

Centre Piece for October Keys Magazine

As Autumn rapidly approaches and the dark evenings are looming we can only hope that COVID-19 is kept under control. As I write numbers of victims are rising rapidly with further regulations coming into force next week. It has been very reassuring to hear how our community has responded to supporting vulnerable people.

Although some sort of normality has started to be reintroduced, so has the traffic speeding through the village. I have received several complaints about this, particularly along residential roads as well as irresponsible parking and parking on footways. The latter is quite a problem in Hildenborough and elsewhere and seems to have reached national attention as not only does it create dangers for pedestrians walking in the road to avoid the vehicles but heavy vehicles damage the footway which was built for feet and people.

The Council was pleased that once again it could open up its playgrounds, ball court and fitness area for users. The Council has undertaken a risk assessment and has provided information on every entrance to these areas giving rules for its use. It has to rely on users or their carers taking care to wipe down equipment and gates before use with anti-bacterial cleaner suitable for use against viruses, keep hands sanitized and away from face (eyes, nose and mouth) in order to keep themselves and others safe.

There has also been several incidents of illegal meetings in West Wood and the dumping of rubbish as well as evidence of fire lighting. The Council has had to pay a regulated rubbish remover to have this taken away. The police are now regularly patrolling the area and were able to detect and take action against some young people using the woodland.

It is very frustrating that due to the COVID-19 pandemic many highways issues have had to be put on hold. The Council's Highways Improvement Plan is still awaiting assessment and further investigation by Kent Highways before any headway can be made. There are two items which have been progressed and they are signage to deter HGVs from turning in Foxbush and line and signage improvements in Nizels Lane. Both of these improvements should be completed by 31 March 2021.

I am sure many of us have experienced steep learning curves with the necessity to widen our use of IT, the Parish Council office has not escaped this either. With meetings needing to be carried out remotely they have bought into Zoom. This means that if you would like to virtually attend any of their meeting you will need to make contact with me and I will send you an invitation to join. As you will have seen a separate issue has been updating the website to make it accessible to all. There are still improvements to make but currently you can find information about the Council and the Village as well as financial and other documents, minutes and agenda from all meetings – do take a look on www.hildenboroughpc.org.uk and let us know what you think and/or what else could be usefully included. In order to be accessible the Council has also upgraded its very old software. The cctv has not escaped this revolution either, new high definition cameras have been installed as well as a remote connection.

The Council met remotely on 9 September after the summer recess. There were many things to consider and plan for next year as in October the budget has to be drafted to be approved in December. The Council considered two large projects, namely a track around the Recreation

Ground which has frequently been requested by runners, walkers and people with dogs in order that the area can be used during the winter when it is frequently very wet. The other large project under consideration is that of replacing the current two dilapidated storage facilities beside the Pavilion with one watertight and secure building. Quotations for these will be sought although it will not be possible to undertake both in the coming year.

At last the picnic area on the village green is under construction (it should be completely finished by the time you read this). When the area was marked out by the contractors residents around the ground were unhappy about its position so it was agreed to move it further towards the centre of green. It looks as if it is going to be a fine feature and a lovely facility. The Parish Council has agreed the planting scheme for the planter, a multi-stemmed Amelanchier lamarckii tree with ground cover provided by hebes and euonymus and some bulbs for the spring. One of the Rowan trees is currently listing to one side. It will be staked up by the same contractors. A litter bin for this area is being considered.

Talking of Spring, one of our members has agreed to plant a large selection of bulbs around the Village Green purchased with a donation from a resident. I think everyone who lives or passes by the Green during the Spring will gain much enjoyment from them and appreciate this generous thought.

Planning issues are never far away it seems, what with prospective housing and other development in the area. The latest issue to be brought to the Council is the Government White Paper on Planning which is advocating a drastic reorganisation of planning regulations. This together with the examination by the Inspectorate of the draft Local Plan for Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council during October and November bodes for an uncertain future where planning and construction is concerned. The Parish Council is looking into developing a Neighbourhood Plan in order that local interests can be taken into consideration when planning applications are considered.

There seems to have been a spate of suspicious characters visiting houses in Hildenborough with various tales of tree work, looking for lost animals etc but seizing any opportunity to gain access to the rear of the house. I am sure that everyone will take great care not to buy services from such unsolicited offers but will obtain quotations from reputable companies on recommendation from friends or family or organisations such as Check a Trade and also ensure all property is securely secured when leaving home or going outside.

Don't forget you can always meet with a member at the Farmers' Market on the second Tuesday of the month (13 October) to make any comments, put forward ideas or just ask for something to be looked into. As always I am happy to answer your questions or take ideas to put to the members. I can be contacted on 01732 832367 (please leave a message if I do not answer and I will get back to you asap) or email on clerkhildenboroughpc@gmail.com