

# Doddinghurst Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT 2010/11



### 1. A review of 2010/11

#### 1.1 Good News:

- Full complement of Councillors in place.
- Accepted as part of the Neighbourhood Plan programme

#### 1.2 Bad News:

- Brentwood Borough Council cut the discretionary grant for 2010/11 by 10%.
- New doctor's surgery plans not progressed as fast hoped but action by the PCT expected in 2011/12.
- Excessive levels of arson attacks on village facilities and antisocial behaviour by older teenagers

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### **3.** **Councillors**

### **Contact Details**

Debbie Dicker (Chairman)	68 Lime Grove	01277 823410
Alison Richards (Vice Chairman)	2 Park Meadow	01277 823465
Graham W Bateson	82 Glovers Field, Kelvedon Hatch	01277 374344
Adrian Oliver	88, Lime Grove	XD
Alan Smith	24, Peartree Lane	XD
Colin Enderby	Viroflay, Rectory Chase	01277 821927
Alan Farrow	38 All Saints Close	01277 821058
Julia Le Page	Sans Souci, Doddinghurst Rd.,	01277 822867
Diane Rogers Harrison	16, Harpers Lane, Doddinghurst	XD
Gerry Smith	25 Park Meadow	XD
Peter Davenport	"Acorns", Doddinghurst Road	XD

### **Officers**

Roger Blake (Clerk & RFO)	Parish Office (adjacent Village Hall)	01277 824245
Deborah Tonkiss (Deputy Clerk)	Church Lane, CM15 0NJ Email: <a href="mailto:clerk@doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk">clerk@doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk</a>	

**3. Areas of responsibility:** In addition to the Parish Council meetings, the following councillors have these additional responsibilities (2011 onwards):

Debbie Dicker	Parish Council (Chairman), Allotments (Chairman), Finance & Resource(Chairman), Planning (Chairman), Cheque Signatory, Borough Planning Committee, BBPCA, Local Strategic Partnership
Alison Richards	General Purpose, Finance & Resource, NHS issues.
Graham Bateson	Planning, General Purpose, Allotments, Finance & Resource, Cheque Signatory
Diane Rogers Harrison	Village Correspondent, General Purpose.
Alan Smith	Planning, Village Hall (rep for Parish Council)
Colin Enderby	Planning, Bus Club (Chairman), West Essex Forum, Risk Management, Transport, Police
Alan Farrow	General Purpose (Chairman), Cheque Signatory. Finance & Resource, Footpaths. Planning
Julia Le Page	General Purpose, Allotments, Village Planters, Events co-ordination.
Gerry Smith	General Purpose, Finance & Resource, Cheque Signatory, Youth Development, Highways, Transport, West Essex Forum, Police.
Peter Davenport	Planning
Adrian Oliver	Planning

#### 4. Chairman's Statement and Report for 2010/11

This year I believe has been one of the most difficult ones since I became a Parish Councillor. We have had almost every week some vandalism or criminal damage. Most of this damage has been done in the centre of the village; mainly the children's play area. The new seats and picnic tables were destroyed by fire, damage was done to the play equipment and playground edging, and some of the paving bricks in the new path were dug up. The lights along the scout hut path were damaged by wiring being torn from the post. It is surprising that the culprits did not electrocute themselves. The Village Hall has had slates on the roof broken, and the parish office and room doors have been daubed with graffiti. Whilst a meeting was taking place the doors were tied so that the occupants could not get out. We have also suffered some vandalism in our burial ground and trees in the woods have been damaged.

During the heavy snow, youths were using snowballs to harass drivers. Budgens is often targeted by youths who stand outside whilst people try and go in for shopping. I could go on and on listing this mindless damage that has occurred throughout this past year. The amount of money that you, the residents, will have to pay to replace these damaged and burnt items is a large amount. This is why the Parish Council decided that nothing would be replaced until the youths responsible were caught and dealt with. To this end, we wrote to the Chief Constable of Essex demanding action. We are pleased to say that the response was good and Sgt. Ben Felton was put in charge of the police response, with some funding to provide police officers to patrol the village during the evening and also in the early hours of the morning. We have asked the Chief Constable that this work continues for some time to come so that the problems currently facing Doddinghurst can be erased. The Police have had some success with arrests and keeping the youths moving. The Parish Council continues to meet with the youth service and police to see how we can all help each other. Before Christmas three members of the Council provided mince pies and hot chocolate for the youths who attend the Youth Bus on Tuesday evenings in an attempt to start a dialogue with the young people in the village and perhaps find a solution to the problems. We were pleased with the evening, and are hoping to do this again, possibly at Easter.

