

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2019

Dear Resident,

I am delighted to provide you with this year's Swanton Morley Parish Council annual report. The last year has been another busy period. I would like to take this opportunity to share with you some of the work the Parish Council has carried out on your behalf:-

YOUR PARISH COUNCIL TEAM

In December, after twelve and a half years, we said goodbye to our Clerk, Faye Lebon who has moved to a full-time role as Clerk with a larger parish. She has our thanks for all of her hard work and we wish her the very best for the future. Our Administration Assistant, Kelly Pickard has been promoted to the role of Clerk and we have appointed a new Administration Assistant, Maddi Heinrich. Both Kelly and Maddi live in Swanton Morley and are passionate about the village. A great deal of hard work is being done to improve our communications with you. By now you will have received a copy of the new improved Mardler. A new website is being developed and more emphasis is being placed on regular social media updates via Facebook and Twitter. The parish noticeboards have also been refreshed. A lot of work is also being done behind the scenes to update our office systems. The opening times for our Parish Office located in the village hall are now Monday, Tuesday, Thursday & Friday 10am – 2pm and Wednesday 10am – 12pm. You are welcome to make appointments outside of these opening hours and our staff will endeavour to accommodate this. In the last year we have had a full team of nine Parish Councillors. Regrettably there will be no election for the Parish Council this year. Bernie Marsham and Keith Tidman are standing down and there have been no other candidates put themselves forward for election. Your Parish Councillors from May will be Roger Atterwill, Brenda O'Dowd, Steve Westbury, Seamus O'Dowd, Geoffrey Curran, Jose Rodrigues and John Keen. We will endeavour to fill the two vacancies in the near future.

YOUR COUNCIL TAX BILL

This year the Swanton Morley Parish Council element of your council tax bill has increased by 9.4%. For a Band D property this means an increase of £10.16 for the year. There are a number of factors why this is the case. Firstly, our tax base (number of households paying council tax) has decreased. In 2013/2014 the Government introduced something called the Council Tax Support Grant for which we received a contribution towards our precept. This has now been phased out and we no longer receive this assistance. In addition to this the Parish Council has had to budget for the cost of this year's elections whether they happen or not. We have included in our budget more money for Highway improvements as part of Norfolk County Council's Parish Partnership scheme (project costs are shared 50:50), additional street furniture such as seats, dog bins and information boards. More money has been allocated for maintenance of play equipment due to its age now and we have budgeted for the possibility of paying to keep some of the permissive footpaths open in the village which are enjoyed by many people. The current funding agreements the landowner has in place with the Government comes to an end in the next couple of years and there are currently no plans for the Government to renew these agreements. No final decision has been taken on this yet. For the last five years the Swanton Morley element of your council tax bill has remained quite static in monetary terms:

Band D

2015-16 - £114.77 / 2016-17 - £109.69 / 2017-18 - £109.32 / 2018-19 - £108.67 / 2019-20 - £118.83

Over 80% of households in Swanton Morley are in bands A – C so pay a lower figure than this.

Our budget for this year stands at £82,052.00. We always endeavour to try and obtain grant funding and match funding where possible to assist with capital items such as play equipment and small highway improvements. We currently manage numerous village assets worth over £1,000,000 and I believe that the Parish Council provides good value for money for all of the work it does on your behalf.

VILLAGE HALL

It is now 8 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. Kelly and Maddi 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 - Barry Overman, a cleaner - Zoe Flint, a bar manager - Keri Whitmore and numerous bar staff. In the last year we have successfully installed an extensive adult outdoor gym area, an outdoor table tennis table and constructed a new outdoor timber cabin for use by the football clubs and to provide additional facilities for outdoor functions. The new outdoor adult gym area and table tennis table were paid for from money Breckland holds from developer contributions linked to the village and these totalled £5,120.00 and £2,600.00 respectively and could only be specifically used for outdoor sport & recreation equipment. The cabin was paid for from a £10,000 Awards for All grant and the village hall's own funds, which being a charity, are managed separately from the Parish Council's own finances.

PLAYING FIELDS

In the last year we have replaced the bark surfacing under the swings and slide with turf and rubber safagrass matting. This was paid for using the Parish Council's capital reserves and will now result in less ongoing annual maintenance costs.

CHURCHYARD & BURIAL GROUND

Visitors to the church might have noticed that the churchyard continues to be very well maintained and I would like to place on record the Parish Council's thanks for the voluntary effort of Mr Chris Beal who compliments the work of our own grasscutting contractor. In the Burial ground we have plans to install some new fencing in the coming year.

