

Holme Valley Parish Council



Annual Report 2023 - 2024



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Chair's Message

Cllr Mary Blacka HVPC Chair 2023-2024

This has been a rather eventful civic year. The all-out election in May 2023, resulted in a considerable change of membership, with 15 new councillors, out of 23. Consequently, the first few months were characterised by new councillors finding their way around the, sometimes arcane, procedures of the Council and the rest of us becoming used to the new composition.

When I started my year as Chair, I had two aims. The first was to move towards a Council characterised by civility and respect. The second aim was to set in train a process of forward planning, so that the Council would be proactive, with a clear plan of work for the full four-year term.

The first aim is still a work in progress, to be taken forward by my successor, though the Council did sign the National Association of Local Councils Civility and Respect pledge in June '23. There has been much greater progress on the second aim. Thanks to a lot of ingenuity and hard work, particularly by Committee Chairs, we have moved a long way towards having a plan of work, up to 2027. There is much more detail in the reports from individual Committees. As well as the identification of aims by committees, a small working group identified an overall strategy for the whole Council, which was adopted in December '23. The aims of each committee sit within this overall strategy.

I would like to single out two particularly exciting projects, which are a first for the Council and have been a while in coming to fruition. The Council is now funding a youth worker, who is delivering two sessions in Holmfirth and one session in Honley, every week. Working in partnership with Kirklees Council, we are also funding the purchase of a Speed Indicator Device (SID).



In an effort to get more work done more quickly, the Council has moved to a greater use of short-term Working Groups on, eg a Covid Memorial, the Grants Process, which report to their parent committees. Working Groups are less formal and more agile than committees. The results of their work will start to appear early in the new civic year.

I wish to thank my councillor colleagues for all their work over the year. There has been some whole-hearted commitment and outstanding ingenuity. As a result, we are ending the year with a real sense of dynamism.

Finally, I would like to pay tribute to all members of the clerk team, who so often go beyond what might reasonably be expected. In particular, I want to thank the Clerk, for her guidance and support for me as Chair.

Cllr Mary Blacka - March '24

Report on Holme Valley Parish Council Finances 2023-2024

This represents a report for the full year of Holme Valley Parish Council's finances, though the figures for the months of February and March 2024 are, to an extent, projected. Finalised figures will be available after 24th June and the publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2023-24.

Accounting Statements		2022-2023	2023-2024 (Projected)
1	Balance Brought Forward	£321,485	£253,277
2	Precept	£282,693	£284,924
3	Other Income	£15,562	£19,646
4	Staff Costs	£78,363	£85,328
5	Loan Payments	£0	£0
6	All Other Payments	£288,100	£249,164
7	BALANCE OF RESERVES TO CARRY FORWARD (1+2+3-4-5-6)	£253,277	£223,355

It can be noted from the table that the Parish Council began the Council year 2022-23 with £321,485 in reserves. As we now move into the Council year 2024-25, it should be seen that reserves are expected to be down to £223,355. This has been a deliberate strategy. Our auditor recommended that we cut the reserves we held in line with the national guidance. Hence, the Parish Council has run a series of deficit budgets to reduce its reserves, - that is, where expenditure exceeded income with the shortfall being made up from reserves. The deficit budget was intended to get the level of general reserves down to the right sort of figure by the year-end, and this was accomplished.

The Parish Council for the year 2022-23 did not increase the charge to households in the Holme Valley. The precept, - the amount that the Parish Council receives through the Council Tax collection process, - did increase by a few thousand pounds, but this was because of an increase in the number of Band D properties in the locality, not because of a change in the charges to households.

The projected income of the Parish Council for the year (Box 2 + Box 3) is £304,570, and the projected expenditure (Box 4 + Box 6) is £334,492. The deficit in the year was, thus, around £30,000, met from general reserves. In addition, the Parish Council has a few ongoing projects that it seems unlikely to conclude in this financial year 2023-24, and it is probable that Council will consider earmarking some reserves for these projects to run on into 2024-25. This includes £22,800 currently ringfenced for repairs to The Civic Hall, and £7,000 for solar panels for Holmfirth Public Toilets.

The Parish Council expects to carry forward reserves of around £223,355 of which £149,144 is expected to be earmarked reserves, and £74,211 general reserves.

Many of the Parish Council's financial records are available to view on the Parish Council's website www.holmevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk or electors can inspect them in person by appointment.



Finance and Management Committee Report

Cllr Pat Colling
Chair of the Finance and Management Committee

This year has seen two chairs of the Finance & Management Committee and we would like to thank Cllr Charles Greaves for his hard work for much of the year.

For the first time since 2019, we have been forced to increase the charge we make to households (precept). This has gone up from 52p per week for each Band D household to 65p per week. We did not make this decision lightly, but since 2019 inflation has been 22%.

