



OFFHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Parish Council Newsletter – July 2023

Parish Council emails

Many residents have subscribed to the Parish Council email list which has been very successful. Information is sent out about road closures, planning applications, village events and of course the Parish Council newsletter. In recent months there have been problems. The large number of subscribers has meant that our emails are getting caught up in the spam filters on the system. So, we have looked at alternative providers who specialise in sending bulk emails. The Parish Council selected Mailchimp as they are used by other similar organisations and provide a free service.

Unfortunately, the free service is limited to the number of emails that can be sent per month and the limit has been reached for July so it has not been possible to send any more village emails out.

Councillors are mindful of cost and don't want to set up contracts with additional payments for village emails. Going forward, the Parish Council will trial posting details of road closures, planning applications and village events onto the website www.offham-pc.gov.uk and facebook wherever possible. Please look at the website and facebook for details. The email list will be reserved for sending out the newsletter every month and for occasional emails containing a number of pieces of information.

Thank you for your patience. The Parish Council values being able to reach residents with village news and is grateful that so many residents want to be an active part of the village.

July Parish Council Meeting

- The Parish Council has approved the purchase of some new Christmas Lights to replace those that are damaged
- Councillors are looking for someone who is able to repair the Well on The Green
- Candidates for the vacancy on the Parish Council will be considered when meetings resume after the summer break. If you are interested in the vacancy that has arisen please contact Charles.Unter@offham-pc.gov.uk or clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk for more information.



County Council

County Councillor Hohler provided the following report:

- She has met the new KCC Highways Manager for the area and driven around the division with the Highways Improvement Officer. They visited Offham and looked at the road by the school. They have discussed flashing “20mph” signs for when the road is busy to slow people down.
- She has met with the new police Inspector, Terry Newman.
- In the National Libraries Connected Awards, Kent Libraries won an award for work taking place in Kent Prisons and were shortlisted for work with children.

- Swimming lessons are important, particularly over summer. Kent has the highest rate of drowning in the UK.
- The Rural Crime Task Force is interesting. Extra people are making sure equipment is not stolen and taken over the border. Rural crime has gone down. Cllr Hohler is on the Rural Committee for Kent.
- The KCC Travel Saver helps save the cost of bus travel for children getting to school. The season ticket cost has been frozen. For additional children in the family the cost reduces and for children receiving a free school meal the cost is reduced. Applications run until 13th August.
- The Kent Minerals Plan consultation has no allocation for soft, sharp sand and gravel so there is nothing in the immediate area. The hard rock site is in Aylesford.
- Kent's Plan Bee and Environmental Policy has extended to cover new sites and many more acres of land, road verges and country parks
- The footpath on the Dover Cliffs has been upgraded so it is safer to use
- Explore Kent – KCC is promoting Public Rights of Way and the Countryside Code
- There is a 6-month review of the Lower Thames crossing – work starts 2026
- She noted the Parish Council were interested in Community Speedwatch. You cannot do this on roads where the speed limit is more than 30mph. Speedwatch is active in Wateringbury.



Borough Council

Borough Councillor Roud reported

- He attended the housing and planning committee meeting where the main topic was the Local Plan.
- It looks like TMBC will refuse to accept the KCC parking suggestions from 2008 which recommended 1½ vehicle spaces per property in the Local Plan.
- It was decided to retain the existing timetable for the Local Plan, with an extra Regulation 18B consultation as there are new properties brought forward since the original call for sites. It will be submitted by April 2025 to the Secretary of State. TMBC need to inject an extra £33,000 to cover the cost of this, which can be spread out over a few years.
- TMBC have agreed a process to cover meetings with neighbouring authorities.
- Problem housing standards were discussed. If residents have any problems with their social housing, let Cllr Roud know and he can help. Clarion committed to visit 330 homes in Tonbridge & Malling which are suffering from damp and mould. Clarion owns 300,000 around the country
- TMBC are working with Planning Recruitment as there are not enough planners.
- Last week he went to a meeting with Gallagher at Hermitage Lane. Kent ragstone is a very sought after commodity, for example being used at Westminster Abbey, the Tower of London and Canterbury Cathedral. There are plans to extend the size of Hermitage Lane, not to increase production but to increase the time it operates, for another 20 years.
- He has reported the Parish Council's request for yellow lines at North Meadow, Pepingstraw Close and at the top of Church Road.

