

# **Minutes of the Annual Parish meeting of Swaffham Prior, which took place on 20<sup>th</sup> May 2026, starting at 7.30pm at the Swaffham Prior Village Hall.**

Attendance – 23 parishioners.

## **1. Welcome by the Chair.**

David Greenfield chaired the meeting and welcomed all attending, apologising for John Covill who was not available.

## **2. Approval of the minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting 29<sup>th</sup> May 2024.**

These were approved by general consensus.

## **3. To hear from representatives of the following groups:**

(The order was changed from that of the agenda to suit people's time commitments).

### **a. Cambridgeshire County Council.** Cllr Yannifer Malinowski - Burwell and Bottisham Ward.

I have been in post a year, learning the ropes and concentrating on potholes, solar farms and battery storage through being Vice-Chair of the Fire Authority's Scrutiny committee. Fixing roads is a top priority of CCC and there is an extra £20million committed to the budget for this, along with a commitment to make reporting issues simple and checking that repairs are completed before they are removed from the system. Please make sure to keep reporting road issues, repeatedly if necessary.

Local Government Reorganisation. I have been involved in making the case for the new Unitary Authority to be East Cambs, South Cambs and Cambridge, instead of joining East Cambs with Peterborough. A decision will be made by the government in June/July. Motions supporting people in the area have been passed including support with heating costs and for protection of the LGBTQ+ community.

The Chair invited questions.

Q. What proportion of the original road repair budget was the extra £20million?

Cllr Malinowski said the original budget was normally £70million so it is a substantial increase but that the problem was huge and lasting repairs were needed.

### **b. A-B1102 Group.** Jon Cook (Chair) sent a written report.

David Greenfield noted that A-B1102 group was formed so that Parish Councils could give a joint response to transport issues on the B1102 and to lobby on their behalf.

The A to B1102 Group continues to be active on a number of fronts:

Buses – we continue to monitor the performance of the T4 and T5 bus services. As you may be aware from our recent update in the Crier, we understand that the Combined Authority who are responsible for our bus routes are planning some further modifications to the routes to make the services more robust and reliable. As soon as any consultation is available, we will alert people so that we can all comment on any changes that they propose.

Bus users will have seen the real time passenger information device which is now live at the Cage Hill bus stop – we have had some great feedback about these units and the information they provide. They were funded by the Combined Authority – if the parish wants to instal units at other bus stops, we will need to seek funding through our own Parish Council. This will involve the Parish Council applying for funding, most likely through grants.

The group provided significant feedback on the plans to relocate the Newmarket Road Park & Ride site to the Greater Cambridge Partnership who are leading on this project.

We have significant concerns over what is proposed. This issue and others, we discussed with the Mayor, Paul Bristow, in January and we are pushing him to address this issue.

Another issue we raised with the Mayor was the pressure on parking at Cambridge North Station which is causing significant issues for both commuters and those who want to use the station during off-peak times.

Finally, we continue to challenge the Greater Cambridge Partnership about the progress of the Swaffhams Greenway Cycleway which was supposed to go from Stow cum Quy to Swaffham Prior. Due to various unsurmountable challenges in Swaffham Bulbeck, the route will effectively now terminate on the Cambridge side of Swaffham Bulbeck which is not a great outcome for our village, nor for attempts to extend the route on to Burwell. Please do not hesitate to contact the group if there are other transport issues affecting our communities along the B1102 you would like the group to explore.

**c. Prospect's Trust.** Mark Connell – Farm Manager.

Prospect's Trust is a charity providing supported work places to co-workers on a certified organic farm. Mark is the farm manager, having previously worked at Wicken Fen.

The field on the Reach edge of the village (by Barton Drove) has been developed as a nature reserve; it is open to the public, has a hard path around it and a visitor's information centre open 3 days a week. 90 trees have been planted in it this year and following cutting down of the long grass, 60 extra plant species have been found growing as well as 12 different butterfly species. In the long term, the intention is to have it managed by a system of rangers. While setting up the nature reserve, the remains of a Roman grain drying floor were found, with a tile showing a 2000 year old fingerprint, which has inspired the burial of a modern time capsule on site.

Prospect's Trust also has a gardening team and run Prospect's Trust Unwrapped in Ely – a café, refill shop and greengrocers.

Question:

How much does it cost to donate a tree?

The cost varies because once purchased, the trees need to be planted and cared for, but the charity is grateful for any donation, which can be made online.

**d. St Mary's Church.** Rev Max Osbourne.

Rev Max has been in post for 2 years and oversees 5 parishes. The church is connected to various other groups through events, e.g. the Scouts and Remembrance Day, the school services and the bellringers and he is getting to know the villages and the villagers.

