

Swaton Parish Council

Chairman's Report

Parish Council Year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

Your Council has remained the same this year with me as Chairman (because no one else wants the 'job'), Andy Dunlop as Vice-Chairman, Chris Richardson as Responsible Financial Officer and our two newer members Elaine Penketh and Alan Wilson taking on a variety of roles.

Elaine and Alan have attended training and other meetings (which included the riveting 'Code of Conduct' session) and have had their hands full with the Play Area and learning the ropes.

However with the impending loss of Andy Dunlop to the village, it seems likely that there will be a vacant position on the Council later this year. If you are interested in joining the Council, watch for announcements in the Newsletter and Noticeboard or have a word with anyone on the Council. Anyone interested should attend a couple of Parish Council meetings before applying.

It should be noted that unless more than 10 electors from the village request an election, an election is not required. The new member can be 'co-opted'. This means that if there is more than one nominee, the existing Councillors choose the new Councillor on merit. The election in May 2015 (which also encompassed the General Election and District Council elections) cost YOU, the Council Tax payers, £632.58 - Over a quarter of the total cost of running the Council. We sincerely hope to avoid such costs in choosing Andy's replacement.

Superfast Broadband finally arrived in the village in January with many residents taking advantage of this. Unfortunately all has not gone smoothly for the residents at the North End of the village who find that as their phones are wired up directly to the exchange at Helpringham (and not to Swaton's Superfast box 200 metres away) they cannot take advantage of the Broadband Speed increases. This is very unfair and although BT say they cannot do anything about it, noises are being made to try to get this resolved.

The Play Area progresses..... slowly. An £8000 Grant has been applied for and won from Tesco's 'plastic bag' fund. This should enable some progress to be made during 2016. There have been hold ups due to overhead electricity cables having to be moved (for Health & Safety reasons). It should be noted that due to Cllr Penketh's research and diligence the £8000 cost for this work has been avoided. Dangerous trees owned by Swaton Court's owner are causing similar H&S issues and delays. Further Grant Applications cannot be made until all matters are resolved. H&S issues also necessitated some of the old 'vandalised' equipment to be disposed of.

Anti-Social behaviour has also caused a few problems in the Play Area and around the Bus Shelters. As a last resort the Police were involved and action was taken. IF you see something 'amiss', please report it to a Councillor or if more serious, call the Police 'non emergency' line on 101. If things are not reported they cannot be dealt with.

Our Litter Supremo, Henk Buijs, has once again surpassed himself, but has finally decided to 'retire' and hand over the mantle to someone else. Would anyone like to take on this prestigious position and organise 'Litter Walks' in and around the village ?

The two most consistent items on the Council's Agendas have been Speeding and Dog Fouling. We've tried most things over the years that don't cost considerably more money than we have, but the problems persist. At present we are looking at a Community Speedwatch scheme.

Further to last year's Lighting Survey, we now hear that due, once again, to Lincolnshire County Council's enforced Budget cuts, Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership is conducting a survey to determine if it is safe to switch off up to 3000 street lights on rural roads. More details will be available later in the year.

Thanks to LCC's 'Big Society' Grant we have been able to locate village benches at either end of the village. Thanks also to all involved with the planting of these, particularly Cllr Alan Wilson who lost a lot of sweat and was further drenched by the rain whilst digging the holes.

Last year I wrote : "The West End Flooding dialogues continue. We are 'Oh so slowly' moving towards action ! Chris Richardson and Barry Jeffrey have been appointed as our representatives to follow this through with The Environment Agency, LCC and Black

Sluice Drainage Board. There have been regular meetings and visits and they are expecting a 'Plan of Action' to be forthcoming 'soon'."

Nothing has really changed ! The various bodies are still looking at options including 'Flood Plains' and 'Overflow Containment' measures to the West of the village. Bank maintenance 'downstream' of the village has been improved, though, and I believe this did improve the speed at which this year's West End Flood subsided. The Environment Agency (and LCC) also found a little money to repair bank damage caused by a local farmer's irrigation equipment. I am hoping that they will re-charge this to him.

