

**SWAFFHAM PRIOR ANNUAL VILLAGE ASSEMBLY
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 22nd May 2013**

Present: Parish Councillors: Geoffrey Woollard, Sandra Gynn, Eric Day, Paul Latchford and David Almond plus 12 members of the public.

Apologies: Peter Hart, Steve Kent-Phillips, Andrew Camps, John Covill, Cllr Allen Alderson.

In Attendance: Karen King (Clerk)
CCC – Cllr David Brown
Sue Loaker, East Cambridgeshire Crime Reduction Officer
PCSO Ian Hawkins

In the absence of the Parish Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman, the Clerk invited from those in attendance nominations to Chair the meeting. Alastair Everitt nominated David Greenfield to take the Chair. All agreed. David took the remainder of the meeting.

Before the next item PCSO Ian Hawkins reported to the meeting summarising crimes during the previous 12 months in the Swaffhams – these totalled 58; 6 dwelling burglaries, 5 other burglaries, 8 thefts from motor vehicles, 10 other thefts, 27 other crimes including domestic and drugs. 20 of the crimes were detected leading to a 33% detection rate (slightly up). With anti-social behaviour there had been zero incidents/month over last 12 months.

Presentation on Home and Personal Security by Sue Loaker, East Cambridgeshire Crime Reduction Officer:

Sue explained as part of her role she visited victims of dwelling burglaries and gave some pointers on how to reduce the risk of burglary:

- Low boundaries to front to give easy view of property.
- High boundaries to side and back of property.
- Lockable gate to back garden.
- Dusk-dawn lighting & motion sensor lighting to sides and back of property making this as high as possible.
- Secure outbuildings and mark any equipment with postcode.
- Keep windows and doors locked with safety chain back and front (requirement 5-lever lock minimum for insurance purposes).
- Personal property – put out of sight and mark. Register details on website "Immobilise" – this is free of charge.

Sue summarised the details of "Bobby Scheme" Charity which provides a service to older and/or vulnerable people who have been a victim of crime. They will come out to property and install alarms, chains, etc free of charge for those aged 65 or over, for potential victims of crime aged 65 or over and vulnerable potential victims there was a small charge of £25 (leaflets were available with full details).

Sue asked everyone to sign up to the E-Cops reports as they often provided very useful information.

The Chair invited questions:

James Willmott referred to the quoted crimes statistics and asked how many convicted. PCSO Hawkins replied that statistics are based on convictions.

John Chalmers referred to incident and anti-social behaviour. He asked what would be the best way to report an incident and whether it was worth it. PCSO Hawkins and Sue Loaker said yes it was very much worth it and also referred to the rejuvenation of the Neighbourhood Watch scheme in villages. SL also advised JC that an incident that was happening "there and then, in front of him" was a 999 call.

James Willmott asked how many police officers were on duty that evening. PCSO Hawkins replied that there were 2 sergeants, 4 constables, 4 PCSO's and CID in East Cambs area.

Paul Latchford asked how you would differentiate between a crime, prank or anti-social behaviour. It was noted that ASB was deemed as harassment, alarm and distress.

The Chair thanked Sue Loaker and PCSO Ian Hawkins for attending and they left the meeting at 8pm.

Approval of Minutes from Meeting – 23rd May 2012: Subject to minor amendment the minutes were agreed by all as a correct record.

County Councillor's Annual Report: (Cllr David Brown reported to the meeting).

2012-13 has been another challenging year at the County Council. Cambridgeshire is the fastest growing county in the country, having a population growth of 12.4% over the last census period. Whilst growth does bring advantages it also brings immense strain on resources at a time when central Government is reducing the money allocated to local authorities. For example, over the next 4 years Cambridgeshire County Council is planning to spend £350 million on building new schools, including 3 new Special Schools, simply to meet the rising demand for places.