Advanced warning that 2027 is the 125 year anniversary of St Mary's being a presence in the village and a 'Songs of Praise' style celebration is planned, attended by the Bishop of Ely and Charlotte Cane MP. Finally, Rev Max wished it to be known he is available to all parishioners.

**e. The Scouts, Cubs and Beavers.** Tim Doe – Lead volunteer/Group Scout Leader.

Thanks to all volunteers whether involved in Section meetings, members of the Board of Trustees or part of the maintenance team. Also thanks for the continued support of sponsors and supporters; Mead Construction, Noyes and Noyes, the Parish Council and Parochial Charities.

Slight growth in numbers for all 3 main sections to the point where no more youth members can be accepted due to the number of volunteers we have.

Last census return from Jan 2025 was 55 youth members, dropped to 40 in Jan 2026. I do not see this as a reduction in numbers but as a trend to be concerned about as a

number of scouts and Young Leaders reached the upper age limit in 2025. The current aim is to have 18 members in each section; at present there are 18 in the Beaver Colony, 15 in the Cub Pack, 8 in the Scout Troop with 3 Young Leaders.

Recruiting and retaining volunteers is a perennial, county-wide problem and also at 1<sup>st</sup> Swaffham Prior. At present there are 2 Beaver Leaders and 1 Cub Leader. We do not have a nominated Scout Leader although there is a fully committed Assistant Scout Leader. To keep the sections operational, Steve White has been helping run the Scouts and Tim Doe with the Cubs. Ideally 3 committed leaders per section is needed, but 2 would be a minimum. We are in the precarious position of being one small step from having to suspend section meetings due to lack of leaders.

#### Events:

St George's Day parade – Newmarket (April 2025 and 2026), leading the parade with a huge model dragon, Dennis.

Reach Fair – fundraising by running a burger stand, raising £500 in both 2025 and 2026.

Presentation Ceremony (October 2025) – a number of Beavers and Cubs received Bronze and Silver awards and Graham Harrison and Linda Doe with 10 year service awards.

2024 Seb Parton received his King's Scout Award, the first Swaffham Prior Scout to do so. The award is based on what the young person does as a Beaver, Cub, Scout and beyond and Seb has been active in volunteering through further education and university.

Remembrance Sunday Parades 2024 and 2025, both very well attended and in 2025 including a pony in remembrance of the animals who died in service.

Joint Activity Camp for the Cubs with 1<sup>st</sup> Bottisham Pack – camping, raft building, rifle shooting, running an obstacle course etc

Beavers and Cubs were involved in a stall at the Village Feast and Scouts helped with general duties (2026).

Beavers have been involved in Church productions.

This coming weekend a Family Camp near Bury St Edmunds for Beavers' first camp with family.

We are always on the lookout for ways that the Youth Members can get involved in the wider community.

#### Hut and field.

April 2025 the back wall of the hut was de-squirrelled and the fascia and guttering should be reinstated in the coming weeks. Dividing internal gable ends have been installed to improve sound absorption and keep heat in the main hall. The heating installed in Jan 2024 is working well, as is the French drain reinstalled by Mead Plant and paid for by the Parish Council.

The field was the primary meeting place for all sections through the summer and is a great asset. Until late 2024 the adjacent Deal Hole was used for environmental activities and collecting firewood, but a number of trees were identified as a risk, so the decision was made not to use the area until it is made safe. We contacted the authorities we thought were responsible for managing that parcel of land but found we were going round in circles. Could the PC help?

*Action: PC to look into this.*

Looking forward, we hope to secure funding to rebuild the toilet block as a block building; it is currently an aging wooden structure in need of repair. Hurrells of Newton,

the field landlords, continue to offer support to the Scout Group, refusing no reasonable request.

Financially we are solvent and under the guidance of the Trustees and the continued support of sponsors, we are in a sound financial position and subject to an increase in volunteer numbers, will be able to continue offering the young people of Swaffham Prior and the surrounding area the opportunity to enjoy Scouting.

Questions:

Q. How many children attend and where from? Roughly 40, mainly Swaffham Prior and Swaffham Bulbeck. A parent rota helps but committed leaders are needed.

- f. Proud Of Prior litter picking group and the Car Share Scheme.** Janet Wilmott – organiser.

Proud of Prior restarted in January 2025, spurred on by the Primary School children's interest in litter picking and are now a monthly event on a Friday. January and February were extremely wet but there was still a huge amount of litter collected. The next pick is Friday 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

The PC has funded the purchase of new and better equipment – thanks!