Parking

A polite request is made to ask that you and your visitors:

- do not do not park too close junctions, which causes a nuisance or obstruction, making it dangerous for other vehicles and pedestrians to pass

- do not park on or partly on the pavement, which may cause a nuisance or obstruction for pedestrians, making it dangerous when they have to walk into the road to pass.

Councillors recognise that village roads are not well suited to accommodating the volume of traffic using them, or for allowing easy parking. Most residents and visitors are extremely considerate and are thanked. With everyone's co-operation and help, Offham will continue to be a safe place to live.

Laurence J Betts Ltd

You may have seen in the press that Laurence J Betts Ltd has been acquired by the Regan family who farm at Mereworth as Hugh Lowe farms Ltd. Stephen Betts and his family have been part of Offham for decades and the Parish Council would like to wish the family all the best for their future. The Parish Council hopes to work closely with the Regan family in the future.

Parish Council and Village Events

- Men's Shed – The Kings Arms, every Thursday 10am-11.30am
- Offham Food Bank – every other Monday from Kings Arms (offhamvillagehall@outlook.com)

Contact the Parish Council E: clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk T: 07563 606573. The Parish Council Clerk works 12 hours a week, Monday to Thursday, and aims to respond to emails and phone calls within 5 working days. For more information, please go to our website www.offham-pc.gov.uk

Offham Parish Council Meetings

The next meeting will be **Tuesday 5th September 2023** at 7.30pm in the Village Hall Committee Room.

PARISH COUNCIL OFFHAM
OF

VACANCY FOR A PARISH COUNCILLOR

There is a vacancy on the above Parish Council due to:

RESIGNATION

For an election to be held to fill the casual vacancy for the above Parish, a request in writing to the Proper Officer must be received within 14 days (dies non) from the date shown at the bottom of this notice from ten electors from the Parish.

The address for the Proper Officer is:

Ms Julie Beilby
Chief Executive & Proper Officer
Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
Gibson Building
Gibson Drive
Kings Hill
West Malling
Kent
ME19 4LZ

If no valid request is received, the Parish Council will fill the vacancy by co-option.

Signed *Lynne Mackie*
Clerk to the Parish Council

Date 7th June 2023

Notes

1. Dies Non are 'working days', so exclude Saturdays, Sundays and public holidays.
2. For further information about the election process, please contact Electoral Services at Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council. Visit www.tmbc.gov.uk/voting, email voting@tmbc.gov.uk or call 01732 876022.
3. For further information about the co-option process, which the Parish Council will follow if no valid request for an election is received, please contact the Parish Clerk.



Offham Parish Council Calendar 2024



All funds raised will go to Village Projects such as the Play Area

£6 each or 2 for £10

available to purchase from:

- **Sue**

19 Pepingstraw Close, sue.williams@offham-pc.gov.uk

- **The Kings Arms Pub**



Or contact clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk

NU-VENTURE

Buses 58 and 70 from 13 February 2023

Kent County Council financial support for buses 58 and 70 ends 12 February 2023 and school-time buses 558/578 also cease to area. However, until July 2023, Nu-Venture will continue to operate a limited replacement daytime service on certain days of the week.

Please - use it or lose it! Continuation beyond July 2023 will be at the discretion of the Council on usage in coming months.