As a member of Cabinet, wrestling with the Business Plan for the next 4 years has taken up considerable time. Cabinet remains committed to ensure that Cambridgeshire is able to take best advantage once the economy improves. This means investing in areas such as superfast broadband across the County, increasing spending by £90 million on improving roads and footpaths, and the Ely southern by-pass. We are also addressing pressures for rising demand on services for vulnerable adults and children in the County and have announced our intention to build a care home for the elderly to help competition in the market. All of this at a time of severe pressure on public finances which means we need to continue to deliver savings across the Council – savings amounting to over £40 million in the coming year. This necessitated a rise in Council Tax of 1.95% but as a Cabinet we believe our budget will deliver for the benefit of the people of Cambridgeshire.

Locally I have been involved in a number of issues on behalf of residents, both as a group and as individuals. One issue which I was very pleased to be able to help with was securing a 21 year extension to the lease for Burwell and District Day Centre at a rent of £1 per annum – well below the market value. This involved numerous meetings including arranging for the Cabinet members for finance and adult social care to visit the Day Centre to witness first hand the value of the work done there. The Burwell Masterplan, where I represented the County Council on the Working Party, has been adopted by ECDC following 2 years of work. We have seen numerous improvements to roads, footpaths and drop kerbs in the area, and work is scheduled to start on more soon. I have also offered support to a number of applications for grant aid and external funding for a range of groups.

I have also intervened on behalf of a number of individuals experiencing problems; I will long remember some of the problems experienced by individuals over the programme to replace street lights in Burwell!

On the less formal side I had the pleasure of presenting awards to many of the children and young people in the care of the Council and to foster carers."

The Chair invited questions:

John Chalmers asked how long the census period was. DB replied this was 10 years.

Sandra Gynn asked locations of the 3 special Schools. DB replied Littleport, Northstowe and one somewhere in the south of the County.

Paul Latchford asked when the treatment plant would be up and running. DB replied December time hopefully, explaining that currently CCC were not paying landfill tax because the plant was not 'fit for purpose' and as such had not been signed over to CCC.

District Councillor's Annual Report: *(Clerk read out written report provided by Cllr Allen Alderson).*

Council Tax: The District Council is in the third year of a medium term financial strategy which should deliver savings of over £2m by 2015. As part of this and to ensure a balanced budget we increased the Council Tax by 2% this year. This equates to an increase of £2.79 per year.

New waste and recycling collection service: The new service will be rolled out between September and November this year. The weekly black sack for refuse will remain unchanged. The fortnightly recycling collection will be by a green wheeled bin for food and garden waste and a blue wheeled bin for paper, glass, cans, plastic (bottles and hard plastic food and drinks containers) tetrapaks and cardboard.

Car parking charges in Ely: Following the latest consultation results, the Council has decided not to introduce car parking charges. Car parking charges remains a derisive issue with the public which is distracting ECDC from achieving their ambitious priorities for the next two years.

New cinema for Ely: ECDC are presently negotiating for a six screen cinema which will be on a site ECDC own at the junction of the Downham Road and the western by-pass. This will include a 500 space car park and restaurant facilities. Planning permission is already in place to build a swimming pool on the site.

Tourism and Ely Markets: Ely markets had yet another successful year with occupancy across all markets showing a slight increase on last year. The Flower, Food and Craft Markets which are held on the last Sunday of each month and Bank Holiday Mondays has increased from 16 stalls to 20 per market.

Oliver Cromwell's House has had another good year and has exceeded target on its bed bookings and function room bookings. Admissions hit target.

Homelessness: Due to the recession and the consequent breakdown in marriages ECDC has had to deal with an increase in homelessness. The number of households in B&B accommodation for the quarter ending 31/3/12 was 18. By targeting help we were able to reduce this to 9 for the quarter ending 31/3/13 resulting in a large financial saving for the Council.

Housing (affordable): There were only 14 completions for the year 2012/13 through exception sites and section 106 agreements. Figures for shared equity housing not available until June. There were also between 15-20 through the Government scheme that is now called 'Help to Buy'. The anticipated figures for this year are – exception sites and section 106 (CIL) 50+ plus a number through shared equity 'Help to Buy' 15-20.

Fly-tipping: This has decreased this last year due to the Council's pro-active measures.

