

Chairman's Report for the Annual Parish Meeting – 10th April 2018

I am pleased to report on Horsted Keynes Parish Council's activities over the last year. This report will also be available on the Horsted Keynes Parish Council web site at www.horstedkeynesparishcouncil.com.

Parish Councillors are all volunteers on the Parish Council and are bound by legislation for their rules and regulations, and represent the whole parish, not just the village. They supported working groups, represented the Parish at other outside bodies, as well as liaised with the electorate, and their work behind the scenes has been enormous.

The Council continues to meet monthly with additional sub-committees and working groups meeting on a regular basis. Attendance at meetings continues to be very high. Members of the public are of course able to attend these meetings if they wish and are always very welcome.

One disappointment is that we did not complete the work on a Business Plan owing to our time being dominated by the Neighbourhood Plan, the refurbishment and replacement of the playground, and the assistance in delivering the Boules pitch. Essentially, we want to develop a vision to consider how we will be able to respond to the changes we are likely to encounter over the next 5 years and how we plan to portray the Council to generate greater public interest.

Planning

The workload of the Planning Committee's members never lets up throughout the year. During their monthly meetings, many applications were reviewed and, where appropriate, comments on these applications were made to Mid Sussex District Council. The Committee seeks to ensure that the views of all interested parties are heard at these meetings which are open to the public, and my thanks goes to all those individuals who have taken the time to attend during the past year.

Toilets, Green, Recreational Ground and Highways

The Toilets, Green, Recreational Ground & Highways Committee members routinely take in their stride a variety of items which take up so much committee time.

The work involved in the refurbishment and replacement of the playground has taken an immense amount of time and energy – understanding the legal process involved in public sector tendering; completing surveys to gather information on the usage of the equipment and identify the requirements; writing the tender document; scoring the tender responses; and applying for a loan. Councillor Webster led this work together with members of the committee

and several volunteers from the community – a big thanks for their tireless enthusiasm and time. We now have an agreement to take out a loan and are going through the final stages to place an order for the delivery and installation of the equipment.

The committee, together with volunteers from the community, erected the Christmas tree and lights – you would be surprised the amount of bureaucracy involved behind the scenes, let alone the time to erect it, check its status daily to comply with our insurance, and remove it at the end of the festive period.

Following an application to build a boules pitch on The Green, adjacent to the Green Man, a lot of time was spent discussing the legal and insurance requirements with the Boules Group.

Much of the work undertaken by this committee is largely unseen, but without which the village would notice a deterioration in our environment – managing the maintenance of the Memorial Pavilion, Play Area, Recreation Ground, Bus Shelter, Public Toilets, Finger Posts, Lewes Road Allotments, The Green, and any other common land areas of the Parish, and the provision of Dog Waste Bins.

Finance and Governance

The routine work undertaken by the committee reviewing policies, regulations, finance and governance goes on unseen, but is important in ensuring that the Parish Council remains compliant. This year's budgeting was more complex than usual, as the committee had to balance the long-term commitment for the loan to fund the playground refurbishment and replacement, inflationary pressures over which we have no control, and considering the financial impact of the long-term maintenance of the Parish Council's assets. In addition, we have suffered two water leaks – one in the public toilets and the other related to the Memorial Pavilion – which have resulted in unexpected expenditure.

The Parish Council set its budget in January which increased this year by 34%, and forms part of the council tax that you pay. At a time of inflation, we were extremely conscious of the rise in the precept, and its impact on household budgets.

Neighbourhood Plan

The Parish Council's workload has continued to be very heavily dominated by the Neighbourhood Plan. In June last year our draft Submission Neighbourhood Plan and supporting evidence, including a Sustainability Appraisal, were forwarded to the District Council for its informal comments. The District Council officers confirmed that the Plan was satisfactory subject to two outstanding issues:

- the implications of the District Plan Examination; and
- the impact of the 'Wealden decision' on the Habitats Regulation Assessment of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The advice from Mid Sussex District Council was that until there was a resolution of the implications of the habitats issues and the Inspector had concluded on the District Plan, the advice for those making Neighbourhood Plans is that they should not conclude their work and submit their Plan for Examination.

Following the adoption of the Mid Sussex District Plan at the Council meeting on 28th March, the challenge period commenced the following day, and will last for 6 weeks. We anticipate announcing the timetable for the Submission of our Plan at the Annual Parish Meeting.

The Summary of Responses to the Regulation 16 Consultation were published at the end of March.

Thanks

This is my third report as Chairman of Horsted Keynes Parish Council and I pay tribute to the work and achievements of all the members of the Parish Council, our Clerk, Michaela Frost, all of whom have devoted many hours of their personal time to the service of the local community in the last year.

I would also like to express the Parish Council's thanks to our County Councillor, Mr Andrew Lea, and our District Councillors, Mr Chris Hersey and Mrs Linda Stockwell, for their efforts on our behalf.

David Colville, Chairman, Horsted Keynes Parish Council, 10th April 2018.