

Withyham Parish Council - Bulletin 3



The Future of Groombridge Post Office

POST
OFFICE

The Postmistress of Groombridge Post Office on Station Road, Groombridge, is retiring in September 2020 after many years of serving our parish.

With her retirement the Post Office will close unless the Parish Council steps in.
Find out more about what the Parish Council is considering and how this would affect you.

History

Previously the Parish Council worked closely with Groombridge's Premier Stores, to secure a post office counter there. However despite all efforts, this was not viable. Without another suitable business to take on the post office provision, the parish will no longer have a post office. This would result in the loss of not just local postal services but also other services such as banking, car tax, insurance and currency, and would impact local businesses.

What Have We Done So far?

We are setting up a Community Interest Company in order to make an application to Post Office Ltd. We needed to know whether a post office was required in the parish so we conducted a survey.

Survey Results

Full results of the consultation are available on the Parish Council website. Comments showed that many of our residents (including our local businesses, the self-employed, those working from home and the elderly) rely on Groombridge Post Office with its easy access and parking. They also value the accessibility of the other shops and services around the hub of the post office. Thank you to all who responded.

98.9% of responders said YES they would support Withyham Parish Council in its efforts to secure the future of Groombridge Post Office



94.8% of responders from the Parish said YES they would support their council tax being used to secure and staff the post office



62 residents said they would be pleased to join a working group to explore the options for retaining a post office and/or would volunteer to work on the retail side of the post office. We thank everyone for their input and offers of support.

Options

Having gauged support, Withyham Parish Council has been exploring where a post office service could be 'housed', as the current premises form part of the Postmistress' home. **OPTION 1: to purchase the existing post office building to enable the post office to continue operating from the same site. OPTION 2: to convert part of the Old Station, Groombridge (130 yards up the road).** Parish councils can access Public Works Loans at preferential rates to borrow for capital costs. A detailed Update and Options paper is available on our website and directly from the Parish Office, in addition to this Bulletin briefing, as it is important to the Parish Council to keep residents informed.

Council Tax/Precept

Due to the nature of the contract offered by Post Office Ltd and additional costs of purchasing the current Post Office building/relocating it to the Parish Office, there would be an effect on the portion of Council tax that residents pay to the Parish Council (Precept). WPC will be carefully exploring the site options, as well as staffing and volunteer models, to clarify likely costs and impact on budgets. Current **estimates** based on the options are:

Minimum annual subsidy £25,943 which equates to £19.75 per year/38p per week extra in residents' Council Tax based on a Band D property

Maximum annual subsidy £47,387 which equates to £36.08 per year/69p per week extra in residents' Council Tax based on a Band D property

We Need Your Views!

To apply for borrowing Withyham Parish Council must show parish support for the project.

If you did not respond to our May survey, We need to hear from you.

Email, write or phone by noon on 13th July to let us know if:

1. You support the Parish Council taking on the post office provision Yes/No
2. You support the Parish Council increasing Precept to do so Yes/No
3. You wish to register any other comments.

All responses must contain your name and address. *Please do not respond if you have already completed our survey.*

Withyham Parish Council, The Old Station, Station Road, Groombridge TN3 9RD.

Tel: 01892 864557 * Email: clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk * Website: www.withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk



COVID-19 Coronavirus

Welcome to our Bulletin update. Early on in lockdown, **Withyham Parish Council** wrote to all households in the parish that had not received a flyer from their local COVID-19 volunteers. This explained what help they could access, and encouraged them to contact the Parish Office if they needed assistance. Withyham Parish Council has been working with local volunteers, giving support where it is required and directing residents in need.

We have been able to give a grant of £1,000 towards materials for a local group making scrubs. Further help and support is still available should it be needed. This Bulletin signposts some of the groups, volunteers and agencies with whom Withyham Parish Council is working.

Local help in the Parish

GROOMBRIDGE COMMUNITY

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS RESPONSE

PLEASE CONTACT US IF YOU NEED SUPPORT

What we can help with?

- Shopping
- Picking up your medication from Hartfield Surgery
- Posting Mail
- Walking your dog
- A friendly phone call to check you're OK



Please call for any other tasks and we will do our best to assist.

Contact: 07711 286776/01892 860227 or email: groombridgecommunity@gmail.com



If you need help and assistance and you are not sure who to contact, please call or email the Clerks. Details below.

St John's residents can link in with the group 'Supporting Crowborough':

Email: crowborough2020@outlook.com

Tel: 01892 317151

Mon- Fri 8am-4pm

(answerphone available for out of hours)

Withyham and Blackham

residents needing help with food and prescriptions can be put in touch with local volunteers by contacting the Parish Council. Withyham Village Hall website also has useful information and links

<http://www.withyhamvillagehall.co.uk/coronavirus/>

Your Wealden community hub is here!

Your Community Hub is also continuing to operate.

This is a partnership between the voluntary sector, health service, East Sussex County Council and Wealden District Council. They will listen to people's needs and put them in touch with the group or person best placed to help locally. Call them on 01892 443322.

PARISH OFFICE

The Parish Office at The Old Station, Groombridge, remains closed to the public until further notice but staff continue to work and are contactable via email and telephone. Please do get in touch. If we are unavailable we will come back to you as soon as we can.

Thank You

A big thank you to the volunteer groups and individuals who have done so much for their neighbours over the past few months. Your kindness and support has been a life-line to so many people in our parish. In due course, when we can gather together again, we hope to be able to thank you personally.

Since the coronavirus lockdown, Withyham Parish Council has started to hold its meetings remotely via Zoom. Please refer to our website www.withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk for agendas to meetings, and contact the Clerks if you would like to comment on any agenda items.

AT HOME SHOULDN'T MEAN AT RISK OF DOMESTIC ABUSE

#YOUARENOTALONE

If you are in immediate danger, or suspect someone else is, call 999.

If you're worried you, or someone you know, may be experiencing domestic abuse:



The Portal - Domestic or sexual abuse and violence can happen to anyone. You are not alone. We understand, and we believe you. Contact the Portal:

0300 323 9985

If you need to flee your home because of domestic abuse:



The Freephone 24-hour National Domestic Abuse Helpline run by Refuge offers support for women:

0808 2000 247

care for the carers
East Sussex

The Hub is open virtually 10am-5pm

Monday-Friday
Call 01323 738390
Text 07860 077300
info@cftc.org.uk



SCAM ALERT! Beware of COVID-19 fraud

With over 360 coronavirus-related complaints and enquiries since lockdown began it is vital to be alert. If you think you have been a victim of a scam, report it to Action Fraud on 0300 123 2040. For advice, call the Citizens Advice Consumer Helpline on 0808 223 1133 and to learn more, visit www.FriendsAgainstScams.org.uk

Latest information on coronavirus:
www.gov.uk/coronavirus
www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/

Restarting your business safely

The 'Better Business for All' Partnership has produced a COVID-19 Toolkit which provides useful documents and guides.
www.sussexchamberofcommerce.co.uk/chamber-support-services/better-business-for-all

Mental health support

Find mental health support in East Sussex through the online Mental Health Directory of Community Support. Visit www.eastsussex.gov.uk/socialcare/healthadvice/mental-health/directory/services/ or www.healthinmind.org.uk



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