

Doddinghurst Parish Council

ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18



1. A review of 2017/18

1.1 Good News:

The provision of a new teen shelter system was completed, despite difficult weather, conditions during February and March 2018.

1.2 Bad News:

- Yet again 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. The Government is asking billing authorities why they have held onto funds intended for the Parishes.
- Brentwood Borough Council have ended all discretionary grant payments resulting in yet another across the board rise in Parish Precept, however despite this increase Doddinghurst's Precept is below the average Band D precept for English Parishes.
- The Brentwood draft Local Development Plan is still very late but now has been issued for consultation with some new housing development allocated to the northern villages of the Borough. The Borough Council have been asked to explain by central government why they are in such delay and threatened with executive action if any further slippage occurs.

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2.**Contact Details**website: <https://essexinfo.net/doddinghurst-pc>Councillors (May 2017)

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	Tel: 01277 824245
Clarrie Tremain (Deputy Clerk)	email: clerk@doddinghurst-pc.gov.uk	

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 2017/18

The council had a five-year plan to improve all the amenities in the village and this has now been completed. The Parish Council have been very successful with grants that we have bid for from organisations such as Essex County Councils Community Initiatives Fund (CIF) and the Dagwood Trust. We also received a donation from the half Marathon organisers last year. Overall, the grants and donations have reduced the cost of the new facilities to the residents by tens of thousands of pounds. Such fund raising has become essential as all support from the Borough Council has ended as a result of funding cuts by central government.

The planned improvements to the recreational space are being completed this spring. During the month of February, with great difficulty due to the weather, the teen shelter was completed but the ground will need to dry before final repairs can be made. The older teenagers already seem to be using it on a regular basis. When the ground is in a suitable condition a new kicking goal and 3G surface will be installed. The goal has proved to be one of the most popular activities by the teenagers and the ground has eroded and the grass invaded the netting so we felt it was the right time to renew it. We believe this will be enjoyed by a majority of the young people in the village.

The Village Hall faced a challenge at the end of 2017 with key members of its management committee resigning. The Village Hall and its associated land is an important village asset providing a heart to the community. I am pleased to say that with support from other Parish Councillors a new committee has been created. The Village Hall is a self-funding charity and is not part of the Parish Council but its importance to the village is recognised by the Parish Councillors who have striven hard over the past 4 months to make sure it continues to operate. We would like to thank the Dagwood Trust for a recent donation of £2,000 so that essential drainage work and a replacement kitchen hot water boiler could be installed.

Last year we managed, together with Blackmore Parish Council, to secure the 61 Bus for a further period of two years. Recently a new consultation to change the timetable of the bus to cover the route of a bus service that is being axed, resulting in a detour around the Bishops Hall estate. Those of you who use the bus regularly need to fill out the Essex County Council consultation so that you can express your opinions and give your views. When we have further information, if needed, we will arrange a Bus Forum meeting in the Parish Room so that the changes can be discussed.

Some while ago the Parish Council initiated a Neighbourhood Plan and filed a Neighbourhood Plan area with the Borough Council. We suspended work while the Borough Council carried out the preparation of its Local Development Plan (LDP) because the LDP is the prime document in setting out where local development can be undertaken. The Borough Council has now published its consultation on the final draft for preferred site allocations so the Parish Council can revisit the need for a Neighbourhood Plan which could include preferred design as well as defining additional development to those set out by the Borough Council. This would be a major project for the Village and require considerable input from residents and/or considerable cost in consultant fees and we would like to hear the views of residents on the subject.

The Parish Council has also considered the adoption of Special Police Constables for the village. The Police are recruiting unpaid volunteers to be trained and equipped as PC's with full police powers and would patrol in the village at a marginal cost to the Parish Council, but the time of their patrol would be set by the Police and not necessarily at the optimum time to deal with incidents but they would have access to back up services at the disposal of the Police.

I mention these latter topic as examples of the wider and more profound set of issues the Parish Council is dealing with that residents may not be aware of and we want you to understand that we seek to help all sections of our community in equal measure.

Moving forward and looking ahead, with full council elections in May 2020, we are going to need a younger cross section of people to represent the community and to be prepared to stand as Parish Councillors. It is a simple fact that the existing team are getting older and some are likely to retire, as indeed our Clerk is retiring from the role at the beginning of April 2018.

We would like to hear from anyone who has ideas on the things we can do for you or is willing to step up offer to become a Councillor in 2020 but I hope this letter has been both informative and of interest to you and I am always available for anyone who wishes to discuss anything about Doddinghurst.

Now the snow has gone I hope the spring and summer will bring enjoyment to you all.

Deborah Dicker (Chairman)
6th March 2018

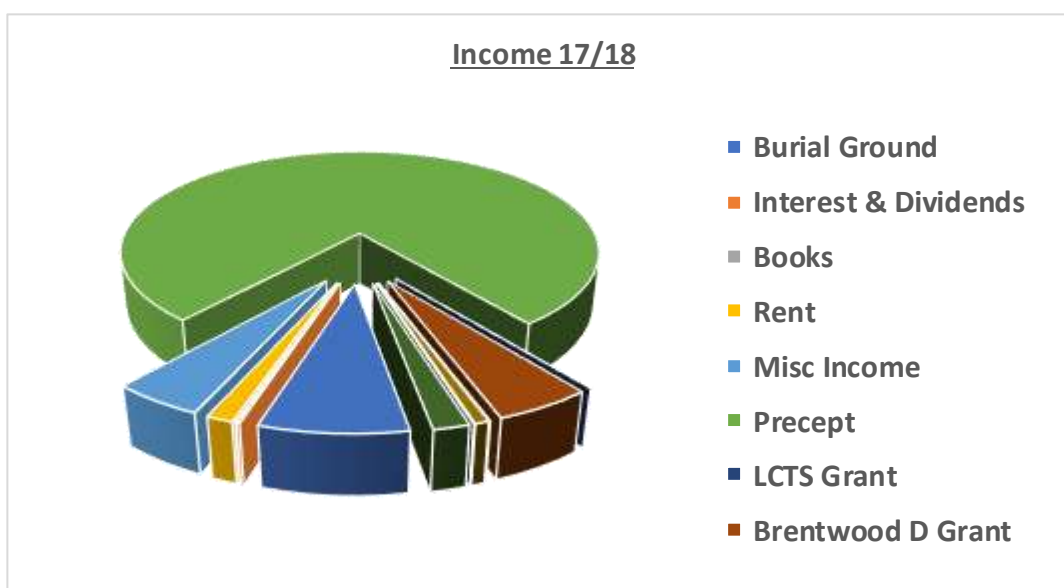
5. Financial Report - Accounts for 2017/18 (pending audit approval)

ANNUAL RETURN
Doddinghurst Parish Council
Statement of Accounts
For the year ended
31st March 2018

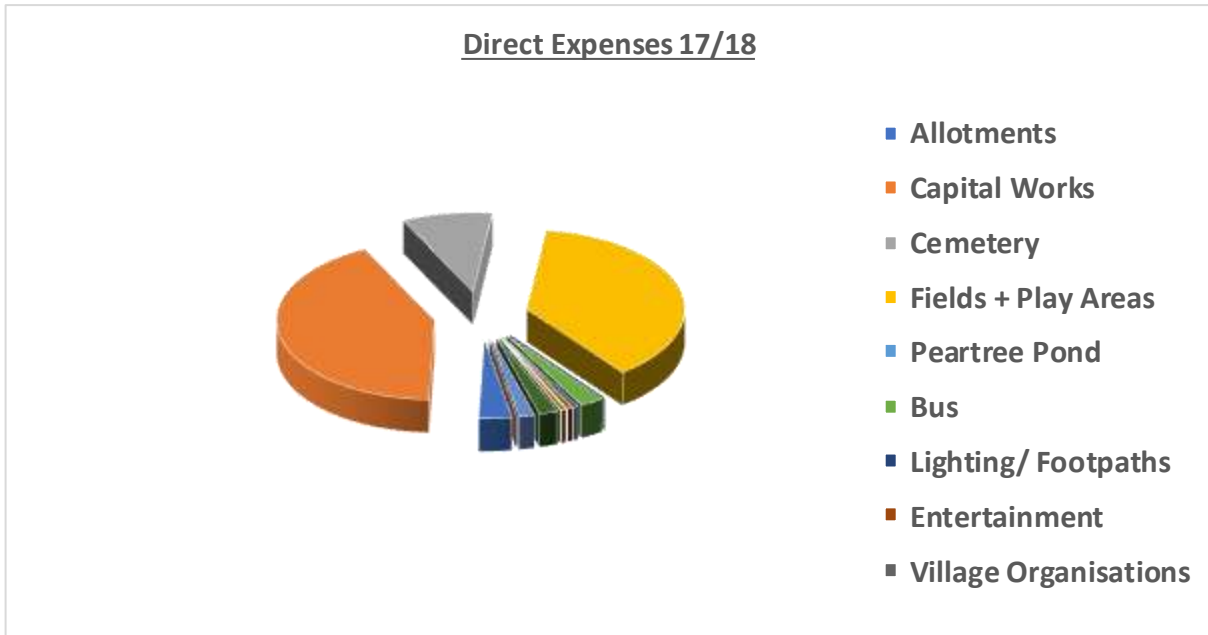
	31-Mar-17	31-Mar-18	
1. Balances B/F	105,386.00	89,517.00	Total balances and reserves at the beginning of the year as recorded in the council's financial records.
2. Annual Precept	60,886.00	66,320.00	Total amount of precept income received in the year.
3. Total other receipts	58,458.00	15,430.00	Total income or receipts as recorded in the cashbook minus the precept.
4. Staff costs	27,555.00	30,124.00	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	100,094.00	37,642.00	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	89,517.00	95,937.00	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	89,517.00	95,937.00	The sum of all current and deposit bank accounts, cash holdings and investments held as at 31 March 2018
9. Total fixed assets	497,535.00	508,632.00	The recorded current book value at 31 March of all fixed assets owned by the council.
10. Total borrowings	72,966.00	68,421.00	PWLB Borrowing, originally £99,000: This money was granted to the Village Hall (£60k) and Priest House (£39k) for renovation work, now completed.

