



## **Somersham Annual Parish Meeting**

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall on Wednesday, 4<sup>th</sup> May 2022 at 7pm

**PRESENT:** Cllr J Caston (PC), S Wright (PC), Cllr S Whiting (PC), Cllr T Hallett (PC), Cllr S Burrell (PC), P Pearson (Tennis Club), D Thorne (Pub), K Dines (Church / The Link), A MacFadyen (Com. Ass.), G Sherwood (Com. Shop) and one member of the Public.

### **IN ATTENDANCE:**

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk) and District Cllr J Field.

### **SPC/APM/1/22/23 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME**

The Chairman of Somersham Parish Council, Cllr James Caston, welcomed those present.

### **SPC/APM2/22/23 - APOLOGIES**

Apologies had been received from County Cllr Oakes, Jennie Hutchinson (Com. Shop), Pat Woolhouse (The Link), Mark Newcombe (Baptist Church), Colin Furrows (Neighbourhood Watch) and Terry Fordham (Wheelie Day)

### **SPC/APM3/22/23 - MINUTES 5<sup>th</sup> MAY 2022**

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2022, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

### **SPC/APM4/22/23 - REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH**

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak and answer any questions. Where received, their reports are attached to the Minutes.

a) Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council – *Cllr James Caston*

Cllr Caston reported the following points:

- He was proud at how Parish Council members had adapted to online meetings during the pandemic and that meetings had now resumed to face to face.
- During the pandemic emergency funding had been provided to Claydon school to purchase two laptops for the use of their children who needed them.
- A large amount of Community Infrastructure Levy (CiL) money had been received following the development of the new housing in the village.
- Grants had been given to the Duke of Marlborough Pub, Tennis Club and Community Shop.
- Council Tax part of the Parish Council's budget had been frozen this year.
- The Parish Council had dealt well with the Solar proposal.

He added that the Parish Council were saddened of the sudden death of Rod Caird in November, previous Clerk, whose laid back approach and unique style had been an asset to the Council.

The new Clerk, Jennie Blackburn, had been brilliant and he expressed his thanks for all she had done so far.

- b) Report of the County Councillor – *Cllr Kay Oakes*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Oakes was not present at the meeting. Her report had been circulated prior to the meeting and will be published in full on the village website.

- c) Report of the District Councillor – *Cllr John Field*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Field briefly went through his report.

A brief discussion took place in relation to Solar developments in the area.

- d) Report of the Duke of Marlborough Public House – *David Thorne*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

David Thorne went through his report. No questions were asked or points raised.

- e) Report of the Community Shop – *Jennie Hutchinson*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Gloria Sherwood read through the report. No questions were asked or points raised.

- f) Report of The Link Magazine – *Pat Woolhouse*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Kate Dines read through the report. No questions were asked or points raised.

- g) Report of St Mary's Church PCC – *Steve Dines*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Kate Dines read through the report. No questions were asked or points raised.

- h) Report of the Baptist Church – *Mark Newcombe*

Mark Newcombe was not present at the meeting and a report had not been received.

- i) Report of the Somersham & District Community Association – *Anne MacFadyen*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Anne MacFadyen read through her report. No questions were asked or points raised.

- j) Report of the Tennis Club – *Penny Pearson*

Penny Pearson reported the following points:

- That the Club would close in the winter months apart from the adult club.
- The new hut had almost been completed.
- Some contention over the footballers using the courts – was inappropriate to have footballer shoes on the courts.
- Parish Council had helped with various funding.

- k) Report of the Neighbourhood Watch – *Colin Burrows*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Colin Burrows was not present at the meeting but his report had been circulated and would be published on the village website.

- l) Report of the Wheelie Day – *Terry Fordham*  
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Caston read through the report.

**SPC/APM5/22/23 - PUBLIC FORUM**

David Thorne raised the issue of the proposed overhead cables by the National Grid. Cllr John Field briefly went through the proposals.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm.

Chairman ..... Date .....

# County Council Annual Report 2021-2022

## Automatic number plate recognition cameras to be installed in villages across Suffolk

In March 2021, Suffolk County Council and Suffolk's Police and Crime Commissioner and Suffolk Constabulary, launched the use of Automatic Number Plate Recognition cameras.

The Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras are being used to help detect and deter speeding offences that have been highlighted in Suffolk villages, and educate drivers on the importance of road safety.

An ANPR camera will be installed at a site where it has been identified by a parish council, with support from their county councillor, there is a problem with speeding and / or rat running on roads with a 20 or 30mph speed limit.

An ANPR camera will identify a speeding vehicle by capturing an image of the number plate of the vehicle. Data will then be shared with the Police and the County Council. The County Council will write to the owner of the vehicle on behalf of both parties explaining that their vehicle has been registered as speeding. Repeat offences at a particular location could prompt the deployment of speed enforcement vans and subsequent fines to those who breach the speed limit.

Ten ANPR cameras will be purchased and each one will remain in situ for up to one week per site. There is the option of extending this period if needed.

The project received funding from the Suffolk 2020 Fund, which is a programme of work all about investing in community projects and improving Suffolk for all residents now and in years to come. The funding secures the ANPR project for a two-year pilot where its impact to reduce speeding will be monitored before it receives a further financial commitment.

## Suffolk County Council begins procurement process for next Highways Service contract focusing on developing local skills and talent

In early July 2021 Suffolk County Council began the process of finding its next long term Highways Services partner.

The council was looking for a partner to deliver key operational projects after the current contract ends on 30 September 2023.

As part of preparations up to this point, the council has worked with leading industry analysts to understand the different types of arrangements that other local authorities have in place, to look at which specialist providers are in the marketplace and to find out what aspects of contract agreement may work best for Suffolk based on the range of outcomes the council wants to achieve from any new contract process.

The council is looking to develop a contract that utilises a blended 'hybrid' approach, enabling the council to enter into one contract that covers the majority of Highways Service functions and two contracts with specialist providers for streetlighting and traffic signals (ITS). The council will be looking for the new contract to focus on delivering greater social value, utilising local skills and talent, giving young people the opportunity to work in the sector as well as building on the council's commitment to carbon reduction and protecting the environment.

The whole contract development process will take just over two years to complete. Once the appropriate tender documents have been prepared outlining the council's requirements, initial advertisements will go out in December 2021. Discussions will begin with any interested prospective contractors in early 2022. Following such a rigorous tendering process, the council hopes to be able to award its chosen contract in early 2023 with the new service provider beginning in October 2023.

The procurement process needs to begin now to provide enough time to go to the market to seek relevant specialist companies which may be interested in tendering for the contract which is worth in the region of £800m - £1 billion over a projected 20-year period.

## **Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service adds four new enhanced appliances to its fleet, fitted with solar panels**

In August 2021, Suffolk Fire and Rescue Service unveiled state-of-the-art rescue vehicles and equipment to provide firefighters with the latest technology for rescues.

Four new "enhanced rescue tenders" will be based at Bury St Edmunds, Lowestoft, Newmarket and Princes Street (Ipswich), giving cover across the county and strengthening the emergency response across Suffolk's communities.

The new equipment and vehicles are also the latest innovations in green technology, supporting Suffolk County Council's climate emergency declaration and ambitions to be net zero by 2030. The fire appliances are the first in Suffolk to be fitted with solar panels, have more fuel-efficient engines and also carry battery powered hydraulic rescue equipment.

## **New Suffolk Recycling Centres online booking system improvements to deliver greater customer experience**

It was announced in September 2021 that Suffolk County Council has developed a new, more user-friendly booking system which enables residents to book slots for recycling.

For bookings from 27 September, people can view all available time slots in real time, to see which booking slots are free at any given moment. The system allows you to book up to seven days in advance. If circumstances change, you can easily cancel your slot up to one hour beforehand or equally, you can click to amend your booking if required.

The system is also able to advise customers on which sites accept specific materials, such as plasterboard to ensure the correct type of booking is made to save customers' time, and it can also be used to share real time messages with customers, for example if any site needs to close due to adverse weather or emergency situations. The new booking system is connected to automated numberplate recognition to allow for a trial of automatic entry gates.

