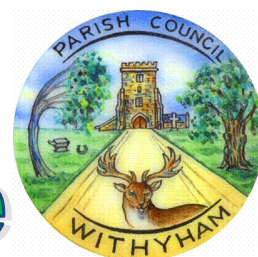


Withyham Parish Council

Autumn 2021 - 15th Issue



**WELCOME FROM
THE CHAIR**

WE'VE DONE IT!

We took you at your word (from your completed surveys)

and have made a giant step forward in the future of the parish by purchasing Groombridge Post Office building and securing the franchise of the Post Office itself.

In spite of three Lockdowns due to COVID 19, we have steadily worked our way through a maze of Post Office Ltd requirements, waited patiently for the government to grant us a loan and had many site meetings with builders, electricians, Post Office Ltd, counter staff and volunteers. And as you can see from the diary on this page

WE ARE NEARLY THERE!

At the same time other parish work continues:

- Rights of Way activities to keep footpaths open
- Groombridge Playground refurbishment
- Consideration of Planning applications
- Supporting the great Amblers team
- Responding to residents' concerns and queries
- Maintenance of parish assets
- Day to day running of the Parish Council

Please show us your support in using the Post Office and Shop once we open!

KEY DATES

1907

Groombridge Post Office Opened

2020

May - Our Survey Says:

"Save the Post Office!"

2021

18th June - We bought the building!

11th October - Transformation begins

28th October - Re-Open for business

TBA November - Grand Opening



The Future of Groombridge Post Office



MAY 2020

We told our residents that Groombridge Post Office was at risk of closure as, after many years of service, the Postmistress was retiring. We had already explored the possibility of Groombridge Premier Stores having a post office counter, but it wasn't viable for them to do so. We therefore asked residents if they agreed with us taking over the Groombridge Post Office building and the business. 98.9% of respondents said they wanted us to save the Post Office, and 94.8% supported us using council tax to do so. Many people also supported the idea of volunteers helping with the shop to keep the amount of subsidy needed from the Withyham Parish Council (WPC) as low as possible.

FAST FORWARD

16 months later we have set up a Community Interest Company (CIC) to operate the business, worked with Post Office Ltd to be accepted as the next franchisee, obtained a loan from the Public Works Loan Board to buy the building and are now owners and custodians of Groombridge Post Office building.

11 OCTOBER 2021

The shop closes for a refurbishment to meet Post Office Ltd's requirements and reflect the new exciting business. On 28 October 2021, the CIC hopes to re-open the doors to a new era in the history of Groombridge Shop and Post Office. The Post Office counter will continue in the very capable hands of Reshma and Sue, who will be joined by Sam Catlin at the counter. Debbie Siddle will add 'Postmistress' to her Clerk and Finance Officer hats. The shop will be redesigned and stocked with a brand new choice of cards, stationery, pocket money toys, local products and gifts. This has been made possible by a dedicated group of volunteers, led by Ray Donelan and Debs Fasey who, with the enthusiastic support of Natalie our Assistant Clerk, have helped develop the vision for the shop, sourcing new and appealing stock to fill it!

**OPENING
28TH OCTOBER 2021**

After two weeks of hard work converting the Post Office and shop, we will be back open ready to welcome you. We are sure you will be delighted with what you find. Your support in using the shop and post office is essential. Our business model relies on volunteers, helping to make it a community asset and keep our costs (and your Council Tax!) down, so we are always looking for more volunteers to help customers in the shop side of the business.



If you are interested in volunteering we have lots of different opportunities, so please do get in touch with the Parish Office Team.



STREETLIGHTS

In order to make positive contributions to our Carbon Policy, support Dark Skies, and to reduce our annual electricity consumption, all of our streetlighting stock has moved to part night lighting. Streetlights go off some time after midnight and switch back on early morning (or not at all in the summer!) We recognise that there can be a perception of increased risk when lights go off, but studies have found that reducing street lighting does not correlate with increased road traffic collisions and crime.

PARISH MAINTENANCE PERSON WANTED

Part time position

Withyham Parish Council is looking for someone to join our team to proactively monitor the Council's many assets*, carry out various maintenance and repair duties and obtain quotes from contractors for larger works.

The hours of work are **7 hours per week** and will be based out of the Parish Office in Groombridge.

Working pattern to be agreed with the successful applicant and can be flexible depending on seasonal conditions and maintenance requirements.

The hourly rate is £10.

Strong maintenance skills and own vehicle necessary (mileage costs will be reimbursed).

If you would like an application pack, please contact us on:

Tel: **01892 864557**

Or email: **clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk**

Completed Applications: Monday 18th October by noon

Interviews to be held: Wednesday 10th November

*Parish Council assets included but are not limited to bus shelters, benches, notice boards, Council buildings, land and children's play areas.

