

## ANNUAL PARISH MEETING CHAIRMAN'S REPORT 2015-16

I am pleased to report on a very busy and productive year for the Parish Council. Councillors not only attend monthly council meetings here in the village but many other committees and consultation meetings at District Council and other venues throughout the year. As well as our own project meetings and also represent the Council on village charities and committees.

### FINANCE

**Precept** – the 2016/17 precept has been set at £55,600, meaning a band D property will pay £59.39 per year. This keeps the Band D payment the same as for the 2015/16 year, **so no Parish increase**.

Our Parish Precept also allows us to continue to include funding towards many village organisations.

**FINANCIAL SUPPORT DURING THE PAST YEAR** was given to village groups and projects including: Swavesey Memorial Hall charity, Churchyard and Cemetery maintenance, Swavesey Youth Café, 1<sup>st</sup> Swavesey Scouts, Royal British Legion Poppy Dance, Community Warden Scheme.

**In the forthcoming year** we have budgeted for grants towards: Swavesey Memorial Hall Charity, Cemetery and Churchyard maintenance, SAY, Swavesey Festival 2016 and the Community Warden Scheme. Reserve funds which we set aside for community grants also allow us to provide grants which may come through to us during the year.

**In the last year** the door-step collections of waste electrical products, organised by WISER Recycling of St Ives continued. Unfortunately the receipts WISER receive for waste products have greatly reduced, therefore they are currently unable to continue with the community donations. They will still arrange a community collection if the Parish requires one but we will not receive the associated donation.

### HIGHWAYS and COUNTY COUNCIL

**Station Road** The Parish Council is pressing the County Council to resolve the surface water flooding across Station Road, just this side of the busway. Across winter this has been very concerning as water floods across the entire road and if it should have frozen overnight, would have been extremely dangerous. Apparently no provision was made when the busway was constructed to deal with this surface water, we are awaiting the County Highway's decision on what they will do.

**Parking** around the Primary School and Village College entrances continues to cause problems for many residents and we continue to work with the Schools and Police to try to improve the situation. Issues with coaches and taxis at the Primary School have been a problem this past year, which took some time to resolve.

We are now receiving complaints about parking around the Costcutter store, as the Post Office has now moved there. Complaints about footpaths and driveways being blocked and double parking, we will liaise with the shop owner and Police as much as we can.

**Market St** – although the marking up of parking bays, etc was approved at this meeting last year, due to lack of County Council Officer time, we have been unable to progress this. We are now informed that this will be addressed from April this year, so we hope to have the scheme completed now by this autumn.

**Streetlights** – The replacement lights were eventually completed but the Parish Council has complained to the County Council and Balfour Beatty about the whole project.

Our County Cllr Mandy Smith takes up all of these issues at the County Council on our behalf and I would like to thank for her help with this work.

## **DISTRICT COUNCIL**

Swavesey Cllrs attend **Parish Forum meetings at SCDC** along with other Parish Councillors from surrounding villages. These cover various topics, with Planning often being a separate forum meeting. Drainage is another major topic, taken up not just by us but many of our neighbouring parishes as well.

The District Council holds an annual Community Awards Scheme and this year the Parish Council nominated four village organisations for recognition: Your Library, Friday Night Youth Club, Community Warden Scheme, Ponds Maintenance Group.

Cllr Sue Ellington supports all of the Parish Council's work and comments to the District Council and I would like to thank Sue for her time and help.

## **PLANNING / CONSULTATIONS**

Many local planning application consultations were received and commented on.

### **Proposals outside of the Village Development Boundary**

Due to the District Council's Local Plan not having been approved, many villages are being inundated with residential proposals which are unplanned for and outside of the village development boundaries. This year we have received three of these to-date: 30 dwellings at 18 Boxworth End, 70 dwellings on land behind Middlewatch, 95 dwellings on land behind Gibraltar Lane/alongside Fen Drayton Rd.

If all of these were to be approved, it would increase the size of the village by just under 20%.

The first application, for 30 dwellings (behind Boxworth End) was refused by SCDC but taken to appeal – as of yet, we have not heard the decision on this.

The Parish Council strongly opposed the 18 Boxworth End proposal and is very concerned over the other two proposals. If they are taken through to application stage the Council will put its comments forward.

