

## SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

**THE SWANTON MORLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING** was held Monday 19<sup>th</sup> May 2025 at 7pm at Swanton Morley Village Hall and was attended by three Parish Councillors and 5 members of the public. Also in attendance was Mrs K. Pickard (Clerk to the Council).

The meeting was chaired by Mr R Atterwill, Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council

### **1. To Welcome Members of Breckland Council to provide an update on the Local Development Plan**

Councillor Atterwill welcomed Sarah Suggett, Deputy Leader of Breckland Council and Simon Wood, Planning Director for Breckland Council.

Mr Wood reported that the NPPF guidance changes that came into effect in December 2024 included new housing standard methodology and the housing requirement is now up from 625 to 903 houses per year. Due to this, Breckland Council have had to produce a Local plan that demonstrates how this can be delivered.

In February 2025 Breckland Council went out for a call for sites, around 100 additional sites have been put forward.

Breckland Council will be looking at all of the constraints including flooding, health, education and highways and take a view on what they can come up with as to which area would be the best for those houses.

There is a meeting scheduled the following day with Parish and Town councils to set out their approach to this and are seeking to engage with relevant town and Parish councils.

Mr Wood touched upon the future of Robertson barracks and said that this site is still being looked at as it is still down to be decommissioned from 2031. There us no set number of houses earmarked for the site as yet.

Mr Marsham said that he would like to see the airfield destroyed he would like to see the airfield for solar panels and to retain the original runway. That will then preserve the grass and it is an ideal location. If there are lots of houses there would be a flood risk for the Wensum.

Sarah Suggett referred to affordable housing, the housing register not building enough houses for requirements.

People get stuck in temporary accommodation as there are not enough homes available for them.

A housing strategy was adopted in September this is reviewed with a team working together to do the best for the residents.

### **2. Apologies for Absences**

### **3. Chairman's Report – Mr Roger Atterwill, Chairman of Parish Council**

The Chairman's report had been distributed to the village. This report focussed on the past year highlights for the village and updates on upcoming projects.

There was an update on the Parish Council Team welcoming Councillor Brian Powter to the team.

The report also included details on the current council tax bill and budget for the forthcoming year.

Mr Atterwill also detailed various work that is due to be carried out including the new addition to the swings in Gooseberry Hill Play park.

Councillor Atterwill's full report is available on the Parish Council website and has been delivered to each household in the Village

### **4. To Agree Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Councillor Walker-Fraser proposed the minutes are accepted seconded by Councillor Venworth and carried

## **5. Matters arising from the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**

None were raised

## **6. Reports from Village Organisations**

**The following groups provided a report for the meeting and these are available on the website**

### **a) Link Up Annual Report received from Laurie Brooks**

Link Up magazine continues to prove popular to the long-standing readership, and the local circulation numbers remain constant, plus they have increased in the outer-lying areas. Regular household deliveries go to Swanton Morley, Beetley & East Bilney, Hoe and Worthing. Further afield we deliver to Dereham, Woodgate, North Elmham, Billingford and we even post out magazines to Essex! Local shop sales are consistent and summer visitors taking advantage of holiday accommodation, invariably result in increased sales. We much appreciate the loyalty of our regular readers, and are grateful for the custom of many advertisers who continue to support the magazine. Like all goods and services, due to the rising cost of our only overhead, printing, we have been forced to increase our prices, but fortunately, a tranche of keen volunteers delivering magazines each month, has kept that increase to a minimum. To all those incredible volunteers we offer our heartfelt thanks. Volunteers Daphne Palmer, and Moira Poole, remain in post as our treasurer, and delivery co-ordinator respectively. The planned introduction of a new editor last year was unsuccessful and Laurie Brooks has continued in the role and is currently taking steps to find a replacement or even someone to share the task. Meantime we look forward to another year serving the community providing news and information of the local churches, parish councils and their services, plus the many and varied local groups and their activities.

### **b) Mill Common – Received from Mr T Harris**

End of season grazing report of Mill Common Swanton Morley by H E Harris & Sons.

The farming year is always different in so many ways, no two are the same. If we cast our minds back, May was much cooler and followed an extremely wet winter and spring. We moved 4 of our pedigree Simmental heifers onto Mill Common in May. Two year old Silvia and May had been to our bull and these girls arrived together with 15 month old Snowy and Bunny for a summer on the common.

