

Swanbourne Parish Assembly 2015

Notes from the Assembly held in the Village Hall on 20th May 2015

Present

All of the Swanbourne Parish Council members:

Tom Finchett (TF) - Chairman

Clive Rodgers (CR) - Vice Chairman; Planning matters and liaison with village organisations

David Blunt (DB) – Highways, liaising with BCC

Jean Tuer (JT) – Village Hall matters

Helen Cleaveley (HC) – Speed watch and MVAS

Simon Hitchings (SH) – LAF funding grants; meetings and contacts

Linda Sirett (LS) – Devolved services i.e. verge mowing, footways, sign cleaning

Clare Barker (CB) – Clerk

District Councillor:

Janet Blake (JB)

Also present were 16 attendees from the village. A list of these is attached.

1. Welcome and introduction by Chairman

The Parish Council Chairman, Tom Finchett, opened the Assembly by welcoming all present. He introduced all the Parish Councillors and confirmed their roles on the newly convened Parish Council. These Councillors are entitled to act on the Council for four years, i.e. until May 2019.

All parishioners are invited to the Annual Parish Assembly. The meeting is for all parishioners and is the opportunity to share views and observations about the village. The meeting will provide the Parish Council with the opportunity to present its Annual Report and for the District and County Councillors to make a report.

2. Declarations of Interest

The Chairman asked members of the Parish Council to declare any Interests. He declared his Interest with regard to Estate matters, and Simon Hitchings declared his Interest as Headmaster of Swanbourne House School.

3. Chairman's Report

TF explained the Parish Council had met four times during 2014, plus the AGM. The meetings are always well attended, usually with all Parish Councillors present and whenever possible the meetings are also supported by our District Councillor, Janet Blake. The Chairman thanked her formally for all her support and work that she does on behalf of Swanbourne.

Minutes of Parish Council meetings are public, and are available to view on Swanbourne Village Website. This will give the reader an idea of the matters under discussion in the year. Residents are also entitled to attend any meetings as observers.

The Chairman reported on current issues as discussed recently by the PC:

- (i) Affordable housing - due to lack of time and expertise TF had not been able to progress this matter. The PC is now considering the issue of the provision of smaller homes for the village - CR to discuss later.
- (ii) Devolved Services - LS is now Co-ordinator. To improve the appearance of the village we are now involved in a social enterprise scheme being managed by Stewkley Enterprise Agency (SEA). Three boys from the village are working for them, Josh Timmins, Josh Sirett and Charlie Baldwin – the boys are responsible for the mowing/strimming of grass around the village, removal of illegal notices, cleaning signs and keeping the footway clean. They are paid by SEA and have to provide invoices. They are doing an excellent job and the overall appearance of the village is a huge improvement on last year.
- (iii) Village Shop – TF said that we must all try to use the village shop as if not financially viable it could close.

4. Report by Janet Blake (AVDC and BCC Councillor)

BCC Finance - JB advised that BCC were not in a very sound financial position at the moment.

This position has worsened recently with the huge call on Children's Services in light of the Jimmy Savile Enquiry and the recent arrests for child exploitation and the court case in progress at the Old Bailey. £12 million has been put into the budget to cover these extra costs. In addition, BCC has recently received a poor Ofsted report for its Children's Services and needs to recruit nineteen Social Workers, these are hard to find and they are currently advertising abroad for staff which is expensive and the continuity of staff is not there. Recent surveys have shown most people in BCC area want more money to be spent on the roads but although funds are short £3 million has been pledged for rural roads, although this is far less than is needed. Therefore a 'plane and patch' programme is under way for the worst areas.

To try and minimise the shortfall JB is keen to borrow via prudential borrowing, which is a cheap way of borrowing but she is in the minority on the Council.

AVDC Elections - the Tories won 43 of the 50 seats, an increase of seven - the biggest majority they have ever held. JB has been made Councillor of Transformation for Commercial Enterprise. With central government reducing funding to councils, councils are going to be responsible for raising their own funds. AVDC has won Entrepreneurial Council of the year and is now advising other Councils and will in due course start charging for this service.

