

SWANBOURNE PARISH COUNCIL
Chairman's Annual Report
Cllr. Clive N. Rodgers

Written for Swanbourne Parish Assembly planned for 20th May 2020. After cancellation due to Covid 19 crisis, this was published in the Swanbourne Newsletter and distributed to every household in Swanbourne village and parish.

A year ago, nobody could have predicted the crisis that we are living through now. The Covid 19 virus has severely disrupted our lives and the lockdown and social distancing rules have resulted in government directives cancelling the first elections for the new Buckinghamshire Council (due on 7th May). The Parish Council elections on the same date have also been postponed until 2021, so it is necessary to carry over the existing Parish Councillors and their roles for another year.

The existing AVDC councillors were also to be carried over. For Swanbourne this would be Janet Blake, though I understand she has recently resigned.

The social distancing requirements meant that the annual Parish Assembly held in the Village Hall (planned for Wednesday 20th May) could not take place.

I would therefore like to take this opportunity to give you a written summary of our work over the 2019-20 financial year and the prospects for Swanbourne for the year ahead.

Bus Shelters – Provision of bus shelters has been something of a mission. Bus shelters were originally proposed by John Fremantle in 1971, but since that time Swanbourne had remained the only village in the area not to have any. To finally make this happen, I first obtained permission from Bucks County Council to erect two bus shelters at the most suitable sites. In order to match with our historic village environment, they were hand built by James Tattam in hardwood. The first bus shelter was completed in February 2019 and I am pleased to report that the second bus shelter (again hand built in the same style by James) was completed in November 2019 at the top of New Walk, yet preserving the John Price memorial bench which was relocated to a new concrete base next to the shelter. In normal times both bus shelters are used by school children every day as well as by members of the public through the day.

Broadband – I am pleased to report success in helping to achieve a levelling up of the fibre Broadband provision within Swanbourne village. Accordingly, it gives me pleasure to report that the main patches of the village originally missed out by AVB (Smithfield End, Charlton Close and Ridgeway Cottages) have all been connected to the fibre network by Gigaclear over the last year.

Playing Field and Playground Equipment – Over the last year, two new rubbish bins have been installed which are being emptied by AVDC (now BC). The Playing Field Committee have also purchased some new signs. The possibility of a cycle track around the edge of the playing field is being considered and what used to be called the woodland walk in the wide hedge around the edge is being considered for a children's adventure walk. The Playing Field Committee and Swanbourne Community Association organised a very successful sports day on Saturday, 13th July, 2019.

Oxford to Cambridge Expressway – Over the last year I have continued to attend meetings and write letters to Highways England and others concerning the very worrying prospect of a dual carriageway. The village has been united - together with Swanbourne Estate and the SCA

we have strongly opposed it. While the Oxford-Cambridge rail project is widely supported (and work on it continues), the Expressway road proposals have been widely regarded as environmentally catastrophic. However, I am very pleased to report that on 11th March 2020 the government announced that the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway proposal would be "paused". The Department for Transport and Highways England said they will instead "undertake further work on other potential road projects" between the two university cities that would seek to reduce congestion in other areas between them.

Traffic Feasibility Study – The report is about future options which may help to manage the volumes of traffic passing through Swanbourne. Helen Cleaveley has liaised with Ringway Jacobs who completed a study and provided a report earlier this year. This has now been fully considered by the Parish Council at our April and May video conference meetings and it was our intention to discuss the options available/recommended at the Parish Assembly on 20th May. As this has not been possible, we have decided to conduct a consultation via a simple online survey, details of which are included after this report.

Standing Orders – Nothing to do with banking, local authority Standing Orders are the set of rules by which a Parish Council operates. We have to follow a government template but also to tailor some requirements for local circumstances. Following work on this with Mike King, we presented our proposals to the Parish Council at the January 2020 meeting. Following discussion, the proposals were approved and formally adopted. A copy is published on the PC website.

Swanbourne Village Community Facebook Group – At the Parish Council meeting held on 2nd October 2019 it was resolved (*minute 72/19*) to organise a Community Facebook group in order to help keep the village up to date with current issues (e.g. expressway proposals). Started by the Parish Clerk (Vanda Bennett) and a Parish Councillor (Deborah Barrow) soon after the meeting, this is proving to be a vital resource during the current Covid 19 crisis, enabling the community to help each other in so many different ways e.g. sourcing local fresh food (with Swanbourne shop closed) and has provided an important source of practical and moral support as/when needed (e.g. dropping off shopping/medicines) as well as providing a discussion outlet when so many people feel relatively isolated due to the lockdown regulations. Parish Councillor Rosemary Andrew has now replaced Vanda Bennett as the second moderator. Deborah and Rosemary are providing helpful advice and doing a fantastic job as moderators, ensuring the discussion remains on an even keel and ending discussion threads at the most appropriate moment.