COMMUNITY CAR SCHEME

Sadly, earlier this year the scheme's longstanding co-ordinator, Anne Sadler passed away. Our thoughts are with her husband, Derek and their family. The scheme is now administered from our Parish Office and Kelly and Maddi try their best to arrange car journeys for village residents requiring assistance but unfortunately, despite various publicity asking for more volunteers, the scheme has a severe lack of volunteer drivers at this time. The Community Car Scheme remains an important service for some people in the village. It 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. I would like to thank our volunteer drivers who give up their spare time to help our community. If you think you might be able to volunteer as a driver please do call Kelly or Maddi on 01362 637166 for more information.

HIGHWAYS

Despite previous promises, Norfolk County Council (NCC) have not yet upgraded the 60 year old concrete footpaths in Thompson Close or Hannah Road. This has been further complicated by discussions we have had 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. Further discussions with both Breckland Council and Norfolk County Council will take place this year to try and find a way forward. We continue to be very proactive in pressing Norfolk County Council to carry out minor highway repairs in a timely manner but due to their budget cuts it has become increasingly difficult to get repairs carried out. It is not an exaggeration to say that some of our roads are literally falling apart in places and more work is required. Please be assured that we shall continue

to press Norfolk County Council for action on your behalf but unfortunately this hasn't been helped by the fact that our County Councillor has not been present at any of our Parish Council meetings since April 2017 despite giving us an undertaking that he would attend four times a year.

We continue to rotate our two SAM2 speed detection signs around the village. These flash up the actual vehicle speed and record statistical data which we can pass on to the Police. Since the new Norwich Northern Distributor Road was opened we have noticed an increase in the number of very large lorries travelling through the village. This is disappointing considering that the main road through the village was a few years ago downgraded from the B1147 to the C888. The result of this is that our main road does not get inspected and therefore repaired by NCC as often as it used to. At a meeting with the bridges team at Norfolk County Council they confirmed that in their opinion the bridges over the River Wensum as you enter the village are able to withstand the weight and flow of this additional traffic. This situation might improve if the NDR link road connecting it to the A47 is ever constructed.

ALLOTMENTS

The Allotment site has undergone some changes in the last year with some tenants giving up their plots. We have introduced some half plots to make it easier for those people who want to grow their own produce but can't commit to maintaining a full plot. New revised tenancy agreements have been issued to everyone on the site. I am pleased that we have received several enquiries from people wanting an allotment and that the site is nearly full.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

In last year's report I wrote extensively to you setting out the very considerable problems we had experienced with Breckland Council and their management of the Neighbourhood Planning process and their very negative responses to our plan. Over the last twelve months I have been engaged in multiple meetings with senior Breckland Cabinet members, Officers and our MP, George Freeman to try and get Breckland Council to change its view on our policies.

I am pleased to report that Breckland Council committed resources to try and resolve this matter to the satisfaction of both parties. Extensive work was undertaken by senior officers and outside consultants (at Breckland Council's expense). The result of all of this is that with a few changes most of our 'contentious' policies have remained in the plan. These are:-

Policies 2 & 3 – These make provision for possible additional development land along Hoe Road East tied in with the need for an additional parking facility opposite the school, widening of Hoe Road East along its narrowest section (which is currently single track), additional parking provision for the burial ground and a footpath to be constructed from Rectory Road to the end of Middleton Avenue. An additional sustainability appraisal was carried out for these fields. The fact that we now have a positive land allocation as part of our Neighbourhood Plan should provide us with an additional defence against aggressive planning applications for developments outside our designated settlement boundary. Indeed, HM Inspector of Planning cited this Neighbourhood Plan as part of his reason for refusing an inappropriate application for a site on Frogs Hall Lane, Woodgate last year.

Policy 4 – This policy has been amended so that now a local letting policy will ensure that 33% of all affordable housing on the additional development land on Hoe Road East should be first offered to those people on Breckland's housing register who are Swanton Morley residents or those people with a prescribed link to our village. I am also pleased to advise that thanks to the work done with Breckland officers, they have recently consulted stakeholders about changing their own district Housing Policy to reflect the principles of our Policy 4.

We await the final outcome but this is a positive step that could benefit all communities having a neighbourhood plan and a positive land allocation.

