



Holmes Chapel Parish Council Newsletter

Spring 2007

Annual Report of the Chairman - 2006/07

(to be presented to the public at the Annual Parish Meeting – see page 4)

I should like to open my report for this year with a big thank you to a group of people who give their time willingly, unselfishly and without recompense on behalf of all the residents of our Parish. They are, of course, your Parish Councillors. This last year has seen several changes to the structure and operation of the Council and, whilst we have had a few hiccups, everyone has pulled together to ensure their success. I must also thank our Clerk for his tireless efforts to manage the Council business and for providing us with his expertise and guidance and my fellow Borough and County Councillors for their continuing support.

I have just mentioned that 2006 saw the Council implement some organisational changes. These changes centred on a revised Constitution, updated financial regulations and structural enhancements. They have been made to ensure that the Council falls in line with ever more stringent statutory regulations as well as helping us to acquire Quality Council status and operate more effectively. The change that will have the most effect will be the introduction of Task Groups. These groups, made up of a small number of Councillors (normally 2 or 3), will concentrate on specific projects, enlisting outside personnel where necessary, in order to prepare much of the groundwork required to put proposals to Full Council thus progressing business more effectively. An example of this type of working resulted in our new website being launched at the end of 2006 where our Communications Task Group, responsible for all external communication with agencies and the public, was joined by Holmes Chapel resident Jim Pulling, a website designer, who had graciously volunteered his services free of charge. This resulted in the excellent site you can now visit and for which the Council owes Jim a debt of gratitude.

This website is just one of the ways in which the Council will interact with the public as evidenced by the new Newsletter and will form the basis of our new "openness". Residents will be able to see all the Minutes and agendas of Council meetings, read about the issues that will affect us in the future and see our "Forward Plan" which sets out the tasks the Council will be covering in the future.

Other Task groups are also progressing projects. The Village Centre group is about to recommend to Council the contractor who will carry out the refurbishment work to be completed by November 2007. This Task Group is a collaboration of County and Borough Officers with Parish Councillors. Another Task Group has just completed the work to introduce our new Police Community Support Officer and will be monitoring the contract to ensure it is effective. Yet another Task Group is looking into carrying out an ecological survey of the Dane Valley with a view to introducing a Wildlife area that will complement the ongoing work on the Cranage Playing Field Recreation and Leisure area and be a benefit to both communities. With groups focusing on Play and Leisure facilities, Youth provision and the introduction of a Heritage walk the Council has plenty to keep itself occupied.

All these projects are in addition to the normal, everyday functions of the Council which involve such tasks as responding to Planning applications, ensuring projects by other parties such as the new Toilet facilities and the London Road junction improvements are completed and responding to residents' requests and concerns.

With so many activities to carry out it is little wonder that the Precept has been increased again this year. However, the increase of approximately £12,000 is largely due to the funding allocated to the new Police Community Support Officer (PCSO) (£11,000 in 2007-8, 8-9 and 9-10) and without this item of expenditure the precept would have remained flat. This rise is in line with many other Councils and the precept, in general terms, is relatively low compared to places such as Middlewich who, whilst having a population of only twice that of Holmes Chapel, actually raise a precept SIX times our rate. This potential stability in the precept may well be under threat in the future as both the Borough and County Councils, in order to set balanced budgets, are reviewing all their costs and divesting themselves of any expenses that are not required politically, morally or statutorily.

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The first evidence of this will affect Holmes Chapel from the 1st April 2008 when Congleton Borough Council removes its funding for maintenance of Parish lighting. From that date the costs will have to be borne by the Parish and as yet we do not know exactly what that entails. We are preparing ourselves for further expense along these lines and will, on your behalf, continue to fight against double taxation. Our Financial Officer is already aware that we must seek out new sources of funding in the coming years.