A substantial amount of our budget is spent on our own buildings. Unlike most of the district, we still have public toilets in Holmfirth which are owned and operated by HVPC and we look after numerous benches and stone bus stops, as well as allotments and garages. The trustees who manage Holmfirth Civic Hall for us continue to work on a long list of repairs and improvements to ensure it continues to be a community asset, as do the Friends of Honley Library - improving the fabric and services in the building and particularly its appearance inside and out.

We have awarded almost £96,000 over the year to a wide range of local community groups and activities. Sports clubs supported by the Parish Council this year included Wooldale Wanderers AFC - £2,500 towards energy-efficient heaters and Cartworth Moor Cricket Club - £3,038 towards ceiling cladding and LED lights.

We continue to support the valley's festivals, and the lights and trees for Christmas, as well as bands, singing groups and craft activities. This year these included Holmfirth Christmas Team - £1,000 towards Christmas lighting display and Honley Business Association - £1,250 towards Christmas events. Holmfirth Film Festival - £500 towards the launch of the Culture Voucher scheme for Holme Valley 18-year-olds; Holmfirth Arts Festival - £1,500 towards the "Flow" project on the River Holme; Holmfirth Festival of Folk - £1,500 towards Festival traffic management and insurance.

Numerous community activities have received money from us including Arts for Health - £1,500 towards equipment for music and animation classes; Holmfirth Chess Club - £784.94 towards chess equipment; Holmfirth Women's Institute - £388 towards equipment for outdoor events; Hade Edge Residents Association - £1,500 towards marquee and sound system for the village gala.

The young people of the valley continue to be a council priority with numerous grants supporting different activities. These include Kirklees Youth Alliance - £14,000 towards support for youth clubs in the Holme Valley and Honley Village Community Trust - £390 towards children's arts and crafts workshops.

In addition to all this, the council is committed to supporting activities and groups which fulfil our 'green' aspirations. Some of these were fairandfunkycic - £750 towards climate change workshops for schools; Honley Village Community Trust - £2,250 towards improving access and biodiversity at Magdale Dam; Brockholes Village Trust - £588 towards village hall heat-loss survey.

We are pleased that the grant applications continue to come in, and we are particularly glad when these come from groups who have not approached us before. We look forward to getting even more in the future!

Last year we simplified the grant application process and have continued this review to clarify which groups/activities do and do not qualify for HVPC Support. Grants will next be reviewed in September 2024 and February 2025 so get your applications in.

Detailed financial statements are available on the Council's website.



Hade Edge Brass Band at Holmfirth Arts Festival 2023
HVPC Grants are awarded to support local community arts and events

Service Provision Committee Report

Cllr Lawrence Baylin
Chair of the Service Provision Committee



This year has been energetic and exciting for the Service Provision Committee with a large number of new committee members and an abundance of enthusiasm. As Chair, I promoted goals of building on previous achievements bringing both rigour and accountability to our work, engaging in longer term financial planning, and pursuing an ambitious and proactive programme which would take a leading role in community action. I am grateful to my fellow councillors and our brilliant clerk team for their contributions to the progress we have made in each of these areas.

We have continued to maintain the many assets for which we hold responsibility on behalf of the community. These include the Holmfirth public toilets, benches, war memorials, decommissioned telephone boxes, dog waste bag dispensers and stone bus shelters. I would like to thank our maintenance contractor and also the many volunteers who ensure that these facilities remain available for the benefit of the community and of visitors to our beautiful valley.



Honley Library is owned by Holme Valley Parish Council and managed by the Friends of Honley Library

We continue to hold responsibility, on behalf of the community, for two major assets, transferred from Kirklees Council – Holmfirth Civic Hall and Honley Library. These are both important facilities providing a wonderful range of services and attractions, and with the potential for further development of that provision. In the case of the Civic Hall, the staff and the members of the Trust constantly demonstrate commitment and vision and we have been delighted to work in partnership with them to ensure an excellent venue for community activities and events. Honley Library is a model community success which has gone from strength to strength in not only securing the library's survival, but also expanding the range of its provision. Thanks to the tireless efforts of the managers, trustees and the Friends group, as well as Kirklees Libraries, the future of this building and service looks exciting and we eagerly await the outcome of their current plans.

The Parish Council has continued to work in partnership with the West Yorkshire Combined Authority and Stotts Buses to ensure a local network of community transport, which contributes to an eco-friendly environment and accessibility for all. Our committee has identified a need to review this service to find improvements and, in the coming year, we will be working with local residents and with our partners to achieve this.

Our grants support a range of benefits for the people of our valley, whether it be for the provision of Christmas trees and lights or the maintenance of CCTV cameras.

Last, but certainly not least, we have been thrilled to work with Kirklees Youth Alliance to achieve the employment of a youth worker, providing services at locations in both Holmfirth and Honley.

