

## **Swaton Parish Council - Chairman's Report 2007 / 2008-05-07**

Once again we have had a couple of changes to the Council. Michael Hardy and Laura Craigie resigned from the Council and were replaced by Sandra Hardy and Jayne Wilkinson. We thank Michael and Laura for all the work they put in and welcome Sandra and Jayne to the Council.

Your Council has become a Quality Council. This honour was bestowed upon us last November. Many thanks must go to our Clerk, Shelagh, who dragged us kicking and screaming through the protocols. Your Councillors have also continued to attend various training meetings on Finance & Risk, Chairmanship, Being a Good Councillor and Planning. Whether it is our Quality Status or just because you have plain awkward, but well trained, Councillors, Swaton is certainly 'listened to' by NKDC !!

We have attended several 'Cluster' meetings. These are where 13 Parish Councils get together to 'air their views' with NKDC. Swaton's 'cantankerousness' saved NKDC £56000 when our objections to a firm of consultants doing a job which NKDC could do themselves were sacked ! These Cluster meeting have also enabled a mobile speed sign and a speed gun to be purchased for use by the Police, our PCSO and trained village volunteers. These should be seen in the village within the next 2 to 3 months.

Coming back to our Clerk, Shelagh has become a Mentor for other Clerks and has become a founder member of The Institute of Local Council Managers. We are honoured to have such a well qualified Clerk to keep us in order.

During the year our village has become a nicer place to live in ! On the instigation of our tame Dutchman, Henk Buijs, three village Litter Picks have been organised. These have yielded over 50 plastic bags of rubbish. Many thanks to all participants.

Improvements to paths and roads have also been made, although some promised work – i.e. 'No-Man's Land' in West End was not done when scheduled. NKDC / LCC are being constantly chased to get this work done, along with rectifying a mistake they made with the slope on the paths down West End. It WILL be done ! Other work is also planned for paths in West End and to the North of the village this year.

Councillor Dunlop has carried out an in-depth (excuse the pun) report of the flooding of West End. His report was sent to all relevant Agencies and already some remedial work has been done. The last body to 'come on board' was the Environment Agency who have finally agreed to do some work on the Eau's banks and bottom. This work will not stop flooding, but should minimise damage to properties.

The village may be further enhanced by our Arts NK approach to site an 'artistic' bench seat between the North end Bus Shelter and the Church. Progress is not fast, but we haven't given up.

We also took advantage of NKDC's offer of 'Free Trees' for the village and some 100 trees and shrubs were distributed in January.

It should be noted that during the last year we changed the way that our village grass is cut. We 'opted out' of having Lincs County Council's contractor doing this and employed our own contractor. Although there were a few 'glitches' when some parts were missed, and perhaps it wasn't cut often enough, we are confident that this will improve in 2008. It should be noted that this exercise showed a £330 saving to the Council.

Other savings have allowed us to temporarily cut the village's 'precept' (that's what the village pays via Council Tax to have a Parish Council) from £2000 per year to £1500 for 2008 / 2009. We are probably the only Council in the Country to knock 25% off its cost to parishioner's Council Tax.

This Council has been quick to react to Parish issues and organise public meetings where appropriate - two such recent events have been the Lighting Review and a meeting to discuss a Planning Application.

Our Village Newsletter now has a new Editor. Our esteemed Councillor Dunlop has taken over this thankless task and would like to hear from anyone who would like to have anything added to this quarterly Newsletter. Thank You, Andy !

And Finally ..... Have a look at our website at [www.swaton.org.uk](http://www.swaton.org.uk). Let us know what you think and what else you would like to see on it.