

HOGHTON PARISH MEETING

MONDAY 18TH APRIL 2016

ANNUAL REPORT

I wish to present the annual review of parish activities for 2015/16. This is the final review as the Parish Council will be up for re-election in May 2016.

At the last Parish Council Annual General Meeting in May 2015 I was re - appointed Chairman and Trevor was re - appointed Vice Chairman.

Sadly I have been unable to be present over the last twelve months as much as I would have liked due to my continuing health problems and I will not be seeking re-election in May, after over 40 years service.

At this point I would like to thank to everyone in the Parish for their good wishes during the past twelve months.

I would particularly like to thank Trevor for his support and for standing in for me.

I hope that Marel is now over the worst and on the road to being well and that Mike Devaney recovers from his health problems.

Turning to the Parish Council business.

We have once again budgeted wisely and although our balances are adequate we have had to increase our precept for the coming year to cover the costs of any election. The County Council and the Police Authority have both increased their precepts by approximately two per cent.

I feel it is worth re - stating that with regard to the Parish precept and the grants we make. Grants to organisations represent around 8% of our spend. Some groups would cease to function if it weren't for members from outside Hoghton helping to keep them viable and alive. It is part of the social function of these groups to enable communities to mix and share common interests and part of the Parish Council function to support them with what are relatively small amounts of money. The alternative if they were to fold would be for Hoghton residents having to travel to participate in groups elsewhere. There is of course an abundance of local knowledge within the Parish Council to know that we are supporting organisations which have a strong local connection at their core.

The other 92% of the precept is predominantly spent on the function of the Parish Council and entirely without exception for the benefit of Hoghton residents. With an income of £5000 per annum the Parish Council is only able to fund modest projects, notice boards for example, and doesn't have the resources to undertake capital works. Our primary function is to persuade other tiers of local government to spend in Hoghton as well as, or instead of elsewhere. Many of the projects undertaken by LCC and Chorley Council would not have taken place or have been brought forward as a result of pressure from the Parish Council.

The Parish Council continues to press for better services for the Parish but it is not easy and things are likely to get worse following the reductions in expenditure faced by the County Council and Chorley Council.

John Peet continues to be our The Neighbourhood Officer and we thank him for the work he does within the Parish..

Turning now to Parish matters, once again it has been a very busy and challenging year for the Parish Council. We have dealt with everything from Highway problems to controversial planning and licensing applications and spending and budget reviews.

We always welcome members of the public raising issues and are happy to take them forward.

As last year reported crime in the Parish has been low. The police staffing situation means they do not attend many of our meetings but we still have links with them.

The problem of speeding traffic persists. Monitoring has been taking place recently and we hope this will improve the situation.

We also receive and publicise details of the latest notifications of scams from the Trading Standards Officer.

Highway and Footpath matters have been many and varied.

We have had problems with the repair and maintenance of several footpaths in the Parish and these have been placed on a list and will be dealt with in order of priority.

Due to the exceptional rainfall this winter there have been extensive flooding because of blocked drains . The County Council is slowly getting to grips with this problem as the better weather arrives.

The flooding at Chapel Lane is an ongoing problem Nigel mentioned this over twelve months ago but little progress has been made despite the intervention by County Councillor Devaney.

Local residents complained of traffic speeds on Chapel Lane and we asked County to look at their suggestions for the introduction of a 20 mph limit and traffic monitoring.

A member of the public referred to the hazardous conditions for motorists on Chapel Lane from the top of the hill to Houghton Bottoms.

The County Council has been asked to investigate this.

On Gib Lane we have had problems with the overgrown hedge which now seems to have been resolved and with speeding traffic County Councillor Devaney has asked the County Council to undertake a traffic survey.

The condition of Blackburn Old Road is still a cause for concern. Both Marel and Tom have raised this issue in the past and it has now been submitted as project in the Highways Improvement Programme. However, unfortunately there is no date for the work to start.

Following an accident at the junction of Bolton Road and Riley Green Tom suggested that the Give Way signs and markings should be replaced by a Stop Sign.

After months of deliberation the County Council decided that no further work was required.

We regularly ask for roads to be swept in particular Station Road.

We have frequently reported potholes which required attention; this situation has been made worse with the bad weather. We will continue to make sure that potholes are dealt with promptly However, they do not seem to be repaired satisfactorily and need further attention almost as soon as they are fixed.

Flooding has also been a problem on Quaker Book Lane but thanks to Nigel's persistence a traffic management scheme has been introduced and this seems to have alleviated the problem.

Damaged street name plates are reported to Chorley Council, it normally takes six weeks for them to be ordered and a further two weeks to fit.

We have considered numerous planning applications and made comment on them .

The major concern was with the regard to the decking at the Sirloin we objected to this a sit was not in keeping with the area and removed disabled access.

We asked Chorley to serve an enforcement notice as the work was done without planning permission. The Sirloin subsequently submitted a retrospective application which was approved.

Additionally local residents asked Chorley to carry out noise level monitoring and it was found to be excessive and a noise restriction order was issued.

As far as the War Memorial is concerned we have succeeded in getting the first phase of the work done although some concerns have been raised about ponding taking place near the footway to the Memorial. We have asked Chorley to look at this.

The de Hoghton Estate granted us permission to register the Memorial with the Land Registry and this has now been done.

We continue to attend the Remembrance Day Parade. The occasion was well attended with even larger numbers than in the past.

The replacement of the dog bin at Hoghton Bottoms with a multi purpose bin has been completed. This means that we don't pay for the removal of the waste.

The annual inspection of the notice boards and benches revealed that generally they were in a good condition.

We supported organisations with grants towards their costs including the Autumn Club, and the St. Joseph`s Parish Hall. We have also given donations to Holy Trinity and St. Joesph`s in return for publishing the Parish Council newsletter.

Along with Tom I attended the LALC AGM.

We are aware of the problems facing the Village Hall Management Committee and will continue to give support and assistance wherever possible.

As you know I am our representative on the Chorley Area Committee of LALC and on the LALC County Executive Committee

Marel is our representative on the Chorley Equality Forum as well as representing us at the Three Tier Liaison meetings.

I would like to commend the work undertaken on our behalf by County Councillor Mike Devaney who comes to our meetings and has proved a valuable link with the County Council.

Also I understand that Matt will not be seeking re-election for personal reasons and I would like to thank him for his services to the Parish Council and wish him well for the future.

Finally I would like to conclude this review by thanking everyone in the Parish for the interest they have shown over the past year. May I also thank the other Members of the Parish Council ,the Neighbourhood Officer, and the Clerk for their support since last April.

DAVID DICKINSON

HOGHTON PARISH COUNCIL

APRIL 2015