

CENTRE PIECE – KEYS MAGAZINE APRIL 2020

As I write this, times seem to be uncertain following a series of storms and the coronavirus now infecting many in this country. The recent storms made many households anxious in the floodable areas in the village with some degree of the inevitability. However, it was so reassuring to see how the community responded to the overflowing of the drainage system with foul and drainage water in the Byrneside, Elm Grove and Leigh Road areas. Many neighbours, members of the Parish Council and volunteer flood wardens responded to the request for help with collecting and building sandbag protection walls and with brooms to keep the water at bay from entering into houses. Many were very grateful to the fire services who pumped out water from houses and the foul water from Byrneside away from the homes. They stayed well into the early hours of the next day to ensure residents were safe from the water. We owe a great deal of thanks and gratitude to all those who helped.

The Council's Annual Parish Meeting was held on Wednesday 11 March 2020 in the Village Hall. Sadly those able to attend were significantly down due to other engagements and sensible avoidance of any possible contact with the coronavirus by some.

The Report of the Council's work during the past year was given by the chair, Margaret Coles. She reported that after a difficult start it had been a busy one. As you may remember the elections last May resulted in only three nominations for the Council, fortunately by the end of that month it was able to co-opt eight more members. There is now a very enthusiastic and talented Council to support the whole community in many different ways. The only downside is the recent resignation of Helen Noone, who will be greatly missed, due to work commitments changing making it impossible for her to contribute to the Council's work.

The Council is, therefore, looking for someone who is interested in contributing ideas, particular skills and is able to attend meetings to come and join them. If you are interested or would just like to find out more about the work and responsibilities involved do ring me on 01732 832367 or by email on clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com before the 8 April when the next Parish Council Meeting will be held.

The Annual Report to residents included a record of the various achievements during the past year from Committee Chairs for Planning, Open Spaces, Finance and Flood Forum (which included the Hildenborough Flood Forum and Volunteer Flood Wardens).

The evening began by written reports from Kent Police and the Speed Watch Team being read by our chair, Margaret Coles. Sergeant Turtle reported on the crime figures, which since 1 January reached a total of 37, mainly thefts and burglaries with some criminal damage. He informed the Council that Hildenborough's new PCSO would be James Billson who would be in the village, following tutoring, at the beginning of April. He further suggested that if residents have issues and priorities they wished the police to know about they could be recorded on line via the police website. He concluded by saying that Kent Police are currently recruiting constables and special constables, information on which is on the website www.kent.police.uk

The Council was pleased to hear that the Speed Watch Team has been active regularly in recent times. They have been monitoring the speed of vehicles along the B245, principally at Foxbush and along Stocks Green Road in the 30mph zones. They have recently recorded 16 vehicles speeding at Foxbush and 6 along Stocks Green Road. All these are reported to the police but the only action they will take is to send the vehicle drivers a letter regarding their speed. The police have to be on the site to take any further action and sadly their workload has not, so far, allowed for this to happen. The Speed Watch Team, continue to look for new members to be trained, so if you are interested again phone or email me and I will pass your details on to the organisers.

Following the report from the Planning Committee where it was noted that planning applications were down in the past year to 75, four of which were refused permission by the Borough Council, a number of questions were raised. Concerns were expressed over what development would follow the Volvo Garage and Fidelity removal from the

centre of the Village. The Parish Council has yet to receive any planning applications and consequently was unable to comment.

Residents also were interested to know the progress of the Tonbridge & Malling Local Plan which is now well behind schedule to be adopted. It is to go before the Inspectors and Stage 1 hearing sessions are to be held at the end of May and beginning of June. It is therefore thought this will not be able to be adopted until at the earliest the end of this year.

David Haugh reported on the work of the Open Spaces Committee and said that the car park in Riding Lane had undergone major repairs and top dressing. It had the day before finally been swept. This had taken so long because of inconsiderate vehicle drivers who had removed the 'car park closed' signage on two occasions during the Autumn, the only solution was for the Council to rearrange once the leaf fall and the very bad weather had passed and then to chain up the entrance!

The belisha beacons near to the Medical Centre have finally been replaced following a number of very near misses on the crossing. I understand that they really do stand out now and so vehicle drivers should have no excuse for failing to see them and stop. Two more seats are to be erected in West Wood but installation has unfortunately been delayed due to the very wet weather.

The investigation by the Borough Council into parking in the Village had been completed but the details are as yet unknown to the Council. They are hoping to get sight of these and make comment on the proposals as soon as possible.

For the coming year the Council is looking at improving the Village Green by organising some replacement seating (the old seats fell into disrepair and were removed two or three years ago) and to other ways of making it more attractive. The first stage should be completed during the Summer.

The Financial situation was reported on by Andrew McNeil, chair of the Finance Committee. He said that the budget for this year is on target and gave details of expenditure. He informed residents that the Council Tax set by the Parish Council amounted to £35.80 for Council Tax Band D properties which was just over half the average for Parish Councils in Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council.

The finale to the evening was Kent Search and Rescue who gave a very interesting account of how they responded to call-outs. They brought along, Bonnie, a search dog (who was the star of the evening) and described how the dogs and volunteers are trained and how they track. Kent Search and Rescue can only be called out by the Police.

As ever, do not hesitate to contact me if you have any queries or concerns on 01732 832367 or by email clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com or talk to one of our members who will be attending the Farmers' Market on 14 April.

I hope everyone one has an enjoyable Easter break.

Pam Gow