

SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL

THE SWANTON MORLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING was held via Microsoft Teams on Monday 26th April 2021 at 7.30pm and was attended by seven parish councillors, County Councillor Mr Bill Borrett, and 4 members of the public. Also in attendance was Mrs K. Pickard (Clerk to the Council) and Rev. James Rosie.

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

1. Apologies for Absences

Apologies were received from Mr Westbury, Mr Rodrigues, District Councillor Richard Duffield, and Mrs L Syer, Little Swans.

2. 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 update of the Team working remotely from home during the pandemic – Chairman Mr Atterwill paid tribute to the whole Parish Council team for all the efforts throughout the pandemic and adapting to a new way of working.
- The finance element of the report and the successful grant funding throughout the year towards projects in the village. This means that the precept is not set quite so high.
- Mr Atterwill was also pleased to report that there is now a considerable number of volunteers – Mr Atterwill in particular wanted to thank the volunteers for coming forward for environmental projects.
- Various maintenance work carried out at Gooseberry Hill playpark
- Highway issues and how the Parish Council are managing them

3. To Agree Minutes of Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2019

Mr Atterwill proposed that the minutes be accepted as a true and accurate record of the Annual Parish meeting seconded by Mr Curran and carried.

4. Matters arising from the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 15th April 2019.

None raised

5. Reports from Village Organisations

Unfortunately, many groups have not been open during the pandemic or have had very little activity so naturally have very little or nothing to report.

The following reports were received.

a) North Breckland Youth for Christ - Youth Café – Report by Mr G Palmer - delivered by Mr Atterwill

The Youth Café in Swanton Morley had to stop when the Village Hall closed because of the Pandemic. The Team continued mentoring some Senior School children and continued offering the Alpha Course in a safe way.

The team hoped to start Youth Café again in Swanton Morley on 21st April in a new Covid Safe format.

b) Link Up Magazine – Report by Mrs D Palmer - delivered by Mr Atterwill

The Magazine serves the parishes of Swanton Morley, Hoe, Beetley and East Bilney . It has been published and delivered each month throughout the last year. The content changed during the Pandemic to include quizzes, crosswords, word search, as well as poems, letters and articles supplied by readers and normal advertisements.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank the Editor and all Volunteers for their services over the past year.

Mr Atterwill also placed on record his thanks to the editor Laurie Brooks.

c) Report from the Barrett's Charity –Report by Mr G Palmer - delivered by Mr Atterwill

Thomas Barrett made a gift of land to the parish in 1488 the proceeds from the rent of this land helps to maintain the Church (£2387 in 2020) and to support the Elderly, poor and needy of the Village. Last year 33 recipients received gifts at Christmas also 2 individuals and 2 organisations received donations (£2387 in 2020)

d) Report from All Saints' Church PCC received and delivered by Rev. James Rosie.

During the last twelve months all churches across the Dereham District Ministry have been closed for services. Even though churches were closed, worships were conducted online via Zoom, Facebook live streaming and YouTube.

The Carol service that was recorded in December reached over 400 people. This was very encouraging to see the engagement is still there.

Churches opened and services resumed the week before easter, and attendance is almost the same as before the pandemic, there are however still several vulnerable parishioners who are slightly nervous to attend.

The team were strengthened by the arrival of the new team Rector Paul Cubic in August 2020 and is hoping to visit all eight churches in the benefice. He is also hoping to be involved with the ministry on Robertson Barracks.

The team remain one vicar short at the present time however are hoping to advertise the vacancy later in the year.

Mr Atterwill thanked Rev. Rosie and was pleased to see a strong presence in Swanton Morley, and to pass on thanks to the team at the Dereham office.

e) Report from the Angel Bowls Club – Report by Mr P. Hendley – Delivered by Mr Atterwill

The Chairman reported that following on from the previous year and in keeping with the effects of the Covid pandemic lockdown, the start of the bowling season was abandoned. In keeping with official guidelines and maintaining social distancing we managed to set up a small "Covid league" with local clubs to provide members with a little exercise and retain bowling skills. A "roving cot" format with only 9 team players worked well, with controls on handling mats and cots. Alas no socialising was allowed as distancing was maintained. We are pleased to say this worked very well during the late August/September period when restrictions had eased, with the club finishing top of this "ad hoc" league, before we closed up for the winter. A reduced President's Day was held in September with Steve Derrick emerging as the winner of this annual trophy. All other annual cup games and fixtures were abandoned. Again, the lack of wear on the green has led to a reduced maintenance burden at the end of the season. Our normal club Christmas dinner function was again abandoned due to restrictions on numbers and venues.

Membership of the club remains stable to maintain a commitment to the local leagues looking ahead to 2021. We continued supporting our main league commitments to the Dereham and District and North Elmham and District Leagues, along with our involvement with the Mid Norfolk and Age Concern. The block system that was set up during 2019 with block Captains under the control of the Club Captain will continue for the forthcoming year.

