

Chairman's Report - Annual Parish Meeting 2018

I would like to welcome all the new residents to the village. The Donsmead development has been finished on schedule and over 50% of the houses are now occupied. As well as adding 'new blood' to the village there is a financial benefit to us all as the developers are obliged to contribute funds to improve the playing fields, enhance the library and support both the school lollipop patrol and new cemetery provision.

The process of making improvements to the playing field has already started. We have had a soil specialist from the Football Association pay us a visit to analyse the soil and the drainage, and we are waiting on his report with his recommendations. As well as improving the main football pitch we are proposing to add a junior pitch and new changing facilities.

East Sussex Libraries Dept have withdrawn funding to both the Mobile Library and Northiam Library. The Parish Council have agreed to take over the funding of the day-to-day running costs of Northiam Library and together with a certain amount of leverage from Cllr. Angharad Davies we have persuaded East Sussex to give us £8,300 from the Donsmead monies to improve the current facilities.

The Playground continues to require investment. Following this year's inspection, we were obliged to add a top rail to the perimeter fence, and the timber agility trail by the small hill is now at its 'end of life'. We are in the process of getting quotes for new and different equipment and looking for match funding to help with the cost.

Highways finally resurfaced Dixter Road & Dixter Lane this year which has been a long time coming. We will continue to put pressure on highways to prioritise other roads in the village that are in need of upgrading. We will also be asking Rother District Council to properly resurface the surgery car park following the disgracefully botched repairs that were done recently.

We are still waiting for Rother's planning dept to give us the final 'go ahead' to improve the access to the War Memorial – It is our intention that these works will be completed in time for this year's Remembrance Day, which will be the 100th Anniversary of the end of the 1st World War. There are various events being planned for this anniversary which are being coordinated by Mr Mervyn Hayes who will welcome any volunteers who would like to help & take part.

The Parish Council have been working together with the Conservation Society on several projects this year. Repairs have been carried out to the Pump House on the Village Green, new gates are being made for the Playing Fields, and we made a successful insurance claim to replace the finger post at the top of Ewhurst Lane which was unfortunately hit by a reversing car. We have also started the process of trying to get Mill Corner classified as a Conservation Area.

Last year I mentioned anti-social behaviour and this is still an area of concern.

More and more vehicles are being parked on pavements which causes inconvenience to pedestrians, especially parents with small children and the disabled. This contravenes the highway code and is just thoughtless.

Dog fouling also continues to be a constant complaint. This village has probably more dog bins per head of population than most villages of a comparable size, and we spend over £1,750 a year of your money on having them emptied yet despite this provision there are still people out there who don't clean up after their dog. As for those owners who think it is acceptable to allow their dogs to foul inside the children's playground.. Well words fail me! Please – If you see it then report it.

The day to day running of the Sports Hall has been handed over to the village school by East Sussex County Council, and using monies set aside by the lottery fund they are investing in new equipment including an inflatable climbing wall and bungee aerobics. The public are welcome to hire the hall for their own use or join the various clubs that take place and should check out the sports hall website for more details. Activities for children will be run during the school holidays and the Parish Council are willing to offer financial support for a youth 'sports' club if only a suitable slot can be found in the hall's schedules - At present there are no slots available on a week day evening between 7 and 9pm.

We invested in new lights for the Christmas Tree this year, and I must thank Lady Fielding for supplying the electricity – so much easier than the old car battery system! You will all be aware that the 'turning on' ceremony was marred by an unfortunate accident to Peter Hayman who has been a stalwart in this village for many years. He is recovering slowly and I am sure that everyone wishes him well.

60% of households responded to our latest consultation regarding the Parish Council's proposal to apply for a loan from the Government in an attempt to buy the Blue Cross site.

The number of households objecting to the proposal remained much the same as last year, whereas the number of households supporting the idea rose by 80%. The final figures were 206 against, 391 for, 17 un-decided, 5 who chose not to give their name and 12 who gave their name but forgot to tick the box. These figures have been sent off to the Communities Dept and we are waiting to see if they consider them to be an acceptable mandate to proceed.

To the best of my knowledge we delivered to every property in the village and I would like to thank everyone involved who helped ensure that this was the case. The Blue Cross have submitted a plan for 125 houses to Rother's Site Allocation Strategy and we now have to wait to see how that is received. This

document is due for release in the next couple of months. If you are unhappy about the Blue Cross's proposals I suggest you lobby your District Councillors.

Finally, I should point out that the current Council has only a year to go before the local elections. If you feel strongly about local matters then rather than shouting at public meetings or making comments on social media, why not step up to the plate and offer your services? No previous experience is required!

A quick word about the pub. No change from last year. To the best of my knowledge the owner is still alive and the pub is still not for sale. However, if you know differently then please let me know.

Pete Sargent