Water levels had been high, the river ran full and normally under the canopy of the willow trees would be soft under foot, however this season water laid deeper than the tops of my wellies for the whole expanse. The Pussy Willow had cast its flower heads, and these laid on top of the water like a huge grey carpet. This area hardly dried out all summer.

Nevertheless, the grazing looked good and was plentiful on arrival. I wonder how many of you considered how few times you had to cut your lawns this year? We certainly had the early rain yet didn't have the warmth, and when later we did get some lovely sunshine, of course we failed to have sufficient rain to promote good grass growth. That's farming! Fortunately, the common supports much more than just the pasture grasses.

Whilst some things might find conditions difficult to flourish others take the lead. It was interesting to note how well the Water Mint was growing in one area, the reeds certainly did well and the cattle spent a while laying in these when they couldn't use the willows.

Yellow Iris were plentiful on the river edge, and an abundance of Buttercups too.

A couple of highlights for me was seeing Goats Beard, a wild flower which flowers like a dandelion, except it is distinctive, in the flower head is almost the size of a tennis ball. I would notice one then another and another, not long lasting, so a joy to see when I could.

For me the star of the show were the beautiful Marsh Orchids. Again not long lasting and last year I was only able to locate them in one small area, however this year they had spread much further up the pasture and were in greater numbers. If the cattle and their trod have helped promote this then I'm a happy man.

I did see again the caterpillars of the Cinnabar Moth on the Ragwort, we avoided removing these plants but cleared where we could. It really was a season for this plant, it grew everywhere it could, you may recall just how yellow the roadside verges and embankments looked?

We introduced a British Blue cow from our herd in August, weaning her off her calf, the common provided her a good opportunity to regain her condition in the remaining few weeks of the season.

By September the pasture grass had been well grazed, just leaving the tussocks of the taller grasses and by October the in calf heifers looked very well, the younger animals have matured and Lilly without the constant demand of her calf had regained her form.

We would again wish to thank Swanton Morley Parrish Council for the use of the Common, I certainly enjoy my time walking through the cattle in these surroundings and enjoying nature.

A special thank you to also to Bernie Marsham, as we are grateful to be able to access the Common with transport across his land.

### **c) The Shelf Pop-Up Pantry – Received from Citizens Advice, Diss**

#### Introduction

The Shelf Pop Up Pantry is a mobile social supermarket funded by Citizens Advice Diss and Thetford, Norfolk Community Foundation and Breckland Council.

We support rural communities across Breckland by setting up a shop in village halls, community centres and churches and providing healthy food and essentials at each stop. Members of the community are encouraged to come along and join (membership is £3.50) and use the shop, we also can give light touch advice, refer our members to relevant organisations if they are struggling.

Achievements so far in Swanton Morley.

We have provided food assistance to 38 families in the last five months, demonstrating the growing need for our services.

We have referred 6 families onto organisations that are able to help them further.

Volunteers have dedicated over 56 hours ensuring smooth operations and fostering a strong sense of local solidarity.

We have collaborated with Barclays bank, they've provided a local service to help with money management, digital banking, fraud and scams advice and more.

We have partnered with Norfolk Community Law Services who are providing a monthly drop-in service where our members can access a 15-minute legal advice session and with a solicitor. We are hoping to extend our outreach for other services.

#### Awareness and Accessibility

Reaching all those in need remains our priority, with efforts ongoing to improve communication and access to services.

#### Conclusion.

The Shelf Pop Up Pantry continues to be a vital community asset, demonstrating the power of collective support of the parish council, the community and of course this wonderful community who contribute to its success.

The Pop-Up pantry runs every Tuesday morning from 10am until 12pm.

### **d) Barrett's Charity – John Carrick**

In 1488, Thomas Barrett, in his Will, left 52 acres of land to the south of Swanton Morley to provide an income for a priest to say Mass for his soul.

This income passed in the 16th Century to the Churchwardens, who used it to discharge their duties which included the repair of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the upkeep of the roads.

In Victorian times, most of their jobs were taken over by local councils and by 1952 the Charity Commissioners redefined the purpose of Barrett's Charity as: half to maintain the Church and half to assist persons in need in the parish.

Though the Trustees occasionally make donations for an emergency, their custom for many years has been to give a little gift where it is thought helpful at Christmas to the older members of the community. The Trustees hope they find it does a bit to bring some seasonal cheer and that they may spare a thought for Thomas Barrett, way back in the time of Henry VII and the kindness he has brought to those in need and the elderly of the village over all those years.

