

# Doddinghurst Parish Council

## ANNUAL REPORT

2016/17



### 1. A review of 2016/17

#### 1.1 Good News:

- A Parish Councillor vacancy arising from the 2016 election has been filled.
- Broadband speeds of up to 74Mbps/s are being achieved in the village with fibre to the cabinet and VDSL connection over copper to the home.
- The replacement of wood chip surfacing in the Children's Play Area with bonded mulch and wet pour surfacing was completed in Oct/ Nov 2016.
- A £20,000 Essex County Council CIF grant and a £6,000 Dagwood Trust award for the Play Area improvements, described above, were obtained as promised for the children play area project.
- An awards for all grant for a defibrillator was obtained and a unit installed in the village.
- Brentwood Council Neighbourhood Action Team undertake local work to tidy the village and have proved very useful in keeping hedges, verges and road signs etc. in good order.

#### 1.2 Bad News:

- The Localisation of Council Tax Grant payment by the Government was withheld from the Parishes of Brentwood by the Borough Council instead of being passed down as intended by the Government.
- Brentwood Borough Council halved the remaining discretionary grant and it is expected to go altogether next year. However despite this increase Doddinghurst's Precept is below the average Band D precept for English Parishes.
- The Brentwood draft Local Development Plan has been delayed yet again and has not been issued for consultation.

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**2.****Contact Details**website: [www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](http://www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk)**Councillors (wef May 2016)**

Debbie Dicker (Chairman)	68 Lime Grove	01277 823410
Alan Farrow	38 All Saints Close	01277 821058
Gerry Smith	25 Park Meadow	XD
Adrian Oliver	88, Lime Grove	XD
Julia Le Page	Sans Souci, Doddinghurst Rd.,	01277 822867
Alan Smith	24, Peartree Lane	XD
Diane Rogers Harrison	16, Harpers Lane,	XD
Phil Arnell	Treble F, Brook Lane	01277 822240
David Potter	65, The Gardens	XD
Michael Capon	11, Peartree Lane	XD
David Powell	37, Rectory Chase	XD

**Officers**

Roger Blake (Clerk & RFO)	Parish Office (adjacent Village Hall) Church Lane, CM15 0NJ	01277 824245
Clarrie Tremain (Deputy Clerk)		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.

Debbie Dicker	Parish Council (Chairman), Allotments (Chairman), Finance & Resource (Chairman), Planning (Chairman), Cheque Signatory, Borough Planning Committee, BBPCA. Brentwood Parish Liaison Committee.
Diane Rogers Harrison	Village Correspondent, General Purpose.
Alan Smith	Planning, Village Hall (rep for Parish Council)
Alan Farrow	General Purpose (Chairman), Cheque Signatory, Finance & Resource, Footpaths.
Julia Le Page	General Purpose, Allotments, Village Planters, Event co-ordination, Finance and Resource
Gerry Smith	General Purpose, Finance & Resource, Cheque Signatory, Highways, Police.
Adrian Oliver	Planning
Phil Arnell	General Purpose and Allotment.
David Potter	General Purpose, Planning, Dagwood Trust
Michael Capon	Finance and Resource , Planning, Bus / Transport
David Powell	General Purpose, Finance and Resource (2017 onwards)

#### 4. Chairman's Statement and Report for 2016/17

Another year has almost gone and I am writing to you to bring you up to date with the work of your Parish Council.

In May 2016 the Full Council election took place when two of our long serving members sadly decided to retire but we were fortunate to have Michael Capon join us. We are now seeking a volunteer to join us as a Councillor to make our numbers up to 11. Please think about joining us and help make Doddinghurst a good place to live. (NB This vacancy was filled March 2017). We meet every other month in the Parish Room at 8pm and the calendar of meetings is published in *The Link* and on-line at [www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](http://www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk)

During the year we organised two main events, the first our traditional May Fair, which is enjoyed by all especially watching our lovely infant school children dancing round the Maypole. Village clubs are there to sell their wares to raise money, together with other professional entertainment. If you would like a stall then watch for the advert in *The Link* in the 2017 New Year.

On June 12th we celebrated the Queen's 90th birthday and although the weather was wet in the morning we were lucky that the sun came out later, bringing everyone onto the field to enjoy the rides, brass band, games and especially the coconut shy. It was lovely that one of our oldest residents who has also served the village over these many years, was able to come and cut the birthday cake. Thank you Zaza. The WI once again excelled itself with cream teas, together with the making of the special cake. A rousing end to the day of communal singing was enjoyed by all.

By the time you read this article the completion of the resurfacing of the children's playground will have been completed. We have been able to secure a grant of £20,000 from Essex County Council's Community Initiative Fund, together with £6,000 from the Dagwood Trust, to add to our reserved money enabling a new, cleaner and lower maintenance, groundwork to be installed.

We plan that next year we will be able to provide better facilities for the teenagers with a new "kicking" goal mouth with better groundworks, and a replacement Teen Village. The Parish Council will continue to keep the village environment in good order with litter collection and litter bin provision. We would like to hope that more members of the public will come forward to volunteer for some of the events that take place. We have once again contacted Essex County Council regarding the condition of our pavements and road signs in and around the village but at the moment we have had a muted response. We are also currently campaigning with Blackmore Parish Council over the 261 Bus which is threatened with cessation unless the County re-introduce the sponsorship they withdrew that has resulted in the current threat to this vital rural service.

I hope to see some of you at our meetings and if you have anything you would like to suggest for the village please contact myself or the Clerk to the Council.

It only leaves me once again to wish you all the very best for 2017.

Deborah Dicker (Chairman)

5. Financial Report - Accounts for 2016/17 (pending audit approval)

**ANNUAL RETURN**  
**Doddinghurst Parish Council**  
**Statement of Accounts**  
**For the year ended**  
**31<sup>st</sup> March 2017**

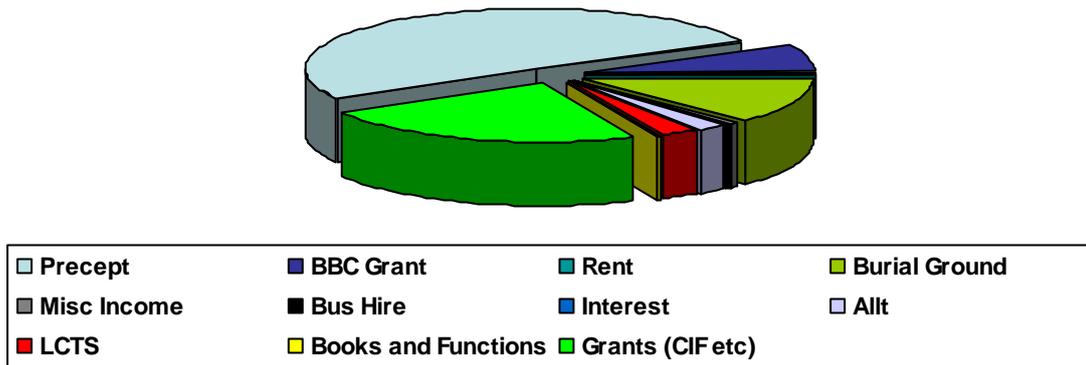
	31-Mar-16	31-Mar-17	
1. Balances B/F	70,090.00	105,386.00	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the council's financial records.
2. Annual Precept	52,070.00	60,886.00	Total amount of precept income received in the year.
3. Total other receipts	43,183.00	58,458.00	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook minus the precept.
4. Staff costs	27,037.00	27,555.00	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	7,564.00	7,564.00	Total expenditure or payments of capital and interest made during the year on the council's borrowings.
6. Total other payments	25,356.00	100,094.00	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	105,386.00	89,517.00	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	105,386.00	89,517.00	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held as at 31 March.  (excludes accrued VAT since not yet paid, else matches box 7 above.)
9. Total fixed assets	437,308.00	497,535.00	The recorded current book value at 31 March of all fixed assets owned by the council.
10. Total borrowings	77,326.00	72,966.00	PWLB Borrowing, originally £99,000: This money has been granted to the Village Hall (£60k) and Priest House (£39k) for renovation work, now completed.

For 2016/17 the Borough Council discretionary grant to Doddinghurst was axed at the last minute by 37% creating a £5000 hole in the Parish Council income and resulting in an increase in precept for the Parish of 16.9% raising it to £60,886. The Doddinghurst Discretionary Grant at £3.04 is the lowest per capita grant of any of the Parish Councils in the Borough with Navestock receiving £10.03 per resident.

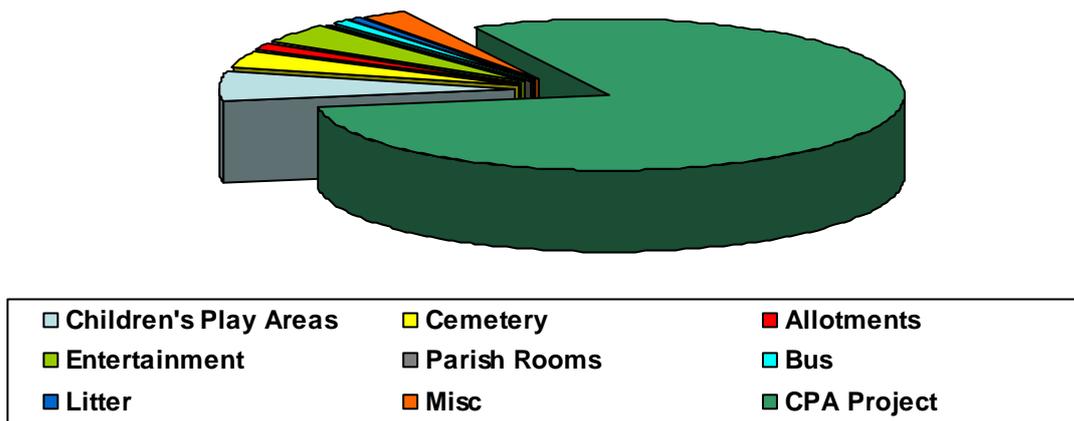
Grants for new surfacing work in the Children's Play area during 2016 of £20,000 from the Essex County Council Community Initiative Fund were used, plus a £6000 grant from the Dagwood Trust for the same project and £1000 grant from the PCC for seating in the Children's Play Area. In addition a grant of over £1400 from Awards for All was obtained for the provision and installation of a defibrillator in the centre of the village.

The Audit Commission approved the 2015/16 annual accounts for the Parish Council in August 2016 with zero comments.

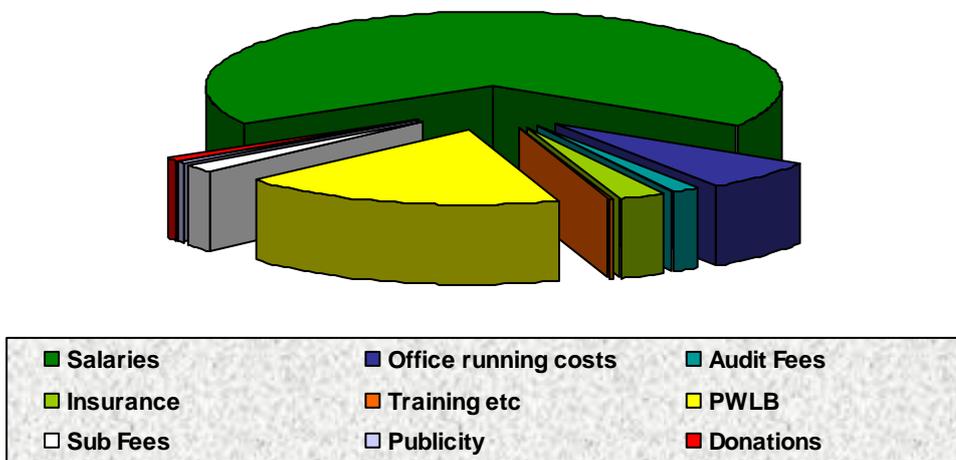
Sources of Income for 2016/17- £ 119,701



