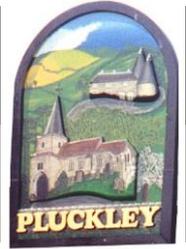


**PLUCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**COMMUNICATE WINTER 2015-6**



**FROM THE CHAIRMAN**  
**(Chris Housman)**

Welcome to your Parish Council's Winter newsletter – although at time of writing we still seem to be waiting for winter to arrive! Communicate is published to keep you up-to-date with the PC's activities on the village's behalf, and is delivered to every home in the village. On behalf of the Parish Council may I start by wishing 'you and yours' all the very best for 2016.

Our Christmas festivities started very well with the best turn-out yet of parishioners, school children and parents at the annual celebration to light the Christmas tree. As usual, carols were sung, vast quantities of mince pies were consumed (supplies actually ran out!) and the mulled wine was much appreciated. Although the tree lacked a bit in stature, everyone agreed that it was a very good shape and looked amazing with all its twinkling lights. Our thanks to Paul and Sarah at The Black Horse for the electricity supply, and to Senna and Gary for their festive lights.

You will see below that we are at last moving forward with what we believe to be an acceptable and workable solution to the Brickworks site. Besides housing, this is planned to provide some extra village amenity land as well as resolving a long-running situation. My thanks to my colleagues who have been working hard on achieving an acceptable compromise solution with the developer.

The Neighbourhood Plan is also moving on apace, and you will very shortly be able to have your say on our draft, thus influencing the future of our village. I urge you to take full advantage of this opportunity.

We also expect to get moving in 2016 on the new entrance and toilet facilities at the Village Hall, and we are most grateful to Ashford Borough Council (ABC) for a grant of £8,000 towards this. More on this later in this newsletter.

Finally from me, it's good news for most of the village regarding the imminent availability of 'superfast' broadband. The PC is also pressing mobile phone providers to improve their coverage and address several 'black spots' around the village – we'll keep you posted.

If you have any comments or issues about anything in this newsletter, or need to raise any concern with village life, please don't hesitate to contact one of your Councillors.

**THE BRICKWORKS**

The Parish Council discussed the latest application for housing development at the former Brickworks site at its December meeting. This case has been outstanding for some eighteen months.



From the Neighbourhood Plan workshops, the Parish Council was aware that while residents would prefer to see the site left undeveloped, most preferred housing to the existing permitted industrial use. Most realised too, that as a 'brownfield' site, it would be seen as appropriate for development and likely to be supported. The brief from residents to the Parish Council was therefore to seek to restrict the number of homes as far as possible.

The original application was for 51 homes, to which the Parish Council objected. However, a number of discussions and meetings have now been held with the developer and with the planners at ABC with the result that a revised application has been submitted for 25 homes. For this smaller number to be cost-effective for the developer and land-owner, given the high cost of cleaning-up the site, the homes planned are larger homes on large plots.

After discussion, the Parish Council resolved to support this new application, provided that a number of conditions can be imposed:

1. Development should take place only on the area previously occupied by the brickworks. All the surrounding area should be landscaped and further development prohibited.
2. At least four of the homes should be smaller, two or three bedroom homes.
3. The adjoining lake and woodlands should be tidied and maintained as such, available as a leisure facility for residents and visitors. There must be a management agreement in place to ensure on-going maintenance.
4. The field beyond the woodland, off Chambers Green Road and Station Road, must be maintained for grazing and/or arable purposes.

The application is now likely to be discussed and determined by ABC's Planning Committee in February.

## **SUPERFAST BROADBAND**

The long awaited upgrade to provide 'superfast' broadband has now been completed for much of the village. The service is known as 'Fibre to the Cabinet' (FTTC), and means that fibre optic cables run from the telephone exchange to the local telecoms cabinets (the green boxes by the roadside). The connection from the cabinet to your home then continues via the existing copper telephone wire. Any slowdown on speed should now only be impacted by the distance from the roadside cabinet to your home, and the quality of this copper wiring. Some questions and answers are as follows:

1. **Can I get the upgrade?** This depends on which cabinet you are connected to. There are 4 cabinets serving Pluckley: cabinets 2, 3 and 4 are all in the current upgrade, but cabinet 1 is not included due to some technical difficulties. The estimated timescale for this cabinet is by the end of June 2016. Giving precise details here on which houses are serviced by which cabinet is not possible, so to check which cabinet you are connected to, enter your telephone number at <http://www.dslchecker.bt.com/adsl/adslchecker.welcome>.
2. **What happens next?** The new cabinets have been installed and the final technical network connections were completed by Christmas. After a two-week period of assurance testing the network is then available for use by the various broadband Service Providers. By the time you read this you should be able to place an order for the new service if you are on cabinets 2, 3 or 4. Check the BT Openreach Superfast broadband website <http://www.superfast-openreach.co.uk/where-and-when> and enter your landline or postcode to see if your cabinet is enabled. If you see 'Accepting Orders', then you can contact a Service Provider for information and costs of the new services available, and to place an order.
3. **What will this cost?** This depends on the service chosen and will vary between the various service providers.