**e) Friends of Swanton Morley Church**

The AGM was held a week prior and John Carrick formally resigned as Chairman after 10 years of service, Mr Hyde was elected Chairman.

Events plan for 2025, including June 8<sup>th</sup> at Castle Farm for the annual duck race.

The Friends would like to get more members over the next few months.

There are items the Church would like to spend some funds on and these will be considered in the coming months.

**f) Swanton Morley Shed Project – Report received by Mr Bob Almond**

Over the course of the last 12 months, Swanton Morley Shed has gone from being a potentially great idea to an active, practical creative community. On Wednesday mornings, anything up to a dozen of us gather – our first task was to get our work space in order. A grant from the Norfolk Community Foundation’s ‘Love Norfolk’ fund helped set us up with some tools, with safety equipment, and with all the appropriate insurance. Donations from local individuals, and from local businesses, helped us to get our space in order. A special mention should be made of our hosts – Jason, Louise and their family have welcomed us and allowed us to shape a workshop to suit our needs. And that’s meant that we have been able to get cracking on projects for our local community.

We’ve been present at the Duck Race, contributed to the D-Day celebrations, made doorstops for Priscilla Bacon Lodge, helped Swanton Morley school build picnic tables, made display equipment for Swaffham museum, and refurbished notice boards for All Saints Church.

We’d love to increase the number of people coming along to our Shed sessions, and we have plans to expand the social activity side – we plan to find ways to share skills and crafts more widely. So many skills are at risk as technology takes over in so many areas, and we have such a wonderful reservoir of talents and abilities that we can pass on to others. So please give us a try – bring a project of your own, or be ready to get involved in one of the things we’re doing just now.

Where next? We would love to receive suggestions of projects that we can get involved with. We hope to build relationships with local caring groups and community organisations.

**g) Little Swans Pre-School – Report received from Mrs Lisa Syer**

We are currently quieter than usual with 26 children and families using the provision, with several families to join later in the year.

A ‘Bear Hunt’ fundraiser was held with families support raising over £500 and a tombola at Swanton Morley School summer fayre later in Summer– donations of teddies would be welcome.

In the garden area children are creating a sunflower teepee and we are looking forward to seeing them and the pumpkins grow.

A big thank you to John Phillips for keeping our garden safe.

Little Swans continues to invest in toys and equipment to ensure the children of little swans have access to a wide variety of activities enabling them to explore and develop their full potential.

A sensory area has been created in the setting for children to access anytime they need.

At the end of June an exciting trip for the school leavers has been organised to Roarr Dinosaur Park.

Little Swans like to invite people into share any activities with the children, if you are interested please get in touch. Previously organised visits from a librarian, doctors and dentists.

On a personal note I would like to thank Little Swans, staff, parents, committee members and Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council in helping me celebrate my 20 years anniversary.

Lisa Syer

**7. To receive a report from Norfolk County Councillor**

The report is available on the website.

## **8. To receive a report from District Council**

Dear Resident,

It is my great privilege to serve as your Breckland District Councillor here in the Lincoln Ward. Here is a brief summary of my work on your behalf during the last year:-

### **Budget & Council Tax**

For the financial year 2025-2026 Breckland Council has increased its share of your council tax bill to £118.53 for a Band D property. This is an increase of £4.95 above last year. Like many households the Council also continues to face financial headwinds, and it has had to utilise some of its financial reserves and implement a programme of efficiency savings. Having spent a lot of time with senior council officers reviewing the budget as well as meeting with the Leader of the Council and the Leader of the Opposition, I was content to support this year's budget. I continue to challenge the Council where I have concerns about financial matters. One particular area of concern I have raised is the need for the Council to take a more ethical approach to its overseas investment portfolio. I am pleased that they have now made some positive progress in this area.

### **Local Development Plan Review**

Following the election of the new government last Summer, Breckland Council paused all of its work on the review until the new National Planning Policy Framework was published in December. As a result of this Breckland Council is now required to build significantly more homes than previously anticipated. Having recently restarted its review, the Council has now carried out an additional consultation asking for more possible development sites to come forward. Consultation with Town and Parish Councils will also soon take place to try and determine where new homes can be built to fulfil the Council's housing target of 903 homes per year.

