

## **SWANTON MORLEY ANNUAL PARISH MEETING**

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> April 2006**

### **Report of the Village Hall Management Committee**

I am pleased to report that the Hall has had another satisfactory year. The Hall is in regular use by nine village organisations with bookings by outside hirers looking promising.

The most pleasing aspect of the year was the paying off of the Breckland District Council loan. This loan of £50,000 was taken out in March 1996 to enable the Hall to be completed to the point where all three trading areas could be used at the same time, supported by serviceable shower, toilet, kitchen and bar facilities. The total repayment to Breckland, being capital and interest totalled £75,000 and proved a considerable burden for the Committee to bear.

Hopefully, with the fund-raising activity continuing, we can build up capital to inject much-needed investment to address areas which need improvement. The Hall is currently debt-free with cash assets of £3,400.

The playing field is currently used by a Dereham Youth football club on a regular basis. There is considerable demand in the Dereham area for football pitches. At one time Swanton Morley had a very strong football club, but it, sadly, folded. The Committee would strongly support the formation of another football club in the village.

It is also pleasing to see the Youth Club up and running in the Hall. This is a much needed facility and great credit is due to the organisers for their perseverance in getting the Club going.

I would like to thank Fred and Janet Hammond for their unstinting help and support for so many years. Fred has stood down as caretaker but is still a great help generally keeping an eye on the premises. Sadly, the Bingo evenings, held every Thursday will be ceasing at Easter as no one can be found to replace the Hammond family who have run the sessions for many years.

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee who give so freely of their time for the benefit of the village, often under difficult circumstances.

However, with the loan burden now removed, we can hopefully generate the funds necessary to address the areas for improvement to create a Hall we can all be proud of.

John Carrick  
Chairman of the Management Committee

## **SWANTON MORLEY PARISH COUNCIL**

**ANNUAL MEETING MONDAY, 10<sup>TH</sup> APRIL 2006**

### **CHAIRMAN'S REPORT**

I am pleased to present my Annual Report on the Council's activities for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006.

The Clerk, in her report will give details of the Council's statutory functions, but I outline briefly here some of the initiatives being pursued by the Council to address various identified issues.

#### **The Council**

I am pleased that the Council is now up to full strength of seven councillors. We are not affected by this year's Local Government election in May. The elections to form a new Parish Council will be held in May 2007 and I hope we attract sufficient candidates to have a contested election.

#### **Mill Common & Burgh Common**

Many residents may be unaware that the Council has managerial responsibility for two parcels of Common land on the Worthing Road, Mill Common (10 acres) and Burgh Common (2 acres). Mill Common is eligible for EEC payments under the Single Farm Payment Scheme and Higher Level Scheme, an agri-environmental initiative designed to improve bio-diversity and public access. Application is being made to DEFRA under these schemes, which, if successful, could raise up to £1,000 per year for the next ten years.

Burgh Common is the narrow strip of land between the Worthing Road and River Wensum just past the now closed gravel workings.

It has been identified by English Nature and the Norfolk Fisheries Action Group as being ideal for public access for fishing and recreation. The Council has received a £500 grant from NFAG to assist clearing the area as a Parish amenity.

#### **Traffic Calming**

In view of considerable concern about traffic speeding through the village, the Council has taken the unusual step of making provision in next year's budget to fund a solution, although no definite plans to resolve the problem have been identified. Traffic calming measures in Swanton Morley are not supported by Norfolk County Council who cite low accident incidents in the village as proof that remedial measures are not a high priority.

However, they are going to provide a pedestrian crossing, following strong Parish Council lobbying, in the area of the old Post Office at the junctions of Woodgate Lane and Mann's Lane. This should help slow traffic down and be an added safety measure for those walking children to school.

The Parish Council is also looking at other measures to slow down traffic, including the SAM initiative (Speed Awareness Message). This is a Norfolk County Council scheme which involves portable speed monitoring equipment which has proved successful in other areas of the County. Although not a permanent solution, it is free and raises awareness of motorists to show consideration when driving through our Village.

### **Gooseberry Hill Play Area**

Roger Atterwill will be giving details of an ambitious scheme to provide play equipment on the Gooseberry Hill play area. The Parish Council is fully supportive of this project which has already attracted external funding. The project will deliver, safe, fully compliant adventure play facilities, which, currently are sadly lacking in the Village.

### **Old Village Hall**

A full report on the old Village Hall and Car Park will be given under item 7.

I hope all residents will fill in and return the questionnaire recently delivered, so the Parish Council may know your views.

### **Precept 2006-07**

You will be aware from your Council Tax Demand and from press attention that the Parish Share has increased by 57% this year. As previously explained, this is primarily due to play equipment and traffic calming provision. In a 'normal' year our precept is well in line with other villages of similar size (Necton, Mattishall, East Harling, etc.).

We are never likely to be a 'cheap' council due to our heavy financial responsibilities towards grass cutting, street lights, the churchyard and burial grounds.

Since the abolition of the Rate Support Grant, we have full responsibility for financing and maintaining our stock of 72 street lights, previously paid for by Central Government. Effective and safe street lighting is a priority for our residents as evidenced by the recent Village Appraisal.

Barring any unforeseen expenditure, the Parish share of your Council Tax should return to normal next year.

All Councils must be aware of their responsibilities towards Audit Regulations, risk management, public liability and the need to comply with 'best value' practice. Although such compliance has financial implications, your Council continually strives to keep expenditure to a minimum and provide value for money for residents.

### **The Clerk**

It is with much regret that we shall shortly be losing the services of our Parish Clerk, Louise Woolnough. Louise joined us at very difficult time and has proved to be quite outstanding at managing the Council's affairs. She brought to the post considerable experience and specialist knowledge which has proved invaluable to us.

I would like to place on record my personal gratitude and that of my fellow Councillors to Louise for all that she has done for Swanton Morley and give her our good wishes for the future.

  
John Carrick  
Chairman