



Holme Valley Parish Council



**Annual Report
2024 - 2025**

Chair's Message

Cllr Pat Colling HVPC Chair 2024-2025

Your council has achieved a great deal this year.

We continue to invest in our permanent resources - Holmfirth Civic Hall, Honley Library, the toilets in Holmfirth, garages, and allotments. We support all the regular valley activities - the various festivals and the Christmas lights for instance. This year we provided more trees than ever before. We have continued to finance Youth activities, and we have maintained our support for the many smaller groups who apply to us each year for grants.

We have had more working groups than ever before. These are more informal than committees, so they are quicker and more responsive. The group considering how to mark Covid decided to honour all those in the valley, mostly volunteers who helped to maintain a semblance of normal life during lockdown, who assisted the bereaved and those who saved lives with their work providing vaccinations. On 5th April living memorials will be created when apple trees are planted and commemorative plaques positioned in Sands Rec. and Honley Library Garden.



Our most important working group this year was the one reviewing all the committees and how they work. We all agree that we need fewer meetings and more productive operations. Already we have agreed that one committee will be disbanded and its work distributed across several others where it sits more naturally. The working group will continue its work into next year looking at every committee and seeking to achieve our aim of LESS TALKING, MORE DOING.

I am grateful to my fellow councillors for all their work over the year and to the clerking team, and particularly to the Clerk whose guidance and support has been invaluable.

Among councillors and clerks there has been the enthusiastic dedication, creativity and resourcefulness that has enabled us to continue to improve and find more ways of strengthening the communities of the valley.

**Cllr Pat Colling
March 2025**

Report on Holme Valley Parish Council Finances 2024-2025

This represents a report for the full year of Holme Valley Parish Council's finances, though the figures for March 2025 are, to an extent, projected. Finalised figures will be available after 23rd June and the publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024-25.

	Accounting Statements	2023-2024	2024-2025* (Projected)
1	Balance Brought Forward	£253,277	£221,342
2	Precept	£284,924	£327,934
3	Other Income	£19,861	£21,996
4	Staff Costs	£85,328	£91,574
5	Loan Payments	£0	£0
6	All Other Payments	£251,992	£324,003
7	BALANCE OF RESERVES TO CARRY FORWARD (1+2+3-4-5-6)	£221,342	£155,695

** These 2024-25 figures represent a report for the full year of Holme Valley Parish Council's finances, though the figures for the months of March 2025 are, to an extent, projected. Finalised figures will be available after 23rd June and the publication of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) 2024-25.*

It can be noted from the table that the Parish Council began the Council year 2023-24 with £253,277 in reserves. As we now move into the Council year 2025-26, it should be seen that reserves are expected to be down to £157,375. The Parish Council had not planned to have a lower level of reserves at the year-end but unexpected events over the year necessitated the need to use some of the general reserves as a contingency. A by-election was called which, unexpectedly, cost around £9,000. Additionally, insurance costs increased somewhat. But the biggest change in circumstances that affected the Parish Council's reserves was the Parish Council having to commit significant extra funds to secure the future of The Civic in Holmfirth. Nearly £90,000 was paid towards urgent repairs at The Civic, - and £26,508 of this came from general reserves.

The projected income of the Parish Council for the year 2024-25 (Box 2 + Box 3) is £349,930, and the projected expenditure (Box 4 + Box 6) is £413,897. The deficit in the year was, thus, around £63,967, met from general reserves. In addition, the Parish Council has a few ongoing projects that are unlikely to conclude in this financial year 2024-25, and it is probable that Council will consider earmarking some reserves for these projects to run on into 2025-26.

The Parish Council expects to carry forward reserves of around £157,375, of which around £80,000 is expected to be earmarked reserves, and the remainder in 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



Cllr Andy Wilson
Chair of the Finance and Management Committee

The Finance & Management Committee carry out many routine tasks in conjunction with the Responsible Financial Officer (RFO) and include monitoring of Income & Expenditure, Internal control checks, Schedule of payments, Bank reconciliations and monitoring of Ear Marked reserves (EMR's).

We also make recommendations to Full Council regarding budgets & the precept.

Precept

Once again, we have been forced to increase the charge we make to households (precept) due to several exceptional additional expenses. These include:

- The second year of critical repairs to The Civic (which is owned by HVPC).
- A "one off" vision document to determine the future of The Civic.
- Funds to cover election expenses (a recent by-election cost increased from £2K to £9K).
- Increased buildings insurance costs.

