

HOCKLEY HEATH PARISH COUNCIL FINANCES EXPLAINED

Prior to 2009, Hockley Heath Parish Council included the areas of Cheswick Green, Tidbury Green, Dickens Heath and Hockley Heath. Following issues regarding the unwieldy size of the parish council and efficiency in each village, Solihull Council divided the parish council into four – each one representing a village and its hinterland. **Since 2009** Hockley Heath Parish Council now only represents the residents of the village of Hockley Heath and immediate rural area – a population of around 1,450.

Below is a table as a guide to show how roles and responsibilities have changed with this reorganisation:

	Old HHPC pre 2009 – included Cheswick Green, Tidbury Green, Dickens Heath and Hockley Heath	New HHPC post 2009 – includes Hockley Heath village
Hockley Heath Residents Association (village work)	<p>There was a contract between HHPC and HHRA delegating the management of the recreation ground, the pavilion, the bowling green and village matters to them and their volunteers.</p> <p>Volunteers worked to secure, provide, operate and maintain the pavilion, recreation ground, children’s playground, football pitches, and clean away waste and dog fouling.</p> <p>Funding for the work came from volunteer time, donations from residents, profits from events such as the Bonfire Party and lettings of the pavilion by groups and individuals.</p>	<p>HHPC now take responsibility for the recreation ground, the pavilion, the bowling green, securing the recreation ground, the woodland, war memorial and village matters.</p> <p>Funding for this comes from the Precept and lettings of the pavilion by groups and individuals.</p>

<p>Hockley Heath Residents Association (traffic)</p>	<p>HHRA commented on behalf of the parish council on traffic issues and bus services affecting the village. HHRA also acted as the voice for planning applications and general village matters.</p>	<p>HHRA continue to hold an important role re traffic matters. Responses are agreed with HHPC prior to submission.</p>
<p>Hockley Heath Gardening Club (gardening)</p>	<p>A group of volunteers who maintained the village planters and flower borders.</p> <p>Funding came from SMBC, donations and profits from fund raising events.</p>	<p>The group of volunteers continue to play a critical role in providing and maintaining the planters and flower borders.</p> <p>HHPC have offered a Small Grant award to the gardening club for the past 3 years to support their work. The two groups are working together to develop a service level agreement which formalises the relationship so that future financial support can be offered using funds from the Precept.</p>
<p>Hockley Heath Gardening Club (Christmas Lights)</p>	<p>This group funded and coordinated the Christmas Lights and the annual 'switch on' event.</p> <p>Funding came from SMBC, donations and profits from fund raising events.</p>	<p>HHPC have taken on funding of the Christmas Lights and HHPC are working with a local church to coordinate the 'switch on' event.</p>
<p>Small Grant Award</p>	<p>No system of grants was in place.</p>	<p>A Small Grants Award has been established allowing for groups to apply for funding to support activities which benefit the village i.e. Gardening Club, fighting planning applications, supporting the bowls club etc.</p>

The Localism Act 2011	The old HHPC had to balance the interests of residents from a large and diverse geographical area. The outcome was that sometimes, Hockley Heath interests were overridden.	The Localism Act looks at empowering local communities freeing parish councils to act in the interests of their community rather than look to central government to hand down powers. HHPC can now challenge how services are run.
Village Plan	Solihull Council had developed a village plan for the village which was focused on planning limitations in the area.	HHPC and HHRA have developed a Village Plan using information gathered from a village questionnaire. The final village plan, which deals with community aspirations and looks at ways of attaining them, is on the website.
Grant Funding	In the past, grants were sought on an ad hoc basis with some confusion over which group was seeking which grants.	HHPC are coordinating the development of the recreation ground and surrounding area and will coordinate grant applications. This will reduce confusion.

As the Parish Council has become more local focused, so it is easier to see how the Precept is being utilised. The financial table clearly identifies the operating costs from discretionary costs.

Operating Costs: these are the items of work which the Parish Council must undertake in order to provide a safe community facility in the recreation ground, playground, woodland and bowls club. In addition, there are administrative costs associated with operating these facilities and supporting councillors.

Discretionary Costs: these are areas of work which have been raised by the community through the village plan and on-going requests, which the Parish Council would like to see undertaken. It may not be possible to fund these activities in one year but as the council becomes more adept at seeking grant funding, it is hoped that the work will take place.

Reserves: it is prudent for parish councils to hold a reserve for emergency expenses e.g. fighting a significant planning application. HHPC would ideally like a reserve of no less than £20,000.