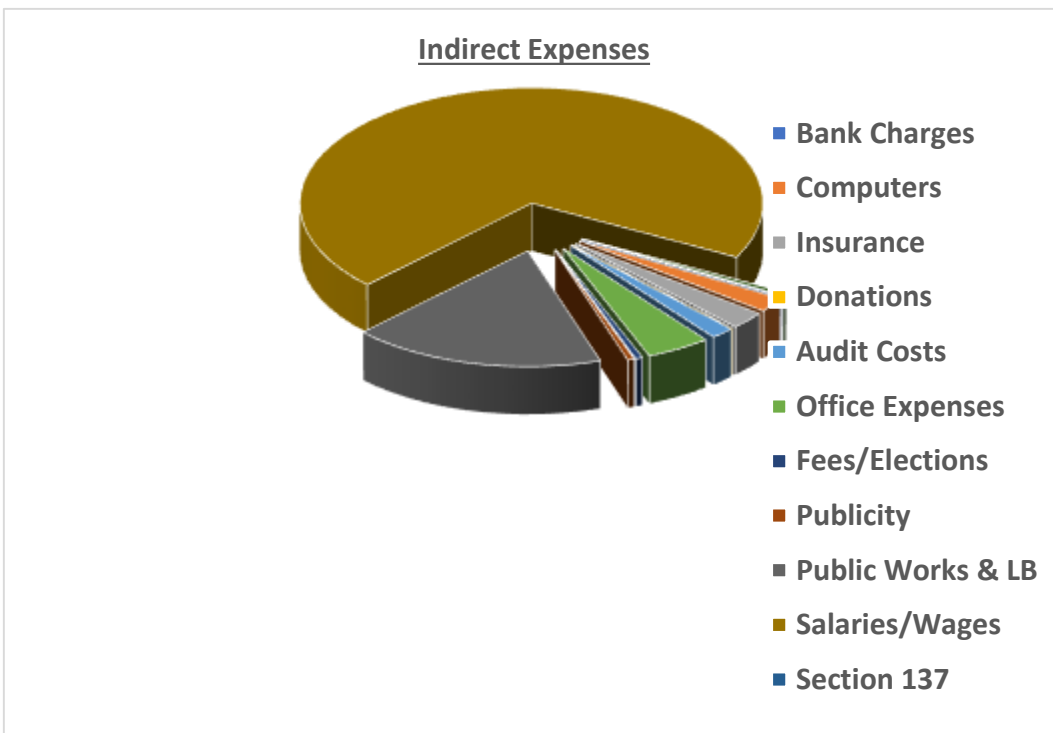
Income 17/18 - £84,559.29



Direct Expenses 2017/18 - £ 32,410.93



Indirect Expenses 2017/18- £42,919.90



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.

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. We aim to do the 4 times a year.

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 are posted on the Parish Council website <https://essexinfo.net/doddinghurst-pc>

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 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 Applications.

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 Deputy Clerk who log them for a full council 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 2017/18 some 64 applications were received for comment and of those 38 were approved by Brentwood. Of the remaining applications submitted 21 were refused, 3 were relating to appeals and 2 did not require approval.

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 2017/18. Among other items it reviewed were the RoSPA report on the Children's Play Area and it approved no change to fees for Burial Ground interments in April 2017.

7.3. Finance and Resources Committee

This committee met in 2017/18 to review the Parish Council Insurance, Risk Assessments and financial governance including the audit results and 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 2017/18 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 28 full plots and 24 half plots. The waiting list has now been exhausted so we have 1 full plots and 1 half plots available to lease.

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 to shop and to venues such as the Bishops Hall swimming pool and the 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. It is also used by School children who are at schools in Brentwood.

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. A new bus operator EOS Swallows has now been identified by Essex County Council, with a contract to extend to 2020.

8.2 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 Bus club accounts for 2017/18, and the preceding year, are as follows:

2016/17		2017/18	
Brought Forward	£ 771.24	Brought Forward	£ 751.24
Income	£ 861.00	Income	£ 704.00
Expenditure	£ 881.00	Expenditure	£ 830.62
No of Trips run	14	No of Trips run	12
Closing Balance	£ 751.24	Closing Balance	£624.62

NB. In 2017/8 £0 was spent on driver MIDAS training and £20 was spent for the BCT membership fee.

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. Parish Council owned land is managed under contract for field mowing and hedge cutting.

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.

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 2017/18 fell steeply to £6385.00. The expenses incurred were £2998.00, leaving a net income of £3,387.00

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 2017/18 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 2017/18 the rent has been £10 (prior 4 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 regular user groups that now includes the creche as a major user together with Love2Craft, the Essex Cycling Association and other occasional users. 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 rose slightly to £1163 giving an earned occupancy of 15.5% (previous year was 9.6%, and 17.7% 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 17.5%.

12. Allotments.

Garden Allotments measuring approximately 17m x 5m are provided at £60/ year or £30 for a half plot. With 28 full plots and 24 half plots in use the 17/18 income was £1567.00 and less the revenue share, lease and administration costs, leaves a sum of £486 to pay for maintenance and repairs - e.g. the storage shed and other facilities such as the water system, access gate and car park. Recently we have had to pay to have six vacant plots covered at approximately £60 per plot.

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.

14. Website and Office.

The Parish Council website has migrated to an [essexinfo.net](https://www.essexinfo.net/doddinghurst-pc) site and the url is now: <https://www.essexinfo.net/doddinghurst-pc> 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 old site will be deleted in 2018.

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 7th June 2018.

Issue 1.1