

# Swaton Parish Council

## Chairman's Report

Parish Council Year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

Your Councillors have remained the same this year with me as Chairman (because no one else wants the 'job'), Andy Dunlop as Vice-Chairman and Chris Richardson, Elaine Penketh and Alan Wilson. I have taken over the post of Responsible Financial Officer. Even though Andy Dunlop has left the village, he is entitled to remain a Councillor until the next Elections in 2019 and has attended most meetings and plays an active part in the multitude of 'between meeting' discussions.

At last The Play Area has progressed and is now up and running with Swings, Seesaw and Zip Wire Ariel Runway. A Play Area Committee has been set up which is independent to the Council.

Phase 2 which is a wheelchair friendly Roundabout and a Basket Swing should be seen in the next few weeks thanks to a grant from the 'Awards For All Lottery Fund'. This will be followed shortly thereafter by a Metal and Timber 'Shelter'. This has been designed by Cllr. Wilson and he will build it with the help of John Wilkinson and others. Many hours of work have already gone into this project and lots more will be needed before it is up and running. All this time is given voluntarily. Thank you to all involved.

Phase 3, subject to further grants, is likely to be better goal posts and other pieces of Play equipment.

Grants are becoming harder and harder to come by, so the tenacity of Cllr. Penketh must be applauded. Some of the Grant application forms which all seem to need to be filled in differently can stretch to dozens of pages !

One of Elaine's greatest successes was to win a Grant from the Co-op for Phase 3. As many of you know, this entailed about 40+ Swaton Residents turning out one evening to vote for their 'Community Winners'. I am very proud to say that tiny Swaton absolutely annihilated the competition (from places as big as Newark) due to our exceptional turn out. Thank you all !

The amount of this Grant depends on plastic bag sales and 1% of shop sales from June to September, so please support your Lincolnshire Co-op Shops. Our closest is at Heckington. Billingborough is a different Co-op Society.

Volunteers (from as far away as Yorkshire....) came together earlier this year to dig out and place necessary entrance and root protection material in the Play Area. A supreme effort – in the rain.

Thanks should also go to Charles Champion who has taken the grass of the Play Area under his wing. It looks great ! His vigilance with the mole hills and his regular (rather comical) flattening attempts has also to be commended.

We have received a couple of reports of Dog Poo within the Play Area and have decided, a little reluctantly, that Dogs (and other pets) should not be allowed in. Signs will soon appear.

On the same subject 4 new combined Rubbish and Dog Poo (in bags) Bins have been purchased and will soon be placed around the village. This entails a massive 'Red Tape' process in getting permissions to place them from Lincs County Council Roadways, Western Power, Anglian Water and BT. Each of the 4 bins requires its own 'permission' from all of these !

The lack of Superfast Broadband for the residents at the North End of the village is still a problem. BT are being particularly unhelpful and representations from several bodies including our new MP, Caroline Johnson, appear to make little difference to their attitude. She awaits a response from BT.

Our Litter Supremo, Henk Buijs, has now left the village and many thanks go to John & June Lukjaniec who have taken over. I have no doubt that they would appreciate any help you could offer.

There is a possibility that an extra 'Roadway light' could be available in the High Street. We are competing for a tiny part of NKDC's budget on this.

Last year AND the year before, I wrote : "The West End Flooding dialogues continue". 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. The Environment Agency continues to 'employ' expensive Consultants to 'help' alleviate our problems. I despair !

As you were all informed in last year's message from me and in several Newsletters articles, Grass Cutting in the village has come to an end. The Council decided that rather than raise your Council Tax, which partly covers this cost, we would ask residents to look after their own frontages and help out with their neighbours if necessary. From Hilary at the North End of High Street and

Mick further South (to name but a few), your efforts have shown Swaton's Community spirit yet again. To date, most of the roadsides are looking as good as, if not better, than they did last year. Thank you all !  
The exception, at the moment, is some of the South side of West End beside the Eau. This is being monitored. Some residents actually like the idea of a 'nature / conservation' area !

Concerns have been raised about whether the bus services are continuing and whether the once a week bus to Boston is in jeopardy and that the Dial a Ride service is not as convenient as it has been. Cllr Dunlop continues to monitor the situation. "Transport Poverty" is a serious issue in villages such as ours.

Traffic Calming along the High Street has also been discussed at length. Sadly lack of available funds has postponed any further action. New batteries have been sourced for our existing 'Speed Indicator Signs' and John Lukjaniec has graciously taken over the role of Signs Administrator.

Public Footpath signs have been reinstated and Footpaths have been made more visible – this is an endless task ! No reply has yet been received from LCC about 'siding back' the footpaths. We are expecting the normal 'Budget Cuts' comments. However, once again, some residents have helped out and made a fantastic effort with some of the path clearing.

Our excellent Village Newsletter continues thanks to the efforts of Cllr Elaine Penketh. It's production is a thankless task it will never satisfy everyone. If you have anything relevant to go in, please contact Elaine.

The Village Emergency Plan mentioned last year was completed as far as possible before Lincs County Councils unworkable requirements scotched the idea of having it formally adopted. These requirements were MUCH too onerous for such a small village as ours. 40 or 50 regular 'volunteers' would have been required with such ridiculous requirements as always having a pillowcase available in case someone brought a snake to the Hut – and it escaped ! However – The Plan exists – If we have an Emergency, the village WILL spring into action ! But don't bring your snake to the Hut – without a pillowcase !

The Hut also deserves a mention. When I had it built, I was told by many at the time, that it was too big and would never pay it's way. The doubters were wrong ! Our Hut Committee run it very profitably and are even considering extending it ! Well done.

I've re-read this missive 7 or 8 times now, making corrections and adding and deleting bits each time. I've thanked a few individuals by name, but realise I've missed out many of the people who make Swaton such a great little community of which I am proud to be a part of. Thank you to you all !

AND FINALLY..... Yes – I've written the same again, but I'd never hear the last of it if it were missing..... 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 (subject to many, many constraints !)



Chairman to Swaton Parish Council

# Swaton Parish Council

## Responsible Financial Officer's Report

Financial Year 1st April 2016 to 31st March 2017

This year, £5172.21 which was held 'On Trust' on behalf of 'The Swaton Village Fund' has been donated to the Council for use in populating the Play Area. Thank you to the Trustees Chris Richardson and Barry Jeffrey for their generosity.

Thus, the Council started the year with £4418.11 in the Bank (which included £850.00 previously 'Ring Fenced' for the Play Area). The Village Fund transfer made this £9590.32

This is £3568.11 of Council Funds and £6022.21 of Play Area Funds.

It should be noted that ALL Play Area Income & Expenditure MUST go through the Council's coffers to enable the reclamation of VAT.

During the year we received an income of £24780.81. £6032.81 of this came from NKDC for the Precept and Litter Picking and LCC for Grasscutting, Bank Interest, Donations from other Parish Councils towards the cost of replacement SID batteries and VAT reclaimed. £18748.00 was Play Area Grants.

Our expenditure for the year was £19359.36 . £5794.36 of 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 on purchases. £13565.50 was spent on Play Area equipment and maintenance.

Please note the Council's full Income and Expenditure accounts (unaudited at date of writing) can be viewed on the Council's website : <http://www.swaton.org.uk/>

We finished the year with £15011.77 in the Bank. This is £3707.06 of Council Funds and £11304.71 Ring Fenced for the Play Area.

The £15011.77 is carried forward into the 2017/2018 year.



Responsible Financial Officer to Swaton Parish Council