

Holme Valley Parish Council Annual Report 2021-22



Chairman's Report

This was a year of starting to get back to normal although, as the Council year ended, we still had a number of Councillors not yet well enough to attend meetings. We wish them a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing them again.



It has been a year of considerable activity and achievement for the Parish Council. Possibly, the biggest accomplishment was the successful public referendum for the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan. This had been in development since 2014 and had gone through multiple consultations and revisions, and was finally adopted after a resounding referendum win. Cllr Rachel Hogley was the driving force behind this and I want to thank her for her outstanding and longstanding commitment.

The Planning Committee has continued to review all the planning applications in the Holme Valley as a matter of course. But there has been significantly more engagement with wider issues such as road safety, environmental damage and anti-social behaviour to green lanes, road and footpath closures and diversions.

Responding to the ongoing climate emergency was a fundamental part of my year as Chairman. The Climate Emergency Committee did sterling work in focusing the Council and our community on making those personal, small differences that might, accumulatively, make a big difference for the planet. Unlike the other Committees, the Climate Emergency Committee includes Members who are not Councillors but members of the public. I would especially like to thank them for giving up their time to work with the Parish Council to develop fantastic, innovative projects like our Home Energy Savings booklet, energy audits of public buildings, If It's Not Far Leave the Car campaign and cargo bike scheme.



I have been very pleased that the Parish Council was, through the Finance and Management Committee and the Service Provision Committee, able to support so many community groups through our grants-giving process. Around £170,000 was awarded last year to a great variety of different groups. I do hope that the grants have made a real difference. I was especially pleased that we could focus more on support for young people.



And, of course, we had our Publications and Communications Committee doing an excellent job publicising the work of the Parish Council through print, through our website and through social media. The Committee has overseen the Parish Council's preparation for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, providing small grants to the community for street parties and co-ordinating the Planting Seeds to Save the Bees project, giving every schoolchild in the valley a Beebomb of wildflower seeds for planting.

One thing I especially appreciated was celebrating the fantastic community spirit of the valley by awarding nine Community Champions awards, an unprecedented number for an unprecedented occasion.



Finally, I would like to say just how much I have enjoyed my term as Chairman and the opportunity it has afforded me to meet so many of the people in the Holme Valley. It really is a special place. I would very much like to again thank Cllr Sweeney and Cllr Hogley who attended events on behalf of the Parish Council when I was not available, all the Committee chairs and members who work so hard to ensure that this Council continues to push forward in making the Holme Valley the best that it can be and our amazing staff in Jen, Rich and Michelle.

As is customary, I hope you will all join me in giving the next Chairman, - Cllr Jason Brook, - and Vice Chair, - Cllr Mary Blacka, - our wholehearted support and best wishes.

Michael Pogson

Cllr Michael Pogson
Chairman of Holme Valley Parish Council 2021-22

Finance and Management Chair's Report

This was the financial year after we emerged from COVID. While grant applications had gone down during lockdown, last year we received many new applications as groups got back to normal. The council made awards of around £170,000 in grants to maintain and restore our community assets, finance the Holme Valley mini-bus, and support a great variety of community interests. I was delighted at the number of grant applications we received, which included many groups who had never approached us before, and we look forward to getting more and more applications in future.

A substantial amount of our grant allocation goes to our own buildings, particularly, Holmfirth Civic Hall, which is working on the long list of repairs and improvements to ensure it continues to be an asset to the whole community. Holmfirth Civic Hall Community Trust which runs the building on our behalf received £50,000 for new toilets and office space, new fire doors and energy efficiency measures.

Like the Service Provision Committee, we were also keen to prioritise providing more for the youth of the valley. Numerous grants were paid out to support different activities for our young people: Honley Junior Football Club Under 7s - £350 grant for pop-up shelters; Hade Edge Band - £1000 grant towards uniforms and instruments for the youth band; 1st Holme Valley (Holmfirth) Scouts - £1680 for a new awning at Scout HQ; Huddersfield & District Wood Turners - £500 grant towards an event for children with special needs; Agbrigg District Girlguiding - £200 towards a trip to a game at the women's Euros.

We also support community assets which we do not own. This year we have given £10,000 to Holmfirth Tech for kitchen and toilet upgrades. Hepworth Band Room, Brockholes Village Hall, Honley Village Hall, Upperthong Village Hall, and Holme Village Community Centre Group have received between £2,000 and £5,000 for roof repairs and insulation, new lighting, damp proof course and connection to the national grid. Not all of our assets are buildings. River Holme Connections had £4,930.60 towards the further refurbishment of the riverside path between Digley and Armitage Bridge, while Honley Village Community Trust received £1,000 towards planting a community orchard.

We made significant awards for Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee, - £1,000 to Honley Village Community Trust, and two awards to Friends of Cliff Rec, one of £525 for their Jubilee party and then, £1000 towards repairing/re-siting of the beacon, when it was blown down by a storm.