ECDC waste team have been great at communicating, collecting the picks quickly and very fast to respond. It would be useful to co-ordinate with the grass cutting teams so that verges can be cleared before mowing.

Many thanks to the village volunteers. Janet is open to suggestions for other projects/ideas e.g. short sessions or cutting back the footpaths (dependent on manpower) but litter picking remains the main focus.

Car share scheme. A small but dedicated group provides lifts to medical appointments. There is not a huge call for them at present but the contact number is in the Crier if it is needed and new volunteers are welcome.

Questions.

Q. Why do people litter? Don't know, the top road is mainly people driving through. JW named and shamed on Facebook once, got unpleasant comments.

David Greenfield noted that the PC was responsible for some verges.

- g. Swaffham Prior Primary School.** Helen Bartley, headteacher.

113 children are enrolled at the school. Last year there was a drop in the Reception year intake and only 6 out of 15 places were filled but this year there are 15 and 4 on a waiting list, plus 14 more new children throughout the other Years.

A nursery class has been introduced and will be running 5 days a week from September 2026 – there are 14 children waiting for places this September. There is also a toddler group "Stories and Smiles".

2024/5 was a bumper year for KS2 SATs with a pass rate of 94% in all 3 subjects.

The school has won:

- The Gilt Award in Primary Science – earned by 2% of primary schools and a tribute to the work of Kirsty Anderton, lead Science teacher.
- 2 years Gold Awards for school games – the school has attended many tournaments for many different sports.
- A Fair Play Award
- One for encouraging girls in sports.

New toilets have been fitted in the Early Years classroom and the process of resurfacing the playground and adding a raised fence to the perimeter wall are still ongoing.

The children danced the Maypole at Reach Fair and Swaffham Prior Village Feast, have been on visits to Anglesey Abbey by bus, Years 5 and 6 are on a residential visit to Normandy next month, Charlotte Cane MP has visited and been grilled by pupils and there was a visit to Paddington the Musical.

The swimming pool will be open in the next weeks, having been cleaned by school families. The PTA is very active and is currently raising funds to update the trim trail.

Science Week this year is on Biodiversity and if anyone has any links to this, the school would be glad to hear from them.

**h. The Little Library.** Charlotte Greeno – founder.

Charlotte also works with the school on “Stories and Smiles” toddler sessions and expressed appreciation of their willingness to work with her.

The Little Library was commissioned by Charlotte, put in in March 2025 and “opened” by a local author, built and installed by Prospect’s Trust, with the village hall committee and Parish Council giving permission for it to be installed in front of the hall. Apart from replacement of a couple of door handles, it has needed little maintenance. Although it is rare to see someone there, the books are moving regularly!

The Little Library took part in the Advent Windows event, World Book Day and the Village Feast and was decorated for Easter. It also contains the Swaffham Prior Community Journal, to which people can add.

It’s aim is to support reading with and by children, as a recent report found that only 1 in 3 children enjoy reading.

**i. The Village Gardeners.** Fiona Geraghty (Joint Secretary) and Nicola Hames (Chair).

The Village Gardeners meet on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Tuesday of the month at the village hall between February and November inclusive. There are talks both informative and entertaining and trips – usually 1 longer one and at least 2 more local. The talks include all aspects of gardening and horticulture, including history, restoration, wildlife etc; recent ones have been “Weird and Wonderful Plants”, “Restoration of Histon Manor Gardens”, “The Empire beneath our feet” and “How good is the Good Life”. The group is now at the summer break, with trips planned to Histon Manor and Selwyn College gardens, followed by talks on “Chemical warfare and Co-operation” and “Fruit tree pruning” in the autumn.

In the past there have been joint visits with Bottisham Horticultural Society to Kew Gardens. The group write a regular report in the Crier and have a mailing list. People are welcome to come to any meeting or join for the year.

**j. The Bellringer.** John Chalmers – bell ringer and steeple keeper.

The bells have been rung considerably more frequently over the past couple of years. In the past, the bellringers were commercial and anyone could ‘pay for a peal’; there are records of several individuals being charged for the same peal! Now it is mainly done for the love of bell ringing, being good for you both physically and mentally. The group ring for any church service and will ring for requests, e.g. celebrations. It is a good sized group but anyone is welcome to come along and try out and they take recruits of any age.

