

Swallow Parish Council
Chairman, Cllr. G L T Baxter's Report for the year ended 31st March 2007

Welcome to you all and thank you for attending the Annual Meeting of the Parishes of Swallow and Cuxwold.

Last year in my report, I touched on wider issues in the community and country that effect our lives here in Swallow.

Regional Government is proceeding with the Lincolnshire Assembly feeding into the East Midlands Regional Assembly. These are non elected bodies and our Local Association is working hard to have a Parish and Town Council voice in these forums; but it is an uphill battle.

In the event, the reorganisation of the Police Force was fortunately squashed for many reasons, not the least financial, but locally the Police at Caistor have set up local forums for councils to keep in regular touch with issues that have an impact on all our communities. It is too early to say whether these forums will be useful but the hope is that they will, and not become another talking shop.

Your Council continues to respond to all manner of consultations on local and national government levels and it is so important that we put our views forward, despite being a small council. In particular we have supported moves to prevent the closure of local post offices and have supported the Sustainable Communities Bill, which is still going through the House of Commons.

Parish Affairs.

Precept. The precept for 2006/2007 was raised by £500 to £5,000. This year has been one of careful consolidation and the reserves have risen to a satisfactory level. There have been no unexpected expenditure rises. Accordingly, your Council was able to reduce the 2007/2008 precept to £4,250.

Planning. The development on the meadow opposite the church has continued throughout the year and is still in progress. There have been a number of problems arising, mainly over the state of the building site and rubbish blown over the village, but these have been dealt with and there remains one house to be built.

The government has introduced changes to planning administration. The Local Plan which determined how areas were to be developed will cease, to be replaced by the Local Development Framework, which your Council will continue to have input during the consultation process.

Village maintenance.

- a) Lincolnshire County Council has been supportive in keeping the village tidy and drains cleared. The problem of water seepage on Beelsby Road is being monitored and it is to be hoped the Highways will be able to find the cause of the leak very soon.
- b) Council was very pleased to welcome the new traditional road signs at the Grimsby Road/Caistor road crossroads and the Beelsby Road crossroads. They are a big improvement on the old metal signs.
- c) J W Cousins continues to mow some of the grassed areas in Swallow and Council is grateful to him for his regular attendance in the village.
- d) The Humberside Probation Service Community Service Unit has been re-organised in accordance with new guidelines and will no longer be able to come in to Swallow to help with general maintenance and tidying up jobs. This work will now have to be paid for through formal contracts where necessary and will thus cost more, the CSU contribution will be missed by the village.

Bus Services and Lincolnshire County Council Interconnect service 3. Lincoln, Grimsby and Cleethorpes and return. At long last this service is now fully operational and the temporary daily morning service into the village has ceased. The service is proving quite popular and is attracting

new passengers. During April 2007 part of the Chairman's allowance was used to purchase a small bench which was placed half way up Limber Hill, a place to rest before attempting the final walk to the top of the hill! The bus shelters and the stops on the A46 are maintained by the Council; there has already been a problem with graffiti. This is annoying and it is to be hoped that the perpetrators will read this and think of others before they spoil these shelters for other users.

Speed Indication Device. In July 2006 your Council made a bid for loan of a mobile speed indication device from the Lincolnshire Road Safety Partnership. Eventually in March 2007 we were loaned the device for two weeks. Assisted by Paul Hewins, he and I were responsible for the Device which we used regularly at busy morning and evening periods. I am pleased to report that our presence with the device was well received and there was no evidence of undue speeding during the times we were operating the Device. We hope to have the Device again in the future.

Payphone Cuxwold. Despite long, protracted correspondence with the Department of Media, Culture and Sport, English Heritage and an appeal to the Secretary of State, we lost the battle for listed status for the iconic red telephone box in Cuxwold. BT repainted it in 2006 and it is looking cared for, but how long it can stay, remains to be seen. There is little or no cell phone reception in the centre of Cuxwold and the pay phone is necessary for emergency use. It is worth saying "Use it or lose it" in this case.

Undergrounding of electric wires. Lincolnshire Wolds Conservation Services advised your Council at the beginning of the year that there was little or no chance of having the work done in the parish and we were resigned to the wires and poles remaining. Now I am able to tell you that we have been informed that undergrounding of low voltage cables will take place either later this year or early next year.

Wolds Area Local Strategic Partnership. Your Council is represented at all these increasingly important organisations. It is a forum for real change in this rural area and will have a major impact on all issues affecting our lives, health, welfare, education, leisure, planning, transport, the list goes on.....

Training and allowances. Your Councillors and Clerk continue to attend courses and seminars on matters relevant to small councils. Councillors still do not claim a members' allowance but do receive expenses for travel in connection with their council duties.

Donations. Royal British Legion Wreath £15 and West Lindsey CAB £50.

Neighbourhood Watch. Cllr. Wallace retired as the Watch Co-ordinator at the 2006 Annual Council Meeting and the Council was very grateful for the years of dedicated work he gave to the villages of Swallow and Cuxwold.

We were pleased to welcome Emma Bilenky and Craig Dixon who jointly agreed to become our Co-ordinators. They have certainly made their mark with regular informative Newsletters and arranging replacement Neighbourhood Watch signs for those lost or damaged. They are in regular contact with the police and we benefit from their input to village safety.

Village Hall & Playing Fields Association. Your Council continues to support the work of the Village Hall & Playing Fields Association by meeting the costs of insurance, security, play equipment inspections and utility charges. This represents a large percentage of the Council's outgoings but the splendid newly refurbished Hall is a great asset to both Villages and a welcome focal point for us all. It is a great credit to the Chairman, Secretary and all the members of the Association and we congratulate them on all their hard work and dedication.

Parish Plans. These are becoming more and more important as the Local Development Framework and the Local Strategic Partnership develop and place greater emphasis on local need. To express these needs and voice opinion the Parish Plan is the accepted vehicle by all these bodies and Swallow Parish Council should really encourage such a Plan for Swallow and Cuxwold. It must not be Parish Council led, but the way everybody has rallied round to make the Village Hall the place

it is today, shows that there is a pool of very interested and committed folk to draw on. With encouragement the funds are now being made available and can be applied for. A Workshop for this is on 11 June 2007 in West Rasen. Everybody with the interests of Swallow and Cuxwold should have an impact or a contribution to Parish Plans. The working Committee could have a representative from the following: -

1. Churches
2. Village Hall and Playing Fields Association
3. Swallow Inn
4. The farmers
5. Parish Council
6. Cuxwold Cricket Club
7. Swallow residents
8. Cuxwold residents
9. Police

A properly produced Parish plan will carry more weight with all the Authorities which have an impact on our communities and carry more weight than just the views of the Parish Council.

Finally, I offer you my good wishes for the coming year and my thanks to all the Parish Councillors who rarely miss a meeting, West Lindsey District Council and Lincolnshire County Council councillors who have regularly attended our meetings, also including those members of the public who also attend. The Council is grateful for all their support.

Thanks also to the Police and to Emma Bilenky and Craig Dixon in their capacity as Neighbourhood Watch organisers. Their contribution to our communities is very much appreciated

G L T Baxter
Chairman
8th May 2007.