

Birdham Parish Council

# Newsletter

Spring 2017



## *Annual Parish Meeting*

This year's **Annual Parish Meeting** will be held on the 13th May at 11:00am.

The meeting along with this Newsletter is intended to give you an insight into the subjects that councillors are currently involved with.

The meeting will give you the opportunity to make your comments and observations known.

As with last year Tea and Coffee will be available from 10am on.

## **A27— can it be upgraded?**

According to Highways England the South Coast Central route is **critical for future economic growth** around the coastal urban centres of Chichester, Worthing, Brighton and Hove, Eastbourne and Hastings, as well as several inland commercial areas.

They believe the biggest problem around Chichester is **Congestion/traffic queuing** followed by **Roads busy/high volume of traffic** yet on the 1<sup>st</sup> of March this year the Secretary of State Chris Grayling cancelled the improvements to the A27 around Chichester.

Hopefully, out of these ashes, under an WSCC initiative it may be, and I say may be, possible for the people of Chichester District to appeal to the SoS to get the money reinstated, but to convince him do this we need to develop a constructive set of proposals, supported by the majority, we can set before him.

To that end our WSCC, CDC Councillors and Parish Council Chairmen have attended two meetings, the first, also attended by our MP and Bishop, to explore if there is an appetite for ALL of us to work together; and the second to see if there is a common objective on which, through discussion, we can formulate our own proposals.

In line with other parish councils around the district we are offering you the opportunity to make your views known at this year's Parish meeting.

## Protect Birdham from road and property flooding!



If you have a ditch or culvert running along the boundary of your property you are the **riparian owner** of the ditch and/or culvert and you have a responsibility and a legal obligation to maintain them to a satisfactory standard.

Many of our problems in 2012-14 were caused by poor maintenance, but since then many have taken our advice and performed the necessary essential maintenance. The result is that water experiences far less resistance, and runs away more easy, but there are still areas that require improvement .

**Please don't put your neighbours property at risk.**

## Ponds



In the past, Westlands Lane was prone to flooding, so on the advice of WSCC Operation Watershed, plus the help of local farmer Tom Monnington , we cleared out the pond, cutting down the trees, and last autumn removed all of the old roots. This allowed us to clear the entry to the culvert which runs along Westlands Lane .The pri-

mary aim was to increase the 'tankage' of the pond, ie to have enough volume to take the excess water off of the road, which then drains away through the culvert. The pond , plus the entrance to the culvert had become choked with the roots , and it was this that was causing the road to flood . Now the engineering work has been done , it is now time to concentrate on improving the visual aspects and for this we have turned to Jane Reeve of the Manhood Wildlife and Heritage Group who has recommended that we lay down coir matting impregnated with wild plants associated with ponds, The purpose of the matting is to retard the growth of nettles and tree saplings', which if allowed to re-establish would return us to the position we were in a couple of winters ago.

## *Children's Play Equipment*

Many residents will be aware that for some considerable time the Parish Council has wanted to improve the equipment and fencing in and around the children's play area.

In the main the play area has not only been stuck in the 1990s, or earlier, but is neither inspiring or challenging for those who use it and even less so for those who are above the age of five or six.

To rectify the position and carry out an overhaul of the play area the Parish Council has been trying to obtain finances from a number of sources without success. However, an application was made to the New Homes Bonus (NHB) fund in 2014 when an award of £1500 was made to provide a master plan plus a further £7000 should the plan be adopted. In 2015 a further application and award was made totalling £11504. With the exception of the £1500 none of this money had been received by the Parish Council as no master plan had been agreed.

In 2016 a 100% resident's survey was carried out asking residents for their opinions on four suggestions that had been made to the Parish Council. The survey was overwhelmingly in support of an upgrade to the children's play area.

The survey results were used as evidence in support of an application to Chichester District Council (CDC) for the payment of funding from the NHB which had not been paid and an addition funding to replace the fencing around the play area.

On the 6<sup>th</sup> January 2017 the Parish Council received the full payment requested of £26124.00.

Since then approximately 60% of the new fencing has been installed, with the balance to be installed after the new play equipment has been installed.

The Clerk has been given the authority to liaise with suppliers of play equipment. The Clerk suggested that he should try and obtain equipment that was both challenging and interesting and whilst this may sound an easy assignment it has proved somewhat testing in that as soon as a piece of equipment is selected it becomes 'no longer available'.

Once sufficient selections and prices have been obtained it is hoped that Birdham Village School will be involved by allowing the children to vote on the equipment they would wish to see installed.

The draw back in this process is that the money has to be spent on installed equipment by September 2017. Not a lengthy period of time at all.

## Construction starts on St James

The new Community Centre at the Birdham village church is about to become a reality after many years of planning and fund raising efforts. The St James Centre, which will replace the current small church room, will provide facilities for a wide range of "Well Being" activities and will be available to everyone in the local community.

The Centre has meeting spaces on 2 floors – 2 small meeting rooms and 2 medium size rooms with capacity of up to 50 people one of which is intended to have a "drop in café" open every day. The intention is to have a place in the village which is complementary to our Village Hall so that Birdham will be able to attract people for all kinds of meetings, parties and events.

The original idea for the new Centre was to accommodate the expanding needs of the church programme but it has become clear that our village ought to provide "discreet gathering spaces" for all ages in the community – health, counselling, art and social care services to mention just a few which in future we believe will best be offered locally.

To date 70% of the total funds for the St James Centre have been secured and a further £190,000 will enable the Centre to be open by Spring 2018, just 12 months from now – How can you help us make it happen?

## Don't forget the Birdham Tea Party

A reminder that all are welcome to the Village Hall for tea and cakes on the **first Tuesday of every month at 3.00pm.**

## Key Dates

Parish Council Meetings 15th May, 19th June , 17th July.

## Upcoming election dates

Elections to West Sussex County Council will be held on Thursday the 4th of May 2017

The General Election will be held on Thursday the 8th June 2017.