

Centre Piece for May 2021 Keys Magazine

We are all pleased that life is gradually seeing a return to more normality thanks to everyone playing their part by following the rules of social distancing and hand washing etc. Even the gardens are beginning to look brighter with all the spring flowers in spite of the heavy frosts we have suffered during the past week. As I write the blossom is magnificent, with even the pink of the apple beginning to come out.

The Parish Council had their first ordinary meeting since February, on Wednesday 14 April, 2021 as the March meeting was devoted to the Annual Parish Meeting. The Council was very pleased to see that over 40 local residents attended the Annual Parish Meeting which was informative and resulted in a number of local residents' questions being answered. To review this see the minutes on our website www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk A number of local residents came forward to volunteer to take part in formulating the Neighbourhood Plan. The Council is currently seeking the best way to take this forward in order to involve everyone. They will be in touch shortly with all those who have volunteered to up date them (maybe before you read this).

The meeting on the 14th was long and lively during which a number of important issues were discussed. After an eventful start with Zoom refusing to send members to the waiting room to be admitted the meeting finally got underway a little later than usual. The chair welcomed everyone and then expressed the Council's condolences to the Royal Family on the sad death of the Duke of Edinburgh last week.

Normal business is always started with comments, questions or requests from local residents and this meeting was no exception. Members were informed that the Borough Council is seeking to reduce the number of Borough Councillors to around 43/44 at the next election in 2023. The Boundary Commission will be carrying out this work and it is thought that Hildenborough may have to share a Borough Councillor with at least one other Ward. No details are known yet and we were reassured to hear that the Parish Council would be consulted on this matter.

There was a lot of financial business to cover during this month's meeting, it being the first meeting after the end of the financial year. The internal auditor had inspected all the accounts and related papers and had sent his report in to be circulated to all members. This recorded that everything was in order. Forms have to now be submitted to the external auditors for their comments on the accounts and the measures the Council has in place to prevent fraud or misappropriation of funding. In due course you will see these papers displayed on the notice board outside One Stop and on our website.

Many of the items concerned the open spaces the Council manages (Recreation Ground, Village Green and West Wood). It was agreed to accept a quotation for the replacement of the two garages on the Recreation Ground during the summer. It will be a substantial building of approximately the same size as those currently in place but, of course, a major task will be in removing all the contents which are currently stored there whilst the construction is underway.

Another area of concern has been for some years the ponding which occurs on the Village Green most winters and often runs through to neighbouring properties. The Parish Council has on several occasions sought solutions to this problem and it seems the only sensible way would be to connect it to the main drainage system. This is not, of course, as simple as laying a pipe and connecting to the nearby system. Permission needs to be obtained from Southern Water and KCC in the form of a legal agreement but this is only possible in certain circumstances. The Council is now attempting to

see if this is feasible and affordable but have been warned it will take a long time because of the number of legal hoops and authorities involved.

However, the good news is the Parish Council is to fund two further planters for the Village Green to be planted with a donation received. It is thought these will be situated near or on the newly paved area.

An important development is the formation of the litter picking group to try to address the continuing and increasing problem of litter throughout the village. A number of residents have requested litter pickers in order to help. The Borough Council's contractor seems to be struggling to keep up with refuse collections in spite of their new schedule. Our litter bins are timed to be collected every Tuesday but they do not often seem to find them all! It would be very helpful if everyone picnicking or snacking around the village, travelling through it, or visiting our parks would take their rubbish home to dispose of it rather than throwing it on the ground, particularly if the numerous litter bins are full. If you would like to join the newly formed litter picking group please give me a call on 01732 832367 or just send an email.

The good news received just before Easter was that the Foucham's Crossing of the main line was to be temporarily closed. Concerns had been raised about the safety of pedestrians at this crossing as it was situated just around a bend and with fast approaching trains it was not possible to see them. Network rail had instructed train drivers to alert pedestrians to their approach by hooting. However, it was decided that this was insufficient to warn groups of walkers trying to cross the line and had the adverse knock on effect of causing disturbance to nearby residents and so a 6 month temporary closure with a diversion has been agreed by KCC.

Other important issues were raised at the meeting, those of speeding vehicles through the village, uneven footways and lighting from the station to the village. The Council will be pursuing a resolution to these problems with the relevant authorities of the police and KCC.

Don't forget if you have any comments, queries or ideas do contact me on clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com or your question may be answered on our website www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk We hope that members will once again return to the Farmers' Market on the second Tuesday of the month so do look out for them. They will also have copies of our two publications for you see and purchase. As ever the quickest way to make contact is by phone 01732 832367 (please leave a message if I do not answer and I will get back to you as soon as possible provided you leave your contact number).

Pam Gow