Direct Expenses 2016/17 - £ 93,040



Overhead costs 2016/17 - £42,639



## 6. Community Action.

The Parish Council regularly hold annual events which help to bring the community together. It acts to ensure that community venues are in good order and that there is a range of good recreational space available to residents in the village. In addition the Council supports local clubs and societies which give local people leisure opportunities and keeps people in contact with one another, avoiding loneliness and isolation. In 2016 the Parish Council hosted the Queen's 90<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration in June.

### 6.1 Newsletters

The Parish Council prepares a newsletter that is inserted into the centre of the "Link" magazine which is distributed to all households in the Village as well as Wyatts Green and Hook End. In addition to essential contact information the newsletter is used to advise residents of pending events and current affairs affecting residents.

### 6.2 May Day Fair

In 2013 the Parish Council took over the management of this event from the Horticultural Society. The day makes the Village Hall available to clubs and societies to set up stalls to raise money for their charities. The May Fair remains a popular event in the village and enthusiasm for stalls and taking part in the events is still buoyant - despite the sometimes less than ideal weather in early May.

### 6.3 Annual Parish Meeting.

The Parish Council convene the Doddinghurst Annual Parish meeting of the leaders of the community in April every year. This meeting records the activities of groups such as the Churches, Schools, Football, Uniformed organisations and Neighbourhood Watch. The minutes of this year's meeting on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2017 are posted on the Parish Council website [www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](http://www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk) .

## 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. A reduced calendar of meeting was again operated during this year with a committee meeting every month except August (as previously).

The full council elections occurred in May 2016 and 10 councillors stood for election giving the council an electoral mandate of 90%. The remaining Councillor Vacancy was fill by a co-option process to bring the Council to a full complement of 11 Councillors.

### 7.1. Planning Committee.

The Parish Council is given an opportunity to comment on planning matters and the Council review all development planning applications received for Doddinghurst Parish at full Council meetings. In between meetings all planning applications notices relevant to the village are sent electronically to the Clerk who logs them for the committee stage planning review and assesses them for impact. If potentially sensitive or controversial these applications will be flagged immediately to planning committee members for their comments and feedback. Care is taken that planning committee members abstain from commenting on applications that are local to the part of the village in which they live. During 2016/17 some 72 applications were received for comment and of those 51 were approved by Brentwood. Of the remaining applications submitted 16 were refused, 1 was part approved and part refused, 2 were withdrawn, 1 didn't need permission, 1 application was still pending a decision at the time of writing. Also in addition to these applications 1 appeal against an enforcement notice was heard which resulted in a split decision.

### 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 the burial grounds and room hire etc. The committee met 5 times during 2016/17. Among other items it reviewed were the RoSPA report on the Children's Play Area and it approved new fees for Burial Ground interments in April 2016.

### 7.3. Finance and Resources Committee

This committee met twice in 2016/17, once to review the Parish Council Insurance, Risk Assessments and financial governance including the audit results and a second time to review/ agree proposals for the 2017/18 budget, staff pensions and pay review, next year's precept and banking arrangements. It should be noted that Precept setting is always considered and voted upon by the full council in January.

The committee is also responsible for the overall control of Council Governance including standing orders, financial policies, audit process, insurance and risk assessment and transparency. Finally, the Finance and Resource committee is responsible for dealing with recommendations concerning personnel appointments, terms and conditions of contract, superannuation and reviews of salaries if not dealt with directly by the Full Council.

### 7.4. Allotment Committee.

Allotment Committee. The allotment committee met once in 2016/17 with regular inspection visits also undertaken by committee members. There is also the annual tenant's meeting held just after the renewal period has ended. The allotments still continue to be a popular resource within the village and there are now 40 tenants (was 44) working a total of 29 full plots and 23 half plots. Due to issues with shade in parts of the allotment and no waiting list we have decommissioned Plots 13, 14, 15 and 4b. An accumulation of rubbish is being removed by volunteer effort.

