

Swaffham Bulbeck Parish Council

Annual Report

2023 – 2024

Your Parish Council meets once per month to look after the business of the parish, considering planning applications, protecting the village from unrestricted housing developments, applying for grants for village and transport improvements, taking care of things such as wear-and-tear and damage to village assets, grass cutting, planting of trees, and more. In addition to the Parish Council meetings, there are frequent Working Group meetings that deal with things such as environmental matters, council finances, legal regulations and special events.

Much of this work goes unnoticed, so I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Parish Clerk (who ensures that actions are taken once Council decisions have been made) and all of the councillors who have served in the past year, including Sue Romero, who stepped down in 2023, and Lynn Reed, who served the parish in various capacities for many years before she passed away earlier this year.

Activities in 2023 – 2024 included:

BENCHES

Many of the benches in the parish – including all of those on the Denny - have now been repaired or replaced. This is a continuing programme that helps to ensure that the village can be enjoyed by all at their leisure.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The Parish Council has been working to arrange the loan of (and suitable training for) a thermal imaging camera that will enable residents to identify areas of heat loss from their homes. We hope that we will be able to use this information to help residents to improve their insulation to cut heating costs and improve the parish's carbon footprint.

FINANCE

The Parish Council finances are well controlled and, despite the problems being experienced by many councils around the country, it has the reserves it needs to meet any reasonable expenditure in FY24/25.

SPECIAL EVENTS

The Parish Council organised two well-attended special events in 23/24. King Charles III's Coronation party was a great excuse to bring the community together. Our Earth Day combined the efforts of the Parish Council's new Climate Working Group, the Church and the local school children to organise the first of what we hope will become an annual event. We were delighted by the level of interest in this important subject as we attempt to raise awareness of climate change and show that Swaffham Bulbeck is committed to supporting and encouraging environmental awareness and net-zero activities within the Parish.

THE DENNY

The Parish Council – in consultation with its Trees Officer - has a program for replacing trees when necessary. We have been increasing the variety on the Denny, most recently adding two walnut trees to provide different colours and broaden the range of wildlife habitats. Preparation was completed by the community and the Community Payback scheme, and planting was a community event that included the schoolchildren from the parish.

The Parish Council would like to thank the Community Payback Scheme for its assistance over the past year. In addition to its work on the Denny, it has performed many important maintenance jobs such as cutting back unwanted foliage and repainting the cemetery railings.

TRAFFIC MATTERS

The Parish Council won a Local Highways Improvements bid to clarify the village speed limits by moving the 30mph signs a little further away from the centre of the village and installing speed notification cameras. We hope that these will encourage drivers to drive responsibly throughout the parish.

The Swaffham Greenway cycle scheme has proved to be the most contentious issue over the past year, with views within the parish ranging from wholehearted support for the GCP proposals to equally strong views against them. The Parish Council will continue to work to try to obtain the best outcome for the village and surrounding areas.

TREES & BIODIVERSITY

After suitable spots on the Denny were identified, a community event led to snowdrops and daffodils being planted in designated areas. Not only will these look nice, they should help to encourage wildlife and biodiversity on the Denny.

After a successful pollarding of the crack willows at Cowbridge last year, the next phase of management is now due. The wood will be left for the community, and we hope that people will be able to make good use of this.

ACTION PLAN 24/25

Swaffham Bulbeck Parish Council strives to work on behalf of the parish and is keen to receive ideas and suggestions in areas of particular interest or concern. Its action plan for 2024-2025 is attached below.

General objectives	Actions
<p>Cemetery Ensure that the cemetery is tidy, attractive and well maintained.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review cemetery rules/guidelines and agree that they are fit for purpose. • Ensure that the grass cutting contractor keeps the cemetery in a manageable state. • Develop a wildflower area and encourage wildlife. • Prepare for the Cambridgeshire Churchyard Conservation Award Scheme – bronze. • Complete the transfer of burial records to an electronic system and link this to a new digital mapping system.
<p>Climate Change Reduce the parish's carbon footprint and support initiatives to help mitigate and adapt to the impact of climate change.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop affordable ideas that could be implemented within the parish to lessen our contribution to climate change.
<p>CLT Liaison & Housing Work in partnership with the CLT and developers regarding proposed developments within the parish.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the CLT/Housing Association regarding affordable housing and renting.
<p>Community Matters Engage with the community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and encourage community links and events.
<p>Denny & Denny Wood Ensure that the play equipment is safe and that open spaces are suitable for leisure, social, sporting and learning activities.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify further improvements to the Denny and its facilities.
<p>Governance Ensure that the Parish Council is efficient, effective, open and transparent, that public money is used wisely, and that the village is safe and in good order.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Endeavour to fill the vacancies on the parish council. • Involve the community on major projects.
<p>Gutter Bridge Wood Ensure that the wood remains accessible and that biodiversity is broadened.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider opportunities that promote the wood for learning and pleasure.
<p>Pavilion Ensure that the Pavilion is maintained and well used.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconsider options to refurbish or replace the pavilion.
<p>Transport & Highways Be proactive regarding highway issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaise with the GCP and other relevant bodies to try to ensure that an appropriate and above all safe cycle route through the parish is agreed.
<p>Trees and Biodiversity Improve biodiversity through a greener local landscape.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research the Parish Council's obligations with regard to Biodiversity Net Gain. • Encourage the development of trees and biodiversity projects. • Continue to explore possible sites for a school wood and community orchard. • Consider the extension of existing woodlands.

FINANCE:

2022-23	INCOME	2023-24
£38,061.35	Income (precept and land rents)	£43,035.77
£3,010.50	Administration	£2,152.80
£847.09	Land & Open Spaces	£847.09
£2,635.00	Cemetery	£580.00
£100.00	Playground/Recreation	£30.00
£0.00	Grants	£0.00
£0.00	CIL Monies	£228.90
£40.00	Pavilion Charity	£50.00
£6,701.12	VAT	£2,749.53
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£51,395.06	Total Receipts	£49,674.09
	EXPENDITURE	
£14,893.39	Administration	£20,453.46
£22,168.07	Land & Open Spaces	£14,118.94
£581.90	Cemetery	£112.00
£5,800.30	Playground/Recreation Ground	£0.00
£111.99	Street Lighting	£123.35
£1,224.04	Grants	£78.99
£2,755.83	Pavilion Charity	£364.93
£5,792.43	VAT	£2,728.43
£0.00	Climate Change	£33.29
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£50,879.87	Total Payments	£38,013.47
	RESERVES	
£515.19	Current Year Fund	£11,660.62
£27,523.77	General Reserves	£20,882.96
£4,975.00	EMR - Professional Fees	£4,975.00
£2,100.00	EMR - Jubilee Fund	£250.00
£242.50	EMR – Gutter Bridge Wood	£242.50
£8,000.00	EMR - Pavilion Development	£8,000.00
£3,000.00	EMR - CLT	£1,506.00
£533.00	EMR - Village Sign	£533.00
£0.00	EMR – Neighbourhood Plan	£0.00
£28,937.62	EMR – CIL	£28,937.62
£2,560.00	EMR – Cemetery	£2,560.00
£1,500.00	EMR – Denny Wood	£1,500.00
£2,500.00	EMR Playground Repair	£5,000.00
£1,000.00	EMR Capital Expenditure	£1,000.00
£1,934.31	EMR Bench Refurbishment	£1,934.31
£4,000.00	EMR Sign Posts	£4,000.00
£4,000.00	EMR LHI Contribution	£7,000.00
£0.00	Climate Change	£1,000.00
£0.00	Tree Works	£4,000.00
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£93,321.39		£104,982.01