

West Farleigh Parish Council Newsletter - April 2009

The Parish Council intends to issue this newsletter on a quarterly basis. Its aim is to inform you on some of the different topics that are discussed at Council meetings. Should you have a particular subject that you feel requires further explanation and would be of interest to the rest of the village please let us know through the Clerk, Vikki Stancombe and we will try to include it in the next issue.

Proposed Community Centre

It was thought that this was a good time to give you all a run down as to progress on the proposed community centre and a little on the history of what has taken place over the years.

Prior to the recent proposals several years ago the Parish had received offers of two parcels of land for a village hall, one being opposite the Good Intent which was later withdrawn (1982) and a compensation fee of £1000 paid. The other was on a site next to the Good Intent and low and behold this was once again withdrawn in 1987.

As you are no doubt aware the Parish Council was approached by Lambert & Foster in 2005 about a plot of land in Ewell Lane which could be used for a community centre for the village of West Farleigh. Naturally, we accepted their offer which was not part of supporting the application for the proposed development of the site.

We then presented a brief outline to the village at a meeting held in the Church. This turned out to be very well attended and the Church was full with all but a few in support of the project. From this positive feedback we then went on to obtain planning permission. Then came the news that Lambert & Foster were having trouble selling the development site and their offer to us was withdrawn but along with an offer of reimbursing our costs.

However, in 2008 we received an offer of another plot of land in Charlton Lane, this time leasehold, for a period of 99 years at a peppercorn rent of £1 a year. Soon after this initial discussions were held with Maidstone Borough Council to determine the possibilities of building on this site rather than the one in Ewell Lane. Their indications were good but the planning process will obviously have to be followed, and this time, after lessons from previous experience, it was agreed to do this once the lease was in the name of West Farleigh Parish Council. The present position on the lease is that we are quite close to completing this process but are obviously dependant upon the solicitors. We will keep you updated as to when this process is completed.

It is then our intention as a Parish Council that once this process is completed to seek the ideas and feelings of the residents of West Farleigh via a questionnaire to every house in the village. We will then collate your views on these and present the findings to you at another open meeting of Parishioners to be held at the Church. **What then follows is down to you all, so please participate in this with us as this will then give us a clear and factual picture on our next move driven by you the residents of West Farleigh.**

A few people have expressed concerns as to how the community centre construction costs would be found. Quite simply through fund raising, donations from external bodies and a small amount of money that was raised previously and is looked after by the Parish Council as Trustees. This money can only be used on a community centre as laid down in the original agreement. As to running costs we have as a Parish Council visited several community centres and with our discussions with the centre representative's found that there are normally many takers for space from the surrounding communities. These can range from sports/fitness clubs, Citizen Advice Bureau, polling station, children's nurseries, meeting rooms for local groups i.e. Women's Institute, Evergreens, internet café etc. None of the community centres we visited reported problems with finding money for the upkeep and running of such centres.

Hopefully this brief will have given you a clearer picture as to what the Parish Council have been doing regarding this project. However, we will need your input soon before we take any major decisions on how and what we need for the village of West Farleigh.

Parish Councillor Frank Underdown

By now you will have seen in either Lifeline or on the notice boards that Councillor Frank Underdown has resigned from the Parish Council for personal reasons.

Frank came to the village 60 years ago from Chatham where he was born, and as you can imagine in that period of time spent living here means that he has proved to be a most knowledgeable source of information and experience that we his fellow Councillors could tap into. Frank has been on the Parish council for the last six years, always working hard for our village and has often acted as our mediator in preventing problems escalating in the village.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank Frank for all his time spent on Parish business, his devotion to West Farleigh, his sensibility and his humour that was often so evident at our meetings.

Time now for him to try and enjoy what he has contributed to over the years and the pigeons to keep their heads down.

He is also still I believe the record holder for swimming from Teston Bridge down the River Medway to Maidstone, a race that used to take place yearly. Again from us all, thank you Frank.

Village trees.

One of the areas that I have undertaken to be responsible for is the Tree Warden for the village. This involves carrying out inspections on the trees, checking for diseased or damaged trees and putting into action measures to overcome any problems relating to this.

As a joiner and wood-turner during the whole of my working life I have always had a love of trees and when Don Goodwin who was the tree warden for many years retired from the Parish Council I happily volunteered to step into his shoes. Don was responsible for planting a large number of trees in the village both within the confines of his farm at Court Lodge including the cricket ground and also on the village green.

The Kent Men of the Trees is a Charity that invites Kent villages to take part in a competition aptly called "Trees In The Village" and West Farleigh has been taking part for a number of years. Each year the trees are judged and the winning villages are awarded prizes of trees to be planted within the village.

We are lucky in the village to have some magnificent specimens both in private dwellings and in public areas not the least of which is the Handel Oak, a remarkable pollarded oak of substantial girth and possibly exceeding most Oaks in Kent. This tree is on the West Farleigh side of Teston bridge on the right as you cross from West Farleigh.

Since taking over this post I have planted several trees and these include a Holm Oak, Rowan, and a Liquid Amber gum tree on the village green, a beautiful Acer Rubrum on the Lower Road and a Flowering Cherry on the triangular Green in Charlton Lane. Extensive planting has been carried out over the last few years by Stephen Norman at Smiths Hall and by Hugh Evans at Court Lodge.

West Farleigh is very lucky to have some wonderful trees and the Liquid Amber on the green was the prize from Kent Men of the Trees competition last year. We are still awaiting the results of this year's competition but the judge again passed comment on what lovely and well managed trees we had so we keep fingers crossed for another good result.

Councillor Brian Merritt

Contact telephone numbers:-

Cllr. Geoff Martin	01622 812189
Cllr. Deborah Bailey	01622 721671
Cllr. Beverley Hards	01622 721181
Cllr Jill Morgan	01622 726251
Cllr. Bryan Merritt	01622 813990
Cllr. Bruce Scott	01622814476
Clerk Mrs. Vikki Stancombe	01622 842782
E-mail	westfarleighpc@googlemail.com