## 8. Transport

Doddinghurst is a rural community and the Bus service is an essential component in maintaining a thriving village life. Not only is the service used by non drivers to head into Brentwood for a shop and to venues such as the Bishops Hall swimming pool and sport centre but many prefer to use the Bus to a car to get to work either in Brentwood or to the rail station for transfer elsewhere.

### 8.1 Blackmore to Brentwood - 261 (61) Service

The 261 is the primary service from Doddinghurst on Monday through to Saturday running from Blackmore, through Doddinghurst to Brentwood and serves some 5000 residents of Blackmore and Doddinghurst. With short notice Amber Buses announced their termination of service to take effect in December 2016. After some prevarication Essex County Council assigned Ensign Bus as the operator for the service - now called the 61 bus - starting in January 2017, so for 3 weeks no County service ran and the Parish Council arranged for the 898 bus to make a detour to provide a stop gap alternative but this did not run hourly. The County Council used short term subsidies to provide a service whilst the route and passenger numbers were studied. This led to considerable uncertainty and dissatisfaction among bus users because no-one knew if the service was continued as the period of subsidy was extended from April to August 2017. At the end of May 2016 Ensign also abruptly terminated their contract with effect from July 2017 and have indicated their dissatisfaction with how Essex CC were handling the contract for the replacement of the 261 service. A new, as yet unidentified, bus operator now has been identified by Essex County Council, with a contract to extend to 2020.

### 8.2 Queens Shopper Bus 898 Service

The original route was terminated at the end of March 2016 by Essex County Council who maintained that the journey can now be made on alternative Bus routes using the 261 into Brentwood and a new service from Brentwood to Romford/ Queens Hospital. However this involves an interchange in Brentwood from Sainsbury Bus Stop to the High street and a un-coordinated set of timetables between the two services - so quite impractical for most purposes. A new 898 route is being trialled independently of ECC by Brentwood Community Bus Services in 2016/7.

### 8.3 Village Bus (Bus Club)

The Bus Club is managed by the Parish Council with ex Cllr. 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 Brentwood 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. The “Village” Bus Club has recruited one new driver in 2016, who has been “Midas” accredited.

The Bus club accounts for 2016/17, and the preceding year, are as follows:

2015/16		2016/17	
Brought Forward	£ 817.70	Brought Forward	£ 771.24
Income	£ 905.30	Income	£ 861.00
Expenditure	£ 951.76	Expenditure	£ 881.00
No of Trips run	13 (1 cancelled)	No of Trips run	14
Closing Balance	£ 771.24	Closing Balance	£751.24

NB. In 2016/17 £100 was spent on driver MIDAS training and paying the BCT membership fee (£20).

## 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 enforcement of any breach of use should this be necessary. The land includes the leased 5 acre Peartree Recreational Field, the wholly owned 6 acre fields on which a junior and senior football field and woodland Nature Trail are located and a further wholly owned and separate recreation field for the Children’s Play area.

9.1 Children’s Play Area. The Parish Council carried out a major refurbishment of the play area in 2014 and 2016 with a total of £47,000 of grant funding. The majority of the play equipment was replaced and a new zip wire added in 2014, new seating installed in 2015 and the wood chip surfacing was replaced in 2016. In total, and net of VAT, over £150,000 has been spent on this one area alone.

9.2 Football Facilities. Doddinghurst Olympics Football Club (DOFC) was the major user of the Football Fields owned by the Parish Council and the Village Hall. This club merged with Brentwood Town Football Club in 2015 but the teams continue to use the football fields as before. The Club has taken more responsibility for white lining as well as goal mouth repair. The Parish Council also manage and maintain showers, referee and changing room facilities for the football club in the Parish Rooms complex adjoining the Village Hall. The Parish Council in 2008 agreed a “Heads of Agreement” document with DOFC that allows both parties to contribute towards the cost of managing and maintaining the facilities. This arrangement continues despite the merger with Brentwood Football Club. For 2016/17 (all bills received up to end March 2017) the total cost of football facilities provided for the village was £700.00, of which the Parish Council funded £437 (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. In 2016/17 the cost halved compared to the prior year as the club have taken over white lining and the Parish Council ceased using Brentwood for ground management in 2015 as their service had become very unreliable, so overall the costs are now between a quarter and a fifth one of what they were in 2012.

