

## Centre Piece for December Keys Magazine

When members emerged from the Parish Council Meeting held on Wednesday 14 November they were greeted with a damp, dismal and foggy evening giving a clear reminder of the winter to come. However, when the sun does shine, what a display the autumn leaves are giving us this year. There have been many comments on the beautiful reds, browns and oranges in the Village.

It was good to see a goodly number of local residents at the Parish Council Meeting this month voicing their views on four different topics. Many residents at Hildenbrook Farm are concerned about the sales literature for the Merrybrook Estate which has been, following the landowner selling the land, split into lots to begin with and subsequently sold via auction as plots for building.

This area is of course well into the Metropolitan Green Belt where house building is not permitted. Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council has confirmed that there are no plans to move the area out of the Green Belt and it is not included in the draft Local Plan shortly to be considered by the Planning Inspectorate. The literature is also very misleading to prospective buyers by only partially quoting the Parish Council's view on the boundary of the Metropolitan Green Belt. The Council's view is that in order to provide more houses in the village it may be necessary to lift the Green Belt restrictions for land immediately adjacent to the built up area of the Village centre. It is not in favour of isolated development outside the confines of the built up Village area or in developments which would result in it becoming a conurbation of Tonbridge. The lesson to be learnt here is to check with the authorities on promotional sales pitches before committing yourself to buy.

It is the time of year to look at the financial position of the Council and at the November meeting members considered expenditure to date this year and looked at the provision for the next financial year. Expenditure is mainly related to the upkeep and development of open spaces owned by the Council. Following discussion, it was agreed that to finish off the newly refurbished and extended play areas in West Wood and the Recreation Ground with the provision of a hard wearing tarmac footpath through and leading up to them would be a great improvement. There are two reasons for this, firstly the stony nature of the current paths results in gravel being transported by feet onto the very expensive wetpour safety surface which is resulting to unnecessary wear and secondly, the footpath in West Wood is becoming worn and wet in places. Quotations for this are being sought so it will soon be known if all this can be achieved next year. One other concern is that of the car park in the Recreation Ground where constant filling of potholes has almost reached its limit, again quotations are awaited for the resurfacing of part of this area.

There have been many compliments about the extension to the play area in West Wood, the Cheddar Gorge being cited as being a particular favourite. With the new wet pour surfaces it is hoped that this equipment will all be usable for much of the winter ahead.

During the public session of this meeting the proposal of KCC to further restrict the hours of work to its libraries was raised. It is proposed to cut the hours at Hildenborough to 15 per week from its current 23. This is a great shame since recently it has become a great hub of activity for the community. Whenever I go in there I see groups enjoying an activity, others using the computers or children enjoying story sessions. It would be to the detriment of the community if some of these activities need to stop –if you feel the same do sign the petition which will be available in the

chemist and I am sure, also the Library. The KCC consultation is online until 29 January so make sure you make your views known there too.

The Council approved its response to the Section 19 Consultation on Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council's draft Local Plan. This will shortly be input onto their website and will also be available by the time you read this for residents to read on the Parish Council website. The main concerns of the Parish Council on the proposed development for housing on land along Stocks Green Road are the lack of any thought for the provision of infrastructure to support this development. For other areas proposed for development in the draft Local Plan infrastructure development has been included, but it is clear that little thought has been put into the availability of medical services, provision of school places, the effects on the drainage system downstream which is already overloaded during times of heavy rainfall, and provision for extra traffic and footfall in Hildenborough.

Another concern raised at the Meeting was that of the provision of school transport for children living in Mill, Vines and Riding Lanes. At very short notice, I am sure you are aware, the dedicated bus was withdrawn leaving the children to walk along these lanes to the main road. There is no provision of footpaths along any of them thus making it extremely dangerous during the dark evenings and mornings. The result of this has been increased car transportation along already busy roads. To resolve the situation it has been agreed to support, for a trial 10 week period, the funding of a bus by our KCC member Cllr Harry Rayner's Members Fund and a one off donation from the Parish Council. The intention is to prove to KCC that this route is in fact viable when hopefully they will reinstate it.

The Village Green was also a topic for discussion. Residents immediately overlooking or very near to it were circularised to ask their views on whether it should be mowed regularly or continued to be allowed to develop as a meadow. The response was very poor with no conclusive way forward so it was decided to look at this in greater detail at the Open Spaces Meeting in early January. So if you have views on this please contact me before Christmas.

One last request – this time to dog owners. Please keep your dogs on leads when crossing fields where livestock is present. This time of year many animals are carrying young and uncontrolled dogs often scare them - be a good neighbour and let your dog and the animals living there enjoy the environment.

As ever if you have a concern, comment or idea do contact me in the usual way, via email [clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk) by phone 01732 832367 (do leave a message if I am not able to come to the phone at that time) by letter to the usual address or meet up with one of your Councillors at the Farmers' Market on 11 December between 10am and 11am. They will also have copies of our publications for sale – **Tales from a Kent Village, Hildenborough as seen through the Parish Council Archives** at £10 and **Hildenborough from A to Z** at £9.50. They would be a great Christmas present for anyone interested in the history of the Village.

Wishing everyone a very happy and peaceful Christmas and New Year.

*Pam Gow*