Customer survey results show overwhelming support for the use of a booking system and the Council has gathered feedback from customers and site staff on how the booking system can be further improved, which have shaped the design of this new system. Through the use of bookings the council can avoid the frustration of long queues at peak times and increase the overall throughput and efficiency of the service for residents.

## **MPs from Norfolk, Suffolk and Essex and County Councillors, unite to protect the countryside and communities from the worst impacts of new pylons and cables**

In October 2021, the Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) was set up to review and respond to the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR).

A new group of MPs from across the region, under the chairmanship of Sir Bernard Jenkin, and including County Councillors from the region, has been set up to ensure that the emerging proposals of the Government's Offshore Network Transmission Review (OTNR), and proposals to change the Nationally Significant infrastructure Planning regime, are effectively scrutinised.

The Offshore Electricity Grid Task Force (OffSET) supports the government's commitment to meet the target of Net Zero by 2050, and the aspiration to deliver 40GW of Offshore Wind, by 2030. However, this will result in a succession of electricity generation and connection projects in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex, over the coming decades, which will have significant impacts on the environment and communities of the region.

The group believes that these ambitions and targets cannot be met, on an "at any cost" basis. Therefore, the further development of the onshore transmission system, and the connection of offshore wind farms, and interconnectors, will require a new deal for communities and the environment. It remains a key priority that we speed up the Government's timetable to transition to the offshore transmission system, in order to protect our communities from the damaging effects of multiple cable corridors.

As well as scrutinising and responding to new policies and initiatives, the group will be a contact point for Ministers and senior officials, as well as for the National Grid, Crown Estate, and Ofgem, to engage with Regional Leaders. The group will also be inviting key stakeholders and community groups to meet with them, to better understand the impacts, and opportunities, of Net Zero transmission and generation infrastructure in the region.

**OffSET's mission statement:**

"OffSET exists to promote strategic leadership of the development of a coordinated offshore electricity grid, to address the need for increased grid capacity which off-shore wind, coastal new nuclear, and international interconnectors will demand, while standing up for the countryside of East Anglia so that the welcome transition to net zero electricity generation does not do unnecessary damage to our communities or the environment."

**Suffolk continues to create the greenest county with £150,000 for new trees**

It was announced in October 2021 that a joint bid by a number of Suffolk's authorities secured funding from the Forestry Commission to plant around 3,000 trees this coming planting season.

Suffolk County Council submitted the bid on behalf of itself, Ipswich Borough Council, Babergh District Council, Mid Suffolk District Council and West Suffolk District Council. The successful bid will see £149,712.55 come into the county for new trees, from the Local Authority Treescapes Fund.

The fund targets treescapes that have been neglected or suffered damage in the past, including disused and vacant community spaces and those affected by tree diseases such as ash dieback. The locations are chosen where they are likely to be experienced directly by people, as well as on improving the age structure of trees in all the project areas.

One of the interesting methods being adopted to re-establish woodland as part of this project, is the Miyawaki method.

It is regarded as one of the most effective tree planting methods for creating cover quickly on neglected land, or land that has previously been used for construction or agriculture. It uses natural principles,

such as using trees already native to the area and replicating natural regeneration processes, and is particularly effective in the urban environment.

### **Suffolk County Council investing £12.8m to decarbonise its buildings**

It was announced in November 2021 that properties, including fire stations and libraries, will receive investment as the council continues to drive its ambition to be Net Zero by 2030.

Suffolk County Council will be committing £12.8m towards reducing the carbon produced by buildings in its corporate estate.

Cabinet members today (9 November 2021) approved a report to commit to this investment, as well as implementing the SCC Energy Management Strategy, as recommended by the Climate Emergency Policy Development Panel.

### **Suffolk County Council approves extra £20m investment in highway drainage and footpaths**

In December 2021, Cabinet members committed an extra £20 million over the next three years into further improving Suffolk's highway drainage systems and footpaths.

In recognition of the increasing maintenance demand on these areas, councillors approved the use of £10 million to specifically deliver an increasing number of drainage schemes that deal with problems that affect larger numbers of people, and a further £10 million to improve footpath quality and access.

