



Salehurst & Robertsbridge Parish Council

NEWSLETTER

Volume 5 Issue 4

March 2011

Can you help please?

We need a volunteer to deliver the Newsletter
In Brightling Road from China Hill to Hackwood
If you can help please Contact the Clerk or Cllr. David Allen

Parish & District Council Elections - Thursday 5th May

Thank you!

In the last Newsletter we asked your views on changing our street lighting pattern and the colour of the lamps - thank you to all who took the time to respond.

Overwhelmingly the response was that we should change to the 'Golden' light bulbs which are cheaper, use less energy and last longer and that we should adopt a policy of turning lights off at midnight in all but the main 'arteries' of the village. The Parish Council has therefore adopted this policy and as the bulbs come up for renewal they will change to the 'Golden' ones. Also, as we change the street lanterns to remove the mercury based lamps we will have them programmed to turn **on at dusk, off at midnight, on at 5am off at daylight - note this is a fixed schedule and cannot be adjusted on an individual lamp basis** except for Station Road and the High Street to the by-pass and the Clappers to the by-pass where the lights will stay on from dusk to dawn. We hope to have the necessary authorisation for the loan to replace the lights in time to start work in June and complete by the autumn.

And now, we would like your thoughts on something else please!

With this newsletter you will have found a Housing Survey from Rother District Council which we should be grateful if you would complete and return.

Housing for our more elderly residents

For many years, it has been recognised that there is inadequate provision for our elderly in Robertsbridge and we know of many residents who have been forced to leave the village, their friends and family to live in more suitable accommodation.

The last Housing Survey for Salehurst Ward was done in 2008 and at that time only one elderly resident said they needed or would need more suitable accommodation.

The Parish Council has been working with Rother DC and our District Councillor over a long time to get an older person's housing scheme in Robertsbridge, but we have to justify the need. If you are over 55, please make sure you complete and return the enclosed survey by the end of April.

Dates for your diary 2011

Annual Parish Meeting
Robertsbridge Hall

11th April

Parish & District Council Elections

5th May

Parish Council Meeting
Robertsbridge Hall

16th May

The dates of Meetings for the rest of 2011 and 2012 will be set at the meeting on May 16th by the new Council.

Note: Meetings of the full Council now take place on the 3rd Monday of alternate months.

All meetings start at 7.30 pm and a period of up to 15 minutes is allowed at the start of the meeting for public comment or questions if required.

Agendas for meetings are posted on the parish notice boards and web site at least 3 days before the meeting - planning applications are available for inspection at the parish office during normal opening times or on the Rother District Council web site - www.rother.gov.uk and you can comment on planning applications on-line

Grit Bins - Now you see it now you don't. The grit bins which the Parish paid for arrived in the nick of time for the first snow in November and apart, from a couple of glitches, were much appreciated.

We installed 9 bins including one at the junction of Redlands Lane and the by-pass which, because of the incline, had proved dangerous in the past but within 24 hours this one was stolen! - we expected perhaps that the grit might be misused, but the whole bin? However, a sharp eyed resident spotted it and it was returned, only to be re-stolen. Again, it was spotted and it has now been removed until we decide how to secure it.

It seems a pity that a facility installed to benefit all residents could be taken for selfish purposes.



Many residents were sorry to see the closure of the Village Butchers at the end of December - not only did it provide a useful facility within the village, particularly for older residents who find it difficult to shop outside, but it had become over the years something of a landmark in the village.

However, the shop is to remain as a commercial premises and the bakers, Judges of Hastings, are going to supply their bread and, we are promised, other facilities will be available. We look forward to the opening in the Spring.

Making Tracks

Following our first meeting at The George during January, we now have a group of eleven volunteers who are keen to help keep our footpaths open. I am leading the group and with Mike Noble have completed most of the training required by East Sussex County Council, so we are now trained to the first level of First Aid and, with one other, in the art of using a Cable Avoidance Tool! Our final training course is scheduled for 31st March, after which we will be able to set to on some routine clearing. To remain within ESCC's insurance cover we are not allowed to use power tools so our remit is restricted to anything we can do using hand tools, such as cutting back hedges, clearing pathways, installing bridges, gates, stiles and erecting signs and finger posts. We have identified a section of footpath which needs clearing and, by the time you read this, I hope to have checked it out for nesting birds and to have a pretty good idea of what is involved and if it is a suitable job to get us started. If all is well I will then contact the land owner for permission to start work and decide on a date. Any type of work we have not undertaken before will be overseen by ESCC's Volunteer Officer to make sure we are doing a good job.

If you see any areas of footpath that are in need of some work or if you are interested in joining us please contact me, my details are on the back of this newsletter. I can't promise to do the work immediately but I will certainly take it into account when planning future work parties.

Charlie Beeden

Bishop's Meadow - the very wet and cold conditions over the winter have delayed work on the new area but a Work Day was organized and the fencing between the area and the Licensed path to Glottenham was removed and some of the trees donated by the Woodland Trust were planted.

Unfortunately, the Volunteer Work Day was poorly supported so not as much was achieved as was hoped but another day is planned - why not lend a hand?