Finances and Annual Return - The Annual Return and finances for the 2019-20 year were considered and approved by the Parish Council via video conference meeting held on 13th May 2020. To fund the costs of the second bus shelter and the traffic feasibility study together required approx. £7000 to be taken from reserves. A copy of the Annual Return and documentation will shortly be posted on the Parish Council website.

Notification of public rights (to inspect Parish Council books held by the Parish Clerk) – This will include the first 10 working days in July. However, the accounts summary, Annual Return etc. will also be published on the Parish Council website.

Parish Council Transparency – The Parish Council website follows government transparency guidelines and contains all the Parish Council news and documentation (e.g. agenda and minute records as well as all financial information). www.swanbourneparishcouncil.co.uk

Parish Council Meetings – The last normal Parish Council meeting to be held in the Village Hall was in January 2020. Since then The Parish Council have held video conference meetings in April and in May but under the lockdown regulations it was not possible to hold the normal Parish Assembly. We are hoping it will be possible to have a normal Parish Council meeting back in the Village Hall again by September.

Swanbourne Community Association Annual Report (*Frankie Fisher, Chair*)-

- * Monthly teas and lunches continue to be well-supported, with three lunches and nine teas held again during the year.
- * Two quizzes were held in March 2019 and October 2019, and were much appreciated by those who took part.
- * The Village Newsletter continued to be delivered to every house in the Village every three months.
- * A new edition of All About Swanbourne was produced, and circulated together with the December newsletter.
- * Another Swanbourne Sports Day was held in July, supported by SCA funds.
- * A further tennis coaching event was organised on the Playing Field in June.
- * The History Group held two public meetings – on ‘*Two Men called Thomas*’ and on ‘*The Wing Airport Resistance Association*’. Articles continue to be added on its website, and two village history walks were organised.
- * A donation was made to the Village Hall and a further grant was made towards the second bus shelter recently erected at the top of the New Walk.
- * Roger and Anne Parker continued to support the link with Nedlands (which includes Cottesloe and Swanbourne) in Perth, Australia.
- * The SCA website continued to be supported financially and updated as necessary.
- * The Christmas carol singing around the village raised £300.89 for The Aylesbury Homeless Action Group.
- * In 2019, £700 was paid out in prizes, and a further £410 was raised to fund future village activities.

Parish Council Meetings - All Parish Councillors are unpaid volunteers who live in Swanbourne and freely give up their time to help improve life for the people of Swanbourne community. Regular meetings are normally held in the Village Hall.

Swanbourne Parish Council AGM had to be held remotely on 13th May 2020, and we agreed to carry over our existing roles for another year. These are: -

Parish Clerk – Vanda Bennett, email clerkswanbournepc@gmail.com telephone enquiries to 728392.

Parish Councillor (Chair) - Clive Rodgers, email swanbourne13@gmail.com Strategic planning, liaising with SCA, maintenance overview, Newsletter, liaison with Swanbourne Estate, websites, maintenance overview.

Parish Councillor - Helen Cleaveley – Traffic issues, MVAS and Speed watch. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Parish Councillor Linda Sirett – Dog related issues, playing field/verges liaison. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Parish Councillor Steve French – Local area Forum meetings, local planning applications. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Parish Councillor Rosemary Andrew – Bus shelters, bus stops, joint Facebook community administrator. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Parish Councillor Deborah Barrow – Highway defect reporting to Buckinghamshire Council and litter issues. Joint Facebook community administrator. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Parish Councillor Mike King – Standing Orders, Transparency compliance, help with Parish Council Website. *Emails will be forwarded via the Parish Clerk.*

Traffic Survey (public consultation) (Cllr HJelen Cleaveley) - One of the unexpected benefits of the strange and sad times we are currently experiencing is the quiet which lockdown has brought to the village.

The dramatic reduction in commuter traffic (by 72%) has brought the hum of insects and the sound of birdsong back to the main thoroughfares.

If, like me, you've been enjoying the new-found peace, then please do complete this PC survey by following the link: -

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/3MJBS8D>

Following the PC's Traffic Survey in 2018 and the new Feasibility Study (both carried out for us by Transport for Bucks) we are now seeking your views on more ways to keep our village roads quieter and safer.

C.N. Radner

May 2020.