I turn now to the coming year. Whilst we will continue to progress all the activity I mentioned earlier there are some new activities we must address:-

1. Completion of our portfolio for submission related to our application for Quality Status – including the Clerk gaining the necessary qualification (a doddle, surely, after 37 years service?)
2. Monitoring of the progress of the PCSO scheme
3. Addressing the Local Development Framework and the allocation of Industrial and Housing sites in Holmes Chapel
4. Maintaining a watch on the Kinderton Landfill and M6 expansion plans.
5. Organising the “official” opening of the “new” Village Centre in conjunction with the planned annual “switching on” ceremony for all Holmes Chapel residents around the Christmas Tree this December.
6. Instigating a “Parish Plan” process – an absolute necessity if we are to ensure our voice is heard in the future and we stay at the forefront of local decision making. This is particularly relevant now that Cheshire CC is applying for unitary status.
7. A strategy for Young people in Holmes Chapel.

Last but not least there will be elections for the Parish Council in May 2008. Needless to say nobody can have everything that they ask for but we do hope that we will leave Holmes Chapel in a stronger position than in May 2004 and that residents of the Parish will be proud of what has been accomplished.

Just before I close I would like to make an appeal. One of the strengths of the Task Group structure is its ability to bring together Councillors and non Council members in order to carry out business more effectively, efficiently and with greater speed than was achievable in the past. We are but 12 Councillors who ourselves, like you, have many pressures on our time and what would help significantly is, having seen the activities we hope to progress, that any of you with skills that you think may be useful to us get in touch and see if it is possible to offer any assistance. You can offer as much or as little as you like, we do not care whether you are young or old - all we want is your help and then we can really get things moving. If you can assist us then please contact any one of the Councillors, or the Clerk, to register an interest.

I thank you for your patience and may I, on behalf of the Council and the Clerk, wish all of you the very best for the future and we hope to see you and work alongside you more often.

David Savage, Chairman – Holmes Chapel Parish Council

Holmes Chapel Parish Council Budget

At the Council meeting on the 4th January the 2007/8 budget was approved and the precept requirement fixed in the sum of £44,492. This will represent an increase in council tax for the year of £4.82 on Band D properties.

Within the figures this year there is provision for extra policing with the appointment of a Police Community Support Officer. This accounts for £11,000 of the extra spending for the year but is hoped to give more security and protection for people in the village. A contract is being negotiated with the Police Authority by a Parish Council task group.

This year sees also the implementation of a village centre improvement scheme which will certainly cost £167,000 and – depending on the final configuration of the scheme – as much as £190,000. The NWDA is providing a 25% grant and Borough Council support costs are being met by them.

To give effect to this expenditure the Council has approved a Capital Programme which, in addition to the village centre scheme, contains provision over the next few years for improvement schemes in the Dane Valley, Cranage playing fields (in partnership with Cranage Parish Council) and some improvements to footpath lighting.

A busy and exciting time ahead in the village which, it is hoped, will give considerable benefit to everyone!

Thanks to the Village Volunteers

A pat on the backs of the Village Volunteers for the attractive and colourful display of spring flowers carpeting the ground beneath the trees in front of the Fire Station. All will agree that this makes a cheerful and attractive corner next to the Precinct.

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Local Development Framework – be ready to make your comments

The Consultation to be carried out by Congleton Borough Council at the beginning of 2007 did not take place and there has been some confusion as to the next stage. At the time of going to print we are told that an informal consultation will take place in May 2007. Please watch the local press and the Parish Council Website – www.holmeschapelparishcouncil.gov.uk – for further information. The Parish Council and local people have done a good job so far in protecting our village and we need to keep the impetus going.....

More Trains Serving Holmes Chapel

With effect from 26 March 2007, a service of two trains per hour was restored to Holmes Chapel. One will be routed via Stockport and the other via Manchester Airport. These long awaited improvements follow successful commissioning of the Wilmslow junction by Network Rail, allowing the Northern Rail operated services to run again from the Crewe direction to and from the Styal line and the Manchester Airport branch.

