

Centre Piece for July Keys

At the moment it does not feel like Summer but hope, according to the weather forecast, is on the horizon as is the case with the new Parish Council. Following appeals in Centre Piece and on our notice boards a number of local residents came forward to fill the vacant places. During the annual meeting held on 22 May a sufficient number of residents were able to be co-opted by the three already elected members, Margaret Coles, David Haugh and Colmar Lewis together with two nominees from Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council, our recently elected Borough Councillors, Mark Rhodes and Nick Foyle, who made up the numbers to make the Council quorate.

They were able to co-opt and welcome back to the Council, David Cuss, Andrew McNeil and Claire Sheldon and in addition five new members. They are Karen Dobson, Helen Noone, Gordon Paterson, Emily Simons and Sandy Thomas. They all bring with them a variety of valuable skills and interests which will, I am sure, bring a fresh and lively approach to the Council.

The Council said a very big 'thank you' to Malcolm Baker at the end of the previous Council's term of office. He has been a great support to the Council for 24 years and this was recognised, together with many other contributions to local resident's welfare, by the presentation of the KALC Award for Outstanding Service to the Community by the chair, Claire Sheldon. He had over the years been the chair of Open Spaces and the Finance Committee bringing together his skills as a financier, knowledge of the local environment and great interest in sport.



Two other very valuable members from the previous Council did not seek co-option, Nigel Simpkins and Mark White. Both members undertook a lot of hard work on behalf of the Parish which included checking the lighting, litter collection, flood warden duties as well as work on the planning committee. The Council would like to thank them both for their time, support and help given to the community.

The Meeting on the 22nd was the Annual Parish Meeting when the chair and vice chair are elected together with all members choosing which committee they are able to contribute most to. Claire Sheldon was not able to stand for re-election as chair and we are very grateful for all the work she has undertaken on the Council's behalf for the past three years.

The Council elected Margaret Coles to the chair, who we are sure will be an invaluable asset to the Council. She has been a very effective vice chair in previous years. David Haugh has taken over as vice chair and with his wide range of skills and interests in the village will certainly add to building a strong and productive Council for the year ahead.

Surely you must have missed Centre Piece in June? Due to the late date the Council met in May there was no time to report the above changes in the June issue but this month there is 'catch up' and a report of matters of interest taking place in the June meeting.

This meeting was held on 12 June and proved to have many items of interest. They received two requests to use the Recreation Ground, one for a charitable event in the Autumn for Chasing Connor's Cure. It is proposed to hold a firewalk which looks to be very exciting. There are a few more details required in planning for this event but the Council gave a provisional go ahead. The other was for use of the Pavilion which was also agreed to on a trial basis.

Cllr Harry Rayner again attended and brought news from KCC to members which included items from the Joint Transportation Board's meeting held on 10 June. Finally, after four years of the Parish Council trying to get it started, it was agreed to actually start the investigation into parking problems in Hildenborough. This will commence in a few weeks' time with a meeting with KCC, Borough Councillors and Parish Councillors to try to identify where problems exist. The Parish Council receive on a regular basis problems with inconsiderate parking, particularly on corners of road junctions. To mention just one, an ambulance could not gain access to a property in Church Road because of parking on the corner by the Village Hall. Regularly there are concerns expressed over parking in Riding Lane, and outside Stocks Green School to mention just two areas.

Another highways related issue to be referred to the Joint Transportation Board is the road safety measures residents and the Parish Council, following an engineer's report, would like to see implemented in Nizels Lane. It was thought this might have been included in the June meeting but because of local elections it was not possible to get the relevant reports completed after 2nd May in time for inclusion on the Agenda. Hopefully this will now be included on the September Agenda.

Cllr Rayner also informed us that at a KCC meeting on flooding it was reported that a re-think on the height the Leigh Flood Barrier and Hildenborough protection bund extension was put forward. It is now proposed to reduce the height of the 1m increase in height by one third. This has to gain government approval but at this time the Parish Council does not have details of any implications for residents.

After a break of several years there has been three incidents of vandalism in the Recreation Ground (broken fencing) and West Wood where there was damage to the highlander equipment. This has now been made safe until permanent repairs can be made. The police, thanks to local resident's vigilance, attended one incident in West Wood. We would like to thank our neighbours for taking action when they hear a disturbance and call the police on their 101 phone line. It will hopefully help to address the current incident and stop further incidents from occurring.

A matter raised at the Farmers' Market with Parish Council members on 11 June was the building and erection of fencing, gates etc on the Merrybrook Estate. This area is within the Metropolitan Green Belt and unauthorised building is not permitted. The Parish Council would not, of course, be supporting in this area any new development and have already pointed this out to anyone who has approached them thinking of purchasing these plots of land. They will, of course, be in touch with the Enforcement Officer at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council to support residents' concerns.

The Open Spaces Committee will be meeting early in July and will be looking to the future to see what improvements and additions can be made to current leisure provision in the Recreation Ground, West Wood and the Village Green. Already there are suggestions on improvements to seating.

As ever, do get in contact if you have concerns or ideas at the usual address but please note the Parish Council email address has changed to: clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com Any emails via the old address will not be received. Members will, as usual, be attending the Farmers' Market on the 2nd Tuesday of the month (14 July).

Pam Gow