

Holme Valley Parish Council Annual Report 2022-23



Chairman's Report

In the final year of my term as a Parish Councillor, it has been an honour to represent the Parish Council as Chairman.



Towards the start of my year in office came Queen Elizabeth II's Platinum Jubilee. I had the privilege of attending a beacon lighting event at Holme Moss, and also of attending the Wooldale Allotment Society Jubilee celebrations, including the launch of The Veg Box in a converted heritage red telephone kiosk – a truly unforgettable event!



Equally important but imbued with a sense of deep sadness were the events which marked the passing of our dear Queen in September. It fell to myself as Chairman to send a letter of condolence to our new King and also to open the Book of Remembrance and lay flowers alongside the Vice-Chair, Cllr Mary Blacka. I was very touched to receive a moving reply from King Charles III, thanking all the residents of the Holme Valley for sharing in the nation's loss.



I have been proud to represent Holme Valley Parish Council at a wide range of community events, including the Honley Agricultural Show, Macmillan Art Week, The Holme Valley Lions AGM meal and several civic services around the local areas.

The role of Chairman is both rewarding and demanding; I will always cherish my time as a councillor and as Chairman. I am leaving the work of the Parish Council in good hands and wish all who are connected with it the very best for the future.

Jason Brook

Cllr Jason Brook

Chairman of Holme Valley Parish Council 2022-23

Report on Parish Council Finances 2022-23

	Year Ending	
	31 st March 2022	31 st March 2023
1. Balance brought forward	£347,101	£321,485
2. Precept	£274,326	£282,693
3. Total other receipts	£14,019	£15,562
4. Staff Costs	£64,202	£78,363
5. Loan interest/capital repayments	0	0
6. All other payments	£249,759	£288,100
7. Balances carried forward	£321,485	£253,277
8. Total value of cash and short-term investments	£323,011	£254,136
9. Total fixed assets plus long-term investments and assets	£5,271,895	£5,271,897
10. Total borrowings	0	0

Because of the pandemic when, not unsurprisingly, it was difficult to spend money, the Parish Council found that its reserves of cash had built up excessively. Over the last two years we have been endeavouring to spend our excess reserves to the benefit of the Holme Valley Community.

For the last two years and the new year ahead, therefore, the Council has run a deficit budget, - it spent more money than it received in income. This was planned. As you can see in the table above, the Parish Council started the year 2021-22 with money assets of £347,101. At the end of the current council year, 2022-23, money assets are now £253,277. This was deliberate. The Council needed to reduce its reserves to meet recommendations of our governance panel.

Given the economic challenges confronting everyone the Parish Council considered it a priority not to increase the charge to households for 2023-24. The Parish Council has, indeed, not raised its charge for the whole 4 years of this term of office. The Parish Council continues to commit its reserves to deliver on our priorities and commitments to the people of the Holme Valley.

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. The Annual Return will be announced in due course and there will be an opportunity for local people to review our accounts.

Finance and Management Chair's Report

This has been a very effective year for the Finance and Management Committee. A total of £170,000 in grants was awarded by the Parish Council to a range of local community groups over the year.

Some of the awards went to the buildings we hold on behalf of the community. Holmfirth Civic Hall is working on a long list of repairs and improvements to ensure it continues to be a community asset. A recent award of £30,000 is to modernise the reception areas.

After more than 4 years of work, ownership of Honley Library at last passed to Holme Valley Parish Council. The building will be managed by the Friends of Honley Library. The Parish Council will provide the financial support needed to run and maintain the building. Awards of £25,000 were made in the year 2022-23 to the Friends.

We also support community assets which we do not own. This year, for example, we gave Holmfirth Tech £15,000 towards an accessible kitchen and energy bills. Wooldale Community Association received £5,000 towards replacing two boilers and Upperthong Village Hall £2,000 towards roof repairs. Hepworth Community Association received £5,000 for structural work to the village hall. Honley Players got £4,824 towards a new PA and stage audio system, and Honley Silver Band received £5,000 to replace the floor of the band room. Sports clubs were keenly supported by the Parish Council. For example, Scholes Cricket Club received £5,000 towards women's changing rooms, and Wooldale Wanderers got £4,911 towards ladies' toilets and upgrades to the kitchen.

