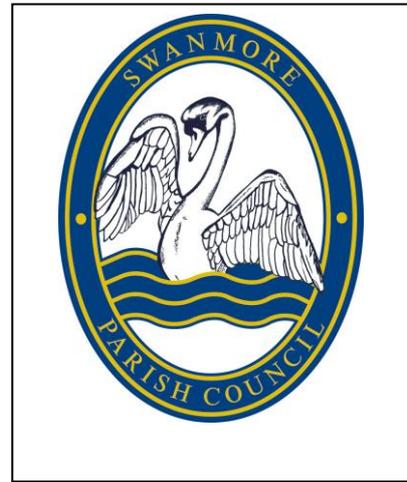


Swanmore Parish Council Annual Report



Chairman's Report

Thanks to the other committee chairs there isn't much space for me to write about this past year! However, the past 12 months have been a challenge as we transitioned from the old to the new organisation. We have welcomed 3 new councillors and 2 new staff onto the team. Thank you to those who have had to be patient over this period as things have settled down, but we are there now. The future is hopefully one of an efficient and effective Parish Council (within the boundaries of what the law says we can do!) and one that delivers what you as the members of the parish want. There are things coming up over the next 2 years that will require your input, particularly around housing with the remainder of our current allocation waiting to come for approval and Winchester already starting the process for hunting for sites for the next allocation. As always, I want to encourage participation in our meetings and would like us to have to use the 'public session' at the beginning of each meeting to hear your views, good and bad! At the end of this coming year all the council will be up for election (assuming there are more volunteers than spaces) and I would encourage you to get involved and take part. That's all the space I have so until next time, bye for now. *Jon*

Planning & Highways Committee

It has been a relatively quiet year on the planning front with no major applications to process. The most recent, the David Wilson development off Hill Pound, is well in hand and we regularly monitor progress to ensure all the planning conditions are being complied with. To date there have been no major problems. However, there has been a steady flow of routine applications and it is encouraging to report that Winchester City Council generally support our recommendations. The small development off Lower Chase Road has been delayed awaiting transfer of the open space which has been allocated for allotments.

We remain very concerned about the amount of speeding that still takes place around the village, particularly Hill Pound and to a lesser extent New Road. We are working closely with Hampshire Highways to introduce ways to reduce this but continue to be frustrated by a lack of funding for major improvements. However, we have allocated some modest funding from our own budget to get things moving and hopefully some progress can be made in 2018. We are reviewing traffic safety outside Swanmore College following the accident involving a pupil before Christmas.

The Parish Council is responsible for a significant number of the streetlights in the village, both on columns and poles. Many are very old and need continuing repair which is a drain on finances, so we have looked at the option of replacing them and at the same time take advantage of new technologies which are more reliable and cheaper to run.

As a result, we are pleased to announce that we are in the final stages of commissioning the replacement of 65 streetlights with energy efficient LED units. As these will use around 70% less electricity than the ones they replace, we will see a substantial saving; and therefore, a return on this investment in around 3 years. They will also give us a better spread of light.

The project will be organised, so no streetlight is out of action during the changeover. Column lamps will be changed on the day of replacement, telegraph poles with brackets will have a new lamp installed, then cutover and the old one removed. One other advantage is that when completed we will have consistent white lights throughout the village rather than the current mixture of white and yellow.

Cllr David Newberry, Chair, Planning & Highways Committee.

Community Committee and Community Christmas Tree Event

Although the Community Committee was dissolved at the end of the last financial year since it had achieved all those of its objectives which were attainable, some of its projects were not completed until the current financial year. These included:

- The replacement of the village noticeboard with a four-panel board allowing greater space for community notices and also, the display and distribution of the Swanmore footpath map.
- The Installation of a defibrillator in the old BT telephone box at the village centre.

The 2017 Community Christmas Tree Event at the Village Hall was attended by approximately 425 people and generated very positive and enthusiastic feedback both via Facebook and direct to the Parish Office.

Entertainment was provided by the village's Irish Dance Group, Swanmore Wind Band and the Swanmore College Jazz Band while children from the Primary School led the communal carol singing. There was a balloon sculptor making shapes for the younger attendees, face painters from Swanmore College raising funds for their school trip to Cambodia, a hog roast by Swanmore Butchers, a cash bar in the Village Hall and – of course – a visit from Father Christmas who switched on the Christmas Tree lights.

