

## **Hilderstone Parish Council Chairman's Annual Report 2015-2016**

At the time of writing this report it is election time again but this does not have any effect on this village apart from the election of Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) for our area. Matthew Ellis continues to be our Police & Crime Commissioner. The next point of voting is the European Referendum on the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016 and the next Parish Council Elections will take in three years' time.

### **Village Consultation**

As stated in last year's report the Annual Consultation was incorporated into the Village Conservation Appraisal when approximately 15 people attended. Those attending mainly came to see how the construction of the new Parish Boundary affected them. There was a further Village Forum - open to everyone - on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2016 when 15 members of the public attended. The Chairman had prepared a list of possible topics for discussion and most of the points discussed will have been covered in this report.

### **Parish Council**

**Village Maintenance** - Notification has been received from Stafford County Council that, as of April 2017, each Parish Council will have to take on more responsibility for the maintenance of their village. At this point in time no details are available but currently we do charge back for some work that is contracted out to Bill Holmes.

**Parish Council Auditing Procedures** – Commencing this year as a Parish Council of less than £25,000 turnover we are only responsible for appointing our own Auditor and submitting returns to the recognised authority for final acceptance. All information shown to the village is unchanged and is posted on the Notice Boards and on the village website.

### **Conservation Appraisal**

This was finally accepted by Stafford Borough Council for adoption in January 2016. This document will now be used by the Planners for consideration when reviewing planning applications within the new Village Boundary. The last Review was in 1977.

### **BKV – Best Kept Village**

In 2015 Hilderstone was again awarded 'Highly Commended' in the small village category. It is some time since we progressed beyond this stage. To make progress and be recognised the village will have to '*up its game*' and be more team proactive. When compared to last year's winners in this category (Fulford) they, together with the villages of Barlaston and Oulton, have teams and committees that promote pride in their villages. We have to thank the Church Yard Tidy team who have done excellent work in recent years and help to gain good points. It is our village assets that have to excel if we stand any chance of improving our standing.

The maintenance of the Church Yard is a joint responsibility between the Parish Council and Christ Church.

This year we needed more children's posters as Green Lea School have not been able to supply the number as in previous years. Special thanks to Caroline Stanley's daughter Erin who provided us with a display board full of bright and attractive pictures.

An improvement in the village this year has seen the removal of all the self-set Ash trees on Roebuck Bank and replaced with seven trees more in keeping with a village scene. Also removed were the overhanging branches near the Severn Trent gateway as a means to improve the safety of people walking the Hilderstone Walkway.

## **Traffic Issues**

During the year only two significant improvements have occurred where traffic is concerned. The SID has been moved to just before the *narrows* going towards Sandon and I would like to think this has had some affect in notifying drivers of their speed before going through the *narrows* . A top dressing has been put on the road surface through the centre of the village including Eastholme.

As a village we still have a major issue with traffic and if more houses and expansion of businesses are built at Cresswell then more traffic will ultimately travel through Hilderstone. People in the village have been asked if they would enter a monthly lottery to help Cresswell to bring a legal case against the developers, a number of householders have done so.

The village does not have a Speedwatch Team now since Richard Pilcher and his team resigned. As was said last year if the Road Safety Team are not going to use the information to enforce the speed limit then why have a village Speedwatch Team. Matthew Ellis, PCC, assured us that he was going to instigate a new co-ordinated initiative to improve the actions of Speedwatch in the first quarter of 2016. Unfortunately, to date, this has not happened. One thing for certain that came from Speedwatch's action was to prove the volume of traffic travelling through the village at peak times - 1000/hr – and the volume is believed to have continued to increase including the number of HGVs.

## **Village Assets – Roebuck Inn - Christ Church - Village Hall**

### **Roebuck**

Our thanks have to go to Darrel for all the effort he is putting in to keep the Roebuck going and its improved appearance is a marked change. Little by little things are improving and we would all like to see it doing well and continue to being a key asset to the village.

### **Christ Church**

In 2015 the Church managed to achieve its reduced Parish Share. This is the end of the three year concession it had in order to meet its commitments. As of this year (2016) it will be back on the normal Parish Share of £13,976 which is much increased and presents a challenge again. The grass in the church yard is currently being cut by Philip & Anna Davies as all previous contractors failed to respond to the request. This is being done under a contract to them.

A point of clarification: *PCC* stands for *Parochial Church Council* - this is the committee that is responsible for the effective running of the church.

### **Village Hall**

The village hall is a major asset to the village and continues to be well maintained and appreciated by all who use it. This year has seen the introduction of holding Film Nights which have been popular and enjoyed by many. During the year Horseshoe Cottages have come into use and the occupants gain access via the Village Hall car park.

A further point of clarification: the Village Hall has its **own** committee and is a **separate** entity to the Parish Council.

### **Village Website – Broadband**

The **website** is now an essential means of communication within the village although more could be done to improve it by more groups participating. [www.hilderstonevillage.org.uk](http://www.hilderstonevillage.org.uk)

**Highspeed Broadband** has finally arrived in Hilderstone. Unfortunately this only covers the village an area approx. 2 km from the Exchange on Roebuck Hill.

## **Parish Magazine**

This is another important communication in the village and thanks to Sue Stubbs the Editor who manages to keep a quality copy coming out each month. Sue would appreciate more contributions to the magazine. The publishing of this magazine can only continue by people giving donations and businesses supporting via adverts together with a subsidy by the Printer.

## **Village Events Reports – 2015 -2016**

- Village Fete – 11<sup>th</sup> July - more side shows and help were required.
- Village Christmas Party Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> December - again another very successful event with a full Village Hall enjoying excellent food and entertainment. Thanks to Hazel Woodward and her team.
- Village Concert Saturday 19<sup>th</sup> December – this was another successful and entertaining evening with home grown talent.
- Film Night - this is a new activity and top rate films are shown approximately every three months.
- Village Market - this has been a well-run activity for over a year but, unfortunately due to some proposed changes in format it has necessitated it to close from the end of April 2016.
- Nepal Coffee Morning – the first one was held in 2015 and another took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> May this year. The money raised will help to rebuild Nepal following the earthquake last year. Thanks goes to Lily Moore for running this initiative.
- A successful Village Dinner Party organised by Joan Carr took place on Saturday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2016

## **Future Events – 2016**

- The Queen's official birthday celebration - nothing planned - 11<sup>th</sup> June.
- Scarecrow Week-end 11-12<sup>th</sup> June including Special Scarecrow Church Service
- Village Fete Saturday 16<sup>th</sup> July
- Village Christmas Dinner Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December
- Village Christmas Concert - TBA

## **Thank You**

- Bill Holmes for maintaining the appearance of the village
- Tim Kitchen and Michael Dix for their diligent work in litter picking.
- The Team who organise the Christmas Entertainment.
- A special thank you to Helen Howie our Parish Clerk for all the work she does on behalf of Hilderstone village.
- Finally to all the Parish Councillors for their continued support during the year.

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Circulation: Members of the Hilderstone Parish Council  
Parish Magazine  
Village Website  
Borough Cllr Andrew Harp  
County Cllr Ian Parry

Issued:

Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> May 2016