### **The Future of Robertson Barracks**

Breckland Council in my view is taking a very pragmatic approach to this site. It recognises that a lot of detailed work around transport links, utilities, green infrastructure and good quality design will need to be produced before a realistic assessment of potential housing and employment growth can be determined. I will continue to engage with all relevant stakeholders including Defence Infrastructure Organisation to try and get the best possible outcome for the current local community and future generations. It must be remembered that any development of this site will likely take many years to complete if the base closes as currently planned in 2031.

### **Community Car Schemes**

Last year I was made aware of complaints made by some volunteer drivers and the co-ordinators about what they perceive is the onerous demands placed upon them by Breckland Council. These relate to the requirement for regular medical checks. It is felt that these can be off-putting for prospective new drivers and place an increased administrative burden on the Co-ordinator. I am pleased that at my request, Council officers have reviewed their scheme criteria and have now issued revised requirements to all car schemes across the district. The new requirements now align with those stipulated by the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency. It is my hope that this will result in less administrative work and a more sensible level of checks for drivers and co-ordinators.

### **Local Government Reorganisation and Devolution**

Residents will probably know by now that the new government has put Norfolk and Suffolk on a fast track programme to establish a combined mayoral authority for the two counties and on the current planned trajectory, an election for this post will take place in May 2026. Running alongside this is the planned local government re-organisation for Norfolk & Suffolk. Here in our county this will result in the abolition of Norfolk County Council, Norwich City Council and the six district councils including Breckland. In their place will likely be two or three unitary councils. Elections for these new councils are currently projected to take place in 2027 or 2028. Local councils now have until September to submit

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to the government their vision for unitary councils in Norfolk. The government will make the final decision. There is still a great deal of uncertainty about all of this but in principle I support these aims. Yes, there is likely to be additional cost to get these new authorities up and running but I believe that in the long run these new structures could be more efficient and provide better services for Norfolk residents. I think we should embrace this opportunity to modernise our existing council structures which have not been changed for over fifty years.

#### Proposed Introduction of Car Parking Charges

After some bitter opposition from some local traders, opposition councillors and many local residents and having spent almost £100,000 on the consultation process, the Council's cabinet decided to pause the introduction of car parking charges in our town centres. They have cited the proposed local government reorganisation as its main reason for doing so. I welcome this pause and I hope it will be an indefinite one. I opposed the introduction of these charges because I was unhappy with the findings of the consultant's report commissioned by the council and also what I consider to be the negative effect this would have on hard pressed local businesses and their employees.

#### Supporting our Military Families

I was troubled to find out last year that some of our service personnel and their families based at Robertson Barracks are living in substandard accommodation on the base. Some of these homes are very poorly insulated, suffer from damp and mould and have very expensive inefficient electric heating. This makes the cost of energy very expensive and impacts on other aspects of their household budgets such as everyday shopping. Last summer I met with representatives from the 1st Queens Dragoon Guards welfare team to try and develop more targeted support. In November I attended a meeting at the base with senior officers, local housing officials and Phil Riley, Director of Accommodation - Defence Infrastructure Organisation. We inspected some of the housing and afterwards met some of the affected families so Mr Riley could hear first hand of their experiences living on the base. A decision was taken by Mr Riley at that meeting to provide over 60 families with rent relief over the winter to help them with their energy costs and a promise to work up a plan to upgrade these houses. Further to this I am very pleased to note that the new government has since bought back MOD housing from the previous private sector housing provider and in April Mr Riley confirmed to me that under new housing standards introduced by the government, the houses at Robertson Barracks would be included in the first 1000 service family homes to be refurbished. Our armed forces and their families deserve to be properly supported and my hope now, with increased focus by the government, is that the standard of all military housing will be greatly improved across the entire MOD estate. I would also like to place on record my thanks to the leader of the council, Sam Chapman-Allen who has supported me in this endeavour and who, following a request from me, has pledged to review the Council's contribution towards the Armed Forces Covenant Board, increasing the annual budget from £5,000 to £20,000 from next year.

#### Casework

As part of my casework I have managed to help a number of struggling local families and individuals receive additional financial support as well as putting them in touch with other professional bodies and charities where they can receive additional help and guidance. I can and often do help with concerns relating to antisocial behaviour, housing, street sweeping, environmental health matters, business support and backing community grant funding applications.

#### Your Councillor

As well as my day to day duties as your councillor, I am also the leader of the Independent & Green Group at Breckland Council. I am now starting my seventh year as a member of the planning committee and I am also a substitute member of the Overview & Scrutiny Commission and Governance & Audit Committee.

