



Clerks Update–July/Aug for September 2nd

During this period, I completed finance training with both Rialtas and Scribe, which has strengthened our financial management processes. Alongside the Planning Committee, I also undertook planning training over three weeks. Although the syllabus was challenging, it has provided us with a clearer understanding of legal frameworks. We've already applied this knowledge by conducting our first site visit and using the large screen to project plans for discussion, improving the quality of our planning meetings.

Progress continues with my CiLCA qualification. I opted to proceed without a mentor to reduce costs, which has made the course more demanding. Nonetheless, I remain committed, as achieving full Clerk qualification will benefit HPC and enable us to adopt the General Power of Competence in future.

A significant milestone this month was resolving longstanding HMRC access issues. The login complications—stemming from mixed credentials between previous staff—have now been fully resolved. I can now track all payments online and successfully reconciled an outstanding £9,000 against a credit from 2019. This has been a major relief and will streamline future financial oversight. The first quarter finances have been approved by the auditor. In addition, the Revenue & Resources Committee has begun training to scrutinize monthly financial reports. This process will be extended to all councillors from the start of the new financial year, promoting transparency and shared responsibility.

Working group attendance remains a concern. Several meetings, including the PWG and YWG, have been cancelled due to insufficient councillor participation. A minimum of three councillors is required, and last-minute apologies—sometimes just minutes before meetings—are making it difficult to progress. I fully understand that councillors have commitments outside HPC, but I respectfully request at least 24 hours' notice where possible. The working groups that do maintain consistent attendance are making the most progress.

On a positive note, the HPC stall at the Carnival was a great success. It increased our visibility within the community and offered free activities such as bee seed bombs and bird box kits. Photos of the winners from Highley in Bloom and the Christmas Light competition have also been shared with the Forum and on social media, further boosting community engagement.

Preparations are underway for the relaunch of the community drop-in event on 26th September. I've been gathering contacts and services to support the promotion of this initiative, which will be managed solely by HPC, and I would like to thank Councillor Hodnett for her unwavering support here. I am currently seeking grant funding to purchase balloons and biscuits for the launch and hope that as many councillors as possible will be able to attend. The October drop-in will include the bus shelter consultation, with additional evening sessions planned to ensure residents have ample opportunity to share their views.

Highways issues have also seen progress. Pothole repair teams were welcomed with bacon sandwiches and a brew and shown the specific areas needing attention. All reported potholes, including those on New England and Netherton Lanes, have now been addressed. While some remain, this marks a significant improvement.

I continue to receive regular visits from members of the public seeking support. This month, I've signposted individuals to the police for issues including theft, antisocial behaviour, arson, and misuse of electric scooters. I've also arranged repairs for damage around the village where HPC is responsible and reported other concerns to the relevant authorities. Overgrown hedges have been reported, and I'm exploring the possibility of installing a flower trough to improve safety near the phone exchange pass-through.

Finally, I've dealt with several PC issues, including stolen hanging baskets, damaged road signage, street furniture, and street light repairs and replacements.