Also, why not lend a hand on Sunday April 17th when we have our annual village clean up day?

Station Road Car Park - The Parish Council set up a small working party (WP) to consider how we might help resolve the problems created by Rother DC starting to enforce the parking restrictions that have existed for some years but have been largely un-enforced.

We recognised that Rother is facing major problems after the huge cut in funding from central government and to deal with this would be looking at ways to reduce expenditure and/or raise revenue and parking throughout the District is being looked at in a review later this Spring. Our object was to make sure that the problems in Robertsbridge were taken into account as part of the review.

We thought one possibility might be for Rother to provide 'Residents Only' spaces, for a fee (currently Rother charges £235), but we needed to be sure that there would be sufficient interest amongst residents to make it worth raising. We therefore carried out a survey by questionnaire delivered to every household along the High Street from the Clappers to Blenheim Court including Norman Villas, Saxon Villas, Hoadley Terrace and Fair Lane and in Station Road. Approximately 90 questionnaires were delivered and 48 were returned. Of the returns, 33 residents said that they had formerly used the car park regularly and 16 said they would be willing to pay and wanted a total of 23 spaces between them - some others said they would pay but not could not afford the amount quoted.

With this information available the WP held a meeting with Rother Technical Services Manager and explained the problems that the decision to enforce the parking restrictions had caused: even more street parking (especially by commuters) and a half-empty car park. He confirmed that a review of parking would occur in the Spring and that all aspects would be considered including charging and perhaps devolving management to the PC.

We thought that charging would probably be counter-productive as residents would simply not use the car park, causing more congestion. Also, devolving management would cause problems for the PC as we have no staff to 'police' the car park, let alone enforce penalties - expecting the Clerk to take on this role would not be reasonable. This would mean that effectively the PC would have to remove restrictions, which would be of benefit to residents but would also probably mean the car park attracted commuters as it is only a short walk to the station. Having the car park permanently filled on weekdays would also have an adverse effect on our shops and businesses. We asked that it be borne in mind during the review that Robertsbridge was in a different position from most rural car parks because of the station and commuter parking problems.

We discussed the possibility of 'Residents Only' spaces and permits but this is not possible as it is illegal to discriminate against non-residents and the only possibility would be 'Permit Holders Only' bays. However, these would have to be available to anyone who applied and this could mean that they all might be taken by commuters. The same legal restrictions would apply even if the PC took over the management of the car park - the only possibility would be for the PC to opt out of the car park regulations and in effect declare the space free of restrictions which could result in chaos. This is a difficult situation and we will have to wait for Rother's review to see how we proceed but we have put the problems of Robertsbridge clearly to Rother and asked that these are taken in to account during the review, especially our commuter parking problems.

It seems clear that with the severe financial cut in the central government grant faced by Rother that the status quo as perceived by residents, i.e. no enforcement of parking restrictions, is probably not an option. It is likely that the PC will be asked to take on the management (probably also the toilets as well) but with no financial support from RDC and will then have to consider whether to increase the precept to provide what will be effectively private parking spaces and whether it wants to take on the toilets.

SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

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Email: clerk@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Web address:

www.salehurst-pc.org.uk or
www.robertsbridge-pc.org.uk

The Parish Office is open to the public at the following times:

Tuesday	9am to 11am
Thursday	2pm to 4pm

Rother District Council

Web address: www.rother.gov.uk

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Summer Picnic - Following the success of the Summer Ball last year it was decided to hold another one at a future date. However, because of the enormous amount of effort and fund raising involved it was decided to make this a bi-annual event and hold a Summer Picnic this year.

This will be held on 26th June and Robertsbridge Arts Partnership (RAP), are taking the lead on this. RAP had hoped to hold a Children's Literary Festival but were unsuccessful in their grant application but following the success of their recent production of 'Alice in Wonderland' at the village hall are planning to do something along the lines of the 'Mad Hatter's Tea Party' for the event.

Put this in your diary!

Elections -

In case you hadn't noticed, this is election year for Parish and District Councils and on May 5th you will have a chance to vote for your Parish and District Councillors.

There are 2 District Councillors and 9 parish councillors and all spaces are open for nominations.

Several of the current Parish councillors have indicated that they will not seek re-election so it is especially hoped that sufficient people will have put their names forward to create a viable Council. If not, then one of the first jobs for the new Council will be to fill the vacant positions by co-option. We thank all the Councillors for their service to the village over the years.

You will also have a chance to vote in the referendum on changes to the country's voting system in national elections, - whether to change our current 'First Past the Post' system to one of the 'Alternative Vote'. In the latter case you will be asked to mark candidates in your order of preference and where a candidate does not get 50% of the vote, then the 2nd preference votes of the candidates with the least votes are re-allocated until someone does get 50%.

At the time of going to press we do not know the precise details of the question being asked in the referendum

LAP Gateway Project - the Local Action Plan group are pressing ahead with plans to get 'gateways' installed at either end of the village from the by-pass.

These 'gateways' are in place in many villages and take the form of visible fencing on the sides of the road and help not only to give an identity to the village but also to remind drivers of the speed limit.