

Parish Council News

August 2020

In many of our neighbouring towns and villages there is the realisation that shopping patterns have been changing with the pandemic. It has radically increased the move to on-line shopping and home deliveries. It has put the viability and survival of local shops at even greater risk. Goudhurst has been fortunate that so far, it has retained a High Street. But it is well established that when community facilities fall below a certain critical mass, most do not survive. It is all about our community: shops, pubs, church, social club, Parish Hall, U3A etc.

You Parish Council (GPC) is determined to take the lead to help Goudhurst shops and pubs and hotel survive the national decline of villages. By working together and working with our shops and businesses we hope to do all that is realistic to reenergise our village centre. We have to give it every chance to flourish. By taking a lead GPC is looking at how we can help our retail shops and pubs thrive. When shopping online is so easy then the experience outside the home has to be better. It must be fun, an event as well as a shop. So, we will be taking the lead and doing what we can for the community we serve and the businesses within it. Leading a joint all community effort. Our village, our plan, and if not GPC, then who?

It is about making the best of Goudhurst, the best of the Goudhurst experience. We will do this by putting our best foot forward to make our village a place one would like to stop in, spend time, eat, shop, walk, create and enjoy a buzz... and critically spend money. We have several ideas to achieve the objective and welcome yours-

- Make Goudhurst an evidently attractive village to get noticed by ensuring that it is beautiful, that there are **flowers** from one end of the High Street to the other. Encourage all shops, establishments, and residents to partake with floral displays supported by the Parish Council where necessary – especially around The Plain, the pond and in front of the Parish Hall. Get everyone involved, businesses, residents, Goudhurst-in-Bloom. Make the best of what we have.
- **Branding.** Create visible buzz to support the floral displays with bright **umbrellas**, possibly with “Welcome to Goudhurst”. Set up wherever space allows, along the High Street, around the Plain, pond etc.
- See how we can make **the pond** itself an attraction with a duck house, a 20m fountain. if not The Houses of Parliament, then what? Make best use of both sides of the pond. Make the pond area a fun place, to stop and visit, play, picnic..... It may be small but it’s ours and in the centre of the village.
- **Welcome to Goudhurst signs** at all entrances to Goudhurst, as in many French villages, with a Goudhurst logo and listing what available – parking, pubs, café, stores, fashion, antiques, restaurant, hotel, tower, views, picnic spots etc. So that people are looking for them and do not just drive in, through and drive past.
- Put up a **finger post** indicating where everything is and where to park. Perhaps an interactive notice board - shops, walks, local attractions.
- **Christmas Lights.** In previous years not everyone in the high street has bought into these and played the game. Some here some there does not do the trick. So let’s try to arrange permanent Christmas type lighting across every property from before the hairdressers to St Mary’s and on both sides of the road, lit from 1st November to end

January (as per Brenchley) put up and paid for by GPC. Everyone is free to augment them as they choose.

- Perhaps also a series of advent displays, so Goudhurst “must be visited”!
- **Late night shopping and events.** The late-night shopping and Christmas fair should return to whole community affair, not just at the top of the hill and church. It should embrace the Plain, the pond and everywhere between. It could be a real collaborative village event with everyone, church, Social Club, Parish Hall with all village societies taking part and why only once a year? How often and celebrating what?
- The roll of the **Social Club and Parish Hall.** Both charities with a community mission. We should engage with them to see how we can support them and how they can support the whole community.
- there have been several suggestions of how to best use the **Parish Hall** that beautiful building, in prime position in the centre of our village. How can it best service the community beyond just being a building “To hire”? Could the area outside by the pond be used for village events and indeed the Hall, sometimes possibly FOC? Could the Hall host a monthly/quarterly Farmers markets? Could they/we acquire marquees to go on the lawn by the pond or over part of their drive; so events or markets are not at the mercy of the weather? There are lots of potential uses and with some imagination that could allow both places to better serve our/their community.
- Why do people stop in a village? To Browse, to visit a predetermined place, because it looks nice or because there seems to be things to do etc? We should brainstorm why people make those decisions; why would one stop and shop or use our village. What can we do to help that decision and what are we missing? – Café, estate agent where people window shop and dream, The Vine (how to keep it?), etc.
- Could we make better use of our **Village Green** on the upper Glebe Field, make it attractive and usable? Though here we have some restrictions because of its village green status.
- The **Lower Glebe**, can we make it attractive and beautiful for residents and visitors, a place to sit, to picknick, to look at the amazing view, then perhaps visit the village to shop or go u[the tower.
- Could we reintroduce the Blue Plaques scheme?
- Can we make best use of our local attractions for our benefit as well – Farm Shops, Bedgebury, Bewl, Scotney, Sissinghurst, Hush Heath Winery, The Hop pickers Trail.
- So dear reader, let us have **your ideas**. We will consult and hopefully hold a village meeting (socially distanced of course).
- And we absolutely must address the **traffic management and parking issue** and find a solution, even if only a short term one (next 3-5 years) until we can do something better.

What next? Parish council accepted responsibility to work with our business community and residents to ensure our village **wins the battle to keep a viable high street**. We accept this challenge and every resident and business in Goudhurst are **asked to do your duty and give us your help**.

Your Parish Councillors ... David Boniface, Craig Broom, Chris Ditton, Alan Foster, Antony Harris (Chairman), Phil Kirkby, David Knight, Barry Noakes, Caroline Richards, Jayne Russell, Guy Sutton and Peter Wood.

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