

HOLCOT PARISH COUNCIL

Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting – 5 June 2016

Thank you everyone for coming along this afternoon – if you don't know me, I am David Walker and I'm the Chair of the Parish Council.

Today's meeting is important for the Parish Council as it allows us to meet and discuss with parishioners the work of the Parish Council and to celebrate our lives in Holcot. In the next few minutes I will outline what has happened in Holcot since the last Annual Parish Meeting (in July 2015), our successes and challenges, as well as provide a summary of what else has happened in Holcot that is outside the Parish Council's direct control but contributes to the quality of life that we hopefully all enjoy.

I will also endeavour to dust down my crystal ball and submit what I expect to be the top challenges over the next 12 months. There is a written report which will be available on the parish website, so I will talk to the main points rather than read verbatim.

As Chairman of the Parish Council for just three weeks, I reflected long and hard on what the Parish Council had achieved over the previous year. The short answer is quite a lot, and considering that the Councillors had only been elected last May (the first fully-elected council in 25 years), I think we should all be really pleased.

At this point I would like to introduce the Parish Councillors to the meeting;

Councillor	Sector responsibility
Roger Gunnett	Main St/Farm Close/Walgarth Ct
David Walker	Back Lane/Brittens View
Jackie Fountain	Moulton Rd/Tithe Close
Kathryn Buckle	Sywell Rd/Ivy Farm/Sunny Bank
Ralph Hawkins	All outlying properties
Phil Scordellis	Rectory Lane/Beelhook/Walgrave Rd
Martin Wilson	Brixworth Rd/Glebe Close
Robert Sinclair	Poplars Lane/Winsland Court

Each of the Councillors has a "sector responsibility" for part of the Parish, with the Councillor for your sector being your principal point of contact. As far as possible the sectors are aligned to the Councillor's own home. Councillors also have a portfolio responsibility for a number of subjects – for instance Martin is

responsible for lighting, Kathryn for road safety and highways, Jackie for youth matters and so on. The full list of portfolio responsibilities is on the Parish Council page on the website.

The last person to mention in relation to the Parish Council is our Parish Clerk, Lisa Callan. Lisa is the only 'employee' of the Council, and she has been in post since January. Her job is to manage the activities of the Parish Council on a day-to-day basis, and she has made a great start! It is a role that is far beyond that of an employee as I am sure that you appreciate. Thank you to all of the Councillors and the Clerk for your work over the last year.

When we look at the activities over the last year, I will draw a distinction of the activities of the Parish Council itself and of the Parish as a whole. I haven't listed everything, but here goes.

Parish Council

Some particular projects – a real variety

- Defibrillator – you will have seen the yellow defibrillator casing on the back of the Book exchange kiosk. The Parish Council had looked into a defibrillator for the parish over the last year or so, and thanks to the generosity of Tony Moulds we have been able to procure one. The Church Room Trustees kindly arranged and paid for the electricity to be provided. As of Wednesday, 1st June the defibrillator has been registered with the Ambulance service and is fully operational. There will be a seminar given by the Community Heartbeat Trust on its use very soon. There is a team of volunteers who have agreed to look after it – thanks everyone involved.
- The Walgrave Road footpath – this is a long running saga, but we are almost there. The footpath is planned to be behind the hedge on the western side of Walgrave Road up to the Mere, allowing walkers to walk from Holcot all the way to Walgrave and Hannington and beyond without road walking. The Definitive Mapping people at NCC have just completed their consultation, and the next step is then to get the approvals in place. We have negotiated with the Naturalists Trust, Anglian Water, The Ramblers Association, and NCC amongst others. The final piece of the jigsaw was where Anglian Water has agreed to construct a footbridge over the Hannington Brook at the Hannington turn to avoid walkers using the narrow road – the Friends of Holcot have recently cleared back the overgrown hedgerow to make this an easier task (and to demonstrate our resolve!). It is hoped that the path will be legally open during the summer.
- Photographic Year 2015 – in late 2014 the Parish Council decided that 2015 should be another Photographic Year where parishioners take a photographic record of the life, people and landscapes around Holcot through the year. Many of you have seen the photos on the website and Flickr.com, and also the fantastic yearbook that the parishioners produced of which there are copies in the White Swan and Church Room. Thank you everyone that took part.
- The Queen's Birthday celebrations next week – the Parish Council wanted to mark the Queen's 90th birthday and fortunately so did another team of volunteers! Over next weekend there are various events including a picnic in the park, children's activities, a Saturday evening party, songs of

praise and an open mic event. Thanks to everyone involved, and don't forget to buy your tickets for the party before Wednesday!

