

HEATON-WITH-OXCLIFFE COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2014-2015

Clerk

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Parish Council activities 2014-15

‘Having a 3 year plan has proved very valuable. It has focused discussions, clarified actions and provided a yardstick against which our progress can be measured’ A Parish Councillor



Key Achievements

2014 was the first year of operation of the Plan adopted by the Council, after consultation with residents and local businesses, which sets out planned outcomes and action over the three year period to 2017. The Plan aims to address key issues facing our local community and seeks to deliver the services our residents want and which will improve the area.

The Council determined that over the three years of the plan it would develop priority outcomes around **reducing fly-tipping; improving our local environment and its attractiveness; ensuring our roads, paths and footways are safe and well maintained; supporting the needs of vulnerable residents; developing community facilities and events, and improving flood risk management.**

In 2014-2015, the Council sought to develop activities, actions and projects that, during the life of the plan would deliver key outcomes and actions to **Identify and respond to the needs of our vulnerable residents** and **Our roads, paths and pavements are safe and well maintained.**

During the year, the Council has progressed its role in supporting the health and wellbeing of residents in the local community and was successful in a £600 bid for funding from Lancashire County Council as a contribution towards the development of a Health and Wellbeing Programme primarily focused on our elderly, isolated and vulnerable residents. Together with matching funding from the Parish Council plans are now being developed to:

- carry out a survey around the health and well-being needs of our residents;
- publish a newsletter specifically on health and wellbeing matters;
- promote the Council as ‘dementia friendly’ and support national dementia aware campaigns;
- develop and distribute a health and wellbeing handbook, and;
- publicise and support “learning for wellbeing” opportunities in the surrounding area.

Throughout the year, the Council has undertaken a number of actions to support our residents on matters of concern. These have included issues of a general nature that have been either reported to the Council directly or online using the website *fixmystreet.com*. These have comprised of reports of fly-tipping; pot holes in roads, and; overhanging trees needing attention. The Council have reported these to the principal authorities on behalf of residents where necessary and have monitored and / or chased up matters in order to get them addressed as expediently as possible.

With these regular and ongoing matters in mind the Parish Council has created a piece of history by appointing its very first Lengthsman, John Fairclough, who officially started working for the Council in April 2015. The term 'Lengthsman' originally meant someone who kept a stretch or '*length*' of road tidy and in good repair. John's duties will cover a little more than that and include grass-cutting, drainage works, litter removal, tree, bush, and hedge trimming, planting, improving public rights of way projects and more!



In addition to these general issues the Council has supported residents on two significant matters of concern. The first of these was raised by residents in the Winster Park Ward who were finding it increasingly difficult to exit the junction of Scale Farm Road and Ovangle Road in their vehicles in either direction, due to the already heavy traffic and congestion being exacerbated by the ongoing Heysham M6 link road works.

On behalf of our residents the Council took the matter to the Lancashire Three Tier Forum – which has Member representation from Lancashire County, Lancaster City and Parish Councils – and were successful in achieving support from all parties, and subsequently from the main contractors for the Heysham M6 link, Costains Group plc. This resulted in a *KEEP CLEAR* sign being painted on the A683 Ovangle Road adjacent to Scale Farm Road.

Whilst, in itself, this will not completely mitigate the problems facing some of our residents, the Council was also able to secure a guarantee from Lancashire County Council that, as part of the Heysham M6 link road infrastructure and plans, Heavy Goods Vehicles will be directed away from using Ovangle Road. This measure should significantly ease congestion and the almost daily problems facing our Winster Park residents. The Parish Council will monitor this situation very closely.

The second major issue involves finding solutions to the ongoing traffic and driver behaviour problems on Roeburn Drive and surrounding roads in the Grosvenor Park Estate, particularly at the start and end of the school day.

The Council has instigated and led on a number of discussions with Lancashire County Council, Lancashire Constabulary and Grosvenor Park School to try and tackle the issue. It has become apparent that there needs to be a combined approach and the implementation of a number of actions to address this issue, which is shared with many schools in the area.

So far, representatives from the Police and Lancashire County Council have attended meetings with the Council to listen to the concerns of residents, the school and the Council. As a result of these discussions, awareness is being raised through banners on the school railings and other forms of publicity including through the schools and the Parish Council's newsletter.

'School Governors and the school community greatly appreciate the contribution being made by the Parish Council in our attempts to tackle traffic problems at the start and end of the school day'
Headteacher
Grosvenor Park School

'I would like to thank the Parish Council for the Newsletter. I found it a very interesting read and look forward to being kept informed of the Parish Council's activities through further publications' A local Resident

An 'event' to promote this further is currently being planned and in January the Morecambe Neighbourhood Policing Team carried out a *Day of Action* in partnership with the Council and Grosvenor Park School.