Bus Services: County and District Councillors continue to press for improvements in the 10 & 10A bus service.

Committees: I have served on the following committees; Licensing, Community and Environment, Vice-chairman of Development and Transport. I am also on working party looking into ways to improve the functions of the Neighbourhood Panels. I am a member of the Swaffham Internal Drainage Board.

The Chair invited questions:

Elisabeth Everitt asked for further details on what to put in the new wheelie bins and when the changes were to be made. Cllr Brown said he would follow up on this and the Clerk was to speak with Cllr Alderson.

Parish Council Report: *(A written report was provided by John Covill and Geoffrey Woollard reported on behalf of the Parish Council):*

Apologies for not being able to attend in person whoever I am sure Geoffrey will do a good job of reading out my notes on the past year.

This year's report will be fairly short as thankfully not a great deal of controversy has come our way.

On the positive side we have arranged to have the Village hall car park and driveway resurfaced as well as having the trees lining the driveway pollarded, the Pound gatepost replaced and most recently the bench seats in the Village hall fence have been replaced by a pair of new ones. The old seats will be refurbished and mounted at the front of the Village hall when finished.

I would like to thank Steve Kent-Phillips for storing the seats in his garage until they could be fitted and overseeing the work, as well as keeping the accounts faultlessly and doing a variety of other tasks to help the village keep running.

On a less positive note (though I am sure that ECDC would not agree) we were told that we are to have wheelie bins for our recycling. We feel that these will be inconvenient for many who have limited access to their rear gardens etc. and will then lead to having unsightly bins left at the roadside all week. While we were assured that there were some opt out possibilities it did not feel like a well thought out operation.

While on the subject of rubbish we have made several representations over the last years to ECDC to keep Veolia to their contract to empty the bins in the bus shelter and on Cooper's Green. Paul Latchford drafted a letter comprehensively questioning their methodology and hopefully this long running problem will no longer trouble us. We were a little surprised to see the new tarmaced path in the churchyard as we certainly had no notice of the work. We felt that it was not very sympathetic to the surroundings and the smooth steep nature of the path could make it potentially dangerous in slippery weather conditions.

A family of travellers moved onto the verge of Little Fen Drove a few weeks ago the County Council got an order for them to move on but they have only moved to the N.T. land at the bottom of Split Drove near the new bridge over Reach Lode.

The Chair invited questions:

There were concerns expressed about the surfacing used for the new path to the Church and the difficulty posed for wheelchair users.

Cllr David Brown left the meeting at 8.30pm.

Parish Council – Financial Report: Copies of the Parish Council's unaudited accounts were available for information. *There were no questions.*

Scout, Cubs & Beavers Group: *(Tim Doe reported to the meeting)*

Numbers had increased and were in the mid-60's. The newest group, the Beavers, had grown to 14 and was run by Amanda Parton with the help of two young leaders. There were currently 28 Cubs and this group was run by Anna South & Ronnie with the help of one young leader. Steve White was the Leader of the Scouts with the help of Nathan Wrench, Francis Reeks and John Cane. 7 young leaders were staying with the group.

Mandy Kingsmill had resigned as Chair of the Committee and Tim invited anyone who would like to get involved to contact him.

Scout Field: There had been some vandalism to the toilet block at the Scout field with doors smashed and holes in the roof.

- It was hoped to purchase a container in the near future to act as a kitchen and storage.
- Trees had been planted but rabbits were proving to be a problem.
- A donation of £900 was used to purchase a generator.

The group would be taking part in the St George's Parade, Remembrance Parade and Tim said it would be nice to see more members of the public join them.

The visit to Germany had proven too costly for parents and would not be going ahead.

Several camps were planned for the Scouts, Cubs and Beavers.

Questions & comments:

John Chalmers asked if there had been any further developments on a new 'home' for the Group. Tim explained that this was not a pressing matter at the moment but that he was still looking. Tim thanked the Parish Council for their support.

The Chair thanked Tim on behalf of all in attendance for his hard work and efforts. Tim said it was not just him but lots of adults working with him and he would pass this on.

