

## **Chairman's Annual Report 2017/18**

### **Annual Parish meeting**

The APM this year was held on 13th April in Offham Village Hall and was attended by over 40 villagers.

As well as the Parish Council (PC) report, there was an update on St Michael's Church by Rev David Green, who is also looking, along with other organisations in the village, at how best to commemorate the Centenary of the 1918 Armistice.

Sarah Hohler and Matthew Balfour gave updates on Kent County Council and Tunbridge and Malling Borough Council respectively. Sarah also commented on the proposed new Malling Sandpit and said KCC have received over 1,000 responses to the consultation! We will keep you posted about any further developments on the proposal.

At the meeting, we recognised three villagers whose contributions to Offham, over the years, have been 'above and beyond':

Fiona Lloyd -Williams - was given the Kent Association of Local Councils award, for her work with the Village Hall Committee.

Malcolm Goodwin - was given an Offham Parish Council award, for his contribution to the village over many years.

Clive Turpie - was also given an Offham Parish council award, for his support and willingness to help in the village over the years.

Draft minutes of the meeting are available to view on the Parish website.

### **Parish Council Changes**

Most of you will be aware of the terribly sad news, that Barry Oliver lost his brave fight with cancer last week. Barry was my Vice-Chair and has been a very active councillor for over 6 years, helping support and improve the village he so loved. He will be sorely missed. Our thoughts are with Jane and his family. It's going to be strange not seeing him walking little Anna around the village!

Other changes are that Martyn Bebey unfortunately had to step down as a councillor, due to his numerous other commitments and I would like to thank Martyn for his support and his contribution to the council.

The Council announced a councillor vacancy last year and we were delighted to have 6 villagers putting their names forward. Following this, we have co-opted Adrian Marchant to the council. Adrian has lived in the village all his life and has been a great supporter of the village and the council.

### **Planning**

Tonbridge and Malling Council have been progressing their local plan over the last year and are, hopefully, on track to have it accepted by central government this year, and for it to apply in 2019.

As usual, there have been several routine planning applications in the village during the year, that the Parish Council has been consulted on, but one stands out as promoting an unprecedented level of objections from villagers. This was the application for change of use of the lake and African lodge at Kentfield Farm. This application was subsequently withdrawn by the applicant, Ian Barwick who, we understand, intends to re-submit it this year with amendments. Mr Barwick has informed the Parish Council that he intends to have an open day at the site, for villagers to see what he is planning, before the application is submitted. Details will follow as soon as we have more information.

### **Broadband**

We were due an update, concerning Broadband, at the Annual Parish Meeting from George Chandler of KCC, but unfortunately he had to cancel due to his wife's ill health. I have since spoken to George after the meeting and he said that BT Openreach are running a bit late against their schedule! However, they expect the commissioning and migration process to be complete in approximately 4 - 6 weeks. I will update you with any further progress but it's almost there! Once fully commissioned, you will be able to apply to your Broadband provider (most should be able to supply) for a Fibre 'High Speed' service.

## **Donations**

The Parish Council, as is usual, gives small donations each year, to organisations that are closely aligned to the village. This year we gave donations to:

West Malling Scout Group  
Offham Lunch Club  
St Michael's Church  
Methodist Church  
Age Concern  
Heart of Kent Hospice

We also made a donation to Malling Lions, for their much appreciated help in running the 'Race Night' for us.

## **Green Spaces, Trees and the Churchyard**

The recreation ground has, as usual, been well used over the year and the children's play area has again, had quite a large amount of refurbishing work; several components of the 'Playdale' equipment have had to be replaced, primarily due to the age of the installation. It is very likely that this will be an on-going expense for some years to come.

The village looked really beautiful again this Spring, with a wonderful but very short show of daffodils. Councillor Williams, along with her husband Peter, have worked hard over the year to keep the village in tip-top shape; we were commended for our trees last year and awarded a Tree Voucher, from our entry in the 'Men of Trees Competition'. We will enter this, along with the 'Village in Bloom' competition, again this year.

The Parish Council has continued its grant to the Church, for the up-keep of the churchyard, although Tunbridge and Malling Council no longer give funds to the PC for this.

## **The old landfill site (Offham Quarry)**

There was a fire on the site in July last year, to which the fire services attended. This was apparently caused by some rubbish, near the entrance, catching or being set alight! Overall though, there has been nothing of any particular note to report about the site over the past year. It has, however, been very difficult to get any responses from FCC about the regular liaison meetings that should be taking place and OPC have not been receiving any updates about any works carried out at the site. There has recently been activity on the site by the owners/managers and some damage has occurred to the fencing around the site. The Parish Council will continue to lobby for the regular liaison meetings to be reinstated.

## **JPCTCG (Joint Parish Council Traffic Consultative Group)**

This is now a group of 15 parishes. It meets quarterly, to discuss traffic and related issues in the borough and also seeks to lobby on issues that affect our villages. The recent main topics of

discussion have concerned: the desire to implement motorway slips at Junction 5 on the M25; the impact on transport of the TMBC local plan and the proposed quarry at Ryarsh.