As Committee Chair, I am proud of our work over the past year but equally excited about our plans for the coming year and beyond.



Climate Action, Communications and Engagement Committee Report

Cllr Sarah Whitelaw

Chair of the Climate Action, Communications and Engagement Committee

Following the May elections, and actioning decisions from the previous Council, a combined Committee to cover Climate Action and Communications & Engagement was established. 10 councillors were elected and six community representatives were co-opted to serve on the CACE committee in its first year. Since its inauguration, the CACE Committee, which met four times this year, has established two working groups to deal with the communications & engagement and the climate action initiatives.

Several projects were carried over from the previous administration e.g. the Topograph installation at Holme Moss and the Covid Memorial project. The former is now complete and the latter is nearing completion, having been agreed to be a "Living Memorial" in the form of tree planting.

As a major task this year, for the Council has been to identify key priorities for its term of office, CACE, along with other committees, was tasked with identifying the Climate Action, Communications and Engagement priorities for 2023/4 and the four years term of the council.

CACE's top priority tasks for 2023/4 fell into two categories:

Communications and Engagement

1. Website redesign and PC re-branding (in progress).
2. Logo and QR code stickers/plaques on all PC assets (to follow from re-branding).
3. Review of collaboration and community engagement. (Ongoing. Including Business Association engagement, and distribution of an information flier about HVPC throughout the Council area).

Climate Action

1. Explore possible funding applications for the Government's decarbonising scheme. (Ongoing. The new bidding round is due to open in Summer 2024).
2. Feasibility study and costing - Park and ride, alongside Stotts review, including costings and possibilities for subsidised or free travel. (Ongoing. A cross-CACE/Service Committee Transport Working Group was established to progress this. Discussions with third parties are ongoing and the potential for a Park and Ride is also being explored).
3. Solar Panels on public toilets in Holmfirth. (Ongoing. A preferred supplier has been identified and the clerking team are progressing permissions for the conservation area).

The CACE committee has ambitious and practical objectives. We believe these will make substantial differences to the Council's engagement with the community it serves. They will also mitigate climate change impact, whilst using the resources the Holme Valley Parish Council receives in a measured and conscientious manner.

All Holme Valley Parish Community members are welcome to work with us. Contact can be made through individual Councillors, the Clerk's office and via social media.



CACE member Kim Warren showcased the Cargo Bike at Holme Valley Cycling Festival, hosted by HVPC in September 2023

Planning Committee Report

Cllr Andy Wilson
Chair of the Planning Committee



As in previous years this has proved to be a busy time for the Planning committee. We meet more frequently than other committees to make sure that we co-ordinate with both Kirklees and Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA) planning applications. To date, we have considered and responded to over 250 planning applications giving a local perspective and also reflecting views from members of the public.

Whilst planning applications take up much of the committee's time we have been active in other areas; responding to consultation requests such as the West Yorkshire Combined Authority Rail Strategy and the Kirklees Flood Management Plan.

We continue to liaise with the team on the Holmfirth Blueprint and report back to the Planning Committee.

Progress has been made against the previously identified committee objectives:-

- **Making a formal application to Kirklees Planning department** for information that has been given to developers under Pre-Application advice. We are awaiting a response
- **Work to reduce speeding and speed limits on local roads;** the first Speed Indicating Device (SID) is on order through Kirklees with delivery due soon. The first five locations have been identified and we have recently taken the decision to order a second device for HVS.
- **Streamline our system of reviewing Planning Applications;** currently ongoing – proving difficult to make the process more effective whilst maintaining the integrity of the responses, however, we now have criteria in place to allow for more focussed discussion and hopefully a speedier process.

As Chair, I am grateful to the committee members for their work in examining the large number of Planning Applications and other activities; my particular thanks go to the Assistant Clerk, Gemma Sharp who has taken on the unenviable task of clerking the committee and for the support and advice to keep me “on track” during the year.



Staffing Committee Report

Cllr Tom Dixon
Chair of the Staffing Committee

The Staffing Committee oversees our employees and deals with any employment matters including training, performance and any appointments once posts are approved by Full Council. It meets at least three times a year with additional meetings when required.

Currently, the Parish Council has three members of staff Jen McIntosh – Clerk, Rich McGill – Deputy Clerk & Responsible Financial Office and Gemma Sharp – Assistant Clerk. In the November meeting of the committee, we were really pleased to confirm that Gemma had successfully completed her six-month probationary period. I feel that we have a very talented team with a broad range of skills that complement each other well.

During this council year, the committee continues to work on resolving any issues that the team have encountered as well as looking at ways we can improve processes within the council including the yearly staff appraisal process.



For more information about Holme Valley Parish Council please visit our website:

www.holmevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk