

Community News

Newsletter of the Wealden Residents' Action Group

www.wrag-online.co.uk



Issue 17 Winter 2014/2015

Winner of the WRAG Garden Competition, Selby Meadows, Uckfield

Contents: News from the Wealden Residents Action Group • Jarvis Brook Community Association • Update from the Sheltered Housing Residents Group • Alderbrook Community Association • Newtown Action Group • Buxted Court goes to the dogs • Garden Competition 2014



News from Wealden Residents' Action Group (WRAG)

Happy New Year.

Cuts to bus services

East Sussex County Council have undertaken a consultation on cutting support for non profit making bus services. Many people particularly in rural areas depend on these services.

WRAG are having joint discussions with SHRG (Sheltered Housing Residents Group) to try and ascertain what the likely impact of these cuts will be in our local communities.

The speaker at our next meeting will be Councillor Barry Marlowe (Chair of the Wealden Bus Alliance) He will update us on likely changes and tell us about a scheme to develop new bus services where there is demand.

If you are interested in this or feel you may be adversely affected, then please come along to the meeting and join the discussion.

Affordability and Rents

We are very pleased to report that we have had an assurance from the Housing Portfolio holder, Cllr Graham Wells, that (unlike Housing Associations) Wealden District Council have no plans to re-let vacant council houses at higher (so-called "affordable") rents.

We are still pressing for new build council housing to charge social rent or at least rents that are considerably lower than the so called "affordable" rents.

WRAG and SHRG are negotiating with Wealden the level of rent rise that will be imposed in 2015/16. WDC are proposing a rent increase of 5%, which is 227% of the Government recommendation, meaning some tenants face an increase of £10 per week. WRAG thinks this is unacceptable in the current economic climate and are asking that WDC abide by the Governments recommendation, something they have insisted on doing in previous years. We will keep you apprised of the outcome. Please e-mail colin@stocksy.org or come to our next meeting and make your views known about the proposed increase.

Our next meeting will be:-

**WITH: A SPEAKER ON FUTURE OF BUS SERVICES
(Barry Marlowe, Chair of the Wealden Bus Alliance)**

AT: 7 p.m IN: Uckfield Civic Centre

ON: Thursday 29th January 2015

All tenants and community group members are welcome.



Update from the Sheltered Housing Residents Group (SHRG)



The past few months have been very interesting and challenging for SHRG. SHRG and its leaseholder sub group are concerned about costs that will have to be paid by leaseholders for some of the major works to sheltered housing schemes.

Leaseholders have issues regarding the fairness of the contracts that they have with Wealden District Council. Talks between WDC and SHRG are ongoing and legal advice is being sought on behalf of the leaseholders.

Meetings are being held by SHRG and WRAG with WDC regarding the Housing Revenue Account. At the meetings, emphasis has been placed on rents. 'Social Rent' is about 40% of market rent for the area. Nationwide, especially with housing associations there has been movement towards charging what is termed 'Affordable Rent'. This is 80% of the market rent for the area. The term Affordable Rent is a misnomer. For example, the market rent for a property in Rochdale is considerably lower than for an equivalent property in the Wealden district. However pensions and incomes for similar jobs are much the same. Therefore in a high rental area (i.e. Wealden), Affordable Rents are not affordable.

Due to changes made and changes that might be made to the benefits system, we cannot rely on benefits to protect low income households. I therefore believe that the so called Affordable Rent must be opposed. Certainly within the high market rent area of Wealden.

SHRG is in favour of and supports the Scrutiny Group Panel in its aims and functions. Some members of SHRG have also attended its meetings and training sessions. SHRG thanks two of its members, namely Sue Wheeler and Gill Roche for regularly attending the Wealden Homes Partnership meetings on behalf of SHRG. The Wealden Homes Partnership meetings are very important and need to be supported.

If you would like to be involved in the Sheltered Homes Residents Group, please contact myself Malcolm Palfrey or Derek Lee Joint Chair of SHRG. Alternatively SHRG can be contacted via David Gibson or Ellie Boulton, Tenant Involvement Officers. In particular we would be interested in hearing from residents of Mary Burfield Court, Heathfield and Cherry Tree Court, Horam. Neither of these schemes currently has SHRG representation.

Malcolm Palfrey – Joint Chair. SHRG



Alderbrook Community Association

In November, after more than six years, Fred Best stepped down as Chair of the Alderbrook Community Association. Fred became chair in 2008 and he was the ideal candidate having lived in the area all his life, he was someone locals knew and trusted which was vital if the Association was to succeed in getting started.



The Association did succeed and since then Fred has worked hard for all members of the community. Fred knows about people, he knew some struggled, so he set up the Help Elderly and Lonely People (HELP) scheme, and with a grant from the Courier's Heart of the Community Award purchased garden tools for members of the Association to use. Through the HELP scheme youngsters did gardening for older residents, breaking down age barriers and instilling a sense of pride in the community.