In keeping with protocols, we held our AGM remote online in Nov and re-elected the current Committee en bloc for another term. The Treasurer reported that the lack of an annual income normally received from the playing season and participation in the Village Annual Firework Display had been recovered with a grant from Breckland D.C. This financial grant has allowed us to continue with our planned replacement of a grounds maintenance mower during this coming financial year, and remain viable into the future covering our normal annual planned expenditure. It is intended that green fees and subscriptions will remain the same for the coming year.

Planning and fixtures would be undertaken in the New Year for the coming season with the possibility of format changes in a post pandemic era.

The Angel Bowls Club will remain a valued part of the village community and will continue to provide both a social and sporting environment for those living in the local area.

f) Report on the Volunteer Scheme – Received and delivered by Mrs B O’Dowd.

Mrs O’Dowd reported that a volunteer service was set up in March 2020 which consisted of 35 volunteers. During the early stages of lockdown, the scheme received 73 requests for help during the pandemic. This included walking dogs, collecting shopping, and mainly picking up prescriptions for residents in isolation. Some residents requested a regular phone call.

Towards the end of the year, it became apparent that the types of requests being received were going to change, so the volunteer scheme was relaunched. There is now a total of 17 volunteers and there has been some parish work undertaken in the village to include tree planting in the village – it was extremely heartening to see the number of volunteers helping.

The scheme is likely to change over the next few years, but there is now a core of volunteers willing to give their time, expertise and coaching. The hope is to see this continue.

Mrs O’Dowd also reported that the volunteers are covered by the Parish Council personal liability insurance, there is also a policy and procedure in place.

Mr Atterwill thanked Mrs O’Dowd

Mrs Lisa Sayer from Little Swans sent her late apologies.

g) Report from District Councillor Roger Atterwill – delivered by Mr Atterwill.

The last year has been unprecedented in its affect on all our lives. The Covid 19 pandemic has placed a huge strain on our family lives and local businesses, and it has made us do things differently. Breckland Council has also had to adapt very quickly with most staff working from home during the last year. I would like to pay tribute to them because they have worked very hard to not only provide the Council’s normal services but also provide support for communities and businesses through both practical support and efficiently distributing business support grants to eligible businesses and organisations. As your ward member I have not visited Elizabeth House now for over a year as all council meetings have been carried out virtually using Zoom. As the year has gone on, we have become very used to such meetings. In my view they have been advantageous because the public have had greater access to the meetings which are streamed live on Youtube. There is also the environmental benefit of not having 49 councillors regularly driving to Elizabeth House. It now looks like the Government will not be extending the emergency legislation which allowed such virtual meetings. In my view this is a mistake and councils should be given the flexibility to do either in person or virtual meetings going forward.

I am a member of the Planning Committee and our work has carried on throughout the last year. There is a great deal of uncertainty at the moment because the Government introduced its White Paper on the future of the planning system. The idea of this seems to be to make it easier for developers to get planning permission at the expense of local accountability. The Breckland Local Plan is supposed to be reviewed and updated but frustratingly the Breckland Council Cabinet seems to have been dragging its feet on this since August last year. They cite the White Paper as the excuse for this but I continue to push for a more proactive and transparent approach. My worry is that if the Local Plan is not reviewed and updated in a timely manner a number of key planning polices will cease to carry ‘weight’ and developers will find it much easier to obtain planning permission which will sometimes be to the detriment of local communities. I am also the Leader of the Independent Group of Councillors and along with Labour and Green Councillors we form the opposition at Breckland Council. I try to work collaboratively and not oppose for the sake of it. An example of this is my support for the Council’s 2021/22 budget and also its environmental sustainability strategy. I see my role as that of a critical friend trying to suggest improvements to policies, procedures, spending priorities and improving transparency in all areas of the Council’s work. I believe that since being elected in 2019 I have garnered a constructive working relationship with officers and work hard with my colleagues to form a more effective opposition group.

I recently provided the Parish Clerk with details of Breckland Council’s ‘Inspiring Communities Programme’ grant funding scheme for local communities. If there is a project in the village which you think could benefit from up to £5,000 of match funding I would be delighted to hear about it and if it meets the scheme’s criteria I would be only too pleased to write in support of an application.

As always, I am available to help residents where I can and would encourage anyone who needs assistance with a Breckland Council related matter to either call or email me.

6) Report on the Management of Swanton Morley Village Hall

A short report had been published in the APM report distributed to all of the village.

The Clerk reported that on 18th March 2020 the Village Hall locked the doors to all hirers due to the pandemic.

The Village Hall staff adapted very quickly to the new way of working.

Deep cleaning and any maintenance work continued to be carried out however at the latter part of the year, the trustee decided to furlough three members of staff.

All of the regular bookings including the Dog Agility, Tractor Rally and Fireworks night was cancelled along with private hire bookings.

There was a period of three and half weeks in October that the hall reopened however shortly after this, a further lockdown was put in place.

The Clerk shared the finance summary for the Village Hall on the screen.

This showed that even though the Village Hall had reduced income from Village groups and private hirers that the income was still £55,862.60. This was largely due to a total sum of £41,689.37 being received in Government grant funding from Breckland District Council.

