

## **Centre Piece for January Keys Magazine.**

The latest Parish Council Meeting was held on 12 December and with only one local resident being present proved to be the shortest for some considerable time. I think everyone was intent on Christmas preparations or following the National political situation which was receiving blanket coverage on all tv and radio channels. However it was a very productive meeting.

The level of local council tax was agreed by members. This will be rising below the rate of inflation and for Band D properties will rise by just £0.87 for the Parish Council portion from £30.93 to £31.80. This pays for all the services and improvements made for residents by the Parish Council which includes the provision of play and recreation facilities in West Wood and the Recreation Ground. The Council had been complimented on its provision of the extended children's play facilities in West Wood by the Safety Play Inspector.

Further improvements for West Wood and the Recreation Ground play areas were agreed at the December meeting, that of providing tarmac footpaths to and through West Wood play area and through the new play area in the Recreation Ground. These footpaths will help keep the safety surface and play equipment mud free and give some protection from the damaging gravel to the wet pour surfaces. The safety surface surrounding the roundabout is also to be overlaid. All this will happen when weather conditions are suitable.

The car park was also another topic for discussion. Numerous deep potholes have been infilled over the past few years and have now reached the state where a professional job is required. The kerbing at the entrance has also been destroyed by vehicles driving over it onto the verge. It is proposed that this kerbing is replaced a little further back and the potholed area is patched. It may be necessary to have other work undertaken following the initial work. Again this will not be able to be undertaken until weather conditions permit.

The Council has received a grant from our local KCC member, Cllr Harry Rayner's Members Combined Grant towards the provision of a school bus for children living in Mill, Vines and Riding Lanes for a trial period during the Spring Term. The Parish Council will be contributing £1,000 towards this venture which it is hoped will address the problem of children having to walk up to a mile along narrow, footpath free roads where thoughtless vehicle drivers speed without thought of pedestrians, cyclists etc during the dark mornings and evenings.

The Parish Council felt that the Drop in Session provided by the Environment Agency was very informative on their plans for the upgrading of the Leigh Storage Area and the building of the Hildenborough Embankment. There were several officers there to answer questions about this project which it is planned will be constructed between 2020 and 2023. It is projected that this project will provide protection for all the houses in Hildenborough who were flooded in 2013 – only time will tell.

Frustrations, however, have been experienced by the Hildenborough Flood Forum who meet regularly with 'experts' from all the authorities involved in the provision and maintenance of vital services, such as water management. At their latest meeting Southern Water were unable to respond to the questions submitted to them in advance as the representative attending the meeting had not been provided with the answers!

The Consultation on the provision of Library Services in Kent is open until 29 January. Details of the Libraries, Registration and Archives Strategy 2019-2022 can be found on the KCC website and are available in the Library. The Strategy has five key proposals which are all very worthy but is proposing to address these with, in most Libraries throughout the County, a reduction in the hours of opening. In Tonbridge there would be a reduction of 18 hours and, in particular, Hildenborough of 8 hours. Do make your thoughts on this known via the Consultation Questionnaire. This can be found on the KCC website and also details are available in the Library. There is also a Library Petition which is putting forward the view that the reduction from 23 hours per week to 15 hours per week opening time in Hildenborough will not leave sufficient time to address the needs of the community. You will find this in the chemist if you wish to read their statement and put your name to it.

I think a number of local residents as well as those who have moved away will be receiving a lovely surprise at Christmas judging by the sales of our latest publication, 'Tales from a Kent Village, Hildenborough, as seen through the Parish Council Archives'. Requests for copies have been received from as far afield as Norfolk as well as a number from our local community. Copies are still available from me or from the Farmers' Market between 10 and 11 am on the second Tuesday of the month (next date will be 8 January) and it costs just £10.

I would like wish everyone a Happy New Year and to remind you that the Council is always pleased to hear from you either with ideas, concerns or just queries on services provided. Members will be present at the Farmers' Market on 8 January between 10 and 11 am or you can email

[clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk) phone (01732 832367) and please do leave a message if I am not able to answer the phone when you call and I will get back to you as soon as possible or by letter to the usual address.