We continue to support Holmfirth's festivals, and as well as bands, singing groups and the numerous sports groups who provide facilities and enjoyment for a broad swathe of their communities.

Pat Colling

Cllr Pat Colling
Chair of the Finance and Management Standing Committee 2021-22

Report on Finances 2021-22

	YEAR ENDING	
	31 st March 2021	31 st March 2022
1. Balances brought forward	£269,150	£347,101
2. Precept	£275,871	£274,326
3. Total other receipts	£8,123	£14,019
4. Staff costs	£58,700	£64,202
5. Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0
6. All other payments	£147,343	£249,759
7. Balances carried forward	£347,101	£321,485
8. Total value of cash and short-term investments	£337,368	£323,011
9. Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	£5,271,894	£5,271,895
10. Total borrowings	0	0

In terms of our finances, because of lockdown, the Parish Council had ended the previous Council year, - 2020-21, - with a surplus on our budget. We had not spent as much as we expected.

Hence, when it came to setting our precept for this year, the Parish Council kept the charge to households in the Holme Valley the same as last year.

Accordingly, in 2021-22 the Parish Council acted to offset this by running a deficit budget. The Parish Council spent more than it received and our general reserve reduced as we planned. Fortunately, some of our income streams, - like money from toilet donations and rent, - bounced back as well. As you can see, the from the Accounting Statements, the Parish Council's cash holdings went down about £14,000 in significant part due to our additional investments in the community like our cargo bike.



The work loads of our staffing team were also reviewed and some additional work hours were funded to accommodate the growing workloads on officers.

The Parish Council still has rather more general reserves than it needs and will likely be reviewing our holdings in the next budgetary-planning process come the autumn.

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

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Planning Committee Chair's Report

The Holme Valley area is split between two planning authorities - Kirklees Council and to the south and west the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA). Because the Planning Committee has to keep in step with the planning cycles at Kirklees Council and the PDNPA, it meets far more frequently than other committees. The Committee met twelve times during the civic year.

The constant, underlying work of the Committee is to consider planning applications for the Holme Valley. The number of Kirklees Council applications runs at between twenty and forty every meeting. There are many fewer PDNPA applications as much of the area is uninhabited moorland.

The great achievement during the year was the 'making' of the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP), following a positive result in the public referendum on 4 November 2021. This means that the policies in the NDP now provide an additional framework alongside the local plan, against which planning applications are considered. Kirklees Council planning officers are already citing the NDP in their reports. Although it is primarily a planning document, the provisions of the NDP affect much of the work of the Parish Council and other committees, particularly the Climate Emergency Committee. Huge congratulations and thanks are due to Cllr Rachel Hogley, as Chair of the Holme Valley Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group.

During the year the Planning Committee has taken up a number of issues, usually with Kirklees Council, often in response to representation by residents. These have included:

- Woodhead Road Holmbridge to Holme - speeding and noise pollution
- Campaign for a Safer Magdale - road safety
- Hade Edge road corridor - dangerous junctions
- Burnlee Road Closure - land slip blocking the road
- Townend Road - partial closure
- Damage to unsealed roads, including Ramsden Road
- Footpaths, including the temporary closure of the footpath from Woodhead Road to Robinson Lane (Smithy Place Lane)

The Committee has also produced an extensive document commenting on the government's response to the *Landscapes Review*, in which we affirm our view that unsealed roads should be closed to all motorised vehicles, apart from those which have a legitimate need for access.

I would like to thank all Committee members for their work for the Committee, in particular Cllr Andy Wilson, who has done a lot of independent factfinding. I am also appreciative of the friendly and supportive spirit of the team.

As Chair, I feel very indebted to Rich McGill, the Deputy Clerk, who has clerked our meetings but done much more than that. I am very conscious that, as the Committee has become more active, Rich's work has greatly increased. I would like to thank Rich for his exemplary support throughout the year.

Mary Blacka

Cllr Mary Blacka
Chair of the Planning Standing Committee 2021-22

Climate Emergency Committee Chair's Report

Our Climate Emergency Committee leads the Parish Council's efforts in helping the Holme Valley work towards carbon neutrality by 2030. It champions the Climate Emergency Action Plan which is focused on working with the community to deliver positive change. As a result, we are the only committee with a mixture of councillors and members of the public giving us a wider network and perspective on how to work effectively with others locally. I'd like to particularly thank our volunteer members whose enthusiasm and expertise alongside the paid support of our Climate Emergency Coordinator, Michelle Brown, has led to real progress this year.

We completed a professional energy audit for our key assets of Holmfirth Civic Hall and Honley Library. This identified specific energy efficiency measures to deliver real changes to the operational and environmental sustainability of the two buildings. With rising fuel prices, every improvement should make a difference and Full Council approved expenditure of up to £10,000 to implement changes in each of these buildings. We published a Home Energy Savings Booklet on our dedicated website (www.holmevalleyclimateaction.co.uk) to help raise awareness of the small practical changes everyone can make to help reduce their impact on the planet.

