



NEWSLETTER

Volume 7 Issue 3

March 2013

Dates for your diary 2013

**Planning
Committee** 4th
April
Youth Centre

Parish Assembly

Come and find out 15th
what has been April
happening in the
village over the
year

**Planning
Committee** 2nd
May
Youth Centre

**Parish Council
Meeting** 20th
May
Robertsbridge Hall

**Dates for future meetings
Will be set at the meeting on
20th May**

**Note: Meetings of the full
Council now take place on the
3rd Monday of alternate
months. Planning Committee
meetings are held monthly if
applications are submitted.**

All meetings start at 7.30 pm and
a period of up to 15 minutes is
allowed at the start of the
meeting for public comment or
questions if required.

Agendas for meetings are posted
on the parish notice boards and
web site at least 3 days before
the meeting - planning
applications are available for
inspection at the parish office
during normal opening times or
on the Rother District Council
web site - www.rother.gov.uk
and you can comment on
planning applications on-line

New Councillors -

Sadly, two members of the Parish Council left us in January, both due to changes in personal circumstances. Charlie Beeden had been on the council for over four years; Simon Longhurst had been on the Council for over five years and Chairman since May 2011. Both were valuable and committed members of the Council and will be missed. We thank them for their work and wish them both well.

The vacancies were advertised in accordance with required procedures; no request was made for an election, so the Council advertised for any interested residents to come forward. Four very suitable candidates put their names forward and the Council had the unenviable task of choosing two of them. In the event they chose Keith Marden and Sean O'Hara and we welcome them to the Council. We are grateful to the unsuccessful candidates and thank them for their interest in the village. They, and anyone else interested may like to make a note that the next elections for Parish Council are due in May 2015.

Annual Parish Meeting – or Parish Assembly Monday 15th April 2013

This will take place on at Robertsbridge Hall, Station Road. This is not a council meeting, but a **meeting of the 'electors' of the parish** – in other words **it is your meeting!** After short reports from the Chairman of the Parish Council and your County and District Councillors, you will have an opportunity to ask questions or raise any matters of local interest.

As usual we will be inviting all voluntary groups and organisations in the parish to take part by having a small table top display or stand to promote and advertise their own activities, and other topical displays. This is a good opportunity to see just how much Robertsbridge has to offer, and to meet informally with other residents and your elected representatives to discuss matters of interest to you.

Doors open at 7pm allowing half an hour to gather, view the displays, mingle and chat. The formal part of the evening – the reports and questions and / or discussions starts at 7.30pm and will last for about 30 - 45 minutes. Following this, light refreshments will be served, with more time to chat and view the information stands. The evening will finish by about 9pm. We look forward to seeing you there.

SPRING CLEAN YOUR VILLAGE

We are having a village 'tidy-up day' on **Sunday 14th April from 2.30pm** and need volunteers. If you can spare some time and would like to help please come to the Recreation Ground at 2.30pm where we will plan the clean up areas or, if you want to clear a particular area or street etc. please contact the Co-ordinator, Sarah Massini, on 880353 or smassini@btinternet.com to avoid duplication of effort!

This will involve mainly litter-picking but can also include sign washing, graffiti removal etc if necessary. The Parish Council will provide rubbish bags, gloves, litter pickers etc. and we will collect the rubbish at the Recreation Ground ready for clearance on Monday.

Forging ahead? The management of Robertsbridge green spaces

The Parish Council manages a number of spaces around the village. Two in particular are managed for their amenity and nature conservation value:

- The **Pocket Park** lies to the north of the village, the other side of the Rother Valley Railway line. Comprising an area of blackthorn scrub and woodland, with more open areas of rough meadow and ponds, this is a quiet and 'secret' space where nightingales sing through May and June.
- **Bishops Meadow** lies to the south of the village, below Mill Rise, off Bishops Lane. The area, including the former wood yard was covenanted to Rother DC (and subsequently leased to the parish) as Public Open Space as planning gain for the development of Mill Rise. It is an area of rough grassland splashed with colourful wildflowers through spring and summer and a hunting ground for barn owls in winter.

The basic regular maintenance of mowing paths, repairing gates and fences, and hedge-cutting, is undertaken by a paid contractor. Occasional, or one of tasks, such as the hay-cut in Bishops Meadow* are also undertaken by a contractor; but other tasks, including coppicing, pond clearance, hedging, litter-picking, etc., which keep these spaces pleasant for people and good for wildlife, are reliant on volunteers.