## 10. Burial Grounds.

The Parish Council owns and manages 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 2016/17 was £14665.00. The expenses incurred were £3076.00, leaving a net income of £11,589.00. During the 2016/17 financial year there were 8 full interments (5 being re-opens), of which 5 were for residents and 3 for non-residents. There were also 8 ashes interments (2 of those being re-opens), of which 7 were residents and 1 was a non-resident.

The Parish Council has agreed to establish a maintenance support fund for the Burial Ground to cover an extended period of time in the future when all the burial and ashes plots are full and income to pay for maintenance ceases. For the 2016/17 year a sum of £40,000 has been reserved for this purpose and a total fund of at least £100,000 will be required from about 2030 onwards.

## 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 2016/17 the rent has been £10 (prior 3 years also £10.00) per morning, afternoon or evening session, or £30 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 fallen to 3 regular user groups: Tai Chi, Love2Craft, and the Essex Cycling Association. Occasional use has been for the May Day, a Board Game group and mini medics. Full occupancy of the room would yield an income of £7,500 (3 sessions a day for Monday to Friday inclusive for 50 weeks of the year). Actual earning has slumped to £740 giving an earned occupancy of 9.9% (previous year was 17.7%, and 18.3% before that). The Parish Council held 15 sessions in the room at a nominal worth of £150 which makes the overall utilisation for the year 11.8% (the previous year was 19.3%). This is the fifth year occupancy has fallen - despite advertng the room for hire locally, the very competitive rate and the room is liked by its users. We have an interest from the preschool in the village hall in using the room as a creche once again during the preschool days, with access from the village hall being used.

## 12. Allotments.

Garden Allotments measuring approximately 17m x 5m are provided at £60/ year or £30 for a half plot. With 40.5 plots in use the income is £2,430 pa. The allotments have remained popular throughout 2016/17 but we no longer have a waiting list. The 16/17 income was £2100.00 and less the revenue share, lease and administration costs, leaves a sum of £857 to pay for maintenance and repairs - e.g. the storage shed and other facilities such as the water system, access gate and car park. At the end of the 2016/17 financial year demand in Doddinghurst for allotments rallied as a direct result of a local advertising campaign run by the Deputy Clerk and we managed to attract enough new plot holders to prevent "empty plot syndrome" developing.

## 13. Public Footpaths

Public footpaths in the Parish are set out on a map showing the definitive footpaths and these are also available to view via the Parish Council website. The repair and maintenance of the footpaths in Doddinghurst is the sole responsibility of Essex County Council but the Parish Council does press for repair work to be carried out by the County when required. In 2016/17 we used woodchips recovered from the play area resurfacing project to improve the Nature Trail and immediate footpaths.

## 14. Website and Office.

The Parish Council website is: [www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk](http://www.doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk). The site includes village community activities as well as the Parish Council reports. The Parish Council has a policy of transparency and follow the government 2015 code on transparency in the publication of data. Please visit it and let us have your recommendations for improvement or suggestions for the publication of other Parish Council held information you feel we should keep on the web-site as a public record.

The Parish Council owns an office that is normally staffed from 09.30 to 12.30 on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. The Parish Office is semi-detached to the Village Hall in Church Lane and access is on the left hand side of the building up the first short flight of stops. Visitors are welcome to call into the office to discuss parish matters and where we keep copies of the Village Book "A Place in the County" which can be purchased at £4 each.

**This report was approved for publication by the Parish Council on the 7<sup>th</sup> June 2017.**

**Issue 1.1**