

WESTERHAM PARISH COUNCIL September 2012

Westerham Consultation - Parish or Town ?

Following an extensive consultation process, at the Council meeting on the 16th July 2012 it was resolved that the parish should adopt the status of a town, pursuant to section 245 of the 1972 Local Government Act.

Greater powers are being devolved to local councils. It therefore becomes increasingly important for our community that we are in a position to influence policies before they are put into practice. Recent experience shows that Town Councils are invited into consultations, whereas for obvious reasons all Parish Councils cannot be.

To maximize influence, funding and opportunity, Westerham Town Council will also need to increase its links with bodies outside its boundaries where the status of Town will be valuable in accessing help from the several Rural and Market Town initiatives.

The economic future is increasingly uncertain but seeking influence and funding recognition from the standpoint of a Town Council will increase our prospects.

Alan Wesley

Chairman
Westerham Town Council

KCC Community Warden Report

Once again I would like to ask for volunteers to help clear up some of the dog mess being left on our streets and playing areas.

I am hoping to have a clear up day after the Para Olympics, in mid-September. To date no-one has responded to my earlier request. If you are willing to help please give your contact details to the Town Council office.

The recent weather has conspired to aid the growth of weeds and in particular brambles and these are causing problems if they are overhanging footways. Could you please ensure that any foliage overhanging from your garden is cut back to allow free access for pedestrians.

Steve Taylor 07813 712760

Planning Committee Annual Report 2011 – 2012

(presented to the Annual Parish Meeting on 2nd May 2012)

It remains the responsibility of the Parish Council, through its Planning Committee, to review and opine upon local planning applications in line with current central and local government policy, law and guidelines. Our aim is to protect the fabric of our community whilst promoting its continuing regeneration and renewal to make it an attractive and enjoyable place to live and work.

Over the past twelve months we have begun to see the transition from Regional strategies and the old SDC Local Plan to the new LDF strategy and Development Plans (DPD's). Final passage of the changes to deliver the underlying detailed plans to the LDF will proceed once the new National Planning Policy Framework is announced to ensure that the local SDC plans meet National Planning Policy guidelines.

We have also seen the passage of the new Localism Bill at the end of 2011 that has begun the transfer of rights and responsibilities from Central to Local Government. This significant change will continue through 2012 and WPC will communicate its implications to our community as they become clearer.

The principal development site included in the DPDs for Westerham is the old London Road site, which will be zoned for 30 residential units. Unfortunately despite anecdotal interest from a number of parties the former Chelsea House shop remains vacant, as do other retail properties in the town. This is symptomatic of the malaise of the traditional High Streets across the country outside of London. We are better placed than many smaller towns but will not become complacent and will be as flexible as possible in encouraging reoccupation of retail shops that change hands.

The other major issue faced was the inclusion of Covers Farm in the KCC consultation document for potential landfill. In addition to the formal response outlining key objections and reasons that the site was inappropriate for development by WPC a significant local campaign was launched and petitions raised by the public in response. WPC has since learned that this site has not been taken forward in the KCC strategy proposals with alternatives having been preferred. We may however see the current leaseholders put forward revised planning applications to gain value from the site following the completion of extraction process. WPC is mindful of the issues underpinning this sensitive site.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of my committee who have served throughout the past year.

Philip Ashley

Chairman
April 2012

THE HEALING GIFT OF SPACE

One hundred years ago on 13th August Octavia Hill died peacefully at the age of seventy-five. As one of the foremost women of the Victorian age, it was expected she be laid to rest in Westminster Abbey, but her own wish had been otherwise, and she lies now in the churchyard of our own Holy Trinity which has become in this centenary year almost a site of pilgrimage.

Her connection with our village dates back to the late 1870s when her sister Gertrude took on the lease of The Warren. Coming to visit, Octavia was charmed by the greensand hills and their expansive views, so bought a plot of land nearby and with her companion Harriot Yorke built Larksfield on the edge of the Common. From there she set about exploring every footpath for miles around, and extended the campaign she'd already begun to make the countryside accessible to all.

History records Octavia Hill as a great housing reformer – some would say *the* housing reformer of the Victorian era – in recognition of her lifelong work among the poorest of the poor in London. Others herald her fame as one of the three co-founders of the National Trust. But my contention is that her greatest legacy is access to some of England's finest landscapes which she loved with a passion. But any romantic notion she may have had for the rural scene was matched by pragmatism, for she recognised that the health and well-being of individuals were dependent on fresh air and space in which to move. Appalled by the knowledge that in East London 7,481 people had access to just one acre of 'preserved space' she protested that: 'the need of quiet, the need of air, the need of exercise and ... the sight of the sky and of things growing seem human needs, common to all men.' So she took her tenants on excursions into the countryside, and during weekends at Larksfield would gather arms full of wild flowers to take back to London in order to brighten their smoke-blackened dwellings, in effect returning the countryside to the city. Through her work with the Commons Preservation Society she fought for the protection of open spaces – 'green lungs' she called them – and was especially keen to acquire vantage points within reach of the city, so those who lived and worked there could escape to 'feast [their] eyes on the marvellous blue of the hill before them.'

Living on Crockham Hill she knew all about the blue of the hills, and thanks to her erudition and campaigning zeal more than half a million acres of countryside and over 500 miles of coastline have now become our heritage; open, accessible, for all people for all time. A committed Christian, it was said of her that 'She brought the force of religion into the cause of wisdom, and gave emotion to justice.'

Thank God then for what Octavia herself once referred to as 'the healing gift of space.' For that is what she bequeathed to *us*.

Kev Reynolds

Note: A lecture expanding on this theme will be given by Kev Reynolds in Rickards Hall (behind the Museum) in Edenbridge on 27th September,

Police information

101 - national non-emergency number for police

You can now call Kent Police for non-urgent issues on **101**. The number is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

To make it quicker and easier for the public to get in contact with their local police, 101 has been introduced in England and Wales. It gives a single, easy-to-remember number to call to report crime and other issues which do not require an emergency response.

You can also call 101 to speak to your local neighbourhood officer, to make a general enquiry or to make us aware of a policing issue where you live.

What classes as an emergency?

Calling 101 for situations that do not require an immediate police response helps keep 999 available for when there is an emergency. An emergency is when a crime is happening, someone suspected of a crime is nearby, someone is injured, being threatened or a life is at risk, or there is a traffic incident involving personal injury or danger.

Each call to 101 will never cost more than 15 pence - no matter what time of day you call, how long your call lasts or even if you call from a mobile. We do not receive any of the call cost.

FORTHCOMING TOWN COUNCIL MEETINGS

Monday 10 th September	Finance and General Purposes
Thursday 13 th September	Planning
Monday 17 th September	Youth and Community
Monday 24 th September	Highways and Lighting
Thursday 27 th September	Planning
Thursday 11 th October	Planning
Monday 15 th October	Council

Members of the public are very welcome to attend these meetings. The first ten minutes of every meeting are available for members of the public to raise any issues with Councillors. All meetings start at 7.30 p.m. - except Planning which is held at

9.30 a.m. and Allotments, Playing Fields and Open Spaces which begins at 8.00 p.m.
They take place in the Town Council Chamber in Russell House.