

## **SPRING 2008**

### **Congestion and Parking**

If you are in need of a good headache or migraine, please step up and give your councillors who are trying to improve the traffic situation in Cuckfield a hand. Following a frustrating meeting with County Highways, it has been made very clear to us that apart from changes that are going ahead under the 'Safe Routes to School' initiative, there is no funding. Even agreed changes are not planned until the year 2009/10, so any ideas of other changes, even if we can get them agreed, are going to be a very distant dream. Any parking improvement will have to be funded locally, ie by ourselves or Mid Sussex District Council. With the potential building work at Tentercroft and Ockenden Manor we will be working hard with the District Council and developers to minimise the inevitable impact on the already overstretched parking availability in the village.

### **Queens Hall Corridor**

The Queens Hall remains the jewel in the 'secular' crown of Cuckfield and from time to time requires some 'quality' upgrades if we are to hand it on to future generations in good useable order. Older buildings always need a great deal of maintenance but add a little subsidence and the bills can quickly mount. We are gradually getting on top of some of the requirements at the hall and the latest piece of work is the rebuilding of the corridor on the north side; which had subsidence to one of the supporting piers. The work is progressing well and should be virtually complete when this paper is published. We have taken the opportunity to improve the general 'ambience' of this passage since it is the major access to the garden; much used by wedding parties. The roof is now tiled and therefore much more in keeping with the heritage of the building – the roof was previously plastic sheeting. Insulated and heated to a better standard than the old temporary structure, we will be able to light and decorate it in a more appropriate manner. Attractive glass doors leading to the rear garden complete the new structure. The Queens Hall is a wonderful venue for weddings; now even more so. Tell your friends!!

### **Dramatic Productions**

The Parish Council is occasionally invited by groups of travelling professional players to provide a premises for theatre. We do not have the experience to 'front' these productions, other than the 'Rain or Shine' which your Council have encouraged for some years now, so for many years we have declined. This year though I am pleased to say that the Cuckfield Dramatic society, as a one off trial, agreed to assist the Chalkpit Theatre to stage 'Laurel and Hardy' in the Queens Hall on March 9. If this has been a success then we an hope to see similar co-operation bringing much more live theatre to Cuckfield.

**Rain or Shine**  
**A date for your diaries. Friday August 9<sup>th</sup>**  
**Bring a picnic, friends and relations for the**  
**outdoor extravaganza**

## **Car Park Toilets**

You will remember that Mid Sussex District Council were going to close these vital facilities! The only way to keep them open was for the Parish Council to take on the responsibility, which we did. Those that use these loos regularly will know the state they were in, so the first thing we have done is to refurbish them and we hope users will now find a much more pleasant 'convenience'. Vandalism is a constant concern and the contractors have refitted the interiors with equipment that is as vandal proof as you can get but still people find ways to abuse the site. The 'Ladies' seems to get more than its fair share of attention. The Lavatories are cleaned daily and are regularly inspected for graffiti etc. Unfortunately, a group decided that the wooden seat which used to be by the entrance was suitable for burning; which is why it is no longer there

## **Core Planning Strategy for Mid Sussex**

The 'Pre-Submission' Core Strategy Document has now been published for public consultation until 20th March. It includes a number of options for the location of new development, including large-scale housing sites, and a range of other potential policies relating to the location and nature of future development in Mid Sussex. Publication of this document at this early stage in the process gives everyone the opportunity to contribute to shaping the future of the District over the next 18 years. Of note is the requirement to find space for 1000 more homes in the villages of Mid Sussex. This requirement comes after the build of the Chatfield Road site, so Cuckfield will have to be actively involved with this consultation. The consultation material is available to view until March 20 at Burgess Hill Library, at the Olympos Centre in the Triangle, Haywards Heath Library, Mid Sussex Planning Office and in the Olympos Centre at the Dolphin. Also in Hurstpierpoint Library.

## **Fossil Detectives**

The BBC were in the village on Saturday 9<sup>th</sup> February, filming for a new series on UK fossils and the prehistory of Britain. Presenter Hermione Cockburn was particularly keen to tell the story of Gideon Mantell's discovery of *Iguanodon* at Whiteman's Green. The fine weather was a great advantage for filming at the Mantell Memorial and there was the added bonus of a beautiful sunset behind the church. As the light faded, filming was moved to Cuckfield Museum which provided access to their resources on the Mantell story including a first edition of Mantell's book "The Fossils of the South Downs" published in 1822 where he makes brief reference to the discovery of some unusual teeth from Cuckfield. Mantell published his formal announcement of *Iguanodon* in 1825. You can find out more about this important discovery at the museum, located in the Queen's Hall on the High Street. The series "Fossil Detectives" is planned to be shown in the summer on BBC4.

## **Good news for local residents**

The Parish Council is very pleased to learn that the Mid Sussex District Council is to change its Housing Policy and that, in future, priority is to be given to local people for lettings of all newly built social housing. This will apply to the next phase of Ashburnham Mews in the Meadowlands Estate and to all newly built social housing provided elsewhere in the village, including Chatfield Road. Please note that this change only applies to the first allocation of new developments and not to subsequent lettings.

Under the new Policy, applicants who have a local connection with the village where the new development is located will be given first priority for the housing. However, it is very important to understand that applicants must be in housing need as defined by the Points Scheme operated by the District Council and registered on the Mid Sussex Common Housing Register. The system for allocating Points is detailed and if you are interested, you should contact Downland Housing Association's Common Housing Register Team on 0845 6887717 who will be able to give you further information and advice. The really important point is that if you or a member of your family who are local to Cuckfield are interested in living in any of the new social housing properties, it is vital to ensure that your name is down on the Housing Register.

The changes also apply to the Shared Ownership schemes so that again applicants local to the village will be given first priority. In this instance applicants must also be on the Common Housing Register and assessed as being in housing need. In addition they will have to be in a position to afford the costs of shared ownership. In the past this issue has raised considerable concern amongst residents. With the soaring cost of open market housing, this will give an opportunity for some local people to remain in Cuckfield, with their families and friends.

### **Youth – After school and Saturdays!**

The majority of our younger residents seem to keep themselves amused in a socially acceptable way but a growing band are creating a significant disturbance in Cuckfield, mostly around the lower High Street and the two Youth Clubs. They are attracting the attention of both residents and, more importantly, the Police! Friday evenings and Saturdays seem to be 'prime time' for this group to assemble. Friday is the evening both the youth clubs meet, in the Old School and London Lane, and these venues seem to be a particular target for disruption. Some of the 'group' have been excluded from the clubs because of previous poor behaviour. The Museum and Holy Trinity Church have also seen disruption.

One parent, collecting children by car from a point in the High Street, was under the impression that the children were in the Youth Club all evening. They were in fact seen roaming around with this gang but had strategically positioned themselves ready to be collected as though they had been in the club.

They all seem to be very aware of their 'rights' but perhaps less concerned with the rights of others! If you see a large Police presence on Fridays and Saturdays you will know why!