

Hockley Parish Council



ANNUAL REPORT 2015-2016

HOCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL - CHAIRMAN'S ANNUAL REPORT 2015/16



The Annual Parish Meeting is the opportunity for the Council to report to the electorate on their work during the year. At the 2015 meeting I was appointed Chairman and Councillor Mrs Veronica Randall Vice Chair for the ensuing year. I would like to thank Councillor Randall and all of our Parish Councillors who have supported me giving freely of their time and knowledge, working to deliver improvements on behalf of the people in Hockley. Each member brings something different to the table to ensure balanced views of subjects are discussed. Councillors volunteer their services, becoming members of committees and representing the council as delegates to outside organisations which enable us to keep in touch with the local community. This is my fourth term in office, and many changes have taken place in local government over that time. We have had a very busy but interesting 12 months maintaining existing programmes and, more importantly, taking on some new projects which will be evident in this report.

Hockley Parish Council consists of fifteen councillors representing the Parish Wards. This May the whole Parish Council was up for election due to the four yearly cycles of nominations for Local Councils, and I am pleased to report members were returned unopposed to serve for a further term. I am very hopeful and positive that together we will be able to, not only maintain high standards at all our facilities, but also add to the range of facilities and equipment provided on your behalf.

A Parish Council is the first level of government but must still run its business under quite strict rules, known as Standing Orders. Its members follow a Code of Conduct as used by other levels of Government. The Council Precept is the money provided by District Council each year from the Community Charge paid by the resident and has to cover all areas of the Council's responsibilities. Through an extensive range of discretionary powers we provide and maintain a variety of important and visible local services including commenting on planning applications, maintaining the parish owned hall and street lights, some bus shelters, open spaces, play equipment, footpaths, providing public street furniture, notice boards, planting schemes and litter bins, as well as supporting local groups with grants in cash and kind and facilitating various community events throughout the year. The members work continuously towards improving community wellbeing and providing better services at a local level.

We have formed committees to help reduce Councillors time and, whilst we have indeed reduced the groups, the time given by councillors has remained about the same as we get to grips with long overdue issues for each committee. However I personally believe we have achieved a more effective approach to our responsibilities to speed up delivery of changes and improvements within the council and village.

This is just a brief insight into the duties of a Parish Council and if you would like to find out more, or indeed are interested in becoming a councillor, please come along to a Council meeting.

Resources & Procedures Committee

- The members of this Committee, under my chairmanship, manage and recommend resources and procedures for the council.
- In addition to the responsibilities already mentioned, the Precept must also cover office administration, insurance, repairs, and the staff salaries.
- The Council is also obliged to hold a reserve equivalent to 25-50% of Precept to cover any unexpected contingencies. In view of changing economic factors this reserve is invested to contribute to income and regularly reviewed by this Committee.
- Monthly Financial reports are produced by our Responsible Finance Officer who ensures we are compliant with Financial Regulations.
- External Auditors are appointed by the Audit Commission and I am pleased to report that we received a clear audit again this year.
- When the council finalised its Budget for 2016/17 we maintained the Precept at its current level of £229,000 which represented a reduction of .9% in the cost per household. In the longer term we will aim for a 1% reduction year on year without any loss of services currently provided, which, despite the reduction in the central government support grant, we are on target to achieve.
- Each year the Council receives a number of requests for financial assistance from societies, groups and village halls offering facilities and services to the local community. All are welcomed, but have to be considered in relation to the resources available. In response to requests received during the financial year 2015-16 the following grants were awarded:
 - £470 to the Hockley Public Hall to enable them to complete repairs to their front steps
 - £7500 to the Massive Project to help towards providing young people with a safe environment in which to meet
 - £5000 to Hockley & Hawkwell 55+ Social Centre for Older People towards their replacement minibus so the elderly in Hockley and surrounding areas can continue to be transported to and from the centre for meals and social activities.
- Our policies and procedures have been brought up to date with a view to obtaining accreditation under the Local Council Award Scheme which ensures all councils are working to a recognised standard.
- As part of the preparation for this Scheme we took the opportunity to create a new website which is now up and running. A great deal of work was involved all of which was done in-house but it has been worthwhile as we now have a site which gives an insight into how we work and what we are able to do for the community. All our formal documentation can be found on the site along with local information. Please take a look, as this is an effective way for councils to engage with the community.

