

Centre Piece for April Keys Magazine 2021

During a very stormy evening the Parish Council held their virtual Annual Parish Meeting on Wednesday 10 March. I think everyone was pleased that it was a virtual meeting since they could at least attend in the dry comfort of their own homes and not battle the wind and rain outside. It was pleasing to note that a large number of local residents came along, albeit virtually!

This is the first time that the Annual Parish Meeting has been a virtual one and it was sad in some respects that members were unable to mingle and chat with interested residents. It was even more sad that we were unable to see everyone as they were muted and the video turned off to conserve bandwidth. This has been a problem for our virtual meetings during the past year with one, two or more of us losing connection at different times, and the Council wanted to try to avoid this, if at all possible in order that nothing was missed – and it worked!

There were reports from all the chairs of the Council's Committees (Open Spaces, Finance and Planning) on the past year's achievements or, in this particular year, lack of achievements. Cllr Haugh on behalf of the Open Spaces Committee reported that there had been many challenges during the course of the year, not least opening and closing of various facilities, vandalism and arson in both playgrounds and illicit camping in West Wood. The Council has, as I am sure you all know, done everything they possibly can to keep facilities open and safe for residents to use. However, they continue to experience a number of residents not following the rules clearly in place on all the current facilities open and to their great surprise actually using areas which are closed showing no regard for their own and others safety. For instance, the ball court, in line with Government regulations is currently closed but organised games are frequently being reported to me whereby a number of, generally young, people are playing games inside. This shows a complete disrespect for all the Council's endeavours to keep the community safe.

Plans for the future include looking into the provision and hopefully the beginning of construction of the footpath around the Recreation Ground, the replacement of the storage facilities and addressing the ponding, if at all possible, on the Village Green. There are other projects in the pipeline but all those and those mentioned above are very much dependant on COVID.

Cllr Andrew McNeil gave the finance report at the Annual Meeting saying that £66,000 will be spent by the end of the year which is slightly under budget due to restrictions on what could and couldn't be done during the pandemic. Receipts have amounted to £84,000 and reserves have been set aside for emergencies, ash die-back etc of £65,000. The precept, as reported in previous Centre Pieces was also noted.

There were also reports on the three major planning proposals for the village during the year which are either still being built, requiring planning permission or have been withdrawn.

Many highways related items were of particular interest to residents such as speed limits, speeding along lanes, speed calming measures and parking. Residents were asked to send in details to me in order that they could be considered for the revision, later this year, of the Highways Improvement Plan we lodge with KCC.

The major part of the evening was that relating to the development of a Hildenborough Neighbourhood Plan.

If you were not able to log on and join the meeting do not worry you too can still be involved. More details of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan will be on our website, including, it is hoped, the presentation given to those who joined the meeting yesterday evening. Below is a very potted

version, but do watch out for further details in the coming months on our website www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk or in Keys

The Neighbourhood Plan is being developed to plan for the future needs and requirements of residents living here. When this plan has been agreed by residents (via a referendum) and the Local Authority it will be taken into account when planning applications are considered, infrastructure is updated etc in order that the needs of residents are taken into account. It will cover the whole environment.

The natural environment will cover such aspects as conservation of flora and fauna, land management for flood prevention taking into account climate change in relation to the village, particularly flooding in the area. Buildings will be covered such as housing needs for all of society, the preservation of the character of the village etc. Amenities would be an important aspect, the provision of leisure and community facilities as well as open spaces to ensure quality of life. The economic structure of the village would also be covered which would include business development and employment opportunities. Of course, all this is very dependent on the infrastructure supporting any development such as transport, education, health, and services (power, water, drainage etc).

So, if you think you could contribute please do get in touch – just email me clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com . If you would like to be involved in developing a Plan for the future of Hildenborough to ensure the needs, concerns and vision for the future of the community in Hildenborough are included in this Plan which will last for at least the future 10 years make sure you let us know what you think. During the coming month we will be gathering together a list of all those who are interested in participating to see what everyone has to offer – it may be a skill, it may be an interest in a particular area, or it may be just enthusiasm and a willingness to give some time to help in some unspecified way so please come forward and make contact.

If you do have any concerns, ideas or queries do contact me either by phone 01732 832367 (please leave a message if I do not answer – I only work part time – and I will get back to you as soon as I can), by email clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com or letter to the Parish Council address. Don't forget to keep up to date by looking at the Parish Council website – it contains all minutes and agenda of meetings, Centre Piece, Keys, information on the Council, photos, contact details of members, Borough and County Council members, our MP and so much more. www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk/

Pam Gow