I would underline most strongly that these problems could be dealt with quicker if the community got together to help the police and us identify these problem youths. I would also ask ALL parents to ask themselves what their child is doing and where they are. The Parish Council can try to help in these matters, but it is not a babysitting service for the village.

Once again we will be supporting the May Day celebrations, and hope to put on an activity afternoon on the field over Easter. We continue to help clubs in the village, keep our groundsman busy with litter collection, and in every way try to keep Doddinghurst a pleasant place to live. We hope to achieve once again this year Quality Status for our Council, and we have also agreed to work with Brentwood Borough Council on the vanguard scheme to develop a Neighbourhood Plan that the government wishes to introduce. This will give parish councils greater powers to run their areas in the way the residents wish. In May we begin the last year of the councils 4 year term, and during the year we will be trying to encourage residents to come to our monthly meetings and see if they would like to join the council in 2012.

I hope we will see more of you during the coming year, and also hope that when I next write there will be a great improvement in the youth problem.

May I wish you all a very happy new year.



Debbie Dicker – Chairman

5. Financial Report. - Audited accounts for 2009/10

**Doddinghurst Parish Council**

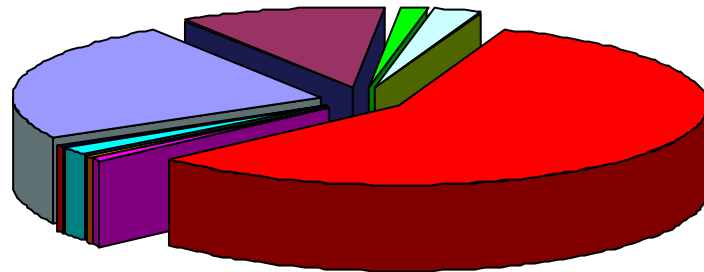
**Statement of Accounts**

	31-Mar-09	31-Mar-10	
1. Balances B/F	42,652	33,636	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the council's financial records having transferred £318.19 to Fixed Assets (Shares)
2. Annual Precept	29,721	43,167	Total amount of precept income received in the year.
3. Total other receipts	37,157	135,346	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook minus the precept.
4. Staff costs	25,696	26,080	Total expenditure or payments made to and on behalf of all council employees, including salaries and wages, PAYE and NI (employees and employers), pension contributions and related expenses
5. Loan interest/ capital replacement	0	0	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the council's borrowings.
6. Total other payments	49,880	114,772	Total expenditure or payments as recorded in the cashbook, minus staff costs (line 4) and loan interest/ capital repayments (line 5).
7. Balances carried forward	33,954	71,297	Total balances and reserves at the end of the year. (1+2+3) -(4+5+6) (Note: all figures rounded to nearest whole £)
8. Total cash and investments	33,568	70,690	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held as at 31 March. (excludes accrued Q4 VAT since not yet paid)
9. Total fixed assets	307,540	362,413	The recorded current book value at 31 March of all fixed assets owned by the council.
10. Total borrowings	0	100,000	PWLB Borrowing: This money has been granted to the Village Hall (£60k) and Priest House (£40k) for renovation work, now completed.

For 2009/10 and 2010/11 Brentwood Borough Council applied an ongoing annual 10% reduction in the discretionary grant to all Borough Parishes. This reduced the grant income to this Parish from £19,211 in 2009/10 to 16,455 in 2010/11 and it will go down to £13,722 in 2011/12. The grant reduction totals 50% over 5 years) an overall reduction of £13722 over 5 years.