Suffolk Highways will use the drainage investment alongside funding from the Department for Transport to increase the number of highway flooding sites which are resolved, providing a highway network that is more resilient and accessible during heavy rain and severe weather events.

The footpath investment will be focused on urban areas and busy footpaths in rural areas - providing a safer and more accessible network that supports people accessing local bus services, health care services and local shopping precincts.

### **Over 10,000 new LED streetlights installed across Suffolk**

It was announced on December 17<sup>th</sup> that Suffolk's LED replacement programme reached a new milestone, with over 10,000 streetlights upgraded with new, sustainable LEDs.

Bouygues Energies & Services, the contractor leading the programme has successfully installed 10,799 new lanterns and counting as part of the project to replace all 43,400 streetlights in the county. These lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights.

The project, which is due to complete by the end of 2022 will also allow opportunity for other streetlight owners within Suffolk such as Parish and District Councils to upgrade their streetlights as part of this process.

This upgrade supports Suffolk County Council's ambitions for becoming a carbon-neutral organisation by 2030. The benefits include; supporting a reduction in carbon emissions by saving energy and reducing light pollution, as well as providing clearer images on CCTV, traffic cameras and dashcam footage for the benefit of public safety.

The teams have been working their way through the west of the county and are making progress in Stowmarket and Sudbury.

Aside from the reduction in energy usage and minimising light pollution, the project will also bring down ongoing maintenance costs for the authority. The County Council expects to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year.

By upgrading the lighting system with smart technology, this will increase the control the County Council has over its power consumption which will further reduce costs.

Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the same time. All heritage-style lanterns which have been identified will be upgraded towards the end of the programme.

## Good news for Suffolk as Government gives the green light to negotiate a County Deal

### **Published in February 2022, Leader of the Council, Matthew Hicks, reflected on the news that Suffolk County Council was given the go ahead to negotiate a County Deal**

Leader of Suffolk County Council, Councillor Matthew Hicks, explains why a new county deal is good for Suffolk, and why we don't need a new Mayor.

In August last year, I wrote about the efforts of Suffolk's Public Sector Leaders in working to secure from the Government a devolution deal for Suffolk. Last week, at the same time as the publication of the Levelling Up White Paper, we heard the news that Suffolk was successfully chosen as one of nine areas across the country to have been given the opportunity of negotiating a new County Deal.

This is fantastic news for Suffolk, and I am delighted about it.

One of the questions I've heard a lot since the announcement is, what would a deal mean for Suffolk? To clarify we do not have a deal yet, and we have many more months of negotiations and discussions with Government ahead of us before we can look to finalise an actual deal.

Some of the areas we included in our initial discussion centred around the development and roll out of Oyster style travel cards to increase the attractiveness and effectiveness of public transport and longer term funding for major transport infrastructure upgrades, not just one-off funding.

We also discussed with Government the opportunity of keeping all the apprenticeship levy funding raised in Suffolk in Suffolk, benefiting more people here. This could create the opportunity to work with the University, colleges, business and others to explore how this money could be better used.

Negotiating the devolution of the powers necessary to develop more innovative projects to help deliver further action on Climate Change and make good on our promises around net zero by 2030 are also possible. Whilst I was delighted to read the other day that in a recent study Suffolk County Council was ranked as the third-best county council nationally for our response to the climate crisis, our ambitions in this area could be taken further still via a County Deal.

What I can promise you, however, is that during the negotiations I will be pushing the Government for the maximum amount of benefit for the people of Suffolk.

Finally, one of the areas related to this announcement which gained a lot of attention, especially from the media, was the potential for a directly elected Mayor of Suffolk, like the Metropolitan Mayors across the country in areas like the West Midlands. Let me say here and now, this is not something which Suffolk has asked for and importantly not something we need to secure a deal with Government.



Whilst of course we recognise the work of such Mayors like Andy Street and Ben Houchen, this additional level of oversight is not needed for our deal given the strong levels of co-operation and leadership already found here in Suffolk. Do not forget, this opportunity is the result of an ongoing dialogue to promote Suffolk to central Government strongly supported by our MPs and the partnership working with district and borough councils. Going forward this partnership working will continue alongside health partners, emergency services, the Police and Crime Commissioner and the Chamber of Commerce.