Personnel Sub Committee

- Councillor Veronica Randall steers this committee which covers all matters relating to staff and training programmes.
- We employ 7 members of staff who, along with Councillors, have undertaken training over the year bringing more skills to the council.
- Our Clerk Mike Letch and Administration Assistant Kate Smiles have provided help and support to the elected members and I would like to extend my personal thanks to them both; with a special mention for Kate who successfully completed her Certificate in Local Council Administration this year.
- John Harrison retired in March after serving nearly 30 years as both Clerk and latterly Accountant and our good wishes go with him for the future.

- Parish Rangers Clive and Grant are familiar faces working around the village and Nicola manages the Parish Hall working with caretakers Mick and Natasha. They all continue to rise to the many challenges in helping reduce costs and benefit the community.
- My personal appreciation therefore goes out to our entire workforce who enables the council to operate successfully.

Planning & Local Development Committee

- Due to the extended absence of Cllr Steve Chelmsford, through illness, Councillor Mark Anderson chaired this committee for part of the year and our thanks go to him for taking this on.
- Whilst planning decisions are made at District Council level, the Parish Council is given the opportunity to consider and comment on all applications as statutory consultees.
- The committee meets fortnightly and reviews planning applications received by the District Council for Hockley therefore can be a very busy team of councillors. However, the Parish Council are only consulted on changes if a planning application is submitted. If there is no change of use involved the Planning Authority at Rochford District Council has the final say on new businesses coming into Hockley.
- With the prospect of large local developments proposed for the area, the progress of the Local Development Plan is closely followed and comments from both council and residents are passed on to the District Council to ensure development is in keeping with the local area.
- Our Planning Committee continue to strive to ensure plans are in keeping with the needs of the village.

Environmental & Open Spaces Committee

- Councillor Lesley Vingoe took over chairing this committee when Councillor Brian Hazlewood stepped down in August and I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor Hazlewood for all his dedicated work on environmental matters over the past few years.
- Members of this Committee actively ensure our open spaces are maintained to a good standard and work to improve the facilities in the area.
- The street scene has been improved with refurbishment and replacement of seating and enhanced planting. The programme to replace the 300 parish owned street lights with LED units continues.
- The Parish provides and maintains two play spaces and a Nature Reserve.
- In August, with the aid of a match funded grant from the Community Initiative Fund, the council installed new climbing equipment at the Plumberow Play Space which has proved popular with the youngsters.
- The play areas are subject to regular inspections and reports are submitted to this committee to consider ongoing maintenance.
- For those of you who prefer a more gentle approach to exercise, the Marylands Nature Reserve is available for walkers.
- Improvements have been seen in the Reserve and new interpretation boards are being installed shortly.
- Following the installation of a new circular path last year, work is scheduled in 2016 to extend the path to enable better access for all users.
- The Annual Ground's Maintenance Programme had been reviewed and a new contract entered into with Rochford District Council providing a significant cost saving to the Parish. The standard of work will be closely monitored by the Environmental Committee.
- The Council was asked to enter the village in the 2016 Village of the Year Competition and because we felt Hockley deserves recognition for its community spirit and good facilities, we have submitted an entry. There are already some new planters appearing outside the shops in Spa Road.