Policy 6 – This policy specifically asked that Swanton Morley Parish Council will be a signatory to any planning section 106 legal agreements relating to the provision and future maintenance of new open space provided as part of a new development. Having debated this over several meetings and taking account of legal advice it was agreed that the policy would no longer require this. The revised policy does however encourage developers to have early engagement with the parish council seeking its input on planning obligations and requires them to provide a supporting statement that identifies how their proposals have taken into account local community infrastructure requirements

Policy 7 - This policy sought to designate three parcels of Breckland owned open space as 'Local Green Space' These areas are at Thompson Close, Gray Drive and Middleton Avenue. Breckland objected to the inclusion of Middleton Avenue as it was apparently under review for its development potential. I am pleased to advise that Breckland Council has now agreed that the land at Middleton Avenue (adjacent to the burial ground) can be included. The local green space designation will give these land areas protection from development.

Policy 13 – This policy set out minimum numbers for off street parking places depending on the sizes of dwellings for new developments. It was agreed to delete this policy as Breckland has its own policy for this as part of its wider Local Area Plan

Policy 15 – This policy set out the required housing mix for developments of more than 10 dwellings and required a developer to provide a greater proportion of 1, 2 & 3 bedroom properties. This was felt necessary because based on our research Breckland Council has systematically failed to meet its own adopted housing mix in Swanton Morley resulting in a greater proportion of 4+ bedroom properties. The policy remains but it has been amended to take account of the district's up to date housing need evidence. Any development application in Swanton Morley over ten dwellings will have to be supported by this evidence base.

The Neighbourhood Plan document was subsequently updated to version 3.1 and a six week public consultation was carried out earlier this year on the amendments only. Having agreed at our request to change their policy for appointing Neighbourhood Plan Examiners I am pleased to say that this second examination is currently underway with an examiner of our choosing. Subject to this passing the examination there should be a village referendum on the plan later this year where all registered electors in Swanton Morley will be able to cast a vote on the plan.

In addition to this work with Breckland Council I have tried to keep up the pressure with interviews for Radio Norfolk, BBC Sunday Politics and last December I attended a meeting in Parliament with the Housing Minister, Kit Malthouse MP, George Freeman MP and William Nunn – Leader of Breckland Council. I asked the Minister to consider giving greater protections from aggressive development for those communities which have a Neighbourhood Plan containing a positive land allocation. In truth our vulnerability is still Breckland's lack of a five year housing land supply. Once our plan is made we will have protection for three years but as the Minister said during our meeting, Breckland Council needs to up its game and get its house in order in terms of getting a robust land supply backed up by a robust local area development plan. This would help the whole district.

[New Meadowview Housing Development](#)

The Meadow View development located on Rectory Road has now been completed for some time. I am pleased to say that having 'stuck to our guns' Hopkins Homes relented and removed the French Drain as was constructed and re-turfed that part of the green. The ownership of the green open space was transferred to the Parish Council in December along with a developer contribution of £45,426.00. This money can only be used for the transferred

land for maintenance and improvements. Last summer we installed a memorial lectern and bench on the site in memory of the soldiers after whom the roads and open space are named after. An opening ceremony with their families in attendance was held with Lord Dannatt and Major General Rutherford-Jones, Colonel of the Light Dragoons Regiment also in attendance as well as friends and colleagues of the soldiers and a large number of local people. As a thank you to our village, as chairman of the Parish Council I was presented with a framed Light Dragoons Regimental Guidon and this is now on display at the village hall. This was a very memorable day and I know that the families and Regiment greatly appreciated it. The lectern, bench and opening ceremony have all been paid for using a small amount of the developer contribution mentioned previously.

Dates for your Diary

At Christmas we held our third 'Carols on the Green' event, except the weather was so bad it turned into 'Carols in the Church'! This was very well attended by local people and along with our Christmas trees and lighting display on the green helped the village get into the festive spirit. Dereham Town Band provided the entertainment and Father Christmas made a guest appearance. The event was organised by the Parish Council and village businesses and we will hold this again this year on Saturday 30th November.

In July we will be holding the inaugural Swanton Morley Festival which will consist of several events and activities organised by the Parish Council, local organisations and volunteers. Sponsorship packages are still available for local businesses who would like to contribute towards the cost of the Festival. It is hoped that this will be a lot of fun and bring our community closer together. If you think you might be able to help us by volunteering some of your time to plan and/or help with an event then please do get in touch with Mrs Brenda O'Dowd (01362 637226) who is co-ordinating the Festival. She is doing a brilliant job and will be pleased to hear from you.