This has resulted in an increase of £10.99 per year, or 21p per week on the household charge for an average band D property for the year 2025/26.



"Dear Sunflowers" Parade at Holmfirth Arts Festival 2024. HVPC Grants are awarded to support local community arts and events

Financial Regulations

During the year a Working Group was set up to consider the New Model Financial Regulations from the National Association of Local Councils (NALC). This led to their adoption by the Council and whilst many of the changes are minor and have little impact, other effects include:

- Protecting the Council from fraudulent activity.
- More flexibility for committees to access their budgets without Full Council authorisation.
- Requiring committees to provide a 3-year forecast to help with long term planning.
- Restricting the use of unspent budgets; these now need an Ear Marked Reserve creating and authorising if the funds are not returned to reserves.

Our main working bank account has been moved from HSBC to Unity Trust – this has allowed both online banking and authorisation.

Grants

Grants take much of the committee's time with two rounds each year in February and September. The budget for the current year is £53,000 (Community assets) and £20,000 (projects and Events).

For a list of all grants awarded and for evaluation forms see:

www.holmevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk/your-council/grants

Thanks go to the Working Group who have once again reviewed and refined the process.

Thanks also go to our RFO for his expertise and guidance, and to Committee members for their hard work during the year.

Service Provision



Cllr Lawrence Baylin Chair of the Service Provision Committee

The past year has been a busy one but also tremendously exciting with good progress made on several programmes of work. We have taken forward new projects identified as being beneficial to the community. Amongst these are sustainable transport initiatives including trialling free minibus travel to some of the festival events, a new fairer scheme for funding Christmas trees and decorations throughout the valley, adventurous projects to help boost local tourism for the benefit of our local businesses and residents, and plans for improvements to the public toilets building in Holmfirth. It has been particularly pleasing to combine forces with other organisations to achieve our goals in partnership for a stronger local economy, better public facilities, support for young people, assisting those in greatest need and a cleaner environment.

Meanwhile, we have worked on behalf of the community to ensure that our two largest owned assets - Honley Library and The Civic, Holmfirth - continue to be maintained and further developed under the management of and with support from the respective staff, trustees, friends and volunteers. In the case of each of these establishments, the past year has presented challenges which they have weathered and managed to maintain a forward programme for promising growth and development. On behalf of my fellow Committee members, I wish to record my thanks to all of those involved with Honley Library and The Civic and to wish them continued success in their ambitious programmes of improvement.

Our Committee has also been delighted to continue its financial support of the local youth service, managed by Kirklees Youth Alliance. Through a variety of creative arrangements, provision has been established in four locations across Honley and Holmfirth, reaching a significant number of young people. I wish to acknowledge the hard work and dedication of all those involved and particularly the outstanding efforts of Youth Worker Tyler Augustine.

We have continued, with the invaluable support of our maintenance contractor and numerous volunteers, to maintain the many assets for which we hold responsibility on behalf of the community, including benches, war memorials, decommissioned telephone boxes, dog waste bag dispensers, stone bus shelters, New Mill Churchyard and Holmfirth public toilets. Such facilities benefit the entire community as well as playing their part in keeping our valley special.

As Committee Chair, I am incredibly proud of what we have achieved in the past year as well as our exciting plans for the future. I am grateful to my fellow councillors for their enthusiasm, vision and energy and to our hard working and hugely supportive clerk team.



The Service Provision Committee provides funding for village Christmas trees and decorations in the Holme Valley



Cllr Mary Blacka Chair of the Planning Committee

This has been a year of change and some challenge for the Planning Committee.

There had been concern, for a while, that resources were being wasted in the routine consideration of all planning applications. The time spent by councillors and members of the clerk team in considering applications – before and during meetings – and the associated administrative tasks were taking up a disproportionate amount of time, given that the Parish Council has no decision making powers.

The Committee set about finding a solution to this problem. A new process, in which only more significant planning applications were considered, was trialled from October 2024 to January 2025, when it was reviewed. As the members of the Planning Committee were then unable to come to a consensus, the decision on how to proceed was eventually left to the Full Council. In the new civic year, 2025/26, the Planning Committee will meet every two months, rather than approximately every month, as at present, with a sub-committee considering applications in the intervening month. This will be reviewed after a further trial period.