Not all the awards went to buildings. Awards totalling £20,000 went to local projects, festivals and events. For example, Holmfirth Forward received £500 towards a 2nd print of the Holmfirth business map, Honley Business Association got £1,560 for CCTV, and Friends of Honley £2,000 towards village centre improvements.

We are delighted at the number of grant applications we get, including those from groups who have not approached us before. We look forward to getting even more in the future!

The Council was fully aware that its grants process was not perfect. Hence, a working group was set up earlier this year to make the grants process simpler for everyone. There are now new, clearer guidelines about what qualifies for a grant and, for those groups who apply every year, there will be a shorter application process. Grants will next be reviewed September 2023 and February 2024 so get your applications in.

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

Pat Colling

Cllr Pat Colling

Chair of the Finance and Management Standing Committee 2022-23

Publications & Communications Chair's Report

Key national events have featured at the heart of the committee's work in 2022-23.

The committee headed the Parish Council's work to celebrate the Platinum Jubilee of Queen Elizabeth II including contributions to and representation at beacon lighting events at Holme Moss and Cliff Rec and through awarding small grants of up to £100 to support local street parties and events.

Thereafter, the Queen's passing was a poignant moment in the nation's history and a Book of Condolence and Remembrance was made available at The Civic and flowers laid in the grounds.

Preparing for the coronation of His Majesty King Charles III has also been part of the work of this committee. A number of small grants have been made to local groups planning a celebration. The Council Chairman and Vice-Chair are looking forward to attending events hosted by Friends of Cliff Rec and Wooldale Allotment Society. The installation of a topograph at Holme Moss viewpoint will also mark the start of the reign of King Charles III and should be unveiled in the early Summer. Thanks go to Cllr Rachel Hogley for leading on this.

The committee was pleased to relaunch its Tidy Trader Awards in the Autumn following a hiatus due to the Covid Pandemic. Then at the Annual Parish meeting 11 Community Champions Awards were made to individuals and groups who were deemed to have made a special contribution to the community life of the Holme Valley.

The committee also made awards to some councillors. A special Chairman's Award was commissioned by Cllr Jason Brook for Cllr Rachel Hogley in recognition of her eminent work as a Councillor. Five long-standing councillors were also honoured for their distinguished service. Cllr Judith Roberts (20 years), Cllr Trevor Bellamy (24 years), Cllr Di Hall (26 years), and Cllr Donald Firth (36 years) were all recognised, while the most remarkable achievement was that of Cllr Paul Dixon with over forty years' service.

An important remit of the committee is to communicate the work of the Parish Council. Holme Valley Parish Council News is now featured in TITO magazine which is delivered free to all residents. The Committee is also very grateful to its officers for maintaining the Parish Council website, Facebook page and YouTube Channel. The committee led work on producing a leaflet for all households outlining the work of the Parish Council and encouraging residents to stand for election as parish councillors.

This will be the last report from the Publications and Communications Committee as this committee will, in the new council year, be merged with the Climate Emergency Committee to form the Climate Action Communications and Engagement (CACE) Committee.

Kath Bellamy

Cllr Kath Bellamy

Chair of the Publications & Communications Standing Committee 2022-23

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Planning Committee Chair's Report

It has been another busy year for the Planning Committee. The committee normally meets every four weeks, which is far more frequently than other committees. Meetings have to be frequent because of the need to keep in step with planning application processes at Kirklees Council and the Peak District National Park Authority (PDNPA).

Commenting on planning applications - giving a local perspective - is the constant work of the committee. We usually consider 20/30 applications each meeting. It has been gratifying to see Kirklees planning officers making more extensive use of our Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP) in their reports. Developers are also starting to cite the NDP in their design and access statements.