The Festival will run from 12th – 27th July and more details of the events line up can be found on the Swanton Morley Festival Facebook page and website.



ROGER ATTERWILL
CHAIRMAN
SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

7th April 2019

Swanton Morley Parish Council – Financial Summary

Income for year 2018/2019 (Total £140,339.11)

Description	Amount
Precept	£78,222.33
Interest (General Funds)	£79.41
Burial and Memorial Fees	£480.00
Youth Football Pitches	£301.00
Council Tax Support Grant	£600.00
Swanton Morley Festival Sponsor/Donations	£950.00

Description	Amount
Allotment Income	£2,055.63
Community Car Grant	£1,300.00
Rural Payments Agency	£74.76
Parish Partnership Refund	£850.00
Outdoor Cabin Grant	£10,000.00
Transfer of Open Space	£45,425.98

Expenditure for Year (from Precept and General Income)

	Budget 18/19	Expenditure 18/19	Budget 19/20
Grass Cutting	6,000.00	5,325.85	6,000.00
Insurance	2,900.00	2,469.72	2,900.00
Street Lighting Maintenance	3,975.00	2,152.00	800.00
Street Light Electricity	756.00	708.06	816.00
Churchyard and Burial Ground Maintenance	2,500.00	2,243.09	3,418.00
Play Ground Maintenance & Improvements	6,700.00	6,241.83	4,850.00
Street Furniture	2,000.00	919.68	2,000.00
Highway Rangers	600.00	0.00	600.00
Staff Remuneration Package	36,332.18	32,758.00	38,481.44
Telephone and Broadband	943.56	643.50	960.00
Stationery and Postage	900.00	1,540.24	900.00
Members Expenses & Allowances	825.00	797.70	825.00
Training	750.00	155.20	1,820.00
Audit	990.00	650.00	1,040.00
Subscriptions	670.00	433.84	948.40
Donations	250.00	0.00	250.00
By Elections	2,500.00	0.00	2,500.00
2019 Council Elections	0.00	0.00	2,006.00
Community Car	2,600.00	963.03	2,600.00
Communications	1,484.00	202.00	434.00
Common Lands & Environment	500.00	2005.63	500.00
Lease of Manns Lane Land	1,200.00	1200.00	1,348.00
Allotment Maintenance	500.00	297.33	500.00
Loan Repayment	11,633.50	5816.75	8,397.30
Legal / Consultant Fees	7,500.00	1414.00	500.00
Community Christmas Event	250.00	389.40	250.00
Phone Box Refurbishment*	250.00	0.00	0.00
Contingency	5,000.00	2342.86	5,000.00
Information Boards	1,504.00	0.00	800.00
Parish Partnership Highways Project	2,700.00	2,700.00	3,500.00
Swanton Morley Festival	0.00	1,000.00	1,000.00
Outdoor Cabin Construction*	0.00	10,171.00	0.00
Outdoor Table Tennis Table**	0.00	2416.66	0.00
Section 137	0.00	0.00	2,000.00
Land Management	0.00	0.00	£6,383.22
Total	104,713.24	87,957.37	104,327.36

* Grant received after budget set

** Grant of £2,600.00 received in 2017/18 Financial Year

Notes: All figures exclude VAT (and VAT recovered) and are from unaudited accounts

The Precept for 2019/2020 has been set at £83,714.68.

INVITATION TO ATTEND THE ANNUAL PARISH MEETING

Notice is hereby given that the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING will be held at the Village Hall, Manns Lane on Monday 15th April 2019 at 7.30pm

All whose names are on the Electoral Register have a statutory right to speak and vote at the meeting. The electors may give others who attend, the opportunity to speak. The meeting is open to everyone.

AGENDA

1. To Receive Apologies for Absence
2. Chairman's Report – Mr Roger Atterwill, Chairman of Swanton Morley Parish Council
3. To Agree Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th April 2018
4. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 16th April 2018
5. Reports from Village Organisations (Order to be Agreed by the Chairman)
6. To Receive Report on the Swanton Morley Neighbourhood Plan
7. To Receive Report on the Swanton Morley Festival 2019
8. Report on the Management of Swanton Morley Village Hall
9. Parishioners' Questions
10. Date and Time of Next Annual Parish Meeting

Roger Atterwill, Chairman, Swanton Morley Parish Council - 1st April 2019