The Village Hall made £200 profit from the cash bar to boost their funds and also received an additional generous donation from Swanmore Butchers. The Christmas Tree was moved to its usual location outside the Primary School after the event and remained there until Twelfth Night, where it was much admired. Thanks are due to those councillors who comprised the Christmas Event Working Group as well as Vicky Newhouse (Village Hall Committee secretary) who joined the working group, Anna Scrace from Swanmore College who designed the event poster, and especially Liz Manship (SPC Projects and Contracts Officer) who ensured that everything went according to plan.

This year's Community Christmas Tree Event is scheduled for Friday 7 December.

Cllr Penny Clive, Chair, Christmas Tree Working Group

Open Spaces & Amenities Committee

The good weather over the summer has enabled the Parish Council and our volunteers to complete numerous improvements across the Parish. These include maintenance work to the Cricket Pavilion, play equipment, noticeboards and the additional provision of handrails and benches where required.

Sadly, we must report there was a significant amount of vandalism and other anti-social behaviour in 2017. The damage, costing several hundred pounds to rectify, used money that otherwise could have been spent on further improvements to our facilities rather than rectification. We appreciate the support from our ACSO Michael Thomas and our local neighbourhood policing team in dealing with these challenges.

During the last year the Parish Council has cleared scrub and small trees where they have significantly encroached upon the grassland in Marshes Meadow. As the area contains 'Sites of Important Nature Conservation' (SINC) we are keen to protect this status and the related floral, insect and related wildlife habitats that the meadow and surrounding areas provide. As part of this of this, the Swanmore Conservation Group continue to demonstrate their enthusiastic and knowledgeable support within Marsh's Meadow, Green's Wood and around Swanmore (Drovers) Pond. This work, performed in all weathers, has also helped to keep these popular walking routes accessible, allowing both residents and visitors to enjoy our much-valued open spaces.

Our Footpath Warden has been working with us to identify priorities regarding local rights of way that require improvement. As a result, some improvements have already been completed and we now have a clear understanding where the Parish Council can help further, especially paths that are prone to being very muddy or overgrown. Even during the winter months, the footpaths, bridleways and byways within Swanmore Parish remain popular, our leaflet detailing the local footpaths is available from the council office, online or by the Parish Noticeboard in the village centre.

Our aspirations to improve and expand the village centre car park are progressing well, the objective being to reduce the traffic congestion around the village centre. Following work to create a detailed design we are now close to requesting planning permission, the details being available to view on our website.

Your Parish Council continues to explore further opportunities for our village recreational areas, including the provision of sports and community facilities for all. We are therefore always pleased to hear of any suggestions that we may not have already considered.

Cllr Andy Rankine, Chair, Open Spaces & Amenities Committee

New Road Playing Field Committee

The New Road Committee was set up to manage the implementation of the improvements to facilities at the New Road Playing Field that Swanmore residents identified in a survey in 2014 and were refined further during consultation in early 2017. Since inception the committee has continued to refine requirements by further consultations especially around the Skate Park and the running facilities allowing us to build up a comprehensive tender for the works. This process has now been completed successfully with the selection of a preferred supplier.

This improved facility will include a new state of the art concrete skate park, a 4x100 metre running track finished to stadium quality, a 500 metre Jogging / Cycle track, an extension to the car park and a toilet block.

This significant project for the parish is over 50% funded directly by contributions received from developers building houses in Swanmore and open spaces grants, and we are currently in negotiation with Winchester City council to make up the balance from their developer contributions. None of the cost of this project is currently funded from the precept.

We are in the process of finalising designs and developing detailed plans. The intention is to have all the elements detailed above completed before the start of the school summer holidays at the end of July this year assuming funding is approved.

The committee is really looking forward to delivering this new and extensive facility for both Swanmore and the surrounding area with facilities which can be enjoyed by users of all ages.

Cllr Pete Ansty, Chair, New Road Playing Field Committee

West Hoe Cemetery Management Committee

Once again, the West Hoe Cemetery Management Committee has had a busy year with some significant new developments scheduled for completion in the 2018/19.