Fibre Broadband - AVDC are very keen to speed up broadband to the villages as this affects everyone. There is a pilot project under way in North Marston for ultrafast fibre broadband; if this is successful it will be spread to other villages. AVDC are hoping landowners will become involved and dig ditches etc for a reduced broadband charge. CR asked JB if there was a date yet for fibre broadband in Swanbourne as it is not on AVDC plans. The slow broadband is a real problem for home workers in the village. JB said that initially BCC had said £12 million would be spent rolling it out across the county but this has now been withdrawn. £1.5 million has been spent on the North Marston project which will last a year and then it will be re-looked at. FA asked JB if a meeting could be arranged with the various

parties involved in the roll out of broadband so residents had an insight as to what was going on.

Local Government organisation - JB is investigating (and favours) a Unitary Policy for both North and South Bucks as the needs of the two halves of the county are very different. This would result in the second (BCC) tier of local government being abolished.

Grants - There are a number of organisation offering grants. The Community Chest is a 10 year project and it is has two years to go. £500,000/year is given to local communities. JB suggested Swanbourne should approach them as they have not made a claim recently. Each application can claim up to £25,000. There is a Home's Bonus scheme for communities impacted by home building in the Aylesbury Vale.

The future - JB went on to say that the next four years are expected to be very financially challenging, but hoped that AVDC would eventually turn out fitter, leaner, and in a stronger financial position.

5. Village maintenance

Highways - TF said that he and DB had met with Matt Wincup (the local Highways Technician) last week. TF went on to say that the road from the church to Mursley is being re-surfaced later this year and the dragon's teeth will be re-painted then. The holes in the middle of the road going out of the village towards Winslow will be patched.

Drainage in Station Road – BCC have done an excellent job at the bottom of the hill. They are hoping to sort the leak at the top of the hill later this year and put a French drain in, but at the moment there is no money.

Smithfield End – Sign and Village School Cars – The sign has been hit and needs attention. FA said that Smithfield End is being used as a rat run for parents from the Village School and suggested that signs should be put up – DB said signs don't tend to work, but that he would speak to the school. He would also ask them to ask parents not to park on pavements and verges particularly down Station Road. However, the school has already spoken to parents and so far it doesn't seem to be having much effect. FA said he would take down number plates of parents using Smithfield End and pass them on to DB.

Drainage and gritting at Nearton End/Cemetery Hill – Matt Wincup agreed that work was needed on the drains and the camber of the road to prevent flooding and then ice in the winter but there were no funds. KH said he had looked at the gritting policy of AVDC and even though the hill met the five criteria they would still not come and grit. JB suggested that we lobby Simon Dudley to see if we could get this overturned. It was suggested that it would be better if Cemetery Hill was gritted rather than the road to Winslow.

Village gates - They are dirty and broken. Winslow Road gate has just been replaced by a plastic one and it looks very good and will be easier for the Devolved Service boys to keep clean. There is a gate missing on the Mursley Road, this has been taken away to be mended or replaced by a new plastic one. It was suggested that the signs should read "Please drive slowly" rather than "Please drive carefully". The County Council will pay for the new signs.

Verges – Smithfield End and Nearton End are very bad. Granite sets are needed from 25 Nearton End to Brises Farmhouse and Station Road where the verges are being parked on.

War Memorial – CR is keen to tidy up the area around the Memorial including planting some colourful shrubs, painting the chains and cleaning up the limestone. The SCA has given him a grant of £200 towards the cost. CR is also looking at a brass plaque to list all the names of the fallen on, as some names are so worn they can't be read and the list is incomplete on the monument. The War Memorial is also being considered for listing of historic monuments for WW1 by Historic England.

Swanbourne in Bloom – CR is also hoping to plant flowering shrubs at the entrance to the village and encouraged residents to brighten up their gardens to make Swanbourne a more inviting village. CR is looking for volunteers to help with this work.