The committee has also been active in other areas, taking up issues initially raised by residents. Chief amongst these have been highways issues and the extensive damage to un-made roads in the area. There has been extensive correspondence with Kirklees Council officers on these issues.

The committee has taken the view that speed limits in village centres and around schools should be 20mph. In pursuing this, we have aligned ourselves with the campaign by Jason McCartney MP. Recently the committee has taken a decision, in principle, that it wishes to spend some of its budget on a moveable speed camera which will be managed by Kirklees Council.

We regularly receive requests to take part in surveys or to comment on policy documents. During the year we have commented on - amongst others - a Supplementary Planning Document on Affordable Housing and a Survey of Parish Councils.

The committee has a clear aim to strengthen its relationship with Kirklees Council officers and councillors. We have set up a number of meetings with senior Kirklees officers, most recently with the team in charge of the Holmfirth Blueprint. In January '23 we had a productive meeting with Kirklees Councillors Moses Crook and Donald Firth, primarily to discuss a number of highways issues.

The Neighbourhood Development Plan assigned 51 tasks to the Parish Council, to be addressed in partnership with local groups. The committee worked through the tasks and was pleasantly surprised that so much had been achieved within the first year of the NDP.

As Chair, I am indebted to the other members of the committee for their work, particularly in examining the substantial load of planning applications. My greatest debt of gratitude is, though, to the deputy clerk, Rich McGill, who has had the unenviable task of clerking the committee. I would like to thank Rich for the support and advice he has given me throughout the year.

Mary Blacka

Cllr Mary Blacka
Chair of the Planning Standing Committee 2022-23

Climate Emergency Committee Chair's Report

Our Climate Emergency Committee champions climate action in the Holme Valley and is focused on working together with the community to deliver positive change. Our aim is for all Parish Council activities to support addressing climate change and we were delighted to lead our 'Planting Seeds to Save the Bees' project to celebrate the late Queen's Platinum Jubilee last year. This allowed us to engage with young people throughout the valley and raise awareness of the importance of everyone making small changes to reduce our impact on the climate and protect our environment.

Our committee combines councillors with members of the public and together we gave assemblies to 3300 children across the 13 primary schools and 2 high schools. Alongside explaining Parish Council's role and the Platinum Jubilee's significance, we outlined what climate action is taking place across our community and highlighted the importance of biodiversity. All primary children were given a 'bee bomb' of wildflower seeds to plant in their garden, pot or local park and every school received wildflower seeds for their grounds. The children were thrilled to see the new Holme Valley Cargo Bike deliver many of the bee bombs and pupils took part in a poster competition with the winners' designs now framed on display in their schools.

While we hope there will now be pockets of wildflowers flourishing across the valley, we were also welcomed back to each school in the autumn to plant one of 15 native trees. These trees will provide a memorable legacy at each school with children able to watch them grow over forthcoming years as they form part of the Queen's Green Canopy.

Alongside our active work with schools, our main focus has been on building a stronger relationship with the wider community and sharing best practice. Our Climate Emergency Coordinator has been developing a database of local groups and businesses so we can connect people together to share inspiring case studies, practical experiences of making organisations and assets more sustainable and energy efficient, and signpost funding opportunities.

Thank you to all members of the committee for their input and enthusiasm and particularly to Michelle Brown, who is moving on after 2 ½ years supporting us as our Climate Emergency Coordinator. As we embed climate action in all the Parish Council's activities, we are looking forward to this committee's work being driven forward in the newly established outward-looking Climate Action Communications and Engagement Committee as we move into the next council year.

Rachel Hogley

Cllr Rachel Hogley
Chair of the Climate Emergency Standing Committee 2022-23

Service Provision Committee Chair's Report

It's been a positive year for Holme Valley Parish Council's (HVPC) Service Provision Committee, seeing the committee members providing grant support for a number of community organisations and events across the whole of the Holme Valley. These range from Christmas events, lights and trees to a multitude of other events and activities that add to the cultural life of the area. There has been a significant hike in inflationary pressure on our budgets, meaning that our budget probably hasn't been able to achieve quite the same amount this year as last year.

