

## Centre Piece – January 2022 Keys

We wish everyone a **Happy New Year** with the hope that there will be much to celebrate during 2022. We know there are celebrations planned for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee in June, but hopefully there will be many other events to enjoy too.

**Tree Planting** – Some of you will have noticed a large group of adults and children on a very rainy Saturday morning in December working hard in West Wood to plant many new trees which will grow to replace some of the ash trees which have sadly been infected with ash die back and felled. Many more will, in the coming year, meet the same fate but hopefully all will be replaced with new species.



**It was wet and cold but nobody minded helping with replacing the felled ash trees.**



**Planning Applications** -As I am sure many of you know the Parish Council's Planning Committee meet fortnightly to consider whether to comment on planning applications validated by the Borough Council. This month there were two notable applications put forward on behalf of Fosse Bank Schools. The Parish Council put forward objections to these for a number of reasons, not least because of the proposal to build housing in the Metropolitan Green Belt and Historic Parkland which is completely isolated from other development in Hildenborough. For the Council's comments do look on our website under planning committee meeting minutes for 22 November ( [www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk/](http://www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk/) )

**Budget for 2022/23** – The Council agreed their budget for the coming year at their meeting this month. They agreed an increase of 25% which results in an increase of £11.02 per year for Band D properties (this is 92p per month or 21p a week). This has again been necessary, mainly because of ash die back and the need to have many more trees felled. The Council has allocated reserves to cover this over the past few years but it will not prove to be sufficient. In addition the Council is to fund improvements to the highways, resurface the ballcourt and in view of the problems occurring in the car park provide some lighting.

**Flood wardens** – The Council is again updating the Emergency Plan for the village which includes a section on flooding. As I am sure many of you know we have a flood warden scheme established to help when flooding is expected or during the

aftermath of a flooding event. **We are in need of more volunteers** as some have moved away or retired. If you are able to help please make contact with me – it is not too onerous and training and equipment is given by the Environment Agency.

**Highways related matters** – The Parish Council has a Highways Improvement Plan which KCC support. Reported to the Council on Wednesday 8 December, KCC were looking into a number of improvements. The Council agreed to allocate funding to help provide enhanced belisha beacons for the crossing by Riding Lane, and improved signage. KCC are also looking, once again, at making the crossing safer for school pupils crossing at Watts Cross to Mill Lane. Plans for this are awaited, as is a solution to the problem parking opposite the Harvester Garage. Also under consideration is replacing the central white line at the far end of Riding Lane with road edge white lines to ensure drivers are more aware of the width of the road and do not end up in the ditch (as many have already done).

**Police** – You have probably seen or met our local PCSO, James Billson. He sends us monthly reports which can be found on our website. He is also happy to be contacted with information or queries by email on [James.Billson2@kent.police.uk](mailto:James.Billson2@kent.police.uk)

**Snow** -Should it snow this winter the Parish Council have salt bins which can be used to make footways etc safe. There are two in the Library car park, one on the corner of Riding Lane/Tonbridge Road, one in the Council's car park and one near to 15 Brookmead. If any become depleted please let us know either by ringing **01732 832367** or by email: [clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com](mailto:clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com)

**Tesco Community Grant** – The Litter Picking Group have been fortunate in being selected as a contender for a grant of up to £1,500. Please support them by voting at Tesco from the first week in January. The more votes the bigger the prize!

As ever, do contact me if you have comments, queries or ideas using the phone no./email address above. Don't forget there will be a member at the Farmers' Market on 11 January. There will also be copies of the Council's publication Tales from a Kent Village, Hildenborough at a cost of £10.

*Pam Gow*