



## Chair's Report to the Annual Parish Meeting – 24 May 2023

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, some of 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. I have kept the format as previous years.

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

<b>Councillor</b>	<b>Sector responsibility</b>
Peter Matthews	Main St/Farm Close/Walgarth Court
David Walker	Back Lane/Brittens View
Caroline Ferguson	Moulton Rd/Tithe Close
Chris Bailey	Sywell Rd/Ivy Farm/Sunny Bank
Charlie Heasman	All outlying properties
Phil Scordellis	Rectory Lane/Beelhook/Walgrave Rd
Tony Hewitt	Brixworth Rd/Glebe Close
James Bonsor	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. Contact details for Councillors are on the Parish Council page on the website.

Councillors also have a portfolio responsibility for taking the lead on a number of subjects – for instance Phil is responsible for road safety, Chris for Police Matters, Charlie for climate change and environment and so on. The full list of portfolio responsibilities is on the [Parish Council page](#) on the website.

Tony and Charlie have been co-opted to the Council since the last Annual Parish Meeting. I would like to thank Trudi Townsend and Kathryn Bournier, who resigned during the year, and of course all Councillors for everything they do.

The last person to mention in relation to the Parish Council is our Parish Clerk, Ruby Cole. Ruby'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, Ruby, for your service over the last year. If you ever want to get in touch with the Parish Council, Ruby is first point of contact [clerk@holcotvillage.co.uk](mailto:clerk@holcotvillage.co.uk).

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

### ***Some key activities***

- **Road safety** – We continue to hold road safety as our number 1 priority and it is a continual focus of the Parish Council. Cllr Phil Scordellis leads on this activity, and I am hugely grateful for his diligence and the massive effort that I know this takes. With the recently announced dualling of the A43 to the Holcot roundabout we will need to redouble our efforts I imagine.

You will know from newsletters and the website that we have a number of outstanding road safety related changes – the Sywell Road chicane being primary. The Parish Council have recently escalated the lack of progress with Highways activity with the appropriate Director at West Northamptonshire Council. WNC launched with a fanfare their new contract with Kier last year, but we are still unable to make progress with the chicane or our smaller initiatives. We strive for progress.

The transit of HGVs exceeding 7.5t through Holcot continues. Last year we held another survey day for 12 hours which demonstrated, again, that this problem persists. Without effective policing in some form the Brixworth Road-Sywell Road route will continue as the north-Northampton ring road for many HGVs. WNC are expecting to have ANPR capability to monitor roads and we're pushing for that to be deployed to make the route less attractive for HGV drivers and owners. Additionally, one of the outstanding tasks for WNC Highways is better signage.

To give an indication of the scale of the speeding problem we use the VASIDs. They record data as vehicles approach (and the message is displayed) but also as vehicles travel away from the display. Here is the summary of the most recent results at each location.

Overview - VASID results

Road	Location, facing	Direction	Dates	V85	Speed violations%	Max speed
Brixworth Road	Opposite Glebe Close, facing crossroads	Arriving	3/2-4/4/23	30	12	77
		Departing		30	12	60
		Arriving	20/1-1/2/23	30	11	56
		Departing		30	12	94
Brixworth Road	Opposite Glebe Close, facing causeway	Arriving	4-14/10/22	35	35	78
		Departing		41	81	85
		Arriving	13/4-23/5/23	30	14	76
		Departing		30	13	97
Main Street	Outside Church Room, facing crossroads	Arriving	21/10-6/12/22	22	0.2	41
		Departing		24	0.7	43
		Arriving	16/10-21/11/19	24	1	53
		Departing		25	1	47
Moulton Road	Next to footpath, facing MOULTON	Arriving	15/12/18-8/1/19	29	11	60
		Departing		31	17	63
		Arriving	6-19/6/19	29	10	62
		Departing		34	28	78
Moulton Road	Next to footpath, facing CROSSROADS	Arriving	6/2-9/3/20	28	4	48
		Departing		27	4	55
		Arriving	31/5/21-26/8/21	28	5	57
		Departing		28	5	59
Moulton Road (new VASID)	Opposite allotments facing Moulton	Arriving	4/8-21/9/22	43	65	88
		Departing		48	91	90
		Arriving	9/4-23/5/23	43	65	80
		Departing		48	91	95
Sywell Road	Opposite Back Lane, facing Sywell	Arriving	18/3/22-15/4/22	32	21	56
		Departing		35	51	73
		Arriving	9/2/22-18/3/22	31	19	57
		Departing		35	50	67
Walgrave Road	Half-way along on northern side, facing Walgrave	Arriving	6/12/2022-9/1/2023	24	0	38
		Departing		24	1	38
		Arriving	29/5-5/6/19	25	0	40
		Departing		25	0	41

