



Jenny Manning has been Parish Clerk at Haddenham for almost 20 years. Jenny works from home and for the past 2 years, has

been supported by an Assistant Clerk, Tor Taylor,

What qualities do you need to be a successful clerk?

“I’d say you need to be adaptable; to be able to get on with people; and you need perseverance and stamina. Things don’t always happen as quickly as you would like so you can’t lose heart. It can be quite a lonely role as you might be working on your own a lot. Before Tor joined as Assistant Clerk, it was quite lonely and so it’s nice to have someone else around to bounce ideas off.”

“The Council has a succession plan for the Clerk role which means that when I retire, Tor will take on the Clerk role and the Council will appoint a new assistant clerk.”

How many hours a week do you spend on Parish Council business? How do you spend a typical day?

“I work 21 hours across three days and Tor, our Assistant Clerk, works another nine hours over two days. We’re paid for any overtime we need to carry out, e.g. meetings in the evening and the Council regularly asks us if our working hours are sufficient.”

“There’s no such thing as a typical day for me. I tend to start at 8am and get my emails out the way. I can then spend time on a meeting minutes and following up on actions; paying bills; preparing a report for our Village Voice magazine but then at other times I can be out in the community carrying out legionella testing or defibrillator weekly checks. On one occasion, Tor and I found ourselves cleaning a bus stop sign, so it’s definitely not a typical desk job.”

“I quite enjoy the practical tasks as they can provide a real sense of achievement. It’s such a varied role and if working from home you need to be quite disciplined to get everything done.”

What is the best thing about being a clerk?

“Definitely helping the community and knowing you’ve made a difference. I love my job – there can be some aspects that you don’t love but, on the whole, I really love the job!

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement since you have been clerk?

“I’m proud to have applied for and achieved £100k funding from WREN and another grant body for a new skate park for the village. It’s something that will make a real impact on the children and young people who live here.”

Are you a member of Society of Local Council Clerks (SLCC)? If so, what do you find the benefits to be?

“I am a member of the SLCC and I go to the Cambridgeshire branch meetings when I can and if the topics are of interest. I also attend CAPALC training sessions if I think I would benefit; I attended a recent session on the General Data Protection Regulation. I enjoy networking with other clerks.”

“I gained my AQA qualification as a Clerk in 2004 and found it boosted confidence in my abilities. As a Council, Haddenham held the old ‘Quality Council’ status for 8 years but, to be honest, we didn’t feel we received much benefit from it and so we don’t currently have any plans to get involved in the new Local Council Award Scheme.”

What are the biggest challenges Haddenham has faced over the past 5 years?

“I think giving input to and influencing the District Council’s Local Plan and managing public concerns around growth has been the biggest challenge we’ve dealt with”.

What is the best thing about living in Haddenham?

“Well, I’m Haddenham born and bred and have never lived anywhere else so it’s all I’ve ever really known, but I love it here and wouldn’t want to live anywhere else.”

Do you have a local council website and social media feeds?

“We have a website (<http://www.haddenham.org.uk>) and a Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/HaddenhamCambsParishCouncil/>). The Parish Council also contributes articles to ‘Village Voice’ the community magazine for Haddenham, Aldreth and the neighbouring village of Wilburton. The magazine is a combination of news about local clubs and activities, articles, columns and advertisements for both local businesses and forthcoming activities. Once a year, in June, we arrange for a copy to be distributed to every household in Haddenham & Aldreth. This issue contains the Parish Council’s accounts and the Chairman’s annual report.”

How do you try to engage the local community in what the Council does?

“A couple of years ago, the Council formed a Communications Group in order to improve the level of understanding the public has about what the Council does, its relationships with other levels of Local Government, and the background to its decision-making. This Group generates social media items and we also maintain noticeboards and organise leaflet drops with councillors’ help.”

If you had a magic wand, what’s the one thing you would change about Haddenham?

“Absolutely nothing!”

Interviewed Apr-2018