Fridays only - starts 17 February 2023

JS 58

BOROUGH GREEN STATION	0930	MAIDSTONE King St (Boots)	1300
Wrotham Square	0935	<i>also stops at Town Hall and West Stn</i>	
Addington <i>opp The Green</i>	0945	Aylesford (A20) <i>Sainsbury's</i>	1318
Trottiscliffe <i>opp The George</i>	0954	A20 Ditton Corner	1321
Wrotham Heath <i>adj The Vineyard</i>	0959	Larkfield <i>Wealden Hall</i>	1323
Addington <i>opp Jungle Café</i>	1003	East Malling <i>opp King & Queen</i>	1326
Ryarsh <i>opp Duke of Wellington</i>	1008	West Malling High St <i>opp Tesco</i>	1334
Birling <i>opp Nevill Bull</i>	1011	Leybourne <i>adj The Old Rectory</i>	1339
Leybourne <i>Baywell</i>	1016	Birling <i>adj Nevill Bull</i>	1345
West Malling High St <i>opp Tesco</i>	1023	Ryarsh <i>adj Duke of Wellington</i>	1348
East Malling <i>King & Queen</i>	1031	A20 Addington <i>Jungle Café</i>	1353
Larkfield <i>opp Wealden Hall</i>	1035	Addington <i>opp The Green</i>	1356
A20 Hall Road <i>opp Sainsbury's</i>	1039	Trottiscliffe <i>opp The George</i>	1401
MAIDSTONE TOWN CENTRE	1055	Wrotham Heath <i>adj The Vineyard</i>	1408
		Wrotham Square	1413
		BOROUGH GREEN STATION	1418

Mondays only - starts 13 February 2023

Nu-Venture Bus 70

Wrotham Square	0930	West Malling High St <i>opp Tesco</i>	1145
BOROUGH GREEN STATION	0937	East Malling <i>King & Queen</i>	1153
Platt, A25 Long Mill Lane	0942	TESCO LUNSFORD PK <i>Chaucer Way</i>	1200
Wrotham Heath <i>Royal Oak</i>	0945	Leybourne Chase <i>Costcutter</i>	1210
Offham Green	0950	West Malling High St <i>Tesco</i>	1220
West Malling High St <i>opp Tesco</i>	0956	Offham Green	1225
Leybourne Chase <i>opp Costcutter</i>	1006	Wrotham Heath <i>Royal Oak</i>	1230
TESCO LUNSFORD PK <i>Chaucer Way</i>	1016	Platt, A25 Long Mill Lane	1233
East Malling <i>opp King & Queen</i>	1024	BOROUGH GREEN STATION	1238
West Malling High St <i>Tesco</i>	1032	Wrotham Square	1243

Code M = Mondays only - No service on other days. NO service on Bank Holidays

Code F = Fridays only - No service on other days. NO service on Bank Holidays

Buses serve all bus stops on line of route.

When boarding, please give a clear hand-signal as the bus approaches.

Pay on the bus with cash or card. Single and return fares available for all journeys.

We welcome the English National Concessionary Travel Pass.

Published by Nu-Venture Coaches Ltd. 01622 882288. www.nu-venture.co.uk



Guided group walks – August 2023

Our friendly group is one of 13 Ramblers groups in Kent and part of the national Ramblers walking organisation. We explore the beautiful countryside of Tonbridge and Malling and surrounding areas.



You don't have to be a Ramblers member to try up to three 'taster' walks with us.

If you're new to our walks, please contact the walk leader in advance to check that their walk will suit you.

For details of all our mid-week and Sunday walks, and walk leader contacts, see www.tonbridgeandmallingeramblers.org.uk.