V85 = 85% of traffic is travelling under/at this speed

Arriving = heading toward front of VASID

Departing = heading away from VASID

You will notice that there are some roads where there are severe speed violations. This information is a major contributor to the focus of our speed-related decisions. We are in the process of determining whether we can get external funding for another solar-powered VASID.

You will have seen in a newsletter that we have *in principle* agreement from the Police to have a 20-mph zone in the centre of Holcot. You may recall that in 2016/2017 we were vigorously pursuing a policy to reduce speed limits to 20mph in the village and 30/40mph across much of the Parish, but despite a robust case this was refused by the authorities. We hope that we will now be able to make a proposal to the Speed Limit Review Panel that will be acceptable, bringing posted limits for most of the village to 20mph, as well as reducing limits elsewhere. Simply posting reduced limits does not necessarily change driver behaviour of course, this proposal is intrinsically linked to making the further road safety engineering improvements I mention elsewhere.

We will be running a Speedwatch campaign again this year. We don't have confirmed dates but we expect end-June/early-July - we will ask Parishioners to spare an hour or two when we know. This is a critical part of raising speed awareness with drivers, demonstrating community engagement with the issue, and showing the extent of speeding.

Lastly, we hope to have additional road safety funds available in the future, generated by the building work along the A43. The Parish Council have prepared a priority list of road safety engineering proposals, which we hope to be able to bring forward once funding is confirmed by WNC. Measures to reduce speeds on the approach to Holcot from Moulton and a chicane for Brixworth Road are two of the proposals. With regard to funding, the Parish Council have earmarked an additional £2k for road safety.

- **Lighting improvement** – Our fixed price electricity contract until 2025 has insulated us to recent electricity price increases. We also recognise the climate change impact of older technologies.

The Parish Council upgraded to LED five more older lamps last financial year – the remaining 4 older lamps will be upgraded as soon as funding is available, expected in next financial year. This will mean that we have a modern efficient lighting estate when we negotiate our electricity contract for 2025 onwards.

- **Climate Change and the environment** – the Parish Council do not knowingly take decisions that adversely affect the climate. For example, our decisions around LED lighting and tree planting are driven by helping reduce our impact. We do know that there is probably a lot more the Parish could do to make a positive impact on climate change, and consequently we are setting up a working group of parishioners to determine ideas for actions that the community can take. If you haven't already offered to get involved, please contact Charlie Heasman.
- **New defibrillator and training** – the Parish Council purchased a second defibrillator, based at the village hall. CPR training has been organised for 8 June at 7:30pm in the village hall – book your free place with Ruby.

### ***Some of the routine but important stuff***

- **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 [editor@holcotvillage.co.uk](mailto:editor@holcotvillage.co.uk) your news items or ideas of how the site could be improved or extended.
- **The newsletter** – Jenny Davis of Glebe Close is Editor - please continue to use it.
- **Parish maintenance** – groups of parishioners, "The friends of Holcot", continue to help with Parish maintenance activities. If you would like to get involved with the gardening or other maintenance activities on an occasional basis contact Ruby who will direct you to the organisers.