If you have an interest in either of these sites, please come along to a 'workshop' at Robertsbridge Youth Centre, **between 3pm and 4.30pm, on Saturday 13th April** where you will be able to share ideas about the management of both sites, and sign up to an informal new group, the Friends of Robertsbridge Green spaces (FORGe). We'd also like to collect images, historical information and wildlife records for both sites. The 'workshop' will be very informal, so come along to chat and discuss, or simply pop-in for 5 minutes to share your thoughts and ideas. We'll have maps and flip charts for you to scribble on. And don't worry there will be no press-ganging, arm-twisting or guilt-tripping to making you volunteer! First and foremost we want your views and ideas. Your sweat, blood and tears are yours to give as and when you choose.

If you can't make it, but have ideas to share, or would like to be kept updated about FORGe please contact:

Peter Massini on 880353 / petemassini@btinternet.com or
Anne Wells on 880832 / annecwells@gmail.com

* Note: cutting the meadow will resume this year

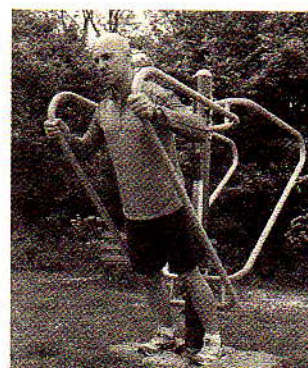
Get Fit for free in the Rec.!



Hopefully (weather permitting!) by the time you read this the four items of outdoor gym equipment should be up and ready for you all to use in the Recreation Ground.

This facility is provided by the Parish Council thanks to an *Awards for All* fully funded grant. As well as meeting the desire of villagers canvassed over a year ago now, it fits with the *Active Rother* aims to encourage people in Rother to be more active in a range of settings including using outdoor and indoor spaces. It is to be positioned between the

cricket field fence and the children's play area. So why not kick start a fit and active summer by getting down there and trying it out?



(Any resemblance to any Robertsbridge residents is purely coincidental - Ed.!)

Precept & Council Tax for 2013-14

In January, the Parish Council (PC) confirms the 'precept' – how much money it will need to run the services (such as street lighting, grass cutting, recreation ground and a dozen others) in the parish for the coming year. The money is collected for us by Rother District Council (RDC) by adding it to the council tax of all households in the parish. This Parish precept is about 4 % of the total Council Tax (ESCC 72 %, RDC 10 %, Police 9 %, Fire 5 %). For the last few years any increase has been mainly to compensate for inflation. This year the precept will result in the Band D tax being **about £13 more (for the year)** for each household than last year (about 0.6 % of the total tax). Why? There are three main reasons; we have two new commitments and a change in Government policy to allow for:

(1) The car park and toilets (CP+T) close to the centre of the village in Station Road are owned and run by RDC. The Government, in an effort to try to pay off debts and to rebuild sound money habits, is to cap the taxes raised by tiers of local government above Parish Councils. ESCC and RDC have therefore become prudently aggressive in dropping services they are not obliged to provide (such as toilets and car parking), and to raise money from everything they own. Because our CP+T are small and remote RDC cannot make a profit from them. In other places they have already done away with toilets, and they might wish to sell 'our' car park or develop the land. But RDC is willing, first, to consider allowing the PC to take over the running of the CP+T on a long lease at a token rent.

After careful consideration the PC has concluded that the general economic and environmental health of the village does require both a car park and central public toilets. We need to get some cars off the congested streets, to which they have migrated during RDC's attempt to enforce the regulations in the car park, and this should encourage shops and visitors.

Whilst acknowledging there are toilets at the Recreation Ground to cater for people using the recreational facilities i.e. sports teams, families and individuals using the grounds and playgrounds, these are inconveniently distant for visitors to the shops, particularly small children and the elderly. The PC is also aware that if RDC were to do away with the toilet block it is likely to be too costly to rebuild if later experience showed that to be necessary. So, whilst the PC is aware that some residents may not use the car park and/or toilets themselves, we firmly believe that both provide a valuable indirect benefit to the community as a whole (it is a widely respected principle that everyone pays tax for services that are for the common good - like education, for example - even if they do not use the service personally).

The PC has therefore agreed to negotiate with RDC the takeover by the PC of the CP+T services, after outstanding defects have been corrected. Exactly how the car park would be run is still for discussion, but whatever emerges would probably seek to keep access free, but with regulations that could be invoked should an individual driver abuse the service.