The expenditure for the year was reported as £35,985.00, this was made up of Utilities, Cleaning, Rates and Insurance, Administration costs, Maintenance and repair and Bar expense.³

The Clerk also confirmed that there had been a further grant received in April 2021 for £12,000.

Moving forward, the doors reopened for organised indoor children's activities on 12th April, and we welcomed back a number of groups.

The second phase for all indoor hirer groups is going to take place on 17th May with a view to all private hirer bookings resuming after 21st June.

It was reported that sadly a number of regular groups will not be returning to the Village Hall however there are some new groups to begin this year including baby massage, move it and lose it keep fit and a community café.

Overall, the Village Hall staff and Trustee are looking forward to resuming all hire bookings and become the thriving hub of the community once again.

County Councillor report

County Councillor Bill Borrett introduced himself for the members of the public in attendance as the County Councillor for Swanton Morley.

Mr Borrett reported that he was always amazed at how busy Swanton Morley Parish Council is.

It has been a very different year since the last APM of the Parish Council. They were very lucky to have already installed new IT equipment to allow the entire work force to work remotely, and even though the offices were closed, the services could continue.

Mr Borrett extended his thanks to the staff at Norfolk County Council for working incredibly hard and sometimes undertaking different tasks in order to provide the support.

The professionalism and commitment of the staff in the social work teams were praised.

Mr Borrett also thanked all of the volunteers across the County for their assistance particularly through the pandemic.

Mr Borrett reported that the County Council is also now able to work more closely with the NHS in social care.

The vaccination rollout for Norfolk has been incredibly successful and out of 42 health and care partnerships in the country, Norfolk is the second highest.

The County Council budget figures for the year end came in on scale, largely thanks to the covid support grants from the Government which allowed the County Council to concentrate on the job in hand.

The work on Broadband is gathering pace and there has been huge successes, Norfolk County Council are now looking at the second roll out to improve online broadband in Norfolk.

Support for the restart of the economy is now available and services such as apprenticeships schemes are being put back on the front foot as the country comes out of lock down.

Mr Borrett then reported that in this financial year members budget there is an amount earmarked for environmental schemes such as tree planting.

Mr Borrett also mentioned the elections that are taking place on 6th May and if he is not successful, he wanted his thanks on record to Swanton Morley.

Councillor Turner then delivered a report on the Community Speedwatch Scheme.

This process was initially started in September 2019 however due to Coronavirus; it was placed on hold.

Mr Turner was pleased to report that this has now been restarted.

Mr Turner met with the community Liaison Officer in the village and 9 different locations were discussed. These locations are currently being assessed and a health and safety check carried out by the Speedwatch team at Norfolk Constabulary

There are now 9 volunteers on the scheme who have offered their time, and there is online training to complete ahead of socially distanced face to face training at the next stage.

Once the training is complete, the programme can then begin.

Mr Turner is also liaising with the army barracks and they are volunteering two members to take part.

7) Parishioners' Questions

A member of the public asked Mr Turner if Woodgate is included on the Speedwatch scheme?

Mr Turner responded that the main locations are the main roads through the village including Gooseberry Hill and Rectory Road, however there is the ability to request further locations for assessment.

It was also noted that the SAM signs may not be in the same location as the Speedwatch at the same time.

A member of the public asked Mr Atterwill a question with regards to the trod that has been approved by Norfolk County Council highways, and the location that this will be in due to the steep banks, Mr Atterwill responded that this is something that will be assessed by the Highways engineer and the Clerk is to request a site visit for this to be discussed.

Mr Curran asked Mr Atterwill, due to the speeding on Woodgate, would it be possible to secure a SAM sign in that location, Mr Atterwill responded that it is not one of the designated locations, however the Clerk can request that this is added onto the agreement by Highways, Mr Atterwill would need confirmation of street furniture at the location to secure the camera to.

Mr Atterwill then addressed Mr Borrett regarding the highway issues in the village.

Mr Borrett responded that he has driven through the village and experienced that road surfaces himself and he agrees that it is very bad at the moment.

He has been in constant contact with Norfolk County Council highways department with regards to scheduling in the works for repair. There has been an increase in work load but Mr Borrett said if there is an area that is particularly bad then he is happy to receive correspondence from the Clerk and he will follow this up.

Mr Atterwill then reported the main areas are the large potholes on Dereham Road by the turning to the surgery, the pedestrian crossing that needs resurfacing and new white lines, and the safety of the waterfall bridge that was damaged.

Mr Borrett requested that the Clerk sends an email highlighting all of the issues for him to address.

One member of the public joined the meeting

One member of the public wanted to attend the meeting to say that they are fairly new to the village but are very impressed with everything that has been done and they are very grateful for all of the information that is circulated by the Parish Council. The member of the public then thanked the Parish Council.

8). Date of Next Meeting

The next Annual Parish meeting will be held on Monday 25th April 2022 at 7.30pm

The meeting closed at 8.29pm

_____ (Chairman) _____ Date