

SWANTON NOVERS PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on Thursday 12th May 2016 at Swanton Novers Village Hall at 7.30pm.

Councillors present: Cllr Mrs. V Hart (Chair), Cllr. Mrs. C Armstrong (Vice Chair) Cllr. Mrs. R Leeder, Cllr. R Hart, Cllr. Rick Hadden & Cllr. Mrs. V Brittain.

Others present: NNDC Cllr. Annie Claussen-Reynolds, NNDC Cllr. Roy Reynolds, PCSO Shane Artingstall, County Cllr. David Ramsbotham and 3 members of the public.

2016/1 Apologies: Cllr. Miss F Jenkinson.

2016/2 To receive declarations of interest: None received.

2016/3 Annual Report from the Chair of the Parish Council Cllr. Val Hart:

Swanton Novers Annual Parish Meeting 2016 **Report from the Chair**

During the past year, the Parish Council has been busy and has much to report.

What follows is in no particular order of date or importance.

- The clerk - Jeffrey Smallbones - has, not without some problems, managed to set up the Parish Council website. It is available to all and contains all Meetings, Minutes of Meetings and other very useful village information.
- The clerk has been in regular contact with the County Council Highways Department and has reported 2 broken footpath signs, a road sign on the B1354 which was damaged and has continued the dialogue regarding promised repairs and resurfacing of the Holt Rd. leaving the village. The signs have been repaired or replaced. The dialogue over Holt Rd. continues.
- The clerk and myself attended a meeting last Autumn at County Hall and, as a result, gained information on accessing grant funding which has enabled the Parish Council to install Broadband and WiFi to the Village Hall. The grant also covered the purchase of a laptop computer and scanner/printer which will be for future Parish Council use.
- The Wartime Pill Box at the junction of Gallowhill Lane and Tinshed Lane has been registered as a War Memorial. It has been tidied up and a Service of Remembrance was held there on November 11th. This was well attended and we are keen that this be an annual event. The work was carried out by volunteers who repaired some of the concrete roofing and brickwork. They also made a bench dedicated to WW2. Public subscription paid for a plaque which has the names of all Swanton men who died fighting during both wars.
On this subject, we are being asked to be mindful of the 100th anniversary of the ending of WW1 in 2018 – and to begin making arrangements to commemorate this event locally. We will need to consider setting up a sub-committee to organise this.
- The clerk was able, as a result of attending yet another course, to gain information about ways to access funding to have adult outdoor exercise equipment installed at the playing field. By asking the village community via questionnaires, it is clear that there is a lot of interest in this facility. It is hoped that we may be able to install it later on in the year.
- The Annual Litter Pick was well attended, and our village environment has been tidied up for the time being. Sadly there are those who ignore their surroundings and continue to deposit their unwanted litter – in particular those leaving quantities of drinks cans along the grass verges. We all do our best to mitigate this, and it seems that we need to continue pick up any litter we may see whenever we are out and about.
- The allotment has reached the end of the first full year. Holders have worked hard to mitigate the effects of the wind, drought, pests etc. and are now more confident with the land. There is space available for anyone wishing to take up this rewarding, but tiring, pastime.

- There has been an issue with 'The Shed' in the woods, generated by comments made by members of the community, mainly about compliance with planning conditions. The situation, as it was understood, was that it could only be inhabited during the day time and not at night. This was challenged at a meeting held in the village hall with the occupiers of 'The Shed' and concerned villagers. Following that meeting, the Parish Council contacted the District Council with information gained. As a consequence of this, restrictions were removed and retrospective Council Tax imposed. Currently we are waiting to hear from NNDC Planning regarding change of use.

- Barney Lane. Progress has been made after a meeting with Lord Hastings and the farm manager. It has been agreed that farm traffic will be reduced to a minimum, and that unauthorised vehicular traffic will be prevented with the installation of gates at the Swanton end of the lane. This has been done. Also discussed at the time, were remedial works to be undertaken to address the very deep ruts, overgrown margins and the need to restore the blocked runnels to drain the track. This work is promised as soon as the weather permits.

- We have been in contact with the District Council Chief Executive and other officers on 2 separate occasions during the past year. These have been to address the Oak Tree Cottage extension and the poor attendance of our Ward representative – Stephen Ward.

Regarding the Oak Tree Cottage issue – we complained about the treatment we received as a Parish Council where we felt that our opinions were disregarded and that, when we attended the meeting of the Development Committee last June, our verbal submissions were also disregarded and not even debated.

As for Stephen Ward, we insisted on meeting with the Group Leader, Cllr. Tom FitzPatrick to put our case. That meeting was not a success. We were treated very badly by the member of the Legal Team who had been asked to attend by Cllr. FitzPatrick. Indeed it would be true to say that there was no respect accorded to us – by which I include the Chairs of both Melton Constable and Fulmodeston with Barney. Her hostility was such that I will be raising this matter in the following Parish Council meeting.

It needs to be said that, in both cases, the outcome of the meetings were far from satisfactory. Subsequent information has shown that we were right to challenge both cases.

- Resulting from the complaints received from the 3 Parish Councils, Cllr. Ward has resigned and there will be an election later in the summer. In the interim, Cllr. Claussen-Reynolds will be acting as our Ward Representative and hopes to attend as many of our meetings as possible
- Looking to the future, we are intending to look very closely at the options to alter our street lighting to a more environmentally friendly and less light polluting system of LED lamps.

It is becoming very clear that we, as a Parish Council, will be expected to engage more with computer technology and training. Our clerk has attended a training session and set up the website. The grant to install Broadband and WiFi was obtained for this reason. This is expected of all Parish Councils. All Parish Council business has, in future, to be entered digitally. In the case of those of us not in possession of a computer, then of course the usual paper copies will be available. The Parish Precept has increased, and there is money available for all Council Member to attend any appropriate training sessions offered. Jeff and I attended a Full Council Meeting at the District Council in April, and found it to be most useful – both to see how they work, and to discover information affecting our region. I encourage all of you to attend at least one Full Council Meeting if possible. Parish Councils will be carrying more responsibility in future, which is why more training sessions are being offered. For example, some of us attended a session on Planning late last year and I think, found it to be most informative.

We can be proud of our achievements over the past year. We are demonstration are we not “Government from the bottom up” as Leader of NNDC Cllr. Tom FitzPatrick stated at the last full council meeting on April 27th.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Parish Council members for volunteering your time and commitment to our village.

Val Hart 12/05/2016

2016/4 Open Forum: No items were raised by members of the public

Signed..... Chairperson dated.....

Signed..... Parish Clerk dated.....

Next meeting will be held on Thursday 16th June 2016 at 7:30pm in the Village Hall