Questions:

Q. Will the bell tower be opened to the public again? Yes.

- k. The Village Hall.** Keith Carter – treasurer – read a report from Philip Blackburn (Chair). I am very pleased to report that 2025/26 has once again been very successful. Over the past year, the hall has continued to welcome both an increasing number of residents and visitors and been host to a range of village events, wedding receptions, parties and regular group meetings. The numbers of bookings are steadily increasing, and the online booking system is making it easier for everybody to access and hire the hall. We organised several village events which included our yearly “Feast” in May together with the “Autumn Show” in September and what is proving to be a popular alternative to mainstream “Carol singing” in December and my thanks go to Jenny Brand and her team for all the work she does in making these a success. In November, we had a fun evening courtesy of Andrew and Dee Noyes who with their band entertained us with a Ceilidh. This proved to be so popular that we are doing it again this November (14th – watch for details) so my thanks also go to them. We have had a number of challenges throughout the year, and which caused a few headaches. The most expensive was with the taps in the toilets being left on for long periods and which resulted in a hefty water bill -these have now been changed to “concussive” versions which turn off after use. We also had very long and painful “discussions” with Voneus over the broadband not working and have now changed our provider to BT so hopefully it will work now! We have also had a particularly busy period during the winter following new guidance from the Charity Commission in which we undertook a full review of all our governance statements and policy requirements which remains ongoing. The finance remains stable despite a general increase in costs, but the committee felt it appropriate to make a small price increase in hire costs from February which is the first in three years. This was done mainly to reflect the current market conditions and also to allow further investment in the facilities we have. One example of this will be the addition of a projector screen and sound system which is often being requested and hopefully will make a more complete offering. There was also an enormous water bill which prompted replacement of a faulty tap! I would particularly like to thank all the trustees - Keith Carter – Treasurer; Dan Spencer – Assistant Treasurer; Emily Thomas – Secretary; Steve Harbert – Webmaster; Alan Durrant – Maintenance; Jenny Brand; Karen King; Kate Muscroft for all their tireless work in ensuring that the hall continues to be a valuable and attractive asset for our village. Finally, I would like to thank all the people who hire and use the hall for caring about it, taking pride in it and for supporting us. We hope this next year is as successful.
- l. The WI.** Report sent by Kate Muscroft and read by the clerk. The Swaffhams’ WI has continued to flourish these past 12 months with new members joining and inspirational speakers coming to our meetings. We have had talks on a huge variety of subjects ranging from learning about the pioneers on the Oregon Trail to understanding more about our local bats. It is with sadness, however, that after 78 years, the Swaffhams’ WI now no longer exists. The Swaffhams’ WI documents and memorabilia will be kept in the archives of the Cambridge Federation of the WI and can be easily accessed. A new women’s group is therefore being formed with members coming from the Swaffhams, Lode, Reach and Burwell. May 2026 brought the first meeting of The Swaffhams’ Women’s Group (SWG). We meet once a month for a talk on a wide range of topics and naturally there is also time set aside in each meeting for home baked cakes

and tea or coffee. Our aim is to enable stimulating and thought-provoking talks and discussions whilst at the same time bringing friendship and fun to our members. There is a subscription required of £30 a year and members are welcome to bring along visitors at £5 a visit. Please look in The Crier for further information..

**m. East Cambs District Council.**

No-one was free to attend – David Greenfield noted that the District Councillors have many commitments across their areas and noted that the new bin collection day will be Wednesday from the 1<sup>st</sup> June onwards.

**n. The Parish Council.** David Greenfield - Vice-chair.

John Covill (Chair) sent his unavoidable last minute apologies. The Parish Council meets every second Thursday of the month and the meetings are open to the public. Recently changes had been made to procedures – all available on the website - and the website and emails moved to a .gov.uk domain. This has advantages in that the emails are centralised and under the control of the PC, but disadvantages in that councillors have to remember to log into the right account before responding!

**o. The Swaffham Crier.** James Matheson – editor.

Please send report for publishing – what is being done, things that you would like to do, items of interest to the village. The Crier has a double function; to disseminate information to the village and to act as an historical record.

**p. Swaffham Prior Parochial Charities.** (Written report from John Covill not read out due to time constraints).

We have had more meeting the last 2 years to reorganise our affairs.

We have a new vicar, but he unfortunately has not had time to attend most of our meetings.

We have welcomed new trustees; Lesley Boyle and Nick Acklam from Reach and Janet Wilmott from Prior. They have joined Steve Kent-Phillips and I and been a great help in researching the history of the charity so that we have been able to register land with the Land Registry. We have also drawn up and signed new tenancy agreements for the land. Steve has kept the accounts up-to-date as well as registering us for data protection.

We of course treat all information in total confidence. People do not need to apply personally for a grant, so if you know of someone in real need please contact Pam Waters, our hard-working clerk, so that we can help if possible.