A similar service pattern will operate at Holmes Chapel on Saturdays and a two hour frequency of services on Sundays. These improved services will increase the flexibility of journey opportunities from the village.

The Dane Valley – Our Open Space

The River Dane forms the parish boundary between Holmes Chapel and Cranage with areas of land in the ownership of Congleton Borough Council on both sides of the river. On the north side, Congleton Borough Council in conjunction with Cranage and Holmes Chapel Parish Councils have developed a plan for a sports and recreational area which has been partly implemented with the creation of football pitches now in regular use.

On the Holmes Chapel side of the river is a large area comprising mixed woodland and open grassland through which the Dane Valley Walkway passes. The aim would be to improve this as a natural environment to encourage a wide range of plant and animal species. The exploration of this attractive area will provide an educational resource for local residents and schools in the area. We are presently discussing the survey stage to establish the type of flora and fauna existing in the valley: proposals will be discussed with the village community prior to a final scheme being established. Residents interested in helping with this project are asked to make contact with the Parish Council. Ideally, the two recreational areas would be linked by a footbridge across the River Dane and some preliminary work has already been completed by Cranage Parish Council to provide a basis for a funding bid.

A good deal of work by both Cranage and Holmes Chapel Parish Councils has already been put into the project which will provide valuable facilities for both young and old for many years to come.

Planning Continues on Village Centre Improvements

Work will take place in the centre of the village this summer to improve the village centre. The tender is due to be let soon covering re-surfacing of the pavements throughout the village centre and the roadway around the rear of the church. You may have already seen work on the road signs throughout the village - half are to be removed. Highways Department of CCC believe this will make no difference to the information available to motorists but will make the place look a lot tidier. Other work will involve landscaping the area where the old toilet block currently stands when new toilets are opened behind the library.

Inevitably the work, which will take about 12 weeks, will cause some disruption but a scheme is being developed to divert most through traffic from the centre when required and the work will be planned to cause the minimum of inconvenience to shoppers.

New Pedestrian Crossings

Two new pedestrian crossings have been agreed for Holmes Chapel. The first is a Puffin crossing over Macclesfield Road just west of Sandiford Road near to existing barriers. The second is a Puffin crossing over London Road just north of the junction of Chester and Station roads. This is part of a complete refurbishment of the traffic lights and both crossings have been included as part of the 'Safer Routes to Schools' programme. The slip lane into Station road from the village centre will disappear because of the new crossing so there is some expectation that diversions will be necessary while work is in progress.

This is good news for Holmes Chapel and along with the crossing on Middlewich Road, will add up to three new pedestrian crossings in the village over the last two years.

Library displays

Now that the village library has the new meeting room facility there have been some very interesting displays of paintings, sketches and artwork, which are well worth a visit. Why not take the opportunity whenever you are in the Precinct to pop in and view the latest presentation even if you are not visiting the Library itself. It would be time well spent.

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Kinderton Waste Tip

The decision on whether Kinderton will be developed as a waste tip is now in the hands of the Government Inspector. He has indicated that once the Secretary of State has seen his recommendations, a decision will be announced in early June 2007. Until then we must bide our time and hope for the best.....

Annual Parish Meeting

incorporating the

Holmes Chapel Parish Plan Meeting

Do you care about the future of our Village?

Are you concerned about the following issues?

- Lack of consultation on issues affecting you
- Affordable Housing and Sustainable Development
- Local Amenities and Leisure provision
- Community Safety
- Transport, Roads and Parking
- Conservation and heritage
- Youth and Community facilities
- Etc

Then you are cordially invited to attend this meeting at

The Victoria Club, Victoria Avenue, Holmes Chapel

On

Wednesday, 2nd May 2007 from 7.30pm until 9.00pm

The only opportunity for the **WHOLE FAMILY** to have their say
in the future of Holmes Chapel. Do not miss it!

Refreshments will be provided

Please enter this date in your Diary **NOW**