

Swaton Parish Council

Chairman's Report

Parish Council Year 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018

A change to Your Councillors this year ! Due to Andy Dunlop's resignation, Saff Murphy-Mann has been co-opted onto the Council as your 5th Councillor. To continue the effort to introduce a bit of 'new blood' and ideas on to the Council, we have invited Judy Patrick and Charles Campion (who also put their names forward to replace Andy) to the Council as 'Village Coordinators'. They are not Councillors and cannot participate in any Council voting, but their comments are taken into account. Saff, Judy and Charles have attended a Training Session to give them an insight into how a Council runs and the multitude of constraints which apply.

In view of this additional interest, a decision has been made to start the application process of increasing the number of Swaton's Councillors from 5 to 7 (at no additional cost to Council Tax payers !). This is a long drawn out procedure involving NKDC, LCC and Central Government. Should our application be successful, the increase will take place in May 2019.

The Play Area has progressed further with Phase 3 adding the Shelter, Infant Swings, an Activity Trail and a 'Springer'.

The majority of the funding came from Lincolnshire Co-op (£9400) with grants from Bicker Wind Farm, Tesco and The Blakemore Foundation thanks to Elaine Penketh's tenacity. There was a magnificent donation of £2000 (via Andy Dunlop and you other 'members of the cast') from a Film Company who came to the village to make a 'Sport of Egg Throwing' advert !

Your Play Area Committee are now planning Phase 4 for 2018 which will include new goal posts and fencing to avoid balls being kicked onto neighbouring properties. As Grants are becoming harder and harder to come by, Fund Raising events are planned during the Summer to help with this.

A tremendous amount of work has gone into this Play Area, ably spearheaded by Councillors Elaine Penketh and Alan Wilson with a lot of help from villagers. You know who you are - Thank you !

Charles Campion continues to keep the grass in the field in pristine condition. What a difference a couple of years of TLC can make !

New bins have been placed at the North End of the village, near the bridge and at the West End junction with Pepper's Lane in the hope that Dog walkers will dispose of their dog poo bags in them. However, dog poo still causes concern. Another bin has been placed in the Play Area.

A pothole survey has been carried out and will be the main bone of contention with Lincs County Council at a forthcoming meeting. Their 'fixing' of the A52 potholes to the West of the Swaton crossroads will be highlighted as how NOT to do it !

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.

John & June Lukjaniec continue to keep the litter cleared within the village. They were recently presented with new 'litter pickers' (tongs) as they had worn the old ones out ! Thank you both. Any help with this task would be appreciated.

Finally (after 2 years of negotiations), an extra 'Roadway light' has appeared near where the Phonebox used to be, although it doesn't appear to be working yet ! Did anyone notice that the Phonebox has now gone ?.

The Environment Agency, LCC and Black Sluice Drainage Board continue to consult consultants and talk about our flooding problems and work that should be happening to the West of Swaton to alleviate the problems. However, we are told that Black Sluice spent about £300,000 modifying the Eau's banks near Bridge End. They finished just before our two most recent minor floods.....

As you are all no doubt aware, Lincs County Council stopped paying for the grass to be cut in the village. 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 and Charles 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 when LCC cut them. Thank you all !

Traffic Calming along the High Street has also been discussed at length. Sadly lack of available funds has postponed any further action. John Lukjaniec continues to deploy our existing mobile speed signs.

Three new houses have been given Planning approval in Swaton. One in Parson's Lane and two at Weighbridge Farm / Sally's Shop at the North end of the village.

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 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 its way. The doubters were wrong ! Our Hut Committee run it very profitably and are even considering extending it ! Well done.

In all, a busy and reasonably successful year for the Council. The Council had loads of other formal and boring things to contemplate which I didn't feel were worth adding to this Report !

Thanks once again to our Parish 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.

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 !

Please note that you can access details of forthcoming meetings, how to contact Councillors, rules and regulations, financial details etc. on the Council's website at www.swaton.org.uk/ YOU are very welcome to attend all Parish Council Meetings.

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 !)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Alan D. Leonard'.

Chairman to Swaton Parish Council

Swaton Parish Council

Responsible Financial Officer's Report

Financial Year 1st April 2017 to 31st March 2018

The Council started the year with £15011.27 in the Bank.

This is £3707.06 of Council Funds and £11304.71 'ring fenced' Play Area Funds.

After Play Area Income and Expenditure the 'ring fenced' Play Area Funds are £2051.88 at the end of the year.

The Council received £2500.00 Precept from NKDC and other Income of £149.17. A total Income of £2649.17

The Council's Expenditure for the year (which includes employing our underpaid Clerk, paying her expenses and things like Repairs & Renewals, Auditor, Insurance and Training costs) was £2054.15, so we ended up with £595.02 more than we started with, finishing the year with £4358.20 in the Bank. The Mathematicians among you will note that the figures don't balance until a £56.12 carry over of VAT to be reclaimed is taken into account.

The fact that we consistently spend less than we earn and have built up a 'kitty' of over £4300 in the Council's account is much to do with the Council's wish to get the best value for money for the village. We are 'tight' !

Unfortunately, we are obliged by Governmental Regulations to Budget certain sums for such things as Council Elections (which could cost up to £1000) and 'Reserves and Contingencies'.

It should be noted that as Responsible Financial Officer, I proposed a budget for the 2018/2019 year which involved reducing the 'precept' (which is what NKDC pays the Council – some of which comes from your Council Tax). However, my proposal was outvoted by the rest of the Council and the precept will remain the same (as the last 5 or 6 years) at £2500. Although this remains the same to the Council, it actually shows on your Council Tax Bill as a 30 pence increase (Band D). This is due to Central Government decreasing their grant towards Council Tax to NKDC. Please feel free to blame Brexit, Donald Trump or the Council members who voted me down.....

The considerations for keeping the precept the same involved more village improvements and help (if further grants are not forthcoming) with the Play Area's Phase 4 plans.

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/>



Responsible Financial Officer to Swaton Parish Council