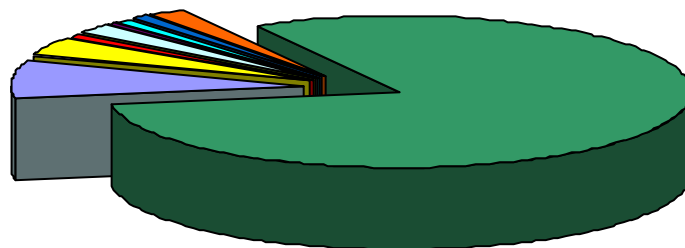
Doddinghurst Parish Council has no large reserve of funds and therefore a precept of £46,859 has been set for 2010/11 and the year on year increase does no more than restore income to the 2006/7 levels, following the erosion of grant and the value of money due to inflation over the past 4 years.

**Sources of Income for 2009/10- £178,513**



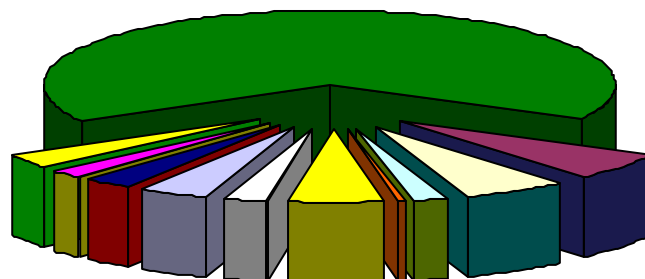
- |           |             |        |                 |                      |            |            |        |         |
|-----------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|------------|--------|---------|
| ■ Precept | ■ BBC Grant | ■ Rent | ■ Burial Ground | ■ PWLB + Misc grants | ■ Bus Hire | ■ Interest | ■ Allt | ■ Other |
|-----------|-------------|--------|-----------------|----------------------|------------|------------|--------|---------|

**Direct Expenses 2009/10 - £102,581**



- |                         |                 |                 |
|-------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| ■ Children's Play Areas | ■ Cemetery      | ■ Allotments    |
| ■ Litter Clearance      | ■ Parish Rooms  | ■ Footpaths etc |
| ■ Bus                   | ■ Miscellaneous | ■ Village Orgs  |

**Overhead costs 2009/10 - £38,270**



- |                        |                            |                        |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|
| ■ Salaries             | ■ Section 137              | ■ Office running costs |
| ■ Audit Fees           | ■ Bank Charges             | ■ Insurance            |
| ■ Training & Transport | ■ Miscellaneous            | ■ Fees/Elections       |
| ■ Computer equipment   | ■ Publicity, & information |                        |

## 6. Community Action.

### 6.1 Village Hall and Priest House Redevelopment Projects.

The Parish Council approved and obtained a loan of £100,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to help with the refurbishment of both the Village Hall and the Priest House by means of grant payments against actual invoices for work done. £60,000 was made available to the Village Hall and £40,000 to the PCC for the Priest House. This finance has been secured on a 20 year fixed interest, which is currently at its lowest level for over 20 years. The refurbishment work was fully completed in 2010/11.

### 6.2 Mayday

The Council is a key sponsor for the annual Mayday event at the Village Hall, involving the schools in the Maypole dancing and funding the Punch and Judy.

**7. Committee Activities** – all committee meetings are open to the public and derive their authority to act from the full Council of the Parish, which is a body corporate re-elected every 4 years. The next full council elections are in May 2012.

### 7.1. Planning Committee.

The Parish Council is a statutory consultee on planning matters and the planning committee members each have responsibility for designated roads in the Parish. Care is taken that they do not represent the area in which they live. In 2010/11 the economic downturn continued to have a notable effect on planning activity with a significant fall in the number of requests being processed. In addition to the economic situation new planning rules introduced in 2008 means that many more development activities are part of permitted development and no longer require planning permission. During 2010/11 the planning committee met 7 times and reviewed 25 planning applications for the Parish of Doddinghurst and of the applications seen, Brentwood Borough Council approved 21, refused 3, one re-applied, and one remains under consideration. Three enforcement orders were raised by Brentwood Borough Council relating to planning breaches within Doddinghurst Parish.

In addition to planning applications the use of the Certificate of Lawfulness has increased in cases where individuals have sought to obtain changes to use of land frequently having carried out deliberate covert activity for a number of years, usually in the full knowledge that land is Green Belt, and that they would not ordinarily obtain planning permission. The use of this mechanism for circumnavigating Green Belt planning requirements is worrying especially as the Certificates are not strictly planning applications and are therefore not seen as a matter of legislative right by Parish Councils and they were never intended to be used in the manner in which they are now being employed.