Road safety

- HGVs – parishioners undertook a HGV survey at the crossroads for 12 hours one random Friday last October. The highways authorities had said that Holcot doesn't have a specific problem of HGVs over 7.5t flouting the legal limits – how wrong were they. In 12 hours around 70 large HGVs (excluding all the buses and other PSVs) were logged and photographed, of which just under 30 were potentially illegal and their owners written to by the Police. The authorities had expected that we would log 2 or 3 in 12 hours! Off the back of this, we are now on the Northamptonshire Police's Safer Roads Team's "Lorry Watch" scheme where we are one of three parishes in the County that receive a visit from an ANPR (Automatic Number Plate Recognition) van that logs passing vehicles. The last time it was here was in February when it logged 61 potentially illegal HGVs using the Sywell Road in 3 days. The new Police and Crime Commissioner is a particular supporter of Lorry Watch, so it is reasonable for us to expect more.
- Road and housebuilding – the Parish Council had already commented last year on the likely traffic impacts of the Overstone Leys/Overstone Green (Northampton North SUE) developments, where we expect that east-west traffic would increase, and also North-South traffic. This year we have had the consultation concerning the Northampton North Orbital Route. Thank you to everyone that attended the consultation event at Moulton College and the one we held in the Church Room – the Parish Council were able to write a robust commentary (a copy of which you may have seen on the website) on the fears of the parish in particular on the impact on traffic on Moulton Road/Walgrave Road route. NCC had said that they expected that the traffic using this route would decline with the NNOR, our view was quite the opposite. We asked Northamptonshire Highways to re-look at the junctions onto Moulton Rd to prevent the route through Holcot and Walgrave being too attractive to drivers and their satnavs, we asked them to also consider the impact on the Sywell Road/Brixworth Road route. We also pointed out that there is little point making any plans for the NNOR when the broader plans for Overstone Leys, Moulton Heights and the A43 dualling are unresolved. Following a Freedom of Information request, we have now been provided with information from NCC about how they have modelled the future traffic volumes for Holcot. Watch this space.
- Working with Northamptonshire Highways we have been able to improve the signage for the hidden dip on the Moulton Road.
- The white lines in the village are due to be repainted over the summer.

Some of the routine but important stuff

- Lighting – we continue to spend a lot of time and effort on lighting in the village. We have recently reinstalled a long lost light in Poplars Lane and are also expecting to continue to control the costs of lighting the village through gradually modernising lights and managing the costs associated with electricity metering.
- The website – we continue to promote the use of the website as the best source of information about what is happening in the parish – it is updated regularly so **please please please** subscribe to

the site to receive email notifications of new news items, and don't forget to email in your news items or ideas of how the site could be improved or extended. We have about 130 subscribers at the moment.

- The newsletter – Holcot's other key communications medium is our quarterly printed newsletter, which continues to receive news items from across the parish. Please continue to use it.
- Parish maintenance and the Friends of Holcot – the 'Friends of Holcot' group of parishioners continue to support the parish by doing all of the essential maintenance tasks that helps keep our parish looking in such great condition. Over the last few months they have painted the Main Street bus shelter, removed the unsightly posts in the village hall garden, tidied the triangles at Rectory Lane and Poplars Lane, repaired the goals in the playing field, tidied the pub garden this week, as well as continuing to work to bring the Washbrook back to life. Amongst many other things of course, many of which we may never notice! Thanks guys.
- Litter pick – a couple of weeks ago parishioners undertook a litter pick from the edges of the Parish back to the village. Whilst parishioners keep the litter under control in the village, it is less easy along the main routes so this was an important task. Thanks again to everyone that took part.
- There are loads of other things that happen under the control of the Parish Council such as movement of dog poo bins, organising grass mowing, commenting on planning applications, and lighting the Christmas tree!