### ***Some of the less routine, but no less important***

- **Queen Elizabeth II** - Last year the world saw the death of Queen Elizabeth II. The Parish Council had made plans for 'Operation London Bridge' and I hope that you were pleased by the way we reacted quickly, and the formality we put into Holcot's activities. It was great to see that the condolence book stationed in the church was well used, flowers laid at the millennium stone, and events such as the laying of the wreath and reading of the Proclamation well-attended.

### ***Governance and Financial Performance***

I can report that the Parish Council have met formally 10 times since the last Annual Parish Meeting. Our governance conforms to the statutory requirements, and transparency is achieved through every meeting being a public forum and the website in particular.

Ruby will show to this meeting a summary of the financial performance of the Council for Financial Year 2022/23. For those that follow the budgetary and reforecast process on the website, you will have noticed that we spent around £3k less than the original budget, with income in-line with expectations. This is due to the budget process being one of "best estimates", some savings/non-spends, inclusion of ringfences, and timing differences (expenses occurring in FY2023/24 rather than FY2022/23).

Of note last year, major unplanned items of expenditure were the defibrillator and lighting upgrade. We have also increased the clerk's hours, and also hourly rate to reflect her good performance and progress towards being a qualified clerk.

For the past 6 years we have held the precept at £17,500 through careful budgeting and making savings wherever we can, whilst providing and paying for the services that Holcot needs. In the budget discussions for the current financial year it was very apparent that we need to, reluctantly, increase the precept to £19,500. The increase is in-line with inflation.

Key budget items for 2023/24, excepting inflationary pressures, include road safety where provision has been made for the expected increase in costs for the Sywell Road chicane.

**Financial year 2022/23**

**Balance brought forward from 31 March 2022** **£18,898**

*(rounded £)*

**Income**

Precept £17,500

Other income incl VAT reclaimed £2,847

**Total Income** **£20,347**

**Expenditure incl VAT**

Admin and communications (*Website/Newsletter/Audit/* £2,483

*Memberships/Training/General Admin)*

Maintenance (*Mowing/Maintenance*) £5,097

Projects £3,179

Lighting £3,039

Grants & Contributions (*Church/Village Hall/Clock*) £2,500

Other (*Insurance/Allotment/Clerk Salary*) £4,723

**Total Expenditure** **(£21,021)**

**Total Balances and reserves at 31 March 2023** **£18,225**

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**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.

- 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;
- A group of Parishioners look after the defibrillators;
- The various clubs and societies that use the village hall and church room and local facilities.
- We are also fortunate to have the allotments which are used by many parishioners, and the Flower and Vegetable Show organised by the Village Hall is an important event, maintaining fantastic traditions;
- The Church organises events through the year, ranging from services to the annual carol singing.
- The annual Christmas dinner for our more senior citizens;

- The White Swan as a social hub, with music, open mics, quiz nights and other events; as well as charity and entertainment events organised by other groups.

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

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

This is guided by the Parish as a whole, but I suggest...

- We will continue to work through the various road safety issues. This is perennial. Dualling of A43 will have an impact, and during the planning phase we need to make assertive representations to minimise those.
- Continuing to maintain the parish.
- We will continue to contribute to planning activities, and the impacts of already approved plans.
- Continuing to build working relationships with West Northamptonshire Council, and providing our input to their ongoing strategy development as it evolves.
- Climate change and the environment – helping the working group consider our opportunities and consequent implementation.
- Devolution of services from WNC may come forward. We have no concept of what this might be.

There are lots of other things that the Parish Council will have to deal with of course – most of which we can't foresee. Parishioners are invited to every Parish Council meeting, so if you have ideas please don't hesitate to come along. It has been positive that, over the last year similarly to the previous year, more people are attending Parish Council meetings, making use of their '3 minutes' to speak to the Council and express opinions.

### **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 West Northamptonshire Council, 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!

Thank you everyone for listening.

David Walker

24 May 2023