### 7.2. General Purpose Committee.

This committee is responsible for the detailed management activity of certain areas of responsibility on behalf of the Parish Council. It has oversight of the Burial Ground, and, as the Burial Board, deals with sensitive issues relating to the burial ground. It also monitors the Children's Play Areas, including football fields, ensuring that safety checks are carried out and that the management activity is appropriate and timely. The committee also reviews and recommends council fees and charges for Parish Council services such as room hire etc. The committee met 8 times during 2010/11. Among many other items it reviewed the RoSPA report on the Children's Play Area and the follow-up action; approved new fees for the hire of the Parish Room and Burial Ground interments.

### 7.3. Finance and Resources Committee

This committee met five times in 2010/11, once to review the Council's Governance arrangements, staff contracts and reviews, once to review the Council's annual spend, budget and prepare precept proposals for following year and a third time to review the major projects and a fourth and fifth time to review council governance aspects such as standing orders and staff performance. Precept proposals are always considered and voted on by the full council.

The committee is also responsible for the overall control of Council Governance including standing orders, financial policies, audit process, insurance and risk assessment. Finally, the Finance and Resource committee is responsible for recommending personnel appointments, terms and conditions of contract and salary reviews. The Council adopts the National Association of Local Clerks agreed recommendations for staff terms, conditions, and rates of pay, which for 2010/11 rose by 0%.

#### 7.4. Allotment Committee.

The allotment committee met three times in 2010/11. The popularity of the allotments has continued with 43 allotments in use and a small waiting list. Whilst additional land exists to provide further allotments the growth in demand has peaked and turnover during the renewal period has shrunk the waiting list with some new joiners but more leavers than joiners. This has allowed six of the “waiters” to get allotments so the longest “waiter” on the list has been there 8 months. The Allotment committee has decided to suspend the provision of new allotments for the foreseeable future.

#### 8. Bus Club

The Bus Club is managed by the Parish Council with Clr Colin Enderby as the Chairman and the Parish Clerk as Treasurer. It is has not been constituted as a Parish Council committee and the funds are separate from the Parish Council. The Bus Club has unpaid volunteer drivers who have to have a “Midas” certificate to drive minibuses. The Midas certification is awarded by Essex Community Transport following a training course and practical driving test. The Bus Club is registered as a member of the Community Bus Transport organisation; it plans the timetable and books the buses for the trips, which are approximately twice a month. The charge to the users is to cover the hire of the bus and fuel used and is non-profit making. During the course of the year fees had to be revised upwards due to the increase in cost of diesel and the bus hire cost rising to £1/ mile. The Bus club accounts for 2010/11, and the preceding year, are as follows:

2009/10		2010/11	
Brought Forward	£ 370.78	Brought Forward	£ 517.78
Income	£1135.00	Income	£1128.40
Expenditure	£ 988.00	Expenditure	£ 877.00
No of Trips run	13 (5 cancelled)	No of Trips run	12 (7 cancelled)
Closing Balance	£ 517.78	Closing Balance	£ 769.18

A current timetable is shown on the Parish Council notice boards and the website.

#### 9. Recreational Grounds.

The Parish Council owns and leases significant areas of land in the village for recreational use. The land is all covered by byelaws to enable a rapid enforcement of any breach of use should this be necessary. The land includes Peartree Recreational Field, a junior and senior football field and the Children’s Play area and the field in which it is located. Last year saw a brief invasion of Peartree Field by a group of travellers who broke the gate lock and occupied the field for 4 hours before being moved on police. Despite their short stay they still left many bags of rubbish to be cleared away and the gate lock to be replaced. The fact that the field is village amenity land with byelaws restricting its use was the key factor in enabling the police to escort the people off the field – which they had tried to claim as “theirs”

Doddinghurst Olympics Football Club is the major user of the Football Fields owned by the Parish Council and the Village Hall. The Parish Council also manage and maintain shower, referee and changing room facilities for the football club in the Parish Rooms complex adjoining the Village Hall. The Parish Council has agreed a “Heads of Agreement” document with DOFC that allows both parties to contribute towards the cost of managing and maintaining the facilities. For 2010/11 (all bills received up to mid March 2011) the total cost of football facilities provided for the village was £3585.19, of which the Parish Council funded £2240.75 (62.5%). Expenditure is incurred on items of ground management such as white lining, mowing, weed treatment, fertilising, ground de-compaction, turf repair, rolling, and field perimeter brush cutting. For the changing rooms the cost of water, electricity, cleaning, and water system maintenance is also included where appropriate.

