

Clerk's Report 2007

We have decided this year to allow for Councillors' to give presentations on their relevant sub-committees and working groups, so I shall try to avoid stealing their thunder by talking about the many projects they have worked on.

Street Lighting

Miss Woolnough reported last year of streetlighting being a 'thorn in her side'. Luckily this has not been the case for me, as the new contractor appointed, T.T Jones has proven to be ever reliable, with faults being repaired within days of being reported and advice being given on the necessity of new columns. At the start of the year, there still remained a problem with the old contractor who made every excuse not to complete the contract that he had been paid for and remove an old column at Farrow Close. Using a very strong threat of legal action, the Parish Council forced this contractor to fulfil his obligations to the village.

As Mr Atterwill reported, the legal technicalities between Breckland Council and the Parish Council have now been overcome and permission has been given to erect a streetlight between Middleton Avenue and Hoe Road East. The Parish Council was very aggrieved by the advice given by the solicitor representing us, which we feel caused the great delay, and resolutely stood its ground until the firm in question decided to waive its fees.

Dog Fouling

The Parish Council has taken steps to help resolve dog fouling by working more closely with Steve O'Brien, the dog warden from Breckland Council. Loopholes were being found in the Dog Fouling of Land Act 1996 that created legal barriers preventing the Parish Council from enforcing penalties for dog fouling. We have given Breckland Council our full support to enforce the Clean Neighbourhoods Act 2005 in the village. Steve O'Brien has the relevant expertise required to enforce dog fouling penalties, and offenders can, and will be taken to court should they not take appropriate responsibility for their dogs.

I hasten to add here that the few people that are not responsible for their dogs are far outnumbered by those who are. The Parish Council gave permission for Mr O'Brien to use the village hall for a 'Good Citizen Dog Training Scheme'. This course was over subscribed within 2 weeks of it being advertised and a second course was put on.

Communication

Many Parish Council's, ourselves included, have come under criticism for not keeping the village informed about our meetings. I personally feel that this is a little unjustified as we far exceed our legal requirements to advise Parishioners of our meetings and what is planned for discussion. I would like to take this opportunity to remind everyone that full Parish Council meetings take place on the second Monday of every month at 7.30pm at the village hall. There are also meetings of the Churchyard and Burial Ground Sub-Committee and the Playing Fields Sub-Committee arranged when required in the year. A full agenda is displayed 3 clear working days prior to these meetings in 8 noticeboards within the village. An agenda is also published for full Parish Council meetings on the village website, which is www.swantonmorley.info. The Parish Council has also discussed piloting a text messaging service to remind people of forthcoming meetings, as we appreciate that some people lead very busy lives and find it hard to find the time to read noticeboards. If you would like to receive a text message about forthcoming meetings for full Parish Council and/or its Sub Committees, please do not hesitate to contact me.

On the subject of notice boards and the website, I would like to remind everyone that these are used for the promotion of the village. If you have an event going on in the village or a club you would like to promote, please let the Parish Council know because we are more than happy to display posters or place information on the website. The village website now has a section for village notices and also a forum and we dearly hope that people in the village will take advantage of these features. I am also pleased to report that Robertson Barracks have recently appointed a new Community Development Officer. Fran Sampson from the Barracks and myself have recently had a very lengthy discussion about the facilities within the Barracks and also within the village that could be used to their fuller potential if both communities communicated better with each other. I am personally very excited about this opportunity as both communities have a great deal to offer one another.

Quality Council

Whilst I originally said that I did not want to talk about projects, there is one project in that the Parish Council has agreed to that I would personally like to take forward. This is to help the Parish Council achieve what is known as 'Quality Council' status. For the Parish Council to achieve Quality Council status it must pass numerous tests, all of which will lead it to being more accountable, visible, representative and provide trusted community leadership. We will be better able to communicate the needs and wishes of this village and will be able to deliver more local services. The Parish Council already passes many of the stipulated criteria and believes that a Quality Standard mark will give the Council greater credibility and the village greater civic pride.

Summary

The Parish Council works hard on behalf of this village. It provides a voice to represent the community to other organisations such as Breckland and Norfolk County Council. However, the closer we work with Parishioners, the better we become. I was informed in a previous employment, that 'A Bright Idea Doesn't Care Who Has It'. If you have any thoughts about what could be done to improve this village, please talk to us about it. Either come to a meeting, where there is time specifically allocated for the public to talk, or contact either myself or any of the Councillors. We are always open to new ideas, constructive criticism or even compliments!

I would like to conclude this report with my appreciation to all those who have worked tirelessly this year for the benefit of the village. This is not only Councillors, who I must remind you are unpaid volunteers, but also many Parishioners that have given their time, labour, equipment and local knowledge for free. Your community spirit does not go unnoticed or without appreciation.

Thank you for your time, and enjoy the rest of the evening.