



SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

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SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL – CHAIRMAN’S REPORT 2017

Dear Resident,

I am delighted to provide you with this year’s Swanton Morley Parish Council annual report. Ours is a vibrant village and the last year has been another period of successes. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of our achievements and work to come in the year ahead.

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL TEAM

I would like to pay tribute to our Clerk, Faye Lebon for all of her hard work, much of which is done behind the scenes but without whom, we simply could not function properly. In addition to her normal duties she also recently completed her four year foundation degree course in Community Governance. Last summer the parish office located in the village hall was extended and refurbished. The building work was paid for by the Village Hall Trust. We are pleased to welcome Kelly Pickard who has recently joined us as a part time Administration Assistant to work with Faye. Our new office facility and enhanced team has allowed us to increase the opening times for the office to help provide you with a better service. Our opening times are now Monday and Tuesday 10–2 and Friday 10-12. You are welcome to make appointments outside of these opening hours and our staff will endeavour to accommodate this.

VILLAGE HALL

It is now 7 years since the Parish Council became the sole managing trustee of the Swanton Morley Village Hall Trust. I am pleased to report that the Village Hall Trust remains in very good financial shape and has seen a continuing increase in the number of hirers. Faye and Kelly carry out all of the financial, administration and marketing duties for the hall and will provide a more detailed report at the Annual Parish Meeting. The Trust also employs a caretaker, two cleaners and bar staff. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank Ursula and Brian Moulton for their kind work in planting up and maintaining our flower beds at the front of the building. In the coming year we will be installing a disabled/pushchair friendly kissing gate between the village hall field and Harkers Lane to improve accessibility. We are also now starting the process of investigating possible funding opportunities to construct a footpath between this new gate and the village hall car park. We hope that these measures will encourage more walking and cycling to the village hall.

PLAYING FIELDS

We have recently applied for grant funding to help carry out two projects in the coming year. One of these is to install a seesaw at the Gooseberry Hill playing field (£1,200 applied for) and another is to install various items of adult outdoor gym equipment at the village hall (£5,120 applied for). The funding we have applied for is from developer contributions held by Breckland Council. We should hear in April if we have been successful.

COMMON LANDS

In relation to Mill Common and Burgh Common, we continue to work closely with Natural England and the Environment Agency. The Parish Council will this year erect information boards on both Mill Common and Burgh Common. The latter will also have a picnic table installed to help people enjoy this beautiful area next to the River Wensum

CHURCHYARD & BURIAL GROUND

At the churchyard we now have a new bench installed overlooking the bowling green which has been paid for by a generous donation received from a member of the public. Visitors to the church might have noticed that the churchyard has undergone a very pleasing transformation in the last year thanks to the fantastic voluntary effort of Chris Beal. He has worked singlehandedly to improve both the appearance and accessibility of the churchyard and the end result has been very impressive. I would like to place on record our sincere thanks to Chris for all of his hard work. At the burial ground we are currently working to improve the memorial rose garden and this will be completed very soon.

HIGHWAYS

Despite previous promises, Norfolk County Council (NCC) has not yet upgraded the 60 year old concrete footpaths in Thompson Close. This has been further complicated by discussions we had in December 2015 with Breckland Council which owns and maintains the grass verges in this area. They would like the Parish Council to take over ownership of these small grass areas but we have advised them that we are unwilling to do so because legal rights of way do not seem to have been established/clarified for homeowners and especially those who currently drive over or park vehicles on the grass. After 16 months we are still waiting for a formal response from Breckland Council. The long awaited surface water drainage scheme for Manns Lane was completed last year. The new footpath improvements along Harkers Lane are also now complete making this much more accessible all year round. We continue to be very proactive in pressing Norfolk County Council to carry out minor highway repairs in a timely manner. Looking to the forthcoming financial year I am pleased to advise that the Parish Council has been successful in obtaining 50% grant funding from Norfolk County Council for two projects. The first is a £9,476 scheme to install kerbing on one side of Rectory Road starting at the junction with Town Street and finishing near Hill Bungalow. The second £6,200 scheme is to supply and install two SAM2 speed detection signs. These flash up the actual vehicle speed and record statistical data which we can pass on to the Police. These signs will be interchanged every four weeks at eight different positions in the village.

ALLOTMENTS

We are pleased that the allotments continue to be a success. All 29 plots are currently let and it is very satisfying to see people of all ages enjoying this popular community asset. The amount and variety of produce grown on the site is very pleasing. I would like to take this opportunity to thank everyone involved with the Swanton Morley Allotment & Recreational Trust (S.M.A.R.T.) for their ongoing assistance in managing the site. I would also like to thank the parishioner who on occasions leaves a small parcel of fresh vegetables on my doorstep which they have grown on their allotment. It is very kind gesture and much appreciated. You know who you are!

COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

Swanton Morley Community Car Scheme remains a vital service for the village. This scheme is designed to provide low cost transport for parishioners, who cannot access transport by any other means, for medical related appointments. Drivers are reimbursed a set amount for each mile they

travel. The passenger pays 50% of the journey cost with the Parish Council and Breckland Council each paying 25% respectively. This scheme is only possible thanks to the dedication and organisational skills of its co-ordinator, Anne Sadler, who I would like to thank once again for all of her hard work this year, and also the volunteer drivers who give up their spare time to help our community.

