



Chairman's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting – 21 May 2018

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.

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 May 2017) 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

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, Martin for streetlighting 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 – as always, a real variety

- ***The Walgrave Road footpath*** – the footpath up the left hand-side of Walgrave Road has now been approved. This has taken 5 or 6 years.
- ***Northampton North Orbital Route, Northampton North SUE (Overstone Leys/Overstone Green) and Moulton Heights*** – The NNOR is now stalled whilst NCC has gone through it's trials and tribulations. We are not aware of when (and if) it will be resurrected. Parishioners and the Parish Council did a great job of pushing back on the proposals that were based on incorrect assumptions in our view. Northamptonshire Highways eventually agreed that their assertion that a design with a roundabout on Moulton Road would reduce traffic through Holcot was erroneous.

The work on Northampton North SUE has started, with a small development. Eventually it will be 3500 houses stretching to the Holcot roundabout. The A43 works that have commenced are associated with this, with a long-term objective of dualling from Round Spinney to the A14. This will rely on funding.

Moulton Heights, which would be south of the NNOR between Moulton Road and the A43 has raised it's head again – we had been told that it was not part of the planning agenda. The Parish Council are now on the circulation list to find out about this development, if and when it arises, but the last plan was that a planning application would be submitted in 2018. This represents more encroachment in my view.

- ***Playing Field Development*** – You will remember a couple of years ago that the Parish Council arranged a safety and compliance survey of the playing field and its equipment. This led to various maintenance actions, removal of the slide, and a desire to redevelop the playing field. Since then, Cllr Fountain who has accountability for the playing field and a few others have set-up "The Friends of Holcot Playing Field Group" that has made great progress on organising funding for the modernisation of the playing field equipment. Many of you will have attended this weekend's event to celebrate the Royal Wedding for instance.

Some of the old equipment has recently been removed, and the implementation of Phase 1 – an adventure path – will commence on 11 June, taking about 3 days to complete. The Parish Council is due to consider closure of the playing field for the duration of works this evening.

Great progress – and sincere thanks on behalf of the Parish to everyone involved.

- **Neighbourhood Planning approach** – Our approach is to develop a Parish Design Statement, more commonly known as a Village Design Statement or VDS. This is still work in progress. Once this is completed our intention is to develop a Parish Plan, similar to the one created 10 years ago.
- **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 County Council 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. Despite the evidence, the accountable officer does 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. His letter is posted on the website. Our position on making the village itself a 20-mph zone is still on-hold, awaiting the outcome of a central government report. ***The Parish Council are due to decide on our course of action in respect of the refusal, and I have included an item on this evening's agenda to hear Parishioners views as to next steps.***

A second part of our road safety activity is the Community Speedwatch programme, where we aim to create driver awareness. The next programme is in June and July, and takes a small amount of time. Please contact Lisa if you are willing to help.

Lastly, in conjunction with Parishioners the Parish Council had proposed a number of physical changes to roads and signage, funded by S106 monies from the Overstone Leys development. The VASID is due to be installed in Holcot shortly we are told. The other principal works were to change the gateways, road painting, and changing the Back Lane/Moulton Rd and Poplars Lane/Walgrave Road junctions. Both of the latter came in at least twice the original budget once they were designed, and we need to revisit where we go next.

Our thanks go to the Cllr Scordellis who has done a massive amount of work getting us this far, dealing with the authorities, council members, and preparing a very strong case.

Some of the routine but important stuff

- Lighting – We continue to control the costs of lighting the village through gradually modernising lights as they fail, 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*** 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.
- The newsletter – 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 Roger Gunnett for coordinating, and the whole team for everything you do for us.

Governance and Financial Performance

I can report that the Parish Council have met formally 10 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting in May 2017. Our governance conforms to the statutory requirements, and transparency is achieved there

Lisa has circulated to this meeting a summary of the financial performance of the Council for Financial Year 2017/18. For those that follow the budgetary and reforecast process, you will have noticed that we spent around £10k less than the original budget. This is due to the budget process being one of "best estimates", some savings/non-spends, and timing differences (projects slower than envisaged, expenses falling in FY2018/19 rather than FY2017/18). Our income exceeded budget due to transfer of funds from the Holcot Hobble and Road-Calming in particular. The first has been spent on its intended purpose (footpath) and the second is ringfenced to road safety. 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.

Balance brought forward from 31 March 2017	£15,548
---	----------------

(rounded £)

Income

Precept	£17,500
Other income	£9,657
Total Income	£27,157

Expenditure

Admin and communications (<i>Website/Newsletter/Audit costs/ Memberships/Training/General Admin costs</i>)	£1,225
Maintenance (<i>Mowing/Playing Field/General Maintenance</i>)	£4,386
Projects	£3,500
Lighting	£994
Grants & Contributions (<i>Church/Village Hall/Clock</i>)	£2,627
Other (<i>Insurance/Allotment/Clerk Salary</i>)	£3,448
Total Expenditure	£16,180

Total Balances and reserves at 31 March 2018	<u>£26,525</u>
---	-----------------------

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;
- Work on the churchyard extension that has made it so attractive;
- The White Swan, with open mics, quiz nights and other events; as well as entertainment events organised by other groups.

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 work through road safety issues. The speed limits, A43 works, the NNOR, Moulton Heights 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.
- The Crossroads project – about 18 months ago we asked Parishioners for ideas as to what could be done with the crossroads green to make it more of a feature of the village. We put the project into abeyance to allow the road safety proposed changes to be worked through – we have now agreed to reinstate the project and a proposal for a design is due to be discussed by the Parish Council shortly.
- Continuing to maintain the parish.
- Doing whatever we can to improve the playing field equipment, supported by funding from The Friends of Holcot Playing Field.

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. There are too many to mention specifically, and some we probably don't realise how much they do for us!

In particular you will know that Ann Carter has retired as our District Councillor and has moved to the Isle of Man – thank you Ann for everything. Welcome to our newly-elected District Councillor, Lesley Woolnough.

Thank you everyone for listening.

David Walker

21 May 2017