Footpaths – Trudy Timms is paid by the Parish Council to weed and maintain the footpaths around the village. KH said that the footpath by Neal's Farm is inaccessible with a dog – TF will speak to the occupants. There are no plans at the moment to change styles to gates but TF is aware they will need doing in the future. The footpath down by the paintballing is very wet and boggy and requires attention.

6. Financial Report

The Accounts for 2014 and a draft budget for 2015 were presented (copy attached to these notes). TF explained the entries, and items were discussed. It was advised that grants are available from the Community Chest and LAF. The main areas being looked at (re potential application) are Playing fields and Granite sets.

7. Planning and Housing

CR gave a PowerPoint presentation reviewing the history of village housing proposals set within the constraints of two large Conservation Areas (designated in 1989) and a single dominant landowner (Swanbourne Estate). The issues, concerns, and possible ways forward were discussed. The need for small, affordable houses which may also be starter homes would seem to be greatest. The most suitable site for a possible mixed (purchase/shared ownership/rental) housing scheme development might be an infill site near to the Betsey, currently in the ownership of Swanbourne Estate, and this was favoured by a majority (9 out of 16) of those present. The talk by CR was concluded by a review of current planning applications.

8. MVAS and Speedwatch - Traffic calming

Helen Cleaveley is the Speedwatch and MVAS co-ordinator on behalf of the PC. Data is being collated and sent to the police. HC said that if there was a persistent offender then the police will visit them but no prosecution will result. Fifteen sessions had reported 124 speeding vehicles over a two week period. More volunteers are needed for one hour monitoring slots every two weeks. Anyone interested in helping should contact HC.

9. Poor's Land

There was no report available, CB will chase the matter up and circulate a report.

10. Other Village Matters

- (a) Village Hall Report. Mark Oldfield reported the damp repairs are completed and the decoration is finished. The accounts are looking healthy as the hall is in regular use. Simone and Trudy were thanked for their work taking bookings and cleaning. There is a fund-raising Race Night on 30th May which is £10 per ticket including supper. RP is going to update the sign. MO went on to thank David and Jean Tuer for all their hard work.
- (b) Playing Field Report. Nick Odell has stood down as Chairman as he is too busy, but new residents to the village Dave Thrower, Darren Ryan and the Deputy Head of Swanbourne Village School are keen to get involved. Eleanor Markland is happy to be Chair as she is already involved in the various grants available. Swanbourne Village School is looking to use the playing fields once they are tidied up and the dog poo issue is sorted. The plan is to fence the playing fields and erect signs telling people that dogs aren't allowed on them. MG suggested that more dog poo disposal bins and litter bins are needed, particularly at Smithfield End. Roy Sherwood does the mowing.
- (c) SCA Report. Frankie Fisher said that the SCA has had a very good year. Roger and Ann Parker as well as Leslie Campbell were now on the Committee. Clive and Linda Rodgers jointly edit the Village Newsletter, with Clive, Ken and Trudy delivering them. The 'All about Swanbourne' booklet had been well received and everybody who is new to the village will be given a copy. The Christmas Carol Tractor and Trailer raised £270 for Florence Nightingale Hospice. A new venture are the highly successful Swanbourne Afternoon Teas which are held on the first Monday of each month at 2.30pm. They are usually attended by around 30 people. Roger Parker has put up a copy of the Millennium photo in the Village Hall. He is also producing village themed Xmas cards, place-mats and jigsaws to sell (to raise funds for the SCA), and has successfully re-launched the Swanbourne Village lottery.
- (d) History Group Report. Frankie also commented that the History Group continues to update the Website with new articles and provide a range of very successful evening talks, such as that given on WW1 by Professor Beckett of Kent University last December. Clive will be giving a presentation on Swanbourne fighter pilot Anthony Bartley in October this year to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Battle of Britain.
- (e) Swanbourne Village Website. The address is www.swanbournevillage.org and the Administrator is Tim Titley.

The Chairman thanked all present for attending, and the meeting closed at 10.10pm.