

Centre Piece for February 2020 Keys Magazine

It was lovely to have some beautiful sunny days recently but as I write this it is back to heavy cloud and drizzly rain. We did have flood alerts before Christmas and as I write there continues to be laying water in the Sports Ground in Tonbridge.

Our flood warden team were alerted and several volunteered to help when flooding threatened one resident, supported by Borough Council officers. Riding Lane was flooded and closed just before Christmas and currently is in need of repairs where the surface has been destroyed as a result of the flood. Other wardens were out checking for blocked drains and some even managed to clear debris or report to KCC who responded to requests for help. This was all very minor compared to the flooding in 2013 but nonetheless enabled us to test responses to the system set up to respond to such emergencies. We have several flood wardens to thank for their help which was greatly appreciated but it also raises to the fore again that we continue to have three vacancies. We have one and possibly two new volunteers but could really use a further two or three since in the event of a flooding emergency it will inevitably be the case that some wardens will be away or unable to respond for other reasons. Please do contact me if you are able to help (details at the foot of Centre Piece).

Most of us have never thought of Hildenborough as being a place where residents and visitors do not care for the environment but recently there has been cause to question this assumption. Recently the Village has suffered from bouts of vandalism and reports of drug abuse. Costs to the Parish Council are mounting as the Pavilion has suffered damage to the weatherboarding, the picnic table and wet pour in the Recreation Ground, and in West Wood to the litter bins and broken glass left along the service road and in the play area. Considerable amounts of litter are being thrown out of car windows in the Recreation Ground car park and throughout the village, so much so that our maintenance contractor has needed to take sacks of rubbish to the recycling centre. The situation has not been any better at West Wood with Hildenborough Conservation Group also coming to the rescue to help clear it. There have also been reports of drug abuse during the evenings.

The police, has of course, been alerted to all these problems and criminal damage. However, it would be extremely helpful if you see littering, or damage of any type to report it the police. We appreciate it may be time consuming but if the police are not made aware of these events they will not realise that it is happening with the result that they will not take action. All you need do is go online to Kent Police and complete their form or ring 101 to give a verbal report. It would also be helpful if you could email or phone me to let me know so that the Parish Council has an overall picture.

Let us move on to happier topics. The Council considered, at their meeting on 8 January, ideas for improving the Village Green. In next year's budget an allocation of funds has been made for this. During the past year the Council has received requests for seating and this

will be one of the considerations. Other ideas included making a focal point of some sort, planting a few more trees and developing a picnic area. This will be discussed at the next Open Spaces Committee meeting to be held on 15 January. More news of the proposals next time.

The Parish Council also received a request from the family of a previous resident of Hildenborough to erect a memorial seat in the Recreation Ground. They did agree to this and the seats looks, from the illustration, as if it will be a great asset to the area. The Parish Council is always ready to consider such requests for the areas they own (West Wood, Recreation Ground and Village Green).

The promised belisha beacon upgrade with enhanced globes has yet to materialise and I am sure the residents who experienced a very near miss whilst crossing yesterday evening on that very crossing will be very pleased when this has been completed. The Council will be chasing this up, as clearly these residents, are not alone in experiencing vehicles either failing to stop or skidding when realising at the last minute that someone is on the crossing. The age old problem of vehicles speeding along the B245 and other rural roads is always to the fore. This seems to be an almost unsolvable problem as the fault lies with the driver of the vehicle and the extensive publicity given to the dangers of speed does not seem to register with them in spite of speed limits and warning signage.

There seem to be signs of much change around the village during the coming years as large employers seem set to move premises. There has been much consternation expressed by a few residents but the Council is unable to take action or make comment on what could or couldn't be the outcome. They will, of course, be able to comment on any planning applications received, and make representations on the loss of employment opportunities in the village.

The question of the investigation by the Borough Council into parking in the village was again raised. Apparently suggested solutions are in the pipeline but have yet to reach the Parish Council. Later on there would be consultation with residents but we do not have any time scale for this. Hopefully it will be resolved in 2020 but since the request was originally made in 2015 we can only hope!

As ever do contact us if you have comments, need information or just have good ideas. You can ring me on 01732 832367 or email on clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com (the old email address will not reach me). A member of the Parish Council will be at the Farmers' Market on 11 February between 10 and 11am.

Pam Gow