Report for School: Photographs and written pieces were on display.

Swaffham Prior Youth Club: *(Clerk read out written report provided):*

The following repairs were needed to the Youth Club building:

- A set of double doors and a single door (external).
- The electrics all need re-wiring following inspection by electrical firm.
- A new form of heating was needed as oil was too expensive.
- Complete redecoration.
- A post at the top of the drive to stop the cars coming down when not a club night.
- Guttering needed adjustment.

With reference to the possibility of the Scouts using the building, the Youth Club Leaders would consider the idea but there would be a lot of be discussed.

Chair invited questions and comments:

Everyone agreed this was a useful facility but that it would be helpful if one of the Youth Club Leaders could attend the AVA. There was discussion on the certification need for a Youth Club and the legal requirements. The Clerk was to ask Youth Club Leaders if the Youth Club was affiliated with any statutory body.

Burwell Tigers Football Club: *(The Clerk read out a brief report).*

Tigers have just completed their 13th season as a Club.

We have 14 teams with 250 children playing, training and enjoying a sport they love.

We have 11 boys teams and 3 girls teams. This past season we have had 6 of our teams playing their matches at our ground at Swaffham Prior. The pitches have stood up reasonably well over the harsh winter months we have had to endure. We are planning on spending money on the pitches in the coming months.

Our aim is still to gain the funds to erect a pavilion at the ground for all to use. As the Club grows people who run the club change but we will aim to communicate better so we don't have any early season issues regards, parking, turning and overgrown weeds.

We now have signs in place to help ease the problem

The field is there for the village to use so if you wish to hold any events please do ask.

There were no questions.

Village Hall Management Committee: *(The Chair read out report provided by Mike Carrington)*

The Village Hall management committee has spent a considerable sum on improvements during August 2012. This included the complete refurbishment of the kitchen, with new counters, cabinets and appliances. Additional funds were spent replacement the rather dilapidated blinds with new blackout blinds and improving the curtains. The wooden floor was sanded and sealed. Chairs were cleaned and repaired. Additional crockery and new cutlery has been purchased.

Utility costs have been rising steadily over the past few years. Electricity has risen by approximately 20%, water by 40% and oil by 30%.

Income had fallen by 6% last year and has fallen another 8% this year after small increases in the previous three years. This year's trend can be partly attributed to loss of income caused by the closure of the Hall for the whole of August 2012.

Increased maintenance and refurbishment costs have already been discussed.

The Village Feast was not held last year and despite an expanded Autumn Show less funds were raised than in previous years.

The effect of all these changes is that the Hall funds have decreased by nearly £7,800 in the last financial year. This is approximately the cost of the improvements to the kitchen.

Charges for hiring the Hall were rationalised two years ago but this did not lead to any significant increased in costs for our users – in some cases costs fell. Charges have been held at the same level for over five years. These considerations have led the committee to discuss the possibility of increasing hire costs by about 10% for the coming year.

The committee have also considered ways of increasing the level of booking at the Hall:

- Spending on advertising in local magazines will be increased.
- The website will be updated to include images of the interior of the Hall.
- A plan to make the Small Hall accessible when the Large Hall is in use is being considered – information about this was published in *The Swaffham Crier*, along with a request for comments from the village residents about the plan.

The Committee will seek funding for the building work in the coming year.

Copies of the VHMC accounts were available.

The Chair invited questions and comments:

It was noted that the VHMC had not told people that there was internet/WiFi available in the Village Hall and that this would be useful information when promoting facilities to increase bookings. Paul Latchford as Parish Council representative was to take this to the next VHMC meeting.

Parochial Charities Accounts:

No report. Copies of accounts provided.

Question asked – what were the criteria for people to apply to the Parochial Charities for financial help?

Open Question Time:

Ruth Scovill told the meeting that a fence was down in the play area. *Clerk to follow up and get the fence repaired.*

Geoffrey Woollard thanked David Greenfield for chairing the meeting.

Clerk confirmed that the date for next year's Annual Village Assembly would be 28th May 2014.

Meeting closed at 9.30pm