These are not just about not wishing to have additional homes, but about the impact these will have on villages services, eg school places, parking, traffic, surface water flooding, doctors facilities, recreational space, etc.

### **Neighbourhood Planning**

To try to address the future needs and development of Swavesey, in the light of these unplanned for proposals, the Parish Council has started to investigate a Neighbourhood Plan. A Neighbourhood Plan helps set out a community's vision for its area over ten, fifteen, twenty years.

I will go into more detail on this later during the meeting.

**Affordable Housing** – The 20 homes being built for South Cambs District Council on Fen Drayton Rd will become available to tenants this spring. They are a mix of 1, 2 and 3-bed properties, with one 4-bed house all for rental only. These will be priority availability for those with a family or employment link to the village. The PC is aware that the list for local housing is quite long and unfortunately not everyone will be accommodated by these 20 homes. Low cost rental or starter homes are a main priority for this area. The homes went out to bid on Home-Link two weeks ago.

**A14 Improvements** – We continue to take part in the consultations for the A14 improvement scheme which is due to start later this year. A large construction 'village' will be situated at the Cambridge Services junction, opposite the existing services on the Boxworth side. Detailed information about this can be found on the Parish website.

## **DRAINAGE**

Last year I reported that the Parish Council together with Swavesey Internal Drainage Board registered strong concerns regarding various drainage issues, the main ones being improvement works to Mare Fen Drain – as part of the Northstowe and Cambourne developments, and maintenance work to the Riverbank of the Great Ouse.

Unfortunately progress by the Environment Agency and South Cambs District Council is still very slow and works which we thought were to take place last year did not and we still have no fixed dates for when it will. Our MP Heidi Allen is supporting our concerns with regard to the lack of progress by the EA.

### **VILLAGE SERVICES AND FACILITIES**

**Moat Way Play Area** – Following the new play equipment area, we continue to improve the landscaping. Fencing and shrubs have been provided along the front, the mound area towards the back has been planted with wildlife-friendly shrubs and plants and the surrounding trees have been cut back.

**Recreation Green** – Together with Spartans Football Club we successfully applied for an AmeyCespa Community Fund grant of £40,000, which together with £18,700 from the Parish Council and £3,500 from Spartans, has provided a major underground drainage scheme for the green.

To enable the ground to recover and grass to re-grow no football has been played on the green this winter, however the last few matches are scheduled to be played during April.

The PC and the Football Clubs will now be working together to manage a maintenance programme for the green.

**Carters Way/Priory Ave Open Space Area** - We are working with a local young person, Joshua Fretwell, to transform this empty area into a community garden and children's play space for local residents. It is hoped to complete this later this year.

**Youth Café** – The Parish Council is pleased to continue its support of the work of Swavesey Action for Youth and the Youth Café based at Bethel Church on Friday evenings, which is extremely popular.

**Police** – The Parish Council continues to work closely with our Neighbourhood Police Officers and NHW Co-ordinator with regard to reporting of crime and anti-social behaviour issues and in supporting the Neighbourhood Policing Panel meetings.

**NHW** – Polly Wilderspin stood down as our Scheme Co-ordinator during last year, and on behalf of the village I would like to thank Polly for all the hard work put into running the scheme. Andy Jennings has taken over this role and continues to co-ordinate the many street NHW schemes we have around the village.

**Post Office** – The village post office counter has now moved from Market St to Middlewatch, despite a huge response and lots of objections.

### **VILLAGE GROUPS AND NEW INITIATIVES**

#### **Constable's Rood & Village Ponds**

The Parish Council continues to support the maintenance work at the village ponds and in Constable's Rood. Volunteers continue to give their time to help maintain these areas and we would like to thank them for this. The Guides carryout annual pond dipping and help us to keep a record of the wildlife in the ponds.

**Community Warden Scheme** – We are now in our third year of this scheme which is providing much appreciated help and support to elderly residents.

[www.swavesey.org.uk](http://www.swavesey.org.uk)

**FINALLY** – Towards the end of last year we launched a **new Swavesey Village Website**.

Giving details of current village news items, Parish Council consultations and general village information.

Copies of all Parish Council Agendas, Minutes, Accounts and discussion items can be found there.

Thank you to all our Parish Councillors for their time in the many activities of the Parish Council. And to the many volunteers who join our working parties to discuss and help formulate ideas and proposals around various projects.