Planning is a diligent and hard-working Committee, which will have met twelve times by the end of the civic year – much more frequently than any other committee. I would like to thank all Committee members for their work and for the respectful and positive spirit of our discussions. We have managed this, even when members held strongly opposing views. In particular, I would like to thank the Vice Chair, Cllr Andy Wilson, for his considerable help and support during the year.

Kirklees Council is updating its Local Plan. The Planning Committee took the lead in setting up a Reference Group to make representations. The Reference Group, which first met in December, now has members from twelve local groups and we anticipate that more will become involved in the future. The Reference Group will submit an Initial Report to Kirklees Council at the end of February. Given the short time-scale, this report was always going to be patchy and superficial in parts but it will lay down a marker that we are serious about entering into a dialogue with Kirklees Council, for the current and future benefit of the residents of the Holme Valley. Whilst the Local Plan is mostly associated with determining the location and type of new house building, it ranges much more widely and will affect many aspects of residents' lives.



The Planning Committee works towards supporting the balance of conservation and new development

Climate Action, Communications and Engagement

Clr Sarah Whitelaw Chair of the Climate Action, Communications and Engagement Committee



The CACE Committee has run for two years, but after considerable discussion it was decided that as both Climate Action and Community Engagement are 'overarching' matters, these should be considered and actioned in all Council activity. Consequently, from March 2025 CACE will be disbanded and these matters will be addressed directly by Full Council with working groups as necessary; the benefit being that these can be reviewed and actioned quickly and effectively in conjunction with standing committees where necessary.

This year's CACE activities have been fairly wide ranging. Of particular note is the ongoing Website redesign, and accompanying re-branding which is designed to make sure that HVPC imaging reflects its current work and position in the 21st Century, and present in a visually attractive way which reflects Valley tradition and history, in a contemporary manner.

www.holmevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk

We also undertook a review of communication and engagement, which looked at how, for example, social media, printed media, surveys, branding and internet presence, council meetings and councillor communications and surgeries, public events etc. might be used most effectively.

The most significant community engagement activity in 2024/5 was The Big Community Celebration in November. This showcased a wide variety of local organisations and attracted over 800 visitors. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, clearly indicating that an event which helps people to find out about 'Valley Organisations' – and how they can get involved – is a valuable activity. NB The next Big Community Celebration will take place on Saturday 8 November 2025 at The Civic. Initial information will be put out after Easter.

Work on a number of climate-related projects continues. Discussions with Stotts buses are on-going, the potential for Park and Ride is also being explored and we had stalls at summer festivals to promote sustainable transport.

The work on the installation of solar panels on the public toilets in Holmfirth also continues – a condition survey suggests that remedial work on the roof prior to installation of panels is necessary.

Another on-going activity is the discussions with Kirklees officers (Landscaping) and Ward Councillors on stopping the use of glyphosate weedkillers. Clr Morgan will continue to follow up on progress and report back to council.

Importantly, as the HVPC owns a number of buildings, the Clerk has been working with Holmfirth Civic Hall Community Trust (HCHCT) on funding applications for climate mitigation.

Finally, my thanks go to the Councillors, Clerking team and coopted members of the public who have been actively involved in CACE and bringing so many of our projects in to being. Many hands have made light work and have been much appreciated.

We look forward to the Council continuing to develop and deliver projects which benefit the Holme Valley community, address climate issues and promote effective communication.



Over 800 visitors attended The Big Community Celebration in November 2024

Staffing



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.

Cllr Lawrence Baylin is Vice Chair of the Committee and Cllr Mary Blacka has taken on the role of Staff Performance and Development Lead.

Currently, the Parish Council has three members of staff:

- Jen McIntosh – Clerk
- Rich McGill – Deputy Clerk & Responsible Financial Officer
- Gemma Sharp – Assistant Clerk

During this council year, the Committee has continued to work with the staffing team on the proposed restructuring of council committees and the impact of this on specific roles and responsibilities.

In January we were thrilled to hear that Jen had obtained her Certificate in Local Council Administration (CiLCA) qualification, meaning that she is now a qualified clerk. As a result, the Parish Council now meets all the criteria to use the General Power of Competence (Localism Act 2011). This will give the Council more powers to do good in the local community. Additionally, Rich is also currently working on his CiLCA and Gemma has received training appropriate to her role as communications lead within the team.

For more information about Holme Valley Parish Council, the latest news and contact details for all 23 Parish Councillors please visit our website:

www.holmevalleyparishcouncil.gov.uk



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