**From the Parish Council**

At the December meeting of the Council, Anthony Dunnett was elected as Chair, and I was elected as Vice Chair. These are very short-term appointments, as the Parish Council elections are in May, of which more later. And at our January meeting, we agreed on the Parish Council “precept” for the coming year – the element of your council tax which will come to the Parish Council. Despite the fact that our funding from Wealden CD is tapering off sharply, we are raising our precept by less than £2 per household for the year, out of which we pay for many things, including the public toilets, the maintenance of the Jardin d’Aubers, various grants to, for instance, the Citizen’s Advice Bureau, maintenance of the Churchyard, and Wadhurst Culture, our small grants scheme, maintenance and emptying of the dog waste bins, and much more.

In March, we will be organizing a clean-up effort, on a Saturday, as part of the Great Wealden Spring Clean 2019. The date will be fixed shortly, but in the meantime, if you would be happy in principle to join us with our plastic bags and rubber gloves, do let me know by email, and I’ll make sure you’re kept informed of our plans.

Congratulations to our Finance Officer, Fiona Hensher, who has just obtained her Certificate in Local Council Administration, an important qualification for parish Council Clerks and Officers. And welcome to Justine Mountford, the new Principal of Uplands. Our representative on Uplands’ Community Committee, Cllr Bishop, reported to our January meeting that Justine was very keen for the school to be more closely involved in the community, and we will be talking to her soon about how we can make this happen.

The Neighbourhood Plan is moving towards its next phase – the household survey in which you will all be able to give your views on the future of the village. There is an update on this elsewhere in this edition of Focus.

I mentioned small grants earlier. **The final deadline in this financial year for our small grants scheme is February 14th.** There is still money in the pot, and details of the scheme are on the noticeboard in the village and on the website.

As I mentioned earlier, the Parish Council elections are coming up in May. If you are interested in putting your name forward, you may want to come and observe one of the remaining Parish Council meetings of the current Council, on February 14th and March 14th (your nomination papers are likely to have to be submitted before the April meeting of the Council on April 11th). Although being a Councillor requires hard work and commitment, it is a privilege and a rewarding form of public service.

If you were to be elected, you would be expected to attend the 11 monthly meetings of the Council, and to be a member of one or more of its committees – currently Environment, Highways and Transport, and the Community Committee (each of which meet 4 times a year) and Planning (which meets fortnightly). But the really interesting work happens outside the Committees, when members get the chance to make things happen. This year, for example, Cllr Moore has been active in making sure our Dark Skies Policy becomes a reality, working with East Sussex County Council on a programme of replacing bulbs in the most light-polluting street lamps in the village. Cllr Murphy submitted a successful application for funding to protect the road triangles, which are managed by Wadhurst Community Gardeners, from being driven over by vehicles. Conversations are currently taking place about what kind of bollards might be used. The Parish Council is taking over responsibility for grass cutting from the County Council, and Cllr Bishop has been working on creating a plan for which verges need to be kept short, and which can be allowed to grow longer and offer a better habitat for wildlife. Cllr Gadd has created the framework for the Emergency Plan which you can find on the website.

These are just a few examples – I will talk more about our activities and achievements next month.

So, please do come and see us at work, and contact the Clerk if you have any questions about what’s involved.

*Felicity Harvest*

*(Vice Chair Wadhurst Parish Council)*

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