



Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting – 30 May 2017

Thank you everyone for coming along this evening – if you don't know me, I am David Walker and I'm the Chair of the Parish Council. The Parish Council decided this year to hold the Annual Parish Meeting in an evening as it may be preferable for some people – let us know what you think.

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 June 2016), 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 again and suggest 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.

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
Nick Middleton	Poplars Lane/Winsland Court

Robert Sinclair resigned from the Council due to work commitments during the past year, and we should all thank him for his service. Nick Middleton has recently been co-opted to the Council.

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 Phil is

responsible for road safety, Kathryn for Police Matters, Jackie for playing field 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's job is to manage the activities of the Parish Council on a day-to-day basis. 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 service 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

- ***The Walgrave Road footpath*** – I reported last year that we expected this to be open during last summer, but the process is drawn out. Lawyers are now involved - let's hope for this summer.
- ***The Crossroads project*** – Parishioners were asked for their opinions on what might be done to improve the green on the crossroads – work and the final design is awaiting the outcome of the road safety enforcement activities.
- ***Northampton North Orbital Route and Northampton North SUE (Overstone Leys/Overstone Green)*** – The NNOR is due for consultation again starting 19 June – this second consultation has been delayed due to the election. The work on Northampton North SUE has started, with a very small development. Eventually it will be 3500 houses stretching to the Holcot roundabout. The A43 works that have started are associated with this, with a long-term objective of dualling from Round Spinney to the A14.
- ***Playing Field Development*** - Following on from last year's inspection, various maintenance jobs have been undertaken on the playing field equipment (thanks are due yet again to the Friends of Holcot for their support), as well as activities to ensure compliance with current regulations. The last of these is to remove the slide that no longer complies with safety requirements.

Jackie Fountain and Lisa Callan have set-up a "Playing Field Development Group" to develop the playing field as well as ensure regulatory compliance, and it is pleasing that a group of parishioners has quickly formed. They will need support, skills and funding to move this project forward – if you are able to get involved in any way please contact Jackie (jfountain40@gmail.com 780070) or Lisa (lisa.callan@yahoo.com 781230). Alexis will update us this evening.

- ***Neighbourhood Planning approach*** - Having completed a research project, the Parish Council could not see benefits or appetite for compiling a neighbourhood plan as Holcot is protected from developments outside the village by two sections of the current Daventry Local Plan.

As a Village Design Statement (VDS) is a “material consideration” for planning purposes and we already have a draft, this will be resurrected and completed during 2017. A draft will be available shortly – Roger will provide a brief update.

The VDS is only part of the planning environment for Holcot, so we will prepare a new Parish Plan in 2018 – the last one was published in 2008. This will be a community project, with everyone having the opportunity to participate.

Road safety

- You will have seen in the newsletter, on the website, in Parish Council agenda and minutes that the Parish Council continues to strive to improve road safety in Holcot. The NCC/Northamptonshire Police Speed Limit Review Panel has again refused our request to reduce stated speed limits across the Parish – getting this far has taken a great deal of effort and is hugely frustrating. The Parish Council had provided extensive written evidence of the scale of the problems (such as the 25% increase in traffic after the A43 works started), cited many specific examples of why we believe that reduced limits will improve road safety as well as opportunities for “engineering-based” enforcement. Despite the evidence, the Panel do not believe that changing limits will have the desired effect given the road conditions, and although we have pointed out plenty of precedents these were apparently implemented without control prior to the committee being established. We will continue to work with Northamptonshire Highways and pursue road safety objectives, and we will be appealing in the near future. We have asked Judy Shephard (our County Councillor) what help she can give, after she gave her wholehearted support for our original application. Phil will provide a short update this evening.
- Following the fatality at the Hannington turn in January, our Community Speedwatch programme started much earlier than we anticipated. The volunteer team were trained and out monitoring speeds and whilst several speeding motorists have been reported, it is very clear that high-vis jackets and warning boards do reduce speeds and we hope will change the behaviours of some drivers.

Some of the routine but important stuff

- Lighting – we continue to spend a lot of time and effort on lighting in the village. We 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 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 140 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. To reduce costs we have made it a single A3 sheet – this will continue to develop to improve the use of space, for instance by removing paid adverts. 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. Thanks Phillip Pomeroy for coordinating, and the whole team for everything you do for us.
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Governance and Financial Performance

I can report that the Parish Council have met formally 10 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting in June 2016. The Council has continued to improve its transparency and publication of information in line with the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014 and Transparency Requirements 2015. The Parish Council have updated their financial regulations this year, and appointed Kathryn Buckle as Councillor responsible for control and governance. It continues to be 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 2016/17. 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 2016:			11745
<i>Income</i>			
Precept	17000		Unchanged
Other Income			
	VAT Reclaim: 1618		
	Other: 2140		
Total other income:	3758		
Total income			20758
<i>Expenditure</i>			
Admin and communications:	1777		
Maintenance:	5834		£3900 mowing
Projects:	1346		
Lighting:	1690		
Grants/Contributions:	2575		Church, Village Hall, Hub, Clock
Other:	3733		Insurance, clerk salary
Total expenditure		(16954)	Rounding applied
Total balances and reserves at the end of the year:		15548	Rounding applied

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 support our children;
- A Group of Parishioners look after the defibrillator;
- 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 annual Christmas dinner for our more senior citizens is another important annual event;
- The White Swan, with open mics, quiz nights and other events; as well as events organised by other groups such as the concert by Lincoln Noel and the recent Lost Hollow band from Nashville.

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?

- We will continue to harass, cajole and make increasing noise about road safety with the aim of getting the authorities to work with us. The speed limits, A43 works, the NNOR and Northampton North SUE will all impact us.
- Completing the Village Design Statement to help protect us from planning issues, and preparing a new Parish Plan.
- Continuing to maintain the parish.
- Doing whatever we can to improve the playing field equipment .
- 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, the emergency services and community organisations that support the Parish as well as other individuals and organisations. Thank you everyone for listening.

David Walker 30 May 2017