## 10. Burial Grounds.

The Parish Council manage one of the few burial grounds in the area where there are facilities for both burial and ashes interments. The burial ground was established in the early 1970's as a Lawn Cemetery. Deeds of grant are valid for 30 years, which covers 30 years of maintenance. Income from the Cemetery Deeds of Grant and other charges pay for the day-to-day maintenance and go towards the capital cost of extending the area of usage for the future, as demand requires. Plots are not available for purchase in advance! Members of the public have donated memorial seats in memory of loved ones interred in the Burial Ground and memorial plaques may be purchased for loved ones interred elsewhere. The revenue for 2009/10 was £4465. During the 2010/11 financial year there were 4 burials and 5 ashes interments with 3 ashes interment and 1 burial being a re-open.

## 11. Parish Room.

The Parish Room of approximately 40 square metres is rented to clubs and societies as well as being used for business meetings of the Parish Council. For 2010/11 the rent has been £8 (prior year £7.50) per morning, afternoon or evening session, or £24 per day. It is equipped with kitchette and is modern in style representing outstanding value for money since heating and lighting etc is included in the rent. In addition to the Parish Council, the Parish Room has had 7 regular user groups: Neighbourhood Watch, Citizens Advice Bureau, Crèche, Thursday Art Group, Tai Chi, Conservative Party and Love2Craft. Occasional use has been for the Fun Day, May Day, Senior Citizens Lunch, Dance groups and the Horticultural Society. With the reopening of the Priest House occupancy levels have fallen slightly for this year. Full occupancy of the room would yield an income of £6000 (3 sessions a day for Monday to Friday inclusive for 50 weeks of the year). Actual earning has been £2188 (including the last quarter rent from the crèche of £328) giving an earned occupancy of 36% (previous year was 48% with the Priest House out of service). The Neighbourhood Watch have 10 sessions a year and CAB 5 sessions booked at no charge, (worth £120) and the Parish Council holds 20 sessions a year in the room, at a nominal worth of £160, which makes the overall utilisation for the year 46%.

## 12. Allotments.

Garden Allotments measuring approximately 17m x 5m are provided at £60/ year or £30 for a half plot. The allotment gardens have remained popular throughout 2010/11. Total annual revenue for 43 plots is £2580. Costs are £1390 for land lease and revenue sharing leaving £1190 for the running and maintenance of the allotments, storage shed and other shared facilities e.g. water tanks, access gate and car park. At the end of the 10/11 financial year the waiting list was fully absorbed as a result of turnover leaving all plots taken and only two existing plot holders seeking specific additional space.

## 13. Public Footpaths

Public footpaths in the Parish are set out on a map showing the definitive footpaths. Essex County Council made available funds under the banner of Parish Paths Partnership (P3) that enabled Parish Councils to obtain funds for the maintenance and upkeep of the designated paths. This money enabled the Parish Council to engage contractors to clear the paths of bramble and nettle that would otherwise quickly engulf these access points to the rights of way and accordingly they have been cleared at least twice a year. In addition, bridges and gates were kept in good repair. In all there are 10 defined footpaths in the Parish and the 2010/11 year the P3 grant received totalled £875.50. We have been advised that in future years additional contract requirement are being unilaterally applied by Essex County Council (a form of reverse "Localism") to which no known contractor will comply, so the maintenance of the footpaths will return to the County for 2011/12 and thereafter.

## 14. Website

The Parish Council website is: [www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](http://www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk). The site includes community activities other than the Parish Council. Please visit it and let us have your recommendations for improvement.

**This report was approved for publication by the Parish Council on the 12<sup>th</sup> May 2011.**