

BOROUGH GREEN ANNUAL PARISH MEETING - CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2018

It doesn't seem possible that this Parish Council is now entering its 8th year. Only about half of that original group are still with us, but there is never a shortage of willing volunteers to take up the load when someone retires, and we welcome Chris Hurl as our latest volunteer, many of you will know Chris from her many other involvements in Community life, and she is a welcome addition to our team.

Special mention to Tim and Scott for their work with PMSG, to Henry for his dedication to football in the village, Sandra for her years of work as Chairman of the Christmas Lights, and Ann Easthope for her Station Rd safety project, slowly bearing fruit.

Our thanks, and my personal thanks, to Hazel, our Clerk. Many people do not realise the volume of work Hazel carries out behind the scenes, not least of which is the financial management and dealing with the Auditors. Hazel is the reason we have the funding to take on the village projects over the years. We have all become used to that little frown when we overstep the boundaries, but the valuable advice she can reel off that defines the course we can legally take.

You will recall we made our staff groundsmen Barry and Rob proper fulltime employees, and they have responded valiantly. They have just taken on all the mowing at the Rec and Potters Mede, which means the grass can be managed as we want it, which wasn't possible with contractors. We have purchased a John Deere ride-on mower, and you will see Rob whizzing to and fro around the village. Both these lads push the boundaries of their jobs, and regularly litterpick areas of the village that used to get missed.

One of a Parish Council's important functions is promotion of local sport. That has been consistently football for many years, but this year we have branched out a bit.

BG Primary School came to us with a request for a grant to refurbish their Swimming Pool, we responded with a £10k grant, and Wrotham and Platt PCs also contributed. The grand opening is 25th May, and we have been asked to formally open the facility.

This year saw the founding of the BG & Wrotham Netball Club, and we were pleased to fund the hire of the Village Hall for their inaugural fund-raising Quiz Night, and we are in negotiations with BG Primary School about floodlighting their netball court for use by the club.

We are aware that Potters Mede is a valuable social venue, but bookings have been slow to materialise. We are now working with a volatile but very keen group of volunteers called PMSG, seeking to promote better use of PM, and they will be holding an Open Day on 30th June, everyone is welcome. It is designed as a promotion of Potters Mede, but will also serve as a Summer Festival.

Tom Tugendhat MP has kindly agreed to be our Guest of Honour at a dedication ceremony for the War Memorial on 4th November, the week before Remembrance Sunday. We have not yet finalised the form this ceremony will take, and will shortly be meeting with interested parties such as the Churches and British Legion.

But the big storm cloud hanging over all this good news is Borough Green Garden City, a scheme by local sandpit owners to build 4000 houses between Celcon at Darkhill, and the A20 at Nepicar.

Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council think this is a wonderful idea, the first phase of 1500 houses inevitably leading to the whole 4000 houses over the coming years. TMBC love it because it is away from their populated areas where they might get serious popular opposition, so they think they can dump it here in the countryside.

This scheme is bigger than BG, Platt, Wrotham and Ightham combined. I don't know about you, but I don't want to be a suburb of a large urban conglomeration, I like living in a village.

We have formed an Alliance with the other 5 local parishes to fight this scheme, but the sad truth is we may have to resort to employing expensive Planning and legal advisors, because we simply cannot trust TMBC to guard our interest.

That is why Hazel's prudent financial management has been so important, if we need to, we do have the financial reserves.

Cllr Mike Taylor Chairman, Borough Green Parish Council, 27 April 2018