**December News**

*Focus* has an early publication deadline in December, so once more I am having to write this article without our having had a meeting – which is a shame, because the December meeting is the important one at which we set our budgets for the coming year. News of that will have to wait till January.

I am a little distracted as I write this, with what to me is an amazing and wonderful problem – my husband took the lid off a little-used compost bin the other day, and discovered that a colony of wild honey bees had taken over. After looking up what to do, we have discovered that honey bees are one of the few insects that survive the winter, and that they huddle together around the honey combs, swapping over regularly so that they all get a chance to be near the honey and eat. What a wonderful cooperative existence! So, we now need an expert, and even as I write, research is going on in the next room to find the nearest bee-keeper who will hopefully “collect” them.

Outside the confines of our compost bin, alas, life is not always so cooperative, and you can’t please all the people all the time. I know that not everyone has been happy about this year’s interim arrangements for the Christmas lights, but hopefully by the time you read this seasonal goodwill will have taken hold and all will be well. I want to use this opportunity to say a huge “thank-you” to Councilor Gadd, who has worked incredibly hard to make the lights happen. And thanks also, to the Warriors, for the work they have done on this – they will be taking over the lighting completely next year, and the Parish Council will be paying for more connectors on the street lights. And a third thank you, to the High Street traders who have lit their own shops, and organized their own late night opening. We can be as collaborative as honey bees when we try!

While I’m thanking people, can I also thank Major Burlison, who has made another kind donation to the village, this time by funding fitness equipment at the Sparrows Green Recreation Ground, which is being installed this month (or so we’re promised!). People will be aware that the Major has already funded two benches in the village. It’s great when people make this kind of donation to help their fellow villagers. So another honey-bee of the month award to Major Burlison.

The other worker bees in the village this month (I’m sorry, this metaphor has completely taken me over) have been the Neighborhood Plan Steering Group. I’m sure some of you are still wondering what all this is about, and the formal launch won’t be till spring, but in order for us to talk confidently about what our village should look like in 20 years time, we do need some more people with passions and enthusiasms to join us. There is now a website: <https://www.wadhurstnp.org> - please have a look and use the “contact us” function there to let the Steering Group know that you are interested in helping.

As I said earlier in the year, the Parish Council’s Standing Orders mean that the longest a Chair can serve for is 3 years, so this will be my final year as chair and the last chance I’ll have to use this monthly article to send all readers seasonal greetings. I hope this coming Christmas and New Year is everything you’d want it to be. As many of you know, I’m an active Humanist, so Christmas itself holds no particular meaning for me, but I appreciate how important it is to most of you who read *Focus.* And I know it is also important to families who make it the one time when they come together.

However, I do think that the commercialism and the pressure has got so much that it’s hard for many people to enjoy – indeed a recent poll on the *moneysavingexpert* website asked “So if you had aCANCEL CHRISTMASbutton that'd make the whole thing disappear (and just add days to your holiday entitlement), would you press it?”. The vast majority of people who answered the survey voted for “cancellation” – the only groups of people who answered “bring it on!” were men and women with school age children and younger. I think that’s a sad commentary on the effects of that commercialisation.

And finally, we start 2018 with almost all of us having working Parish Council emails again, so that’s the best way to contact us. And please do contact us direct if you have questions about our work – we are here to answer.

Have a very Happy New Year!

*Felicity Harvest*

*(Chair Wadhurst Parish Council)*