Thursday 3 August	A gentle stroll from the picturesque village of Matfield. Moderate difficulty.	5 miles
Sunday 6 August	A leisurely walk from Farleigh Green crossing the Medway at Teston Bridge, then past Barming Bridge and over East Farleigh Bridge, returning through farmland, orchards and woodland. One short steep road climb.	5.5 miles
Sunday 13 August	Brenchley South-West Loop: a leisurely and shady walk with plenty of trees, lakes and ponds. Some hills and stiles and short sections on roads.	5.3 miles
Wednesday 16 August	Pushing out from The Boathouse - a leisurely flat walk from Yalding along the Medway to East Peckham and back.	5.5 miles
Sunday 20 August	Circular walk from Ide Hill to Toys Hill and on to French Street and the Philippines, returning via Emmetts Garden. Fairly hilly walk; moderate difficulty. Great views.	6 miles
Wednesday 23 August	Fish and Chip Supper walk from Wrotham up the Downs to build an appetite for a fish supper at the Rose and Crown. Moderate difficulty.	3.5 miles
Saturday 26 August	Walk from Borough Green to Basted Mill, then past Old Soar Manor and Dunks Green to Shipbourne for a picnic. Return via Fairlawne Estate and orchards. A mix of footpaths and quiet lanes. Moderate difficulty; some stiles and ascents.	10 miles

Walks usually start mid-morning. There's a short half-way break (bring refreshments) and we usually finish near a pub. Most walks are dog-friendly (see website).



PRESS RELEASE

Date: 00/00/00

Laurence J Betts Ltd (LJ Betts), grower of premium salads since 1930, has been acquired by the Regan family who are the owners of Hugh Lowe Farms Ltd, a neighbouring berry growing business in Kent, and of Blaise Plants Ltd, a plant propagator.

Stephen Betts will step down as Managing Director after 45 years running the family business and will remain in a consultancy role for the Regan family; he says: "It has been an honour following in the footsteps of my father, Stewart, and my grandfather, Laurence, to build on their foundations centred on growing top quality produce while using good farming practice and treating staff and customers with respect.

"We are delighted that my cousin, Marion, and her family are taking over LJ Betts and I wish them every success for future generations."

Philip Betts who will be handing over the Board Chair to Marion's husband Jon Regan, adds: "The Betts family is delighted that the company is staying within the wider family, and we anticipate 'business as usual' for customers and staff alike going forward".

Marion Regan, who takes over as Managing Director, says: "We are delighted to continue operating this superb fresh produce business, which we have known and admired for many years. Together with the excellent and skilled team at LJ Betts we aim to grow sustainably into the next generation, sharing the same values that have stood the test of time at Hugh Lowe Farms. We look forward to meeting LJ Betts' valued customers and continuing to supply them with our wide range of fresh and flavoursome salads throughout the year.

Nick Ottewell, who continues as Commercial Director, adds "Our success is based on the highest levels of quality, service and sound farming principles. Stephen Betts has set these standards throughout his lifetime of work, and it is my firm belief that we can take these practices forward into a bright and successful future."

Highways

One way that the community can work together to improve speed is through Speedwatch - [Community Speedwatch | Kent Police](#)

Community Speedwatch (CSW) is a road safety initiative that's coordinated by Kent Police and run by local communities. Trained volunteers monitor the speeds of vehicles using approved 'speed indication devices' (SIDs).

The aim of the initiative is to:

- reduce death and injury on the roads
- improve the quality of life for local communities
- reduce the speed of vehicles to the speed limit
- increase public awareness of inappropriate speed

Speedwatch helps reduce speed. Kent Police collect the data about vehicle speeds and assess it. If problems with speeding and dangerous driving are shown, appropriate action is taken. This may include:

- raising the issues with Kent County Council Highways officers
- enforcing speed limits with help from the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership and their Special Constabulary
- enforcing road safety laws using local officers

If you are interested in taking part in the Speedwatch Initiative, please speak to one of the Councillors or contact the Parish Clerk – clerk@offham-pc.gov.uk. If there are enough volunteers the Parish Council will look into arranging training and purchasing the necessary equipment. Speedwatch encourages drivers to slow down but also provides us with evidence to use when asking Kent Highways or the Police to take action.