

CENTRE PIECE FOR FEBRUARY 2021 KEYS MAGAZINE

As I sit writing this first Centre Piece of 2021 it is very wet, dismal and gloomy as I glance through the window and that is how I feel the New Year has begun with the upsurge in COVID related illness. However, as I look a little closer at the garden I can see buds appearing on the daffodils bringing hope of Spring just around the corner when hopefully there will be the prospect of a better year ahead. Certainly, the vaccine to address the virus resulting in the current severe lockdown, will, when it reaches and is offered to all in the country should help to give us a little of what used to be regarded as a 'normal' life back again. It was with this in mind that the Parish Council on Wednesday 13 February was viewing the year ahead by making and confirming plans for improvements in 2021/22.

The good news was the budget for this current year is on target and most of planned development and maintenance work had been successfully achieved. There was news that the new seat for West Wood is to be delivered and installed this month. It is to be suitably positioned opposite the pump cycle track beside the service road. The Council had received suggestions that it would be a good idea to provide a seat along this road to enable those in need of rest to stop off as they travel up the hill towards the Medical Centre and the main road. The view is not extensive but there is plenty of wildlife and a variety of plants, trees and flowers to view, particularly the dog roses in summer.

More mundane matters were also considered at this meeting, not least, consideration of the projected financial position at the end of the financial year, 31 March. All budgets seem to be mainly on target, and barring emergencies the Council should be in a secure position at that time. However, they are looking to the future when many replacements and improvements are required, and as reported earlier, have set a budget which results in what looks to be a very steep increase in the Parish Council's claim for Council Tax in 2021/22, but in fact, the 25% increase for Band D properties (proportionately more for higher bands and less for lower) is of just 17p per week or 73p per calendar month. This certainly represents good value for money when you consider what is provided for this, for example the maintenance and development of two large recreation areas, woodland walks, 2 large children's play areas, ball court, fitness area for adults, pavilion providing changing and refreshment making facilities, street lighting to the station and outlying areas, free car park and currently funding for highways related projects. Residents, it should also be pointed out, enjoy one of the lowest rates of parish council tax in Kent.

During the coming year the Council is looking towards either carrying out or setting some funds aside for future development of the storage facilities beside the Pavilion, for security reasons lighting for the car park, with the increase in the dog population a dog exercise area, resurfacing the cycle track, some information signage on the Village Green, play equipment for disabled children (the roundabout suitable for wheelchair users had to be removed because of unavoidable waterlogged conditions) as well as the provision of a solid footpath around the Recreation Ground to enable it to be fully used during the winter/wet times of year.

If you would like to make comment on any of the proposals above, particularly car park lighting, the dog walking area and the footway around the Recreation Ground, please do not hesitate to contact us, preferably by email to clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com or by phone 01732 832367. It is, at the moment, more difficult to obtain feedback from residents due to the pandemic resulting in no 'live' meetings which in effect restricts residents to attending Parish Council Meetings via Zoom (invitation is always on the Agenda on the website www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk/) or email or phone calls.

As you will remember members had been in the process of organising a monthly litter pick around the village but due to the lockdown this has, sadly, required this to be postponed. However, there is nothing to stop you, on your own, litter picking when out taking exercise. Just a warning though, if you do please ensure you are wearing suitable gloves and use a litter picker. We would be most concerned for anyone attempting this without taking these precautions, particularly at this time.

The Parish Council continues to be concerned about the amount and collection of litter around the village. They have been in contact with the Borough Council who manages the refuse contract and they have informed us that the schedule for emptying the litter bins around the village is to be updated to try to ensure that all bins are emptied regularly. The dog waste bin emptying schedule which I receive many queries over is supposed to be completed on a weekly basis. However there are many reports of other items being deposited in them, not least soiled nappies. The Borough Council is monitoring this. Just a gentle reminder to offenders – please use your black bin to deposit such items and leave the dog waste bins for their specified purpose of bagged dog waste.

It was reported to the meeting on Wednesday, that Hildenborough Conservation Group had once again completed coppicing a section of West Wood, making charcoal and refreshing some of the brash bund for flood control purposes. The Council is very grateful for their work in this area and thanks them all, particularly during this very difficult year when COVID regulations had to be observed curtailing much of the communal activity during their work in the wood.

Kent Highways have been contacted and are dealing with the flooding in Riding Lane, due to obstruction across the grill at the entrance to the culvert, and the large area in Leigh Road where the gulleys seem to be blocked.

At their recent meeting, the Council, discussed a request for play equipment for the children of Riding Park during the lockdown. Unfortunately play equipment installation takes a long time to plan, fund raise to pay for, and get it installed, so it was not a practical proposition. During 'normal' times the play equipment is adequate for needs in the Recreation Ground.

As always don't forget you can make contact with the Council by email or phone. You can also attend any of their, currently, virtual meetings with links on our website.

Contact details: clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk/
01732 832367

Keep safe,

Pam Gow