Yours Sincerely

Roger Atterwill

Ward member – Lincoln Ward

Email: [roger.atterwill@breckland.gov.uk](mailto:roger.atterwill@breckland.gov.uk)

Tel: 07841 488860

## 9) Report on the Management of Swanton Morley Village Hall

Swanton Morley Village Hall has had a good year during 2024/2025.

Over the last twelve months the Village provided a venue for 6 weddings, 52 private parties, 1940s Tea Dance, Wellbeing fayres, Gardening club, Poultry Show, Dog Agility and Fireworks spectacular to name a few.

The Community café continues to run every Tuesday morning and provides coffee/tea and cake and fruit bowls. Our lovely new volunteer Sharon is a welcome addition to the team who gives her time to serve all members of the community.

In conjunction with this we now have the pop up pantry, an initiative run by the CAB in Diss and supported by Breckland Council. They provide cost effective food and home consumables as well as any advice required.

We still have the comfy corner in the bar area, and this can be used by anyone that would like to pop in for a bit of support as the office staff are mental health champions and have the tools to signpost to the right agencies if you are in need.

The Village Hall were also a lucky recipient of a £1,400 warm hub fund during the winter period, this enabled us to open up the warm space four days a week and provide a hot drink in a warm and welcoming environment.

The Village Hall were able to restore the main hall floor this year, bringing it back to life for the heavy foot flow that the building has.

As reported in 2024 the Village Hall had the upgrade to the lighting to LED, this has been proven to have had a positive effect on the electricity consumption.

Earlier this year the Village Hall was successful in securing £10,000 grant funding from Norfolk Community Foundation, in order to install solar panels on the roof of the building in June 2025.

Future projects that are planned for the Village Hall include redecoration of the ladies, disabled toilet and the changing rooms.

We were happy to welcome the return of the fireworks spectacular in 2024, this proved to be another wonderful event enjoyed by all.

This June we will be welcoming a new event to the building, this is the Norfolk Strongest Man/Woman presented by Big Andy's Gym. This event is open to spectators and the bar will be open.

Thank you to our regular hirers, private hirers and everyone who has continued to support the village hall over the past year – we hope to see you again very soon.

## **10. Update report on the Neighbourhood Plan Review**

The 6 Week public consultation ended a few weeks ago and the consultant is currently working through the responses. A further meeting is due to be held of the Steering Group to go through these responses. Councillor Atterwill is grateful for the time and effort of the Steering Group members. There are some new policies and so far, the feedback has been positive.

Councillor Atterwill wanted to give thanks to Jim Venworth – Gooseberry Hill playing field reopened today following the grant funding received for the new swings.

Councillor Atterwill referred to the sink hole, he is pleased with what the contractors are doing on site at Davidson Park. They are the original contractors and repairing this free of charge.

## **11. Parishioners questions**

A member of the public who used to live in army quarters shared his utter respect to Councillor Atterwill for what he is doing to try and help with the living conditions.

He wanted to thank the Clerk in helping the parishioner with medical transport.

He did raise a bus route complaint as the route has had some issues.

Councillor Atterwill reassured the public that he and the Clerk are still working with Konect to make this better.

Councillor Atterwill also suggested that it would be very beneficial to restate the Community Car Scheme up and running again. In order to do this, there would need to be a dedicated co-ordinator and voluntary drivers.

The Parishioner also relayed issues in being seen at Swanton Morley Surgery rather than North Elmham, Councillor Walker-Fraser responded that North Elmham need to find ways to look at its resource base due to a loss of income following the closure of Toftwood surgery.

Mr Almond wanted to say it was great news about the solar panels on the Village Hall. He asked if following the boiler upgrade has it been more sustainable.

The Clerk confirmed that yes the oil bill was considerably reduced.

He asked if the wind turbine can go back into productive operation. Councillor Atterwill responded that the Village hall receive no statements on this. Its is on a 20 year contract.

A member of the public referred to the Waterfalls. He thanked John Carrick for the access to the waterfalls. He did ask as we are coming into the warmer months, could there be double yellow lines painted on the road to stop the residents parking? Councillor Atterwill responded that this would not be considered as there would need to be a road traffic order costing £10,000 in order to paint the lines.

The member of the public had concerns about younger people walking in the road.

## **12. Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next Annual Parish Meeting is Monday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2026.

The meeting closed at 8.32pm

\_\_\_\_\_ (Chairman) \_\_\_\_\_ Date