

Swallow Parish Council
Chairman, Cllr. G L T Baxter's Report for the year ended
31st March 2010

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

We are all aware of the difficult economic climate in which we find ourselves and the Parish Council is conscious of everyone's concerns. Accordingly, the annual precept has been kept at last year's level of £3,800. We will endeavour to provide you all with a good service throughout the coming year.

Parish Plan.

This year has seen the Parish Plan become a reality, launched with a well attended supper party at the Village Hall. Every household was given a copy of the Parish Plan. All your responses to the questionnaire are incorporated into the Plan and the ideas put forward form the Action Plan. The Action Plan, the final result of the Committee's hard work over two years, has now been adopted by the Parish Council.

Your Council is very pleased to report that the Plan Committee has been invited to present the Plan on 3rd July 2010 to West Lindsey District Council Meeting at the Guildhall, Gainsborough. We are the first Council to be asked to do this and the Committee is looking forward to the opportunity to give our Plan wider publicity.

To begin the process of improvements recommended in the Plan, the Committee is looking at new equipment for the playing field in Swallow. A recent survey of youngsters, their parents and grandparents has yielded some excellent suggestions and play scheme plans are being sought from a number of contractors and hopefully, grants will follow.

Also, the dark, forbidding bus shelters on the A46 will be more acceptable if we can install some form of lighting. The Lincolnshire County Council has said it is unable to fund two lamp standards, at a cost of £6,649 in the present economic climate. Sustainable solar lighting could favourably attract grant funding and the Committee is working on this project.

You will have noticed that the bench on Limber Hill has been raised to a more comfortable height. The Committee is very grateful to Councillor Gary Metcalf for carrying out this work.

Other Matters.

Cllr. Metcalf and his partner Li have also been very busy planting hedging plants in the hedge line on Grimsby Road and in gaps around the playing field. Once again, our thanks go to Garry and Li for all their hard work and commitment for the good of the village.

Your Council has responded to a number of consultations on proposed government legislation and members and the Clerk attended forums and seminars at District and County level.

PCSO David Asher/Caistor Police have regularly attended Parish Council meetings to report on the current policing matters and respond to our requests and they have been active in both villages. A regular surgery is held on the first Sunday in the month at mid day and although there have been very few residents attending, the Police plan to continue them, for the time being.

Peter Day, Neighbourhood Watch co-ordinator, has been very active, his data base of participating residents has made it possible to pass on Police information speedily and hard copies are placed on the notice board. If you wish to be part of this scheme, please advise Peter Day of your e-mail address.

I reported last year on the threat of closure of the BT telephone box in Cuxwold. Fortunately, West Lindsey District Council stepped in and saved Cuxwold's box, along with a number of other boxes throughout the District, for which we were very grateful. Council will keep a watching brief, should BT decide to take any further action.

Fly tipping and litter are continuing problems but West Lindsey District Council, with their Parish Champions scheme is quick to respond to requests to clear fly tipping. Lincolnshire County Council has recently installed gates at either end of the disused section of the A46, just before the County boundary. We hope this will deter fly tippers from dumping lorry loads of all manner of rubbish in the valley, as has happened regularly throughout the year. Access is still available for horses and walkers, as this is a section of the bridleway, leading to Irby Dales. Your Council organised another litter pick in March and we managed to fill Swallow's old bus shelter with the rubbish collected. This is a sad reflection on the irresponsible habit of people who cannot be bothered to take their rubbish home, or even put it in the litter bins provided in the village and at the bus stops on the A46. Our thanks go to the big turnout of residents who came to help; we were able to cover a wider area than in previous years and the village looked tidy again.

The new Permissive Path created on Suttons Estates land around Rookery Farm is now open although it is yet to be signed. This has been incorporated in the Village Interpretation Board which should be in place very soon. Our thanks go to Keith Stoneman who spent many hours on his computer, fitting all the photographs and wording onto the OS map, provided by Lincolnshire County Council. The board is being made and will be situated adjacent to the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty board in the lay by on the Grimsby Road. A smaller version of the map will be laminated and placed inside the bus shelter in Cuxwold. Lincolnshire County Council Highways decided that a full sized board would be inappropriate in such a small village but Council felt that a print will be useful. The cost of the board will be met from Lincolnshire County Council and West Lindsey District Council grants and the balance from the accumulated Chairman's allowance.

The drainage in the centre of Swallow remains an issue. Gullies have been cleared out but the underlying problem of an old and damaged system remains and is still to be fully addressed by Lincolnshire County Council Highways and Council will continue to press for a full investigation. The dip in Beelsby Road, which floods in heavy rain, is still awaiting attention. We are assured that it will be dealt with sooner rather than later.