Through Fred's leadership, the Association has organised team-building events for local children, as well as football tournaments, and secured funding for a play area on Adam Field. Additionally there have been Fun Days for families, Christmas Shopping Trips for the older people and Pantomime Trips for hard pressed families to enjoy.



Other achievements of the Association include regular clear up days, so the estate now looks cared for, giving residents a sense of pride in their area. By attending regular Estate Walkabouts with Officers from Wealden District Council (WDC), Sussex Police and Local Councillors, Fred has improved residents' lives by highlighting concerns around the estate, as well as helping resolve neighbour issues, and residents know they will see action if they ask for assistance. The community grit bins have been very well received.



Overall, Fred has helped to Improve relationships with the relevant authorities, who have all been very supportive of the group, and he

worked in conjunction with WDC, Sussex Police, Crowborough Town Council and ESCC to develop, produce and monitor a Neighbourhood Agreement for the area. Fred has also attended a diverse range of training courses covering subjects including Child Protection, Fund Raising, First Aid, Working with Young People and Food Hygiene.



As an ambassador for Alderbrook Community Association Fred has certainly fulfilled the role to represent the community and will be sorely missed, but he will be welcomed as a committee member, as is everyone who lives in the area.



Joanne Stonebrook – Secretary.

Excellence In Partnership Award for Jarvis Brook Community Association.



The Jarvis Brook Community Association were among Sussex Police Officers, staff members, volunteers and members of the public who were recognised for their bravery, compassion and professionalism at Sussex Police's East Sussex Divisional Awards ceremony on Monday 13 October. Chief Superintendent Neil Honnor, East Sussex's Divisional Commander, opened the ceremony. He said: "For me this is the best day of the year. It is so important for us to recognise the outstanding work of colleagues, volunteers and members of the public who go above and beyond what is required of them, reminding us of why we do this job. I am proud to see so many officers and staff members being awarded but equally as proud to see members of the communities we serve also being recognised".



The Jarvis Brook Community Association were presented with an 'Excellence in Partnership Award' in recognition of the partnership working with other agencies and organisations in the area.

Carolyn Wickens Chair of the Association is presented with the Excellence in Partnership Award.

New Town Action Group – Uckfield

On Wednesday 13th August, the Newtown Action Group held a Traditional Afternoon Tea Party for our local Seniors. We were lucky with the weather with just a few spots of rain. Ray and Graham serenaded everyone on their guitars which was brilliant.



Sandwiches, cakes, and cream teas went down a treat with our guests. It was hard work for everyone but so well worth it.



Thank you to everyone who helped to make it a great event.

Velda Reed –
Newtown Action Group.

Buxted Court Goes to the Dogs!

Residents from Buxted Court recently enjoyed a trip to the Greyhound Racing in Brighton. There were some winners and losers but a great day out was had by all.



Joan Hughes Court Social Club.



Joan Hughes Court Social Club took part in the worlds biggest Coffee Morning in aid of Macmillan Cancer Support. A fantastic £520 was raised.



Congratulations to everyone involved!

WRAG Garden Competition Results 2014



Congratulations to everyone who entered this years Garden Competition. Once again the standard was extremely high, and the judges had trouble selecting the winners.



Best Garden Overall – Selby Meadow, Uckfield

Sincere thanks are due to the judges Frances Vickers, Ann Collins and Cllr. Di Phillips who gave up their time to travel round the District visiting each entry. Thanks once again to Hillier Garden Centre for their generous sponsorship of the prizes and for hosting the prize giving, and thank you to Cllr. Graham Wells for presenting the prizes.



Cllr. Graham Wells presents Velda Reed from the Newtown Action Group with the winners cup

Unfortunately we don't have space to show all the beautiful gardens in this issue, we have used as many as we can.



Phyllis Richardson, Polegate



Susan Plews, Polegate



Selby Meadow

WRAG Garden Competition Results 2014

Category	1 st Prize	2 nd Prize	3 rd Prize	Highly Commended
Best Garden Overall	Selby Meadow			D. Davis Gillian Hawkins Heather Mitchell Joan Walters Joyce Galassock Lily Croleyr Nora Wood
Best Patio Garden	Phyllis Richards	Susan Plews	Phyliss Freeland	
Best Garden started from Scratch	Mr & Mrs Hewlett	Mr & Mrs Fylon		
Best Sheltered Communal Garden	Hampton House			
Best Sheltered Individual Garden	Mr Luxford	Linda Lee		
Best Small Garden	Mr Cousens	John Jago	Mr & Mrs Powell	
Best Vegetable Garden	Derek Lee			
Hampton House Category	Anita Stone	Maureen Spears	Sylvia Westleys	Len Barker
Joan Hughes Court Category	Mr & Mrs Bishop	Mr & Mrs Swindell	Bernice Cunningham	Linda Stevens