In addition to the aforementioned activities, we've been able to support our portfolio of community assets: Holmfirth public toilets, stone-built bus shelters, decommissioned red telephone boxes and benches across our picturesque landscape for the benefit of residents and our visitors. Thank you to our contractor for the work done to keep all these important community assets working, safe and ready for use.

We continue to work to support the Civic in Holmfirth, working in close partnership with Holmfirth Civic Hall Community Trust (HCHCT). It's been gratifying to see the Civic strongly re-establish itself after the pandemic, which included work to improve the toilets and the installation of a new fire escape, helped by grants we've been able to provide. In the coming years it will be exciting to work with HCHCT and the vision for the Civic's continued success.

The Parish Council, via the committee, has been able to continue to financially support the vital local minibuses, as we moved out of the pandemic. This service helps people in the Holme Valley access public transport in areas away from the main bus routes. We have also been able to continue to provide a grant to the Holme Valley Patient Transport Scheme which enables residents to access appointments at local GP surgeries who otherwise might find doing so difficult. This service also helps those surgeries meet local health needs.

On a personal level, it's been very gratifying to see that under the auspices of the committee, HVPC has now taken on Honley Library as this asset has now been transferred from Kirklees Council. The transfer represents almost six years of work towards this goal. Working with our partners Kirklees Council and Friends of Honley Library, I believe we have secured the future of the library in Honley and I look forward to achieving the aspiration for it to become even more of a great public asset. I must in particular pay tribute to our partners in Friends of Honley Library. Without them it's hard to see how the transfer would have been achieved. They have been the perfect partners for the committee and HVPC.

Finally, as a committee, we would like to thank our dedicated clerk for her hard work administering the committee and to the deputy clerk for his advice around our budget and how it is spent.

Sean East

Cllr Sean East
Chair of the Service Provision Standing Committee 2022-23

Staffing Committee Chair's Report

The Staffing Committee is a little different to the other committees in that the membership consists of the Council Chairman and Vice-Chair as well as the chairs of all the other committees. It has a key function to ensure that the work of the Parish Council officers is effective in facilitating the work of the Parish Council.

A focus for 2022-23 has been a review of the staffing needs of the Parish Council in preparation for the merging of the Climate Emergency Committee and the Publications and Communications Committee from 2023-24 onwards.

The review resulted in a decision to not extend the temporary 18 hours a week role of climate emergency co-ordinator. The post-holder, Michelle Brown, has moved onto an exciting role with a global company outside of local government. Her input as CEC had a significant positive impact in bringing to fruition a number of climate action projects through the Climate Emergency Standing Committee and the Parish Council would wish to acknowledge this, thank Michelle for her dedicated work and wish her well for the future.

A permanent assistant clerk role of 25 hours per week to lead on communications within the Parish Council and provide clerking services for the Planning Committee and the newly created Climate Action Communications and Engagement Committee was approved.

The outcome of this is that the Parish Council now has a permanent clerking team of three, consisting of a clerk, deputy clerk/responsible financial officer and an assistant clerk, offering a potential 75 hours of support each week. Thereafter, we gave a warm welcome to Mrs Gemma Sharp who took up the assistant clerk role in April 2023.

The committee is also responsible for approving staff training. Both the clerk and deputy clerk/RFO have completed the Introduction to Local Council Administration (iLCA) this year and the clerk is currently studying for the Certificate in Local Council Administration (CILCA). Once the clerk has completed the training the Parish Council should be in a position to exercise the General Power of Competence which gives the Council wider scope to meet the needs of the Holme Valley.

Michael Pogson

Cllr Michael Pogson
Chair of the Staffing Standing Committee 2022-23

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