COMMUNITY WELLBEING

The Parish Council now owns the old telephone box outside the shops. We plan to turn this into a community information point this year and we are currently investigating ways other communities across the country have done this so as to give us some useful ideas. At Christmas we received a very kind donation from the village's Barrett's Charity to help pay for a second village defibrillator to be installed on the outside of this old telephone box. The Parish Council has made an allowance in its 2017/18 budget to provide the remaining money required to complete this project. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Nancy Briggs who has generously supplied and planted the spring bulbs on the traffic island. I am sure you will agree that these look lovely. The Parish Council also provided a limited supply of free daffodil bulbs to those parishioners who wanted to brighten up the verges in their area. Spring is finally here and the flowers look lovely.

At Christmas we held our first 'Carols on the Green' event on the village green. This was very well attended by local people and along with our Christmas trees and lighting display helped the village get into the festive spirit. Dereham Town Band and Dereham Round Table provided the entertainment and the event was organised by the Parish Council and village businesses. By popular demand we will be holding this event again this year on December 2nd. Further details will be provided nearer the time.

The Meadow View development located on Rectory Road is nearing completion now and the lawyers are working on the final details for the transfer of the green open space to the ownership of the Parish Council. Once this is completed we will be organising a lasting memorial for the site and an event to commemorate the fallen soldiers attached to the Light Dragoons after which each road has been named. It is hoped that this will happen later in the summer.

PLANNING

It is not an exaggeration to say that planning has dominated the work of the Parish Council throughout the last twelve months. As well as dealing with various planning applications we have also been very proactive in working with Breckland Council in relation to their Local Area Plan and how it will affect Swanton Morley. There has been numerous working group meetings held in the district and myself and our Clerk, Faye have tried between us to attend most of these. Breckland Council is behind schedule with this plan but they tell us it should now be adopted by the end of 2017. As part of this plan Swanton Morley is earmarked to have an additional 85 dwellings built and these will mainly be built on the piece of land at the corner of Rectory Road and Hoe Road East. According to Breckland Council's own projections the population of Swanton Morley will be 20% higher in 2036 than it was at the time of the last census taken in 2011.

We also have on our 'radar' three further significant challenges for the village. The first is the announced closure of Robertson Barracks in 2031. It will be very important for the Parish Council to have a dialogue with the MOD, Norfolk County Council and Breckland Council at the earliest possible time to discuss the future use of the site. Secondly, it has been well documented in the local press that Dereham has a very pressing problem with its lack of foul sewage infrastructure. Originally it was the intention of Anglian Water to install a new facility in Mattishall to handle this. In recent weeks the emphasis has shifted to Swanton Morley. It is our understanding that Anglian Water are currently

drawing up plans to install new underground pipework in 2018 from Dereham to the existing sewage works on Worthing Road in Swanton Morley. At this time we have no more details than this but we hope to have a meeting with representatives from Breckland Council and Anglian Water very soon so that we can better understand the proposals. The third challenge for our village is the proposed high voltage underground cabling that is currently proposed to be installed very close to/through Woodgate. This cabling will carry power from a new North Sea Windfarm called Norfolk Vanguard to a substation located near Necton. This project is still in its consultation phase and if approved work will commence sometime after 2020.

The Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan is progressing very well. I would like to thank everyone who has attended our public consultation events and submitted comments about our draft plan. Our consultant is now working through these as well as comments received from all of the stakeholders such as Breckland Council, Norfolk County Council and Ministry of Defence. The Steering Group will consider these responses and make any changes it feels are necessary before submitting the final document for consideration by an independent examiner. It is hoped that a village referendum on the final document will take place in the Autumn and if approved by a simple majority vote it will then be given legal status. I would like to place on record my sincere thanks to everyone who has volunteered to be a member of the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group. As a group we have had some very robust discussions and I think our plan is the better for this.

The Parish Council always strives to be well informed and fights very hard to get what we feel is in the best interests of the village both now and in the future. Needless to say, when it comes to planning we cannot possibly hope to please everybody all of the time. I know that the prospect of new housing can for some be an emotive subject. Planning applications can set neighbour against neighbour and friend against friend. This is regrettable. Good communication is always the best way of alleviating such tensions. Our village is currently growing very fast and given the current direction of travel by both the Government and Breckland Council this will not change in the foreseeable future. Recently the Government published a white paper regarding more proposed changes to the planning system in order to promote more house building and we will need to try and adapt to these changes when they come. What we can do is try and influence how our village will grow and see if we can obtain improvements/additions to our local infrastructure and amenities to compliment the additional housing. The Neighbourhood Plan is our best chance of achieving this and is recognised as such by the Government. Please be patient while we work hard to complete this process.

This is a time of great change for Swanton Morley as it grows and we welcome new residents moving into our new houses. I hope you will join me in extending the hand of friendship to all of our new parishioners and help them settle in.



ROGER ATTERWILL
CHAIRMAN, SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

27th March 2017