**q. Village Photo Album project.** (Written report from Celia Tyler not read out due to time constraints).

Some background to the project

In 2020, Swaffham Prior Parish Council provided funding for the production of an album of historic photographs of the village. This includes funding for 5 copies of the album to be made available in public places in the village: the school, the pub, one of the churches and the village hall and also a copy for the Cambridgeshire Collection local history library in Cambridge.

We were given permission by The Cambridgeshire Collection at Cambridge Central Library and by Cambridge Antiquarian Society to reproduce the photographs specifically for the limited number of albums. 135 photographs are included.

The original photographs were taken in the early 1900s by Thomas Cooper (who lived in the village) and by members of the Cambridge Antiquarian Society who visited many Cambridgeshire villages in the first half of the 20th century to take photographic records of significant buildings and street scenes.

The photographs are a unique record of Swaffham Prior and capture many aspects of village life, including buildings, street scenes, farming life, the churches, the pubs and the windmills.

#### Where we are now

Last year a draft copy of the album with captions was printed off at Burwell Print Centre and circulated to several longstanding village residents including Julie Nunn, Sarah Cooper, Ruth Stinton and John & Lynne Clarke for their comments.

Additional helpful information has come from a recording made in the village by Mike Petty, probably in 1970. It's a conversation about the Thomas Cooper photograph collection lasting about 3 hours. From this we have been able to put more names to faces in the photographs, which is always of interest.

All this new information from the comments and from the recording has been added to the photograph captions throughout the album. Most recently, Julian Lutterell in the village has helped with working out the final sequence for the photographs.

#### Next Steps

We intend to add an introduction to the album, together with an index, a map helping identify the locations of the photographs and some information about the photographers.

Fleur Langley in the village who is a professional proof reader has offered to carry out a final proof reading of the captions and introduction etc before the albums are printed. The albums should be completed later this year.

Thanks to all who have contributed their help and advice so far and to the Parish Council for their continued support and enthusiasm for the project.

- r. **Kingsway Parish Council Alliance.** (Written report from Simon Chandler not read out due to time constraints).

The Kingsway Area Parish Council Alliance (KAPCA) is a working group that includes representatives from parish councils in the area of the proposed Kingsway Solar Farm Nationally Strategic Infrastructure Project (NSIP). The main purpose of the alliance is to advise on matters related to the proposed development by sharing research and information that will help member councils respond to requests for consultation feedback from the developer and make relevant representations to the planning inspectors when the Development Consent Order (DCO) is submitted. That submission is now expected "sometime in the first half of 2026".

Once the DCO is submitted, campaigners against the proposal will be represented by Richard Buxton Solicitors and a barrister whom they have retained. All member councils have signed an agreement consenting to their names being included in correspondence sent by Richard Buxton Solicitors (RBS) regarding the Kingsway Solar Farm. By presenting the case as supported by the Parish Council Alliance, the strength of the objection is increased because it represents the collective position of many more constituents and parishioners, rather than that of an individual, a single parish council, or a single action group.

The Parish Council Alliance now includes 13 parish councils, representing 21,500 people.

There is no obligation for member councils to spend any of their funds, but several have earmarked some of their reserves to help pay the legal fees. Legal support for the campaign against the Kingsway Solar Farm is expected to cost £150,000. This includes fees for the solicitor and barrister and, most importantly, payment to expert consultants

on subjects that our research indicates will have the greatest influence on the Examination Authority. These include:

- Landscape and heritage in the development area and along the pylon corridor
- Lithium-ion battery safety
- Risks of groundwater contamination

We have so far received donations from individuals totalling about £100,000. This money is held in trust by West Wrating Parish Council, which is the official client of Richard Buxton Solicitors. Member parish councils are encouraged to contribute to the legal fund where they can and to suggest individuals from their communities who may be willing to donate towards the legal fees. We still need to raise a further £50,000.

#### **4. Presentation of the Gay Bulleid Award.**

Cllr Sandra Gynn presented the award to Charlotte Greeno, for her work setting up and running the Little Library, collaboration in setting up the “Stories and Smiles” toddler group at Swaffham Prior Primary and many other small kindnesses in and around the village.

#### **5. Open debate/questions.**

- Possibility of adding inclusive play equipment to the playground, funded by the ECDC Inclusive Play grant – member of the public to email the PC clerk.
- Signage for the village hall – on maps etc it is the Reading Room, which makes it harder to find. Signs on the roads would be useful. To be raised at the next Village Hall Committee meeting.
- David Greenfield voiced concern that the purpose of this meeting was misunderstood – it is to share events and happenings in the village, raise awareness and discuss things that are wanted in the village or could be done differently.

Business concluded and the meeting closed at 9pm.