The addition to the precept includes some initial one-off costs, regular running costs, and regular small contributions to a cumulative fund to save for occasional major expenses such as resurfacing the car park.

(2) The Clerk to the PC holds a part-time appointment. For years she had worked more hours than the job description anticipated, but three years ago changed circumstances meant she could no longer do so, rendering it impossible to cope with the volume of things to be done. Robertsbridge has been classified, with Ticehurst, as one of two 'Service Centre' villages in Rother, partly because we have an unusually good set of 'services'. Comparison across the southeast of England, against nationally agreed guidelines, shows that the work really needs a full-time Clerk, or an additional part-time Assistant Clerk. The PC has accepted this case and hopes to appoint an assistant within a few months.

(3) Council Tax Benefit, which was fully funded by central government, has been replaced with Council Tax Discounts, which are not fully funded. The result of this (in over simplified terms) is that the shortfall is spread between all households who pay Council Tax. So even if the Parish Council asked for the same precept as last year, Council Tax would still go up. People who qualify for help will receive it in the form of discounts, but all households have to pay a bit more.

These are difficult times. The PC has done its best to keep the precept to the minimum necessary to provide the services that residents value, but, for the reasons noted above, it is not possible to freeze the (Parish) precept for the coming year.

SALEHURST & ROBERTSBRIDGE PARISH COUNCIL

Clerk to the Council:

Mrs Karen Ripley

The Parish Office
Robertsbridge Youth Centre
The Grove, George Hill
Robertsbridge, East Sussex TN32 5AP

Phone: 01580 882066

Email: clerk@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Web address:

www.salehurst-pc.org.uk or
www.robertsbridge-pc.org.uk

The Parish Office is open to the public at the following times: **(note new times)**

Tuesday 2pm to 4pm
Thursday 2pm to 4pm

Rother District Council

Web address: www.rother.gov.uk

Parish Councillors

Tel:

Cllr Dicky Clymo (Acting Chair) 881563
dicky.clymo@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Ruth Augarde 881708
ruth.augarde@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Neil Barden 880457
neil.barden@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Nick Greenfield 880998
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Cllr Nigel Lockwood 882204
nigel.lockwood@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Gillian Smith 880810
gillian.smith@salehurst-pc.org.uk

Cllr Anne Wells 880832
anne.wells@salehurst-pc.org.uk

East Sussex County Councillor

Cllr Peter Jones
cllr.peter.jones@eastsussex.gov.uk

Rother District Councillors

Cllr Graham Browne 860118
cllr.Graham.browne@rother.gov.uk

Cllr Susan Prochak 881309
cllr.susan.prochak@rother.gov.uk

Skate ramp update

As there was a low response to the appeal in the last newsletter for views on the future of the skate ramp (3 replies) we are extending our research by actively seeking young residents' views while looking into the viability of retaining this facility on a suitable location. A group of volunteers would still be needed to take on the search for funding and seeing through such a project.

If you would like to take part in this project, please contact the Clerk.

The Clappers Recreation Ground – DOGS ON LEADS and CLEARING UP AFTER YOUR DOG...



A reminder please that **ALL** dogs must be kept **ON A LEAD** throughout the entire recreation ground and are completely **prohibited** from the enclosed playground – even if small, well behaved or on a lead! Unfortunately, if your dog is off the lead and either runs ahead or lags behind you, it is easy to miss them 'do their business', and it remains un-cleared; if they are on the lead it is impossible to miss and can be

cleared up. Also, not everyone is a dog enthusiast and adults and children alike have a right to enjoy the grounds without dogs running free.

Dogs can be exercised off the lead in Bishops Meadow but any mess must be cleared up!

The current level of un-cleared dog mess throughout the Recreation Ground is appalling and unacceptable for a recreational area, used for sport and play. Please help us to eradicate this antisocial practice by a minority of selfish, inconsiderate dog owners. When you use the ground or walk your dog, please encourage others to clear up after theirs and to keep them on a lead. Please also report any such behaviour to the Clerk, or Tina the PCSO. Fines can be issued and persistent offenders may be banned from the ground.



It would be a great shame if the council had to re-consider banning dogs from the Recreation Ground completely, because of the behaviour of a few. Also, please remember that "bagging up" your dog waste and then just dumping the bag is not sufficient - you must dispose of it properly.

County Council Elections - 2nd May 2013

Are you registered? If you think you are not, you have until noon on 17th April to register.

Contact Rother DC to find out if you are registered. Tel: 01424 787825
Or email : elections@rother.gov.uk Don't lose your vote!!