Communities Committee

- This committee was created in 2015 to bring together our community work in Hockley and is chaired by Councillor Sue Martin. When presented, new ideas are considered and, if feasible, implemented within our budget.
- A quarterly Newsletter is produced by councillors and delivered to all households to help keep you in touch.
- Plans have been drawn up for improvements at the Parish Hall to create additional facilities. Although income from the Hall does not cover outgoings, council considers this to be a worthwhile community facility.
- Hockley's second Art Trail was held in June where it was encouraging to see visitors enjoying the artwork on display.
- We were delighted to receive an Innovation and Development Award from the Essex Association of Local Councils for developing the event. Our thanks go to the venues and artists who supported the Trail and we were pleased to play a small part in their success.
- The younger members of the community also wished to display their artwork and in March we gave our primary pupils the opportunity to take over the Parish Hall to showcase their very impressive work.
- We were invited to visit Plumberow Primary Academy to give a presentation on the work of the parish council and were encouraged to see the youngsters' enthusiastic involvement with their own school council, as they could well be Hockley's future councillors.

Festive Lights Sub Committee.

- This committee is made up from members of the council, schools and local groups who work together on the event. Local businesses also take part and support us by sponsoring the firework display.
- The parish council finances and maintains the Christmas lights across Hockley and organises the Street Event in Spa Road, which has become a firm favourite, enabling the community to gather together to celebrate the festive season. Around 2500 visitors turned out to support the Hockley Lights Switch-on in November with local charities and independent businesses benefiting from the afternoon's activities.
- Many other activities are held regularly throughout the year, and my thanks go to all those councillors and members of the community who volunteer their time to bring all the events to Hockley.

Going forward

Having seen what a few volunteers, working alongside councillors, can do for the village I would like to see this extended into the coming years, where we can have members of the local community working with the council to have a say in the development of the area for everyone to enjoy. Anyone that has the village at heart and is able to offer their ideas and services for the benefit of the parish, giving freely of their time to support and shape your parish, is welcome to come along to any of the council meetings or forward a letter to the clerk with your ideas. So we look forward to hearing from you and thank you for your continued support.

Councillor Roy Martin
Chairman

Hockley Parish Council Committee Budget Summary 2015/16

		2015 Budget	2015 Actual	2016 Budget
Hall	Income	10700	10675	10500
	Expenditure	55580	37193	38420
Movement to/(from) Reserve		(44,880)	(26,518)	(27,920)
Environmental	Income	0	13855	0
	Expenditure	99250	89815	89620
Movement to/(from) Reserve		(99,250)	(75,960)	(89,620)
Resources	Income	241431	242190	237983
	Expenditure	97620	89841	102820
Movement to/(from) Reserve		143811	152349	135163
Community & Events	Income	2000	100	2000
	Expenditure	20000	15547	20000
Movement to/(from) Reserve		(18,000)	(15,447)	(18,000)
Total Budget	Income	254131	266820	250483
	Expenditure	272450	232768	251610
Movement to/(from) Reserve		(18,319)	34052	(1,127)

Full details can be obtained from the Parish Clerk or the Council Website

HOCKLEY PARISH COUNCIL COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP 2015/16

RESOURCES & PROCEDURES COMMITTEE
Cllrs. Roy Martin (Chairman); Veronica Randall; Phil Meacham; Sue Martin; Shirley James; Mark Anderson; Nick Boxall; Lesley Vingoe.
Personnel SubCommittee
Cllrs. Veronica Randall (Chairman); Brian O'Shea, Sue Martin; Lesley Vingoe, Shirley James; Nick Boxall.
Appeals Panel
Councillors Steve Chelmsford; Mike Carter; Tim Gleadall; Toni Carter;
ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE
Cllrs. Lesley Vingoe (Chairman); Brian Hazlewood; Mike Carter; Brian O'Shea; Shirley James; Mark Anderson; Toni Carter; Nick Boxall.
PLANNING & LOCAL DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE
Cllrs. Steve Chelmsford (Chairman); Mark Anderson; Mike Carter; Shirley James; Tim Gleadall; Nick Boxall.
COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE
Cllrs. Sue Martin (Chairman) Mark Anderson; Roy Martin; Shirley James; Lesley Vingoe; Tim Gleadall; Phil Meacham; Veronica Randall.
Festive Lighting SubCommittee
Cllrs. Roy Martin (Chairman) Sue Martin; Mark Anderson; Shirley James; Tim Gleadall; Mike Carter; Steve Chelmsford.