**Swardeston Parish Council 2019-21**

**Annual Report to be presented at the Annual Village Meeting on May 6th 2021 via Zoom. This report covers two years from May 2019-May 2021, the 2020 meeting having been cancelled due to Covid-19.**

A full Swardeston Parish Council comprises seven members, elected every 4 years in May, the next elections will be in 2023. The council usually meets in the Village Hall on the second Thursday of each month with meetings, apart from the Annual Council Meeting in May, starting at 7.30 p.m. All council meetings are open to the public. Due to the Covid-19 pandemic council meetings have been held via Zoom since April 2020 but should revert to face-to-face meetings in the Village Hall from July 2021. Full details of all meetings are posted on the Parish Council’s website at <https://swardeston-parish-council.norfolkparishes.gov.uk/>

The council is responsible for the provision and maintenance of a variety of village infrastructure: -

* The bus shelter has to be maintained and we employ a contractor to keep it clean.
* A public access defibrillator, in a cabinet on the North wall of the old “Dog Inn” (PB Creative), was supplied and is maintained by, the Parish Council.
* A Speed Awareness Machine (SAM2) was purchased by the Parish Council (in partnership with NCC Highways) and is deployed at four sites, on a 28-day rotation, along the B1113 Main Road. Data from this machine is available on the Paris Council website and is passed to the police from time to time when excessive vehicle speeds have been detected.
* The playground by the village hall also has to be maintained and RoSPA inspected annually. The council employs a contractor to mow the playground grass and cut the surrounding hedge. We also pay for the RoSPA inspection but, wherever possible, simple maintenance tasks are undertaken by members of the council, assisted by Friends of Swardeston Common volunteers, in order to save money.
* Litter and Dog-Litter bins are provided and maintained by the council but have to be emptied by contractors employed by the parish council.
* Two grit bins are provided by the council, one in Short Lane opposite the village sign and the other at the west end of Wood Lane. Although the bins are filled and refilled when necessary by Highways the provision and maintenance is down to the Parish Council. Both bins are currently in need of replacement one having apparently been hit by a vehicle that mounted the kerb in Wood Lane while the other suffered damage to its lid which has subsequently been ripped off and has disappeared. The cost of replacing both bins will run to several hundreds of pounds and, as funds become available, both bins will be replaced.

At its monthly meetings the council also gets to peruse all Planning Applications submitted to SNDC from within the parish and nearby and are able to offer comments to their planners to be considered as part of their deliberations. In the last two year the council considered just a handful of applications although some are from adjoining parishes. Obviously, any additional development in Mulbarton and beyond could have serious implications on traffic volumes through the village as will the Bobbins Way development when it is completed.

The Hornsea Project 3 windfarm by Danish company Ørsted was finally approved at the end of 2020 and is now moving to the detailed planning and construction phase. At our last face-to-face meeting, in March 2020, the Parish Council received a presentation from Norwegian company Equinor regarding proposed extensions to existing windfarms Dudgeon and Sheringham Shoal. Every household in the village is now receiving newsletters through the post regarding both of these windfarms and it is hoped that community presentations will be able to recommence shortly depending on the state of the pandemic.

In addition to supporting two groups of volunteers, The Norwich Fringe Project and Friends of Swardeston Common, in their efforts to maintain various areas of our wonderful Common the Parish Council also provides a grant to St Mary’s Church towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard. The Parish Council also organises an Annual Litter Pick around the village collecting litter from the roadside. Last year’s collection in April was postponed until September due to Covid-19 but was eventually well supported and amassed a considerable amount of rubbish that had been deposited on our roadsides. Plans for 2021 are still to be finalised.

The council operates with an annual budget, which for 2021/2022 is just under £6000 which is raised from our Council Tax. We also have an income from Community Infrastructure Levies on new building within the village. Over the past four years we have received various, relatively small, sums amounting to some £6000 of which about £3000 has been spent on a number of small projects. The council have recently received a sum in excess of £65,000, via S,N.D.C, from Bennett Homes regarding the Bobbins Way development which means we now have a C.I.L. fund of some £68,244 in total. These CIL payments have strict conditions applied as to what they may be spent on and the council will be considering various options of infrastructure improvements, utilising these funds, over the coming months and years. Such funds have to be spent within five years of being received so we are under no particular pressure to spend the money as yet.

In addition to the above we have been advised that Bennett Homes have made a payment of £37,500 to S.N.D.C. under a Section 106 agreement to enable the Parish Council to provide the shortfall in recreational facilities on the Bobbins Way development. This sum to be spent on new and/or refurbished facilities in consultation with S.N.D.C. some time before March 2026. Combined with the CIL payments this provides the Parish Council with a workable budget to update and extent our aging playground facility.

Finally do please get involved in village life in some way or another. Think about attending Parish Council meetings to see what’s going on. Support one or any number of the other groups and/or organisations whose activities are generally reported in the group newsletter. Encourage your friends and neighbours to join you.