Governance and Financial Performance

I can report that the Parish Council have met formally 10 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting in July 2015. The Council has improved its transparency and publication of information in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Transparency Requirements 2015, and established its external audit requirements for 2017 and beyond as required by the Act. If you monitor the agenda and minutes on the website you will see that Lisa has brought these more in-line with current best practice and statutory requirements. Lastly, this month we are due to review and approve a new set of financial regulations based on the updated model provided by the National Association of Local Councils. It is my view that the regulatory and control pressures on the Parish Council are unlikely to reduce.

Lisa has circulated to this meeting a summary of the financial performance of the Council for Financial Year 2015/16. I have abbreviated these below and would just like to draw your attention to some of the key numbers. You can monitor financial performance on the website during the year.

(rounded £)	£	£	£
Balance brought forward from 31 March 2015:			14462
<i>Income</i>			
Precept	17000		Unchanged again FY16/17
Other Income			

	VAT Reclaim: 5803	Includes Playing field gym kit
	Other: 2138	
Total other income:	7941	
Total income		24941
Expenditure		
Admin and communications:	2697	£1100 for election
Maintenance:	5528	£4000 mowing
Projects:	6335	£5400 gym equipment
Lighting:	3841	£2000 electricity & maintenance
Grants/Contributions:	5575	Church, Village Hall, Hub, Clock, kerb-lowering
Other:	3681	Insurance, clerk salary
Total expenditure		(27657)
Total balances and reserves at the end of the year:		11745

Other Community activity

I promised that I would mention some of the other things that are not within the control of the Parish Council, but have contributed massively to the community over the last year.

- The Village Hall and Church Room are fantastic facilities – we are very lucky, and a huge amount of effort goes into looking after these amenities for the parish;
- The Holcot Hub Monday-evening youth group continues to grow, with a successful table tennis club on Thursdays;
- The various clubs and societies that use the village hall and church room and local facilities – we are fortunate to have an active WI, Brownies, Footlights amateur drama group, dance group, art group, model boat club, model helicopter club, cricket club and so on. These groups are always looking for new members, so please don't hesitate to get involved;
- We are fortunate to have the allotments which are used by many parishioners, and the Flower and Vegetable Show organised by the Village Hall committee is an important annual event, maintaining fantastic traditions;
- The Dick Whittington pantomime, the Accrington Stanley gig, the Batter and Banter quiz, a fashion show, the Wine Safari, the Garage Sale amongst other events all add to the vibrancy of our parish whilst raising funds for national, regional and local charities and community groups;
- We have an active church, and the innovative 'Help for Holcot' support group;
- The White Swan, with new freeholders Martin and Hayley who took over this week – welcome to Holcot!!

- And lastly, Julie Dawe has attested as a (Parish) Special Constable and is currently undergoing her on the job training in the area. Once that is done, she will be an independent Parish Special Constable focused on Holcot. Congratulations and well done Julie.

Thank you again to everyone that has in any way supported these and of course all of the other activities not mentioned.

Back to the Parish Council - What are some of the likely priorities of Parish Council over the next year or so?

- I think we will spend a lot of time, and possibly some money, on more road safety related activity – particularly concerning the NNOR and building developments
- We will have to continue to monitor house building and related planning to assess all of the impacts on our Parish
- Continuing to maintain the parish, including landscaping of the crossroads
- Investigating the opportunities around neighbourhood planning, including investigation of measures to protect the White Swan as a community asset for the long-term; and at long last
- Opening of the Walgrave Road footpath!

There are lots of other things that the Parish Council will have to deal with of course - some we can foresee, but some we can't.

And finally...some last thankyou's

As I've talked I have thanked a lot of people, and there are loads more I probably should have thanked including officers and members at DDC and NCC that support the Parish as well as other individuals and organisations.

There are just two more people that I would like to specifically mention on behalf of the Parish Council – the first is Ken Winter who had been the Parish Clerk for 11 years when he retired in December. Thanks Ken.

The second is Roger Gunnett as the retired Chairman of the Council and one of the stalwart's of parish life – I'm sure that everyone has seen the way that Roger and the Parish Council have continued to look after our parish in all practical and political senses over the recent years. We are very fortunate to maintain the sense of community that we have in Holcot. Thank you for your enduring contribution Roger!

Thank you everyone for listening.

David Walker

5 June 2016