Plans are now well advanced for the creation of a wildflower meadow at the far side of the cemetery for the internment of cremation ashes. A hornbeam hedge with interspersed rowan trees – matching that planted last year between two of the designated burial areas – is now in place and the new site will be rotavated and seeded this spring. The South Downs Natural Burial Site at East Meon does not accept cremation ashes for burial and there would appear to be local demand for such a natural site. The Committee believes that West Hoe's Meadow will provide a peaceful and environmentally-friendly location for families who would prefer a more natural site for their loved one's ashes with individual plots that can be planted with native bulbs if desired.

Plans are also progressing for a Pet's Cemetery to be located to the left of the entrance gates and thus outside the consecrated area of the Cemetery. The project has already received a positive response from local residents with around five times as many of those who commented on the proposal being in favour, compared with those against. Initially the area will be hedged, fenced and the layout of plots planned. It should be available for use during the 2018/19 financial year.

There was significant damage at the cemetery late last year, seemingly due to badgers digging at the site, and we have also had issues over maintenance with the current grounds contractor. Mindful of the need to control costs, the grounds contract was put up for tender and a new grounds contractor was appointed from 1 April 2017. Unfortunately, owing to the contractor's subsequent staffing problems, all was not as the Committee would have wished, with the result that after a further round of tendering a new contractor will take over maintenance from 1 April. This contractor has previous experience of cemetery maintenance and had already completed some hedging work for us, so we are optimistic for the future care of the site. Fortunately, too, the badgers currently appear to have moved elsewhere. The Committee would also like to record its thanks to Roger Barrow, the cemetery's former groundsman, for his many years of service.

Work has continued clearing the self-seeded trees invading the shrubbery areas and several young oak trees have also been removed. These had been planted too closely together, were already growing into each other and there was a danger that their roots would interfere with grave plots in coming years. The remaining oak trees will be incorporated into shrubberies which will mark the boundaries between new areas for cremation ashes and burials which are planned for the years ahead.

During the year families and visitors to the cemetery have been reminded of the rules and regulations limiting the items which may be left on plots. Excessive numbers of ornaments and flower pots make good grounds maintenance extremely difficult. The Committee will continue to encourage adherence to the Cemetery regulations and limit the numbers of objects left on graves.

The Committee is very appreciative of the support given to the cemetery by Bishop's Waltham and Swanmore Parish Councils. Both Councils provide funding for the cemetery on a two-thirds (BWPC), one-third (SPC) basis.

Councillors and staff on this Committee take pride in the cemetery and work hard to ensure that it continues to be a peaceful and calm resting place for our loved ones.

Cllr Penny Clive, Chairman, West Hoe Cemetery Management Committee.

Swanmore Parish Council – Interim Financial Report 2017/18

	Budget 2016/17 £	Actual 2016/17 £	Budget 2017/18 £
INCOME			
Precept incl. Council Tax Support Grant	184,070	185,685	201,298
Bank Interest	200	187	130
Community Infrastructure Levy	4,252	36,654	-
Miscellaneous	977	2,731	100
Open Spaces and Amenities	1,300	-	1,300
Swanmore Recreation Ground	-	2,387	1,300
Total	190,799	227,644	204,128
EXPENDITURE			
General Administration	90,448	79,734	113,257
Section 137 grants	1,515	1,413	1,530
Community	24,366	13,024	-
Loan Repayments	6,322	6,222	6,322
Lighting and Highways	16,180	13,324	13,277
Open Spaces and Amenities	42,860	23,038	43,083
Swanmore Recreation Ground	29,375	28,817	22,950
Donations	4,040	3,400	-
West Hoe Cemetery	3,500	3,500	4,000
Total	218,606	172,472	204,419

The 2017/18 Accounting Statements and Auditor's Certificate will be published no later than 30 September 2018, as per Regulation 13(4) of The Accounts and Audit (England) Regulations 2011.

Members

Jon Woodman – Chairman
 Pete Ansty
 Kimberley Barber
 Penny Clive
 Alex Graft
 David Newberry
 Chris Newhouse
 Giles Pateman– Vice Chairman
 Andy Rankine
 Rob Selway

Officers

Tracey Molloy – Executive Officer
 Lynsey Sutcliffe – Finance Officer
 Liz Manship – Projects & Contracts Officer

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 Southampton SO32 2NW
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Meetings are held in the Parish Council Office
 Meetings begin at 7.00pm unless otherwise indicated on the agenda.
 When there are no planning applications to consider the meeting may be cancelled.

