

Centre Piece for April Keys Magazine

Did you notice on the evening of 11 March the water pressure dropping? By the next morning many of us living in the village had no supply at all. The reason, yet again, another large burst (a 3m crack in the main) in Tonbridge Road had occurred. This left everyone without water until 11am and others until 4pm whilst pressure was not completely restored until around 10pm. It really does make us aware of just how much we rely on a regular water supply. The bottled water provided helped but fell far short of the usual supply. The Parish Council is very concerned about the number of leaks and bursts reported along Tonbridge, London and Noble Tree Roads recently, eleven at a very quick count.

Yesterday, Wednesday 13 March 2019, saw the Annual Parish Meeting being held in the Jim England Hall and as it was this Council's last Annual Parish Meeting they took a look at what they had or hadn't achieved during the past four years. It was most encouraging to look at the list of achievements.

The main successes had been in the development of play areas in West Wood and the Recreation Ground. Prior to this the area had a poor selection of play equipment which is why major projects were immediately set up. It was only in its second year that the Activity Zone was completed. Prior to this it was noticeable how the beautiful Recreation Ground saw little activity. Added impetus was given by lobbying from local parents for more attractive and imaginative equipment to encourage children to play outside rather than on their computers and/or phones. Great local support was given not only financially but in the planning and design of the area with further lobbying from adults for exercise equipment.

It was October 2016 when these wonderful facilities were opened by Dame Kelly Holmes. However this brought to the fore a few other problems, not least the existing roundabout which refused to go round! In the following years all the other facilities have been upgraded or extended so reaching conclusion, hopefully in April of this year. The Pavilion has been brought up to date with new furniture, flooring and equipment, the cctv extended to cover the extended play area and finally the roundabout was replaced during this year with repairs to the safety surface and to be completed shortly the footpaths resurfaced with tarmac. And finally the car park will be repaired and top dressed.

All this work in the Recreation Ground showed up the inadequacies of the play area in West Wood. This too has now had all the safety surfaces replaced with all-weather wetpour and an extended range of play equipment installed this year.

Seating and litter bin provision has been improved in both areas.

Also reported to the meeting was the current financial situation. The budget for 2018/19 is on target but will be overspent due to additions during the course of the year being added to the projects mentioned above. However, the Council did have some flexibility and it will not detrimentally affect their financial position. The Council tax for this coming year has been increased by just 2.8% to £31.80 for Band D properties. The whole Council tax which includes contributions for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, Kent Police, Kent Fire & Rescue and KCC is £1,794.88 for Band D properties.

Another report was regarding the Flood Warden Scheme and Hildenborough Flood Forum. There was some reflection on the proposals for the upgrading of the Leigh Flood Barrier and installation of the Hildenborough protection although it was pointed out that this will not provide 100% protection against all weather incidents but will, hopefully, protect from many that would in the past have resulted in flooding. The Hildenborough Flood Forum has been set up to address local flooding and drainage issues bringing together all agencies to solve problems together. A plea for more Flood Wardens was issued as some have moved away or resigned for other reasons and an invitation given for residents to join the Hildenborough Flood Forum. If you can help please contact me in the usual way.

The last report on behalf of the Parish Council was that from the Planning Committee. This committee has had a very busy year even although planning applications were slightly down. Much time had been spent on their response to the draft Local Plan which currently is being considered by the Secretary of State. The Council has been given the names of the inspectors charged with considering this and the name of the person who will be dealing with any queries. The Borough Council will have all comments made on the draft local plan available on their website by the end of March.

One other concern had been that of plots of land being sold off behind Hildenbrook Farm, indicating that it may be possible to develop these for housing. Reassurance was given by the Parish Council at the meeting that currently that is not the case as the area is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and in the draft local plan the area has not be identified as an area suitable for housing development. However, it was pointed out that this situation may not always remain the case.

It was good to welcome our newish PCSO, Jack Bridger, to the meeting. He was pleased to report that crime overall was down as is anti social behaviour in this area, although there have been a number of burglary incidents. We share his time with Tonbridge High Street which presents more of a challenge at the moment than Hildenborough but he said he was happy to meet with any resident to discuss problems, however minor. All residents need to do is ring 101 and put in a request. He answered a number of questions raised by residents, the most problematic being the parking of vehicles on the footway opposite Brookside Garage. A resolution to this inconsiderate dangerous parking problem is still being sought.

The Council was very pleased to welcome Chris Rowley, known to many local residents, to talk about Princess Christian's Hospital. It was very interesting to reflect on how the lives of those living and working in the Hospital were changed for the better by it. He made reference to many moving quotations from local people who were involved. He obtained most of his information from local people as the records of the Hospital were destroyed when the NHS took over in 1949 and similarly when Social Services took over in 1995. Following its final demise Care in the Community was not very able to provide support for those living there and there were several sad stories of the outcome for them.

As ever do contact the Council if you have ideas or concerns on the usual email clerk@hildenboroughpc.kentparishes.gov.uk by phone on 01732 832367 (do leave a message if I am unable to answer at the time of your call) or by letter to the usual address.

Wishing everyone an enjoyable Easter break.