Reducing our carbon footprint requires action by everyone and we recognise our role in highlighting change and sharing best practice. Michelle has developed contacts across the valley with our website now being the central source of information on local climate action. Case studies are being collected and she is creating a database of businesses and community groups to help us all learn from each other. Inspiring change has been the driver behind our £6,900 grant towards a cargo bike which will shortly be operating in the Holme Valley, transporting goods up and down our hills with ease. Learning from a similar scheme in Calderdale, the Environmental Projects in Kirklees (EPIK) bike will be used by trained volunteers delivering for local community projects to demonstrate and test its use. If successful, it should then expand to retail and business deliveries making local shopping deliveries a real option for residents.

As part of increasing awareness of the great work underway locally to achieve net zero, we hosted a Great Big Green Week Event in Holmfirth. This was our first face-to-face opportunity to talk to residents alongside local partners about green initiatives including recycling, growing home produce, sustainable transport and renewable energy. We also partnered with Holmfirth Artweek mapping out walking routes to Artweek venues as part of our 'if it's not far, leave the car' campaign.

Reducing our carbon footprint needs all of us to play a part and I extend my thanks to the Committee which has generated so many ideas, engaged in thoughtful debate and driven forward actions to tackle climate change in the valley.

Rachel Hogley

Cllr Rachel Hogley
Chair of the Climate Emergency Standing Committee 2021-22

Service Provision Committee Chair's Report

Over the last year, Service Provision took on some of the grant functions of the dissolved Community Asset Support Committee. The Committee now has oversight over Holmfirth toilets and the Civic Hall as well as a variety of benches, adopted phone boxes and bus shelters from Holme village to New Mill and from Honley to Holmfirth.

Our committee was able to continue to support community Christmas trees, lights and celebrations across the valley.

We were able to help important services for young people including Honley Youth and BOK Artistic Swimming. The Committee awarded Project Communities £1987 towards provision of a variety of sports sessions for under 16 girls and £5,000 to Kirklees Youth Alliance towards twice weekly youth clubs at the Phoenix Centre.

The committee has worked hard with our partners, Friends of Honley Library, and Kirklees Council towards the asset transfer of Honley Library, which I would hope will be completed at some point this summer.

I would like to thank our Clerk for her excellent support over the last year. Without her efficient preparation and advice, none of our business would be done

Sean East

Cllr Sean East
Chair of the Service Provision Standing Committee 2021-22

Publications and Communications Chair's Report

The Publications and Communications Committee looks after the different ways that the Parish Council communicates with the public. So it oversees the Parish Council website, print publicity and social media. The Committee also got things ready for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee through our wildflower and tree-planting project, where we aimed to give every primary schoolchild in the valley a Beebomb of wildflower seeds for planting and gave trees to local schools.

In March, we handed out ten small grants of £100 to Dean Brook Road Group, Friend to Friend, Friends of Nabb School, Hightown Lane Residents, Holmbridge Community, Malkinites, Netherthong Community Partnership, Ribble Valley Group, Upperrthong School Support Group, and Upperrthong Street Party Group to help them to celebrate the Jubilee through parties and events. We hope they all had a fantastic Jubilee!

Finally, in March we were honoured at our Annual Parish Meeting to give out nine Community Champions awards to special people, - individuals and teams, - who each helped make the Holme Valley a special place to live.

Jason Brook

Cllr Jason Brook
Chair of the Service Provision Standing Committee 2021-22

Staffing Committee Chair's Report

This has been a year of change as we welcomed a new Clerk, Jen McIntosh, in August. This followed Liz Bennett's departure in June. I would like to thank Liz for all her hard work and dedication over the last couple of years. We considered 16 applications with 4 short-listed and interviewed for the position.

We were impressed by the quality of applicants and were delighted to appoint Jen in August. Jen rapidly settled into the role with the excellent support of Rich McGill, Deputy Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer. Alongside our Climate Emergency Coordinator Michelle Brown, who was appointed for the year to support the delivery of our Climate Emergency Action Plan, we now have a really strong and effective team helping us deliver our work for the Holme Valley.

The Staffing Committee oversees the Clerk team and their training, development and working arrangements. COVID once again provided challenges with remote working and arranging meetings in larger venues and we recognise the pressure this has put on the team. The Parish Council has also been more active in recent years with its financial support for community assets including Holmfirth Civic Hall and Honley Library alongside making funds available to dozens of local organisations working in the valley. All the Parish Council's decisions and activities create work for the clerk team so in May, we undertook an external review of staffing workloads to identify any improvements. This led to Full Council agreeing to disband the Community Assets Support Committee splitting its critical roles of offering grants and supporting those running community assets between the Finance & Management and Service Provision Committees. We have also reviewed working hours for the Clerk and continue to monitor how best to support the team in the future.

I would like to thank all members of the committee for their engagement and support and I firmly believe that working together, our councillors and staff team are delivering positive change for the Holme Valley.

Rachel Hogley

Cllr Rachel Hogley
Chair of the Staffing Standing Committee 2021-22