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The focus of the *Day of Action* was on promoting the *Walking Bus* with officers handing out leaflets and speaking to around 30 drivers explaining the traffic and parking issues that were causing a problem for residents. It was reported that there was a positive reaction to the initiative. The local Police Officer and PCSO's will continue to attend school at relevant times as resources allow with similar action being carried out during the year.

The Council fully appreciates that this is a longstanding issue that continues to be a burden for many residents and we promise to do all we can to work with all relevant parties to find solutions to alleviate the problem.

Strategic Highlights

During 2014-15, the Council has taken a keen interest in, and has made representations on, matters of strategic importance to the local area and the wider Lancaster district including:

- Lancaster Local Plan – setting out the long term planning aspirations in Lancaster, Morecambe and the rural districts. Direct representation by the Council has helped to refine and shape the Local Plan and its components, in particular the Morecambe Area Action Plan (MAAP) (now adopted) and consultation on the development of the Land Allocations and the Gypsy and Travellers Accommodation Plans.
- Consideration of, and responding to, a number of consultations, policies, plans and strategies developed by City and County Council's and other public sector organisations. Following representation by the Council and others, Lancashire County Council withdrew and completely revised plans to reduce bus services at off-peak times within our Parish, as well as the wider district.
- Representation at meetings and forums, including the Heysham South Wind Farm Liaison Committee, to discuss key issues and plans that may have an impact now, or in the future, on our local area and the wider Lancaster District. This included attendance at a major event on the future of Neighbourhood Planning and the role of Parish Councils
- Consideration of numerous publications, bulletins, briefings and guidance from public sector organisations and agencies including various schemes, funding opportunities, plans for improving Public Rights of Way and a review of polling districts and places in the Lancaster District carried out by the Electoral Commission.

Financial Summary

The Council must conduct the administration and management of its financial affairs and spend its money in accordance with its legal powers and legislation.

The Parish Clerk is the appointed Responsible Spending Officer with responsibility for maintaining the accounts and providing advice and support to the Council, ensuring value for money and sound financial management.

The Council is responsible for setting a budget and for regularly monitoring income and expenditure against the approved budget, which is done at least quarterly.

For the financial year 01 April 2014 to 31 March 2015, the Council estimated that £8,502 was required to fund Council business and its plans for the year (compared to £9,009 in the previous year). This is almost entirely funded by the precept, which is the council tax collected by the City council on the demand of the Parish Council.

In 2013/14 due to funding cuts by the Government the precept paid was supplemented by a complementary grant from the City Council, which helped to ensure that the shortfall created by the funding cuts was not passed on to our residents through their council tax payments. In 2014/15 this grant was not available but the Council were able to reduce the amount of precept required overall, despite improved longer term plans on how the council will spend its money to deliver the Parish Plan.

With the precept, the total income for 2014/15 was £9,501 including Lancashire County Council Parish Champion Grant (£600), interest and VAT refund (£399). From this the council has spent £6,800, representing a surplus on the year of £2,701 which is largely made up of a reduction in the cost of ground maintenance following the termination of a contract with the previous provider and funds earmarked for the planned health and wellbeing programme and other initiatives and actions arising from the adopted Parish Plan. A summary of expenditure is set out below:

Expenditure	Amount (£)
Clerks Fees & Expenses	4,309
Operating Costs	1,095
Insurance	403
Subscriptions & fees	555
Grounds Maintenance & Repair	365
VAT Recoverable	73

At the time of writing, the detailed year-end accounts were being drawn up for subsequent internal and external audit, approval by the council and publication in June in line with legislation.

Looking Ahead

The Annual Report highlights the key activities of the council during the municipal year 01 May 2014 to 30 April 2015. Our actions have been aimed at developing Heaton- with-Oxcliffe Council into an active and quality council that engages with, represents and listens to, its community and has the well-being of its residents at heart.

Going forward there is an opportunity for the Council to extend its support for the economic, social and environmental well-being of the parish community through enabling local action and working in partnership with, and benefiting from, the support of the City and County Councils and other public sector organisations.

The first year of the adoption of the Parish Plan has been a major step along what may be a challenging and, at times, difficult road but which promises potentially great results! In the coming year the Council will put into action and sustain the plans that it has been developing around improving the health and wellbeing of our residents and, following the appointment of our Lengthsman, will seek to take control of and tackle many of the issues that directly affect our Parish with a particular emphasis on working with the City and County Councils to reduce fly tipping and to improve arrangements around flood risk management, drainage and communication with the public.

We hope that you find this Annual Report useful and we look forward to serving you in the coming year and we encourage you to take advantage of the opportunity to work together to shape our parish community for the future.

30 May 2015

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