The quagmire on the Southern roadside of West End hasn't been improved. LCC Roadways are basically saying 'Our budget has been cut by 40% and we have to prioritise our spending'. This is not, apparently, one of their priorities.

The Swaton LIVES team continue to save lives ! New members are, however, required. Why not join ? Call Peter Penketh on 421769 for more details.

The issue of Grass Cutting in the village has come to the fore. LCC's budget cuts mean that as from April 2017 they will no longer pay the Council to have the grass cut anywhere in the village (or any other villages and towns). SO the debate at the moment is whether we raise the Precept (the amount of Income the Council receives from NKDC) to cover the cost - or not. If this were done there would be a £10 to £15 increase in everyone's Council Tax. The option is to try to keep the village trimmed ourselves. I'd like your opinions on this, please.

Our excellent Village Newsletter continues thanks to the efforts of Cllr Elaine Penketh.

We are obligated to produce a 'Village Emergency Plan'. This covers such (unlikely) eventualities as 3 ft of Snow closing down the village and Pandemics such as Ebola hitting us. This will soon be available thanks to the efforts of many including Peter Penketh, Richard Arnold and Mike Kempster. It will be distributed to each household.

We are also being asked to consider setting up a 'Digital Hub'. This is the provision of an Internet equipped computer and training for the villagers who don't have access to such a facility. Many things such as Job Searches, Brown Bin ordering, Unemployment claims and many Governmental necessities can now ONLY be done online. IF ANYONE in the village feels that this is required, please contact me on 421111.

AND FINALLY..... Many thanks must also go to our long-suffering, highly over-qualified Clerk, Shelagh, for doing her best to keep us on the straight and narrow during the year ! She steers us through the minefield of Governmental Bureaucracy - whilst hanging on to a (necessary) sense of humour.

In all, a busy and reasonably successful year for the Council.

Please contact any Councillor if you have concerns or feel that something needs to change. We will do our best to help.



Chairman to Swaton Parish Council

Swaton Parish Council

Responsible Financial Officer's Report

Financial Year 1st April 2015 to 31st March 2016

At present the Council holds funds 'On Trust' on behalf of 'The Swaton Village Fund' who's Bank Account was closed down (due to lack of use).

New Government guidelines do not allow us to include this within the Report of the Council's Accounts. The figures below do not include this.

The Council started the year with £3403.20 in the Bank.

During the year we received an income of £4899.03 PLUS £40.41 which was transferred (internally) from the Village Fund 'account'. £3047.15 of this came from NKDC for the Precept and Litter Picking and LCC for Grasscutting, £1000.00 from Swaton Vintage Day (for Playing Field only use), £370.00 LCC grant for village benches, £134.90 from the sale of old Play Equipment and £3.96 from NatWest for Bank Interest. 3 amounts of £40.41 were received from village bodies to help pay a very belated bill for electrical work and fitting the Defibrillator. The remainder was VAT reclaimed on expenses.

This was used for the Council's normal running expenses.

Our expenditure for the year was £3924.53 . This was spent on running the Council and maintaining the village, this included paying our Clerk, Stationary, Postage, Insurance, Training, Subscriptions, Hut Rental, Grasscutting, Litter Picking and VAT. One off extras were £370.00 for new benches, £161.63 billed 14 months late for Defibrillator fitting, £632.58 which we obliged to pay NKDC for the privilege of having an election in the village and VAT on some of the expenses (which is reclaimed).

Please note the Council's full Income and Expenditure accounts (unaudited at date of writing - and INCLUDING the Swaton Village Fund money until another account is opened) can be viewed on the Council's website : <http://www.swaton.org.uk/>

We finished the year with £4418.11 in the Bank. This balance does include £850.00 which is 'Ring Fenced' for the Playing Field. This amount consists of the £1000 donated by The Swaton Vintage Day LESS £150 which paid for the Lease of the field from The Crown and Grasscutting during the year.

Deducting the Playing field money leaves £3568.11 as the Parish Council's Reserves and Contingency fund. This Contingency fund is a Statutory Requirement.

The £4418.11 is carried forward into the 2015/2016 year.