4. **How is the new service actually provided?** Connection requires a new broadband router in your home, and a connection change at the cabinet. If you are happy with installing the new router yourself, then a date will be set for connection, with the router delivered to you a couple of days in advance with instructions. On the scheduled day the engineer will then make the necessary connection at the cabinet and will not need access to your home. However if you need help with setting up your router then an appointment can be booked for engineer assistance.

Rest assured that we'll continue to press KCC and BT Openreach to ensure that the remaining cabinet is upgraded as soon as possible.

## **NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN**

Preparation of our Neighbourhood Plan has made good progress and is now at the draft stage. A copy has now been sent to Ashford Borough Council's Strategic Planners for their comments. When these are received (which we expect early in the New Year) the draft will be published as a pre-submission document. It will be available via the website, and printed copies will be available for inspection around the village. All Residents will be encouraged to comment during a six week period after publication. There will also be a public meeting, to which all parishioners are invited, at the Village Hall on **Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> February at 8pm**. Any comments or questions that you have will be welcomed then.

The Plan is important in that, for the first time, parishioners have actually had the chance to input to the plan that will be used to determine future planning applications in the village. Although most interest has focussed on housing development, the Plan also includes policies for Managing our Rural Environment, Economy, Communications and Transport, and Community and Leisure.

The type of housing residents have called for is smaller homes (two or three bedrooms) – both for young starters, and for older 'down-sizers'. The number called for varied but the average was eleven homes over the next 15 years. However, there was agreement that this figure could rise if the Brickworks site were to be developed (see above). To meet this demand, the draft Plan proposes three sites: Thorne Yard (off Smarden Bell Road), off Lambden Road (behind Willow Cottage), and the Brickworks. Between them, these would provide twelve of the smaller homes demanded. The PC originally planned to support a further site at Parsonage Cottage (Station Road) but this was rejected by KCC Highways as having inadequate sight lines for entrance and exit.

The Parish Council will take any residents' comments into account, and revise the draft Plan if required. It will then be formally submitted to Ashford Borough Council. They then too offer a further six week consultation period. After that, the Plan will be reviewed by an Independent Examiner. Finally, Ashford Borough Council will hold a public referendum in the Parish. If this is successful, then the Plan can be formally adopted. So, there are several stages yet to go through and further opportunities for residents to have a say. All being well, the target date for adoption of the Plan will be the summer of 2016.

## **VILLAGE HALL**

The plan to extend the Village Hall, adding a new entrance foyer with toilets, has taken a step further. A grant of £8,000 has been secured from Ashford Borough Council, for which we are most grateful. This, together with the money already committed by your Parish Council, means that we are now over halfway towards the financial target. This will help us in securing the remaining grant funding, which we are currently trying to do.



## SAFETY & SECURITY

A 'public access defibrillator' will be installed in the near future on the side wall of the Village Stores (thanks to Senna). This has been obtained from the British Red Cross, and funded by a grant from our Borough Councillor (Clair Bell). Defibrillators are proven to save lives in cases of cardiac arrest, and our equipment is fully automated for public use without any training. We hope it will never be used, but it will be reassuring to know that it's there if its needed.

Although Pluckley remains a safe place to live, low-level crime – such as break-ins and/or damage to outbuildings – has unfortunately been increasing of late and includes two burglaries to houses. Many of these incidents go unreported, which doesn't help the police in tackling the problem. Residents are therefore reminded to be vigilant, and to report anything untoward to the police.

We have also had an increase in anti-social behaviour - please report this to Ashford Borough Council using the online form at: <http://www.ashford.gov.uk/asb-report-it-form> so that they can take appropriate action. Our Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator (Martin Chambers) sends out frequent email bulletins detailing crime reports, and you can subscribe at: <http://nhw.pluckley-village.co.uk/>. In addition, for more immediate reports of suspicious activities or crime you can participate in the NHW's Facebook Group at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/PluckleyNHW/>, or follow @PluckleyNHW on Twitter.

## YOUR PARISH COUNCIL

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The Council meets in Pluckley Village Hall at 7.30pm, normally on the third Monday of each month, except August. All residents are welcome to attend.