I have always been ambitious for Suffolk, and I believe the opportunities within a County Deal would help unlock more potential in Suffolk and help us level up across the county; especially as we start to slowly escape the clutches of COVID. We will negotiate hard for a deal that will give us the tools we need to build back better, build back stronger and build back greener.

### **Halfway mark reached as over 20,000 Suffolk streetlights replaced**

In February 2022 Suffolk County Council's programme to replace 43,400 streetlights with new energy-efficient LEDs reached the halfway mark.

Contractor, Bouygues Energies & Services begins work in Ipswich.

To date, the teams have replaced 21,215 new streetlights with the new lanterns and are well on the way to successfully delivering the project on budget and to programme timescales.

These LED lanterns use less energy and produce a more natural and focused light than the traditional orange glow of streetlights. They are extremely long-lasting products and have an expected lifetime of up to 100,000 hours. This is approximately two times longer than a typical conventional street lighting lamp. As a result, Suffolk County Council is expecting to reduce its annual electricity costs on the streetlights by around 76%, saving more than £1.7 million a year. This is 16% more than what was originally anticipated.

The programme is on schedule to be completed by the end of May 2022, with all heritage-style lanterns being upgraded towards the end of the programme. Prior to commencing in towns or parishes, Suffolk Highways is contacting those councils in case they wish to upgrade their parish-council owned street-lighting at the end of the project.

# District Councillor John Field's Report

## Overview

The most significant issue for Mid Suffolk for the second year has of course been COVID 19. When the pandemic started numbers of staff were transferred to Covid related duties, particularly organising the distribution of Government grants to businesses. Staff have worked from home virtually 100% until the last few weeks and still in significant numbers. Information Technology, particularly applications such as Microsoft Teams have allowed that to be done efficiently, in fact people tend to be more productive, with the time that would be spent travelling to work and to meetings used productively. I have certainly received reports back at 20:00 for questions raised during the working day.

Deployment of people to Government funded work without back filling of positions has reduced core spend and helped the council reach a very good financial position.

This home working will be an on-going feature of our way forward and has allowed the council to reduce its workspace at Endeavour house and save £675k over the next five years.

## Priorities

The Council's six priorities are: the environment, the economy, housing, wellbeing, our customers, and our communities. To deliver on these it has produced an "Outcomes Framework" of 18 long term and 66 short term outcomes. The Cabinet has agreed additional funding of 5.1 million for these. Details of the framework are on the www site.

## Planning

It's been a difficult year as we have dealt with the conflict between the need to increase the number of houses built to meet population growth and people's natural desire to have their "place" remain unchanged, as they have always known it. This has not been made easier by the delays that the Council's Joint Local Plan has suffered. In addition a number of policies in the MSDC 1989 plan and later reviews do not conform to the requirements of the Government's National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Government inspectors have asked that the Local Plan is split into two parts: the main policies and the site allocation plan, a process that will take to the end of the year for the first part and perhaps 18 months to complete. The Government's significant changes to the overall process appear to have been kicked into the long grass in the Queen's Speech so it is possible this schedule will hold. Neighbourhood plans are vital to guide planning the way communities want and it's a pity there is not one for Great Blakenham.

At the moment Mid Suffolk has almost a ten-year pipeline of development proposals at various stages of approval.

## Planning Reviews

**I am on the working parties set up to respond to the recent planning peer review, the Local Plan and the review of Planning Enforcement. The processes should lead to: up-to-date policies in the Local Plan, to much shorter, clearer and more consistent officer reports to planning committees, and to more rapid and effective enforcement. Better reports should mean that decisions are easier to understand and accept.**

## Building Improvements

**We all believe that building environmental performance must be improved and the planning committees have been trying to push developers in that direction. Revised building regulations dated June 2022 and enforced for new build after June 2023 will help. However, the fabric-first methodology being adopted is now only for a minimum 30% improvement in insulation. More dramatic action, a 70% improvement, will come in 2025 when the future homes standard comes into force.**

**Unfortunately the major builders are still resisting changes to heat generation techniques claiming that gