

CENTRE PIECE FOR NOVEMBER KEYS MAGAZINE 2022

Autumn seems to suddenly be well underway judging by our garden where the autumnal colours are beginning to show as well as the leaf fall commencing. The long hot summer has now receded into memory!

Parish Council Meeting 12 October: The Parish Council had some catching up to do at their meeting held on 12 October as it was their first meeting since the beginning of July, due to the annual recess during August and the cancellation of the September meeting due to the period of mourning for Queen Elizabeth II.

Co-option of new member: They were able to appoint and welcome a co-opted member following the resignation of a member in May. He is Mike Woodham who looks to be an excellent addition to the Council and Open Spaces Group.

Agenda items: Many of the items on the Agenda in October were associated with the finance and the management of the Council's open spaces. Among other necessary replacement items and repairs to equipment, approval for expenditure on the establishment of a water connection for the Village Green to enable the watering of plants and trees was agreed. The external auditor's report had been received and it was pleasing to note that this was all in order.

Finance 2023/24: It is that time of year, once again, when consideration has to be given to setting a budget for 2023/24. As we all know the year ahead is going to be very difficult for many households who are facing increased expenditure. Currently the Parish Council's budget is on target for 2022/23 and with this in mind consideration was given to the future. There are two areas in need of improvement/replacement, that is the replacement of the junior climbing apparatus and the improvement of the footways in West Wood, so these two will have the highest priority. For the more long term the replacement fencing of play areas and the ball court will need to be considered.

Ball Court on Recreation Ground: On the bright side, the ball court has now had drainage installed and been resurfaced. The new backboards and basket ball rings are shortly to be installed as are temporary games lines. The permanent games lines will need to wait until the right weather conditions in Spring 2023. I know many young people have been keen to try it out but we have need to keep it out of action to allow the drainage and new surface to settle properly.

Gas main replacement: You will have noticed that half the Recreation Ground car park is out of use at the moment as the gas main replacement contractors are storing their equipment there, in order to save a possible road closure. They have been extremely helpful in keeping us and those affected updated with progress. Immediately after starting, they hit their first problem in having to dig a trench instead of being able to tunnel to insert the new main. This unfortunately has extended the time it will take to 9 weeks. Hopefully, at the end of all this, we will no longer have the smell of gas in the area from the old deteriorating gas main.

Litter Picking: The litter picking group has been very busy during the summer, helping to keep the area looking at its best. If you can spare sometime during the first Saturday of the month (equipment supplied) please just turn up at West Wood or the Recreation



Ground at 10am. It will be greatly appreciated by the Parish Council and residents alike.

Highways matters always seem to be high on the agenda and this month was no exception. The bollards have been installed opposite the Harvester Garage which will hopefully help to keep the footway clear for pedestrians, push chairs and wheel chairs to enable them safe passage to and from the village. Lighting on Rings Hill bridge over the railway is soon to be installed, hopefully this will allow pedestrians to walk safely to and from the station on dark mornings or evenings. We continue to await the replacement of the belisha beacons and signage on the pedestrian crossing near to the B245 junction with Riding Lane and also warning lights for the school crossing.

Local Plan development: One matter of importance to us all is the development of the new Local Plan by Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Currently they are consulting with Parish Councils on their vision for the future of the area. This will, I am sure, prove to be contentious with very differing views seeking to agree the way forward. It is inevitable that further development for businesses and housing is necessary but the question, as always, is where? The Parish Council is always protective of the Metropolitan Green Belt but the problem is that the village is completely surrounded by it.

Ash dieback: Finally, the Council has been moving forward on the removal of ash trees affected by ash dieback. The first step will be to have the ash trees removed from the strip between the B245 and the service road as well as those bordering of the other edge of the service road and around the play area in West Wood. There are also a large number surrounding the Recreation Ground which will also be removed during the first stage. The Council is currently in the process of obtaining quotations for this work.

Can you help the community? There are several vacancies for volunteer Flood Wardens as a number have either moved away or retired. This is of great value to residents who are, during periods of heavy rain, likely to be affected in some way. Do please contact me if you think you could help and I can give you details of what would be involved.

Ideas for Annual Parish Meeting speaker: Finally have you got any requests for speakers at the Annual Parish Council Meeting to be held on 8 March 2023? We have had a number of very interesting and informative speakers over the years and the Council is always seeking to find something of interest to a cross section of residents so please let me have your ideas either by phone 01732 832367 or clerk@hildenboroughpc.org.uk

As ever, if you have any comments, queries or ideas do let me know using the phone or email address above or call in at the Farmers' Market on 8 November when a member will be present.

Pam Gow