Mr. Cousins, our grass cutting contractor, kept the village grassed areas tidy with regular mowing throughout the season and we are grateful to him.

The County Library at Caistor is likely to be moved if the old West Lindsey District Council building is sold. The service is much reduced and efforts, supported by your Council, are still being made to improve access.

I reported last year on the fight to save the Microbiology Unit at Lincoln County Hospital. The facility's move was temporarily halted, pending a review but the fight to save it was lost by the adjudication at an independent tribunal.

I also touched on the new Power of Wellbeing, giving Town and Parish Councils enhanced powers over those in Section 137, LGA 1972. Your clerk has already attended a training session on the use of this power and a Councillor and I are attending the next course. When 80% of councillors are trained, we will be able to apply to use the Power.

Four years ago, your Council was credited with Quality Council status after the production of a portfolio showing how our council works and more importantly, how we serve you, our community. The status lasts only four years and we are now about to prepare a second portfolio, hopefully proving that we are worth re-accreditation.

Council continues to support the Swallow and Cuxwold Village Hall and Playing Association, as in previous years, meeting insurance, security, play equipment inspections and utilities charges. This year there has been an additional charge. A water pipe in the playground sprang a leak, which was not covered by insurance and the repair cost £570 + VAT. The hall is central to village life and a large percentage of the Parish Precept is used to assist the Association to keep the facilities in a condition which we are all proud to use.

Planning.

Early last year, Council was alerted to a West Lindsey District Council document, the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment (SHLAA) 2008. This showed that Rookery Farm and surrounding land was available for the development of 113 homes.

After unsatisfactory contact with the Planning Department, Mr. John Ware, Senior Planning Officer, agreed to come to the Village Hall on 16th June 2009 to explain the contents of the document. Thirty nine residents,

Councillors and the Clerk attended. Residents were outraged at the apparent enormity of the proposed development in Swallow.

Mr. Ware explained that the SHLAA was a theoretical study and any land identified in the document did not mean that it would automatically be developed. Planning Authorities are required by Government to identify land for future development and this information is fed into the overarching Development Strategy for Central Lincolnshire, within the East Midland Region to which the housing allocation is given.

A letter from the landowners, Sutton Estates, was read out. The Estate had been asked by the Planning Department to identify any land that could become available for housing development and Rookery Farm was one of three sites they offered. The Estate is interested in developing the redundant farm buildings but not the surrounding land.

There is no objection to a slow development of new housing in Swallow but not the large executive style houses on Church View. This is borne out by answers to the Parish Plan, housing needs questionnaire and to a second one distributed after the meeting.

Only the removal of Rookery Farm from the SLAA 2008 document would satisfy the audience but Mr. Ware explained this was not possible. This is a theoretical study, each site must be considered on its own merits, in the light of the Planning Policy Statements and after the production of a core strategy by Central Lincolnshire. The Parish Council must keep abreast of all developments of the strategy and respond to all consultations.

Your Council has been proactive, responding to SHLAA 2009, recommending smaller sites for future infill development. We have also responded to other District surveys and we await further developments.

General.

West Lindsey District Council introduced a new system of triple bin collections in September. After a few minor problems, it is now established and despite the difficulties in the very bad weather earlier this year, it is proving a satisfactory service.

The wooden bench flanked by decorative chimney pots on the green below the Hall was found to be rotting and unsafe. We replaced it with a virtually indestructible one made in the county from recycled plastic bottles and it is in regular use again.

The Christmas season was greatly enhanced by a beautiful Christmas tree placed on the green. This was a joint effort with the Church providing the power, the Village Hall the lights and the Parish Council obtained the tree. Willing volunteers laid the cable and a qualified electrician connected everything up. The tree was a source of much pleasure throughout the Christmas period. Thank you to everybody involved.

It is with sadness that I record the death of Margaret Lynskey, who resigned from the Parish Council in 2007 after many years service as a councillor. She and her husband, Peter moved to Leeds to be closer to family last summer but Margaret died earlier this year. Both she and Peter had been very active members of our community, serving on the Village Hall Committee and being part of the team, which oversaw major improvements to the Hall. Two councillors and I attended Margaret's service of thanksgiving in Leeds. She is sadly missed by her family and friends.

May I offer my thanks to all your Parish Councillors who loyally attend the Council meetings. I also thank the Lincolnshire County Council and West Lindsey District Council councillors who regularly attend the meetings to report on District and County matters. We are grateful for all their help and guidance. Thank you also to the police for their regular attendance.

That concludes my report.

G L T Baxter
Chairman
11th May 2010.