

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE PARISH COUNCIL

We had our usual varied agenda which included a number of finance issues as we are at the end of our financial year. We agreed to make the second of our biennial payments to those who kindly help keep the parish tidy by cleaning the bus shelters or emptying bins or mowing grass in the children's playgrounds and recreation grounds – many thanks to them. We will shortly need volunteers to plant and maintain two planters that will form the new gateways to Rogate village. We agreed to donate £250 to the Petersfield Open Air Swimming Pool which is undergoing a major refurbishment.

The viability of the Rogate shop has been uncertain for some time and the impact of the current roadworks has made matters worse. The Clerk has looked at the figures and verified that weekday takings are down considerably although the weekend takings have remained about the same. There is no recompense available from WSCC Highways even though the reduced passing trade is a result of the roadworks disruption. In fact, there is little that local councils can do to help private enterprises. However, a village shop together with a school, pub and church are the essential components of a sustainable village and this has been recognised in both the 2007 Parish plan and the current Neighbourhood Plan. Research and advice obtained by our Clerk identified an opportunity (under Section 137 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972) for the Parish Council to offer some assistance as long as it would benefit some or all of the community – which is certainly the case with the village shop. Following a good discussion by councillors (which did not include the shop proprietor), it was resolved by majority to offer a one-off contribution of £900, against far greater losses, in order to help maintain the Rogate village shop for the community.

There was much discussion at this meeting and the last one about the local bus services that have placed in jeopardy with the withdrawal of one of the operators and a review by WSCC. All the services through Rogate (Rake has no bus service) are subsidised by WSCC and are therefore at risk as a result of the current spending constraints. The bus routes affect other villages between Petersfield and Midhurst as well as South Harting. Our Council has been in touch with all the affected parish councils and has co-ordinated a meeting to discuss the problem and possible solutions. It is hoped that the Council along with our County Councillor Kate O'Kelly can agree a sustainable plan for the bus routes with WSCC.

New Data Protection regulations come into effect on 25 May 2018. You may already be aware of this through your work or through a voluntary or recreational organisation. It will affect how the Parish Council operates and rather than 'go it alone', we want to join forces with others locally who are going through the same process. If you can help at all please contact our Clerk Debbie at clerk@rogateparishcouncil.gov.uk.

The White Horse pub rescue committee continues and if you can help at all please see the update later in this issue.

As reported previously we wish to repair or replace the iconic black and white finger signposts. We heard that the Clerk had obtained quotes for both and a repair to the original specification looks to be the most expensive whereas a replacement would be to a modern equivalent specification. We agreed to replace the single finger signpost to Fyning (at the top of the hill) in order to understand better the new specification.

Finally, at 7pm on 19 April we will have the Annual Parish Meeting in Rogate Village Hall. This is not a parish council meeting but a meeting of the parish - all the organisations in the parish including: Rake Church of England Primary School; Rogate Church of England Primary School; Rogate Village Hall Committee; Rake Village Hall Committee; Rogate and Rake Neighbourhood Plan; Rogate Parish Churches - Reverend Edward Doyle; Rogate Youth Club;

Rogate Society; The Heritage Centre; Rogate and Terwick News; Rogate and Terwick Housing Association Limited; Fyning, Terwick & Borden Wood Residents Association and; George Street Trust. Please put this in your diary and come along to hear about what is happening in your parish.

Let us hope you read this in springtime sunshine instead of the snow as I write.

Steve Williamson 19 March 2018 01730 890225 or steve@thestepsrake.co.uk