### **Blaise Farm Quarry and composting plant**

The composting facility at Blaise Farm has benefitted by a recent upgrade of the equipment and filters and thankfully there have been less incidents of malodours over the last year.

The Parish Council attends the regular liaison meetings at Blaise Farm and continues to monitor the facility there.

Parts of the village continue to be affected by the Quarry blasts on Tuesdays and Thursdays and, there is still real concern over the proposals for the blast sizes to be increased.

If you are adversely affected by the blasts, please do complain to :

Jim Wooldridge - Principle Planning Officer KKC at [jim.wooldridge@kentgov.uk](mailto:jim.wooldridge@kentgov.uk)

Bill Bowley - Gallagher Quarry Manager at [bill.bowley@gallagher-group.co.uk](mailto:bill.bowley@gallagher-group.co.uk)

Sarah Hohler - our County Councillor at [sarah.hohler@kentgov.uk](mailto:sarah.hohler@kentgov.uk)

Rosemary Ricketts - at the Environment Agency at [rosemary.ricketts@environmentagency.gov.uk](mailto:rosemary.ricketts@environmentagency.gov.uk)

The PC are also co-ordinating a log of the blasts and effects throughout the village; please mail our clerk, Lynne Mackie, at [offham.pc@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:offham.pc@hotmail.co.uk) for this.

### **Village Projects and fund raising**

The Book Box continues to be well used but, thankfully, not the defibrillator.

The Christmas lights looked great again this year; our special thanks must go to Keith, in

Hope House, who has kindly enabled us to have a permanent electricity supply to the main oak tree on the Green, from his house.

The PC is also planning to refurbish the old village well outside Walnut House this year.

The village improvement projects are funded by two Parish Council events: the calendar and, this year, we organised a 'Traditional Race Night' at the village hall, which was a great success and much fun was had by all. It was undoubtedly the noisiest event in the village hall for a long time! Our thanks to the Malling Lions who ran the event for us.

The Calendar sales and the Race Night, between them, raised over £1,500, which will go towards village improvement projects in the future. We are always looking for ideas here????

### **Council Tax and the Village Precept Tax**

The Council Tax changes, that I outlined last year, have all been implemented and the net result for villagers, with the reduction in TMBC Tax and the increase in the Offham Precept, has been neutral.

The Parish Council have also managed to keep the Offham Precept the same for 2018/19 year.

A lot of the maintenance jobs around the village continue to be carried out by councillors and village volunteers, helping to keep our costs down. We would be delighted if anyone would like to help with these.

### **Our Village Hall**

As discussed and voted on at last year's annual meeting, the Parish Council have implemented an annual grant of £1,000 to the Village Hall Committee, to help in running and maintaining a great

facility for the village. Although we said that to fund this would involve a small increase in the Offham precept, this year we have managed to fund the grant without needing to increase the precept. Next year, however, it is likely we will have to apply a small increase.

## **Environmental Improvement Scheme**

The Environment Improvement Project has continued over the year and is now entering its final stages. Recent works have been: the granite setts have been installed, several verges extended, the 'choking' of the junctions with Setts have been carried out and the wooden gates have been installed on the approaches to the village green. The new mobile SID (Speed Indicator Device) is now operational and will be moved around the village by a team of volunteers. Team SID being: Steve Rickett, Jim Brown, Colin Ellis and Tracey South.

There has been lot of remedial work taking place, principally around the Granite Sett channelling, where puddling has occurred. It has also been necessary to install some wooden bollards and 'Grass-crete' blocks (these allow cars to drive over them but also grass to grow through) in some areas of the village; this has been due to cars being parked on the new extended grass verges, turning them into unsightly mud quagmires!

The final stages of the scheme will be to 'plane', and then lay, a coloured junction coating to the main junction in the village centre and then to surface-dress Teston Road, between the two outer village gateways. Once the surface dressing has been done, the centre white line will not be replaced, so the road will appear narrower.

The tarmac and surface-dressing is dependant on the weather and is now likely to be delayed until the summer months, due to the bad weather we've experienced of late!

There will be a further opportunity to carry out any required remedial works 12 months after the scheme has been completed and has 'settled in'.

It is the Parish Council's intention to commission another traffic and speed-count exercise, to be carried out after the scheme has been fully completed, to gain an objective assessment of its effectiveness. The results of this could also determine whether or not it is possible to pursue a 20 MPH zone implementation, for the village as a whole.

## **Parish Council meetings and helpers**

The Parish Council meets the first Tuesday of the month, at 19:30 in the Village Hall Committee Room and villagers are welcome to come along and have the opportunity to contribute.

The Parish Councillors are all unpaid volunteers and, you may have noticed, we do an increasing amount of the maintenance jobs in the village ourselves; we are therefore always looking for volunteers to help with either specific work parties or just in general, to keep our village beautiful. We would like to put together an e-mail list of helpers, who we would mail when there are group jobs to be done that require your help. If you would like to help occasionally, then please e-mail myself or the Parish Clerk.

Finally, I would like to thank my fellow Parish Councillors and volunteer helpers, for all of their hard work throughout the year and for the time they have given up to support our village - it is much appreciated.

David Frankling  
Chairman Offham Parish Council