This year has seen the welcome return of the Flower Festival held at St Michael and All Angels, Withyham. Cllr Jill Pardey masterminded, organised and sponsored the event over the Bank Holiday weekend. The theme was 'The Commonwealth' and there were over 20 beautiful floral displays, enjoyed by many visitors. All donations went to Hospice in the Weald.



PARISH OFFICE

The opening hours of the Parish Office are set out below. We can also be contacted by email and phone.

Monday 12.00 – 3.00pm

Tuesday 9.30 – 12.00

Wednesday 9.30 – 12.00*

Thursday 9.30 – 12.00

Friday 9.30 – 12.00

*During School Holidays the Parish Office will be closed on Wednesdays.



Grants Awarded

GRANTS

Withyham Parish Council runs a very successful grants programme every year. This year has been no different and we have been delighted to support among others:

- Withyham Watch
- Groombridge Village Hall
- Blackham Village Hall
- Air Ambulance
- Samaritans
- Wealden Citizens Advice
- Clued Up...

WHAT'S CLUED UP ALL ABOUT?



Clued-up is a charity which covers all areas of the Parish. It is based in Crowborough, and offers free and confidential advice and support to young people aged between 11 & 25.

They offer a drop in facility 5 days a week and also pre-bookable appointments.

The project offers a range of services including informal counselling, information, advice and support.

If you have a young person who is finding life hard please do get in touch with Clued-up, and join others in the Parish who have accessed this vital service.

For more information on what's available and how to access Clued-up, please see their website at www.clued-up.info or call them on 01892 661990.

PARISH PLAN

Work on this vital document is well underway. Our Parish Plan road maps the work of the Parish Council for the next five years.

We are looking forward to sharing this with you shortly.



Useful contact information

- **East Sussex Highways** – Telephone: 0345 6080193 Email: customer@eastsussexhighways.com or online www.eastsussexhighways.com/report-problem
- **Operation Crackdown** for anti-social driving or abandoned vehicles – www.operationcrackdown.org
- **Wealden District Council** - Telephone 01323 443322 Email: info@wealden.gov.uk or www.wealden.gov.uk
- **East Sussex County Council** - Telephone 0345 608 0190
- **Community Warden** 07734392141 or email clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk

PLANNING MATTERS

Would you like to be more informed about Planning Applications in your area? Have a say in the decisions that are made?

Ways to stay informed

- "MyAlerts" from Wealden District Council is a weekly email newsletter. It notifies you of planning applications in your local area each week. It is restricted to a radius which is set by you. You can sign up for this service on Wealden's Website.
- You may also see Planning Notices placed at the site of an application. (Like the one shown above)
- Applications are listed on the Parish Councils Planning Committee Agendas which are available on our Website.

How can I have my say?

Anyone can comment on a Planning Application. This can be done by:

- Email or post to Wealden District Council who are the Planning Authority.
- Attending the Parish Council's Planning Committee Meeting when the application is on the agenda. A ten minute opportunity is given at the beginning of each meeting for members of the public to speak on agenda items. Parish Councils are an important statutory consultee in the Planning Process.

Wealden have a helpful section on their website about how to comment on a Planning Application. <https://www.wealden.gov.uk/>

Have a planning concern?

Wealden are also responsible for enforcing planning laws. If you see anything which concerns you please contact Wealden District Council.



A FOND FAREWELL

After nine years our wonderful St Thomas Vicar, Sharon Francis, has retired. We would like to wish Sharon and her husband John a very happy and well deserved rest.



COUNTRYSIDE MATTERS

NEW

ACCESSIBLE gates have been installed on two footpaths in the Parish. This was made possible by the combined



efforts of the Landowner, WPC's Rights of Way Committee, the great work of our County Council's Rights of Way Team, and funded by WPC. We are endeavouring to make the countryside more



accessible, for everyone to enjoy.

Our Rights of Way Footpath Volunteers have also been busy clearing footpaths.

A huge thank you to them for their continued work.

THE LAW MATTERS

NEW POLICE STATION

We are so pleased that there will now be a permanent police presence based in Crowborough at the new police station. The new Crowborough Station, sited at the old Town Hall on Crowborough Hill, will help to increase the amount of time that can be spent in the Parish, and assist with quicker response times.



We were delighted to have a visit from our dedicated PCSO Matt Duval recently. Matt and his colleagues are eager to work with residents to maintain and improve the quality of life in the area.



HEDGES

If your property abuts a road or footpath, please check hedges are cut back and not causing an obstruction.

Keeping footpaths clear for pedestrians and roads wide enough for passing traffic helps keep us all safe.

BONFIRES

Residential bonfires attract many complaints and are a source of air pollution. We recommend that garden waste is composted or taken to a house hold waste site.

Love where you Live



SPEED MATTERS

We have unveiled our new Speed Indicator Device aimed at reducing speed on some of the Parish's roads.

The Speed Indicator Device, affectionately known as 'SID', will display driver's speed and give either a happy or angry face. 'SID' will also collect speed data which will be provided to East Sussex County Council for action, if required.



SLOW DOWN. SAVE LIVES.

Studies elsewhere in the country have given concrete evidence that the presence of a 'SID' on the roadside does help reduce speed and minimise the risk of accidents.

Setting the wheels in motion for this device was the Parish Council's Road Safety Committee, which is made up of Councillors and Residents. There are plans to extend the scheme which will be reviewed with East Sussex County Council in due course.

COMMUNITY CAFÉ/AMBLERS

Keep an eye out for future information about our wonderful **Community Café** coming soon.

The **Amblers** will be walking again on paths throughout the Parish. Details of each walk can be obtained from the Parish Office.

Anyone is welcome.

Amblers dates

23rd October
27th November
11th December



Are you on Facebook? We have our own Facebook page, which, alongside our newly updated website, contains useful information about your parish. Have a look, we always welcome your comments.
www.facebook.co.uk/WithyhamParishCouncil www.withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk

NEW FACES We are delighted to introduce some new faces:

Withyham Parish Council



Cllr Robert Gordon-James



Cllr Alan Gaukroger



Cllr Chris Pope

County Council



Cllr Georgia Taylor

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL



Cllr Diana Kelly *Chairman*
Cllr Paul Watkins *Vice Chair*

WARDS

Groombridge (including Withyham/Blackham)

Cllr Nick Anderson
Cllr Gwen Butcher
Cllr Andrew Fane
Cllr Robert Gordon-James
Cllr Diana Kelly
Cllr Keith Obbard
Cllr Chris Pope
Cllr Vacancy
Cllr Paul Watkins
Cllr Linsey Winter

Mardens Hill

Cllr Alan Gaukroger
Cllr Jill Pardey
Cllr Marcus Tarling

Clerks to Withyham PC:

Debbie Siddle - Clerk
Natalie Brett - Assistant Clerk
Tel: 01892 864557
clerk@withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk
www.withyhamparishcouncil.org.uk

On our website you can also find copies of our Agendas, Minutes of Council Meetings and Community News updates.

COUNTY / DISTRICT COUNCILLOR CONTACTS:

County Cllr Georgia Taylor
Tel: 07510 074255
Cllr.Georgia.Taylor@eastsussex.gov.uk

District Cllr Keith Obbard
Tel: 07941 578427
cllr.keith.obbard@wealden.gov.uk

District Cllr Chris Hardy
Tel: 01892 771348
cllr.chris.hardy@wealden.gov.uk

OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS

East Sussex County Council

www.eastsussex.gov.uk
Tel 0345 6080190
www.eastsussexhighways.com
For queries about roads & paths, potholes, street lighting, flooded roads.

Wealden District Council

www.wealden.gov.uk
Tel 01323 443333
For queries about planning, recycling, waste, and environmental issues.

Editorial Team: Natalie Brett, Stephanie Chapman, Diana Kelly, Debbie Siddle.

PLAY AREAS

Groombridge Play area is due for a refurb. Since 2018 a wonderful group of residents joined Cllr Di Kelly to develop ideas for a new playground.

The tender process is almost complete for the exciting new playground. The group has plans to consult on the final design at a Community Café.

As well as applying for grants, we hope that residents and local businesses will contribute some funds to the project. Plans are underway to encourage and enable residents to get involved.

Please keep an eye on our dedicated Facebook page
www.facebook.com/groombridgeplaygroundrenewal



Balls Green. We recently received a request for some adult exercise equipment, so we asked Withyham residents for their views via our social media. Thankyou to everyone who fed back to us. The responses are being compiled and WPC will consider them. Watch this space!

Blackham. A piece of play equipment, such as a set of swings, was recently requested on behalf of local children and young people to be sited on the recreation green at Teasley Mead. We will be consulting with residents via our social media on whether they would like to see a piece of play equipment, but if you are not on social media you can let us know your views by email, letter or phone (by the end of October).



DEFIBRILLATORS

Do you know where the defibrillators are in the Parish?

- Groombridge - By the entrance to the Village Hall
- Withyham - External Wall of King's Hall
- Blackham - Village Hall - Installation imminent!

**You don't need to be trained to use a defibrillator.
Anyone can use it!**

They are simple and easy to use and you don't need to go on a First Aid course. There are clear instructions on how to attach the defibrillator pads. It then assesses the heart rhythm and will only instruct you to deliver a shock if needed. You can't deliver a shock accidentally.

By using a defibrillator before an ambulance arrives, you can significantly increase someone's chance of survival.

Thank you to Sussex Heart Charity for their support with the Blackham defibrillator .

