideas for improvements in this area do let us know.

Finally they arrived in the Recreation Ground which was looking rather splendid in the evening sunshine. They were able to finish off the meeting in the recently renovated Pavilion where they discussed the 3-Year Plan which was taken to the Parish Council Meeting on 10 July and during that meeting a number of decisions were made.

Firstly, many users of the crossing between Coldharbour Lane and the Medical Centre will be pleased to know, the Council decided to go ahead with asking KCC to provide enhanced belisha beacons (those containing small lights similar to those in Sevenoaks) to help alert drivers to the crossing. There have been so many near misses on this cross due to visibility issues that many are deterred from using it. Hopefully this will be money (around £6,000) well spent by the Parish Council in the not too distant future.

The other big issue discussed in the 3-year plan is for the next financial year, that of providing more parking spaces in the Recreation Ground car park. The cost of this is very high and would probably involve a one-off increase in Council Tax in the region of £20 for the year per residence. Because of the high cost they felt that they should undertake a consultation with residents and the methods are being planned at the moment. It is hoped to open this consultation up in September by the inclusion of details in September Keys (there is no Centre Piece in September as the Council does not meet during August). In order to seek the opinion of as many people as possible members are looking into various methods, for instance an online questionnaire, consultation form in Keys with boxes in the village to collect responses as well as other ideas. So please look out for this – your views really will matter.

During the Open Spaces Committee Meeting representatives of Hildenborough Conservation Group attended. This Group undertake coppicing and charcoal making as well as contributing to the flood protection scheme in West Wood. Their input is of great value to the whole community and the Parish Council is very grateful for their work and expertise. They have been awarded an Environmental Clean Up grant which they have used to purchase litter pickers of various sizes, gloves, bag holders etc to assist groups or individuals with litter picking. They are to be used by the scouts in September. This equipment is available to any other group or individual wishing to help keep our village a place to be proud of and a pleasure to be in. If you are willing to help with this please contact Hildenborough Conservation Group who will be willing to loan the requisite equipment.

Did you attend the Scouts Music Festival? It was a great success with many people able to enjoy the music and picnic in the Recreation Ground on a beautiful warm sunny day. The Scouts think about 1,500 people attended this free event during the opening time of 3pm to 11pm. Everyone has praised the standard of the bands performing proclaiming them to be of a much higher standard than in previous events. This is the fourth year this event has been held following the unfortunate disbandment of the previous annual firework party and provides valuable funding for activities which benefit all the young people enjoying being members of the various Scout groups in the village.

The Scouts are looking to find the way forward to address the problems encountered with the growth in popularity of this free event, more toilets to name one! With the increase in numbers security issues were raised which will require some action for next year's event. Our local PCSO was sorely missed at this year's event as he was unable to attend because his shift did not coincide with it.

Of interest to those residents who live in the floodable area, the Flood Forum met at the beginning of July and was given details of the latest amendments from the Environment Agency's plans for the upgrading of the Leigh Flood Barrier. These have been altered to allow for a 0.66m increase in height of the barrier instead of the planned 1m. The current infrastructure will be strengthened and the Hildenborough bund to help protect houses from the flow-back from the Medway will go ahead as planned together with the pump to avoid build-up of water behind it.

Have you been affected or seen the number of water leaks in the Village? As I write this there are three in Riding Lane and one in Coldharbour Lane which are fortunately not, at the moment, major bursts but nonetheless result in a significant loss of water. They have all been reported to SE Water. A meeting has been set up via our local MP for various interested authorities, including the Parish Council, to meet with SE Water to express their concerns about the number of recent major and minor leaks and bursts (six between the Hilden Manor and Leigh Road, 5 major bursts in the Sackville School area and three in London Road, one of which was a major burst and one which ran for around 18 months).

Finally, a call for a village diary to be set up was received following a clash of the Music Festival, School Summer Fair and Gardener's Flower Show which created gridlock in the centre of the village. The Parish Council, in the past, has tried to do this but with a great reluctance by organisers to inform them of their events. It was decided that it would be tried again by inserting details in Keys Magazine with a copy on the notice board outside the Village Hall. So if you are organising an event please do contact Keys to let them know in order that the chaos on 22 June can be avoided in the future.

Don't forget if you have any concerns or ideas do contact me on our new email address clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com by phone 01732 832367 or by letter to let us know of these. Members will be at the Farmers' Market on 13 August, so do look out for Karen Dobson and David Cuss who will be there to listen to your concerns or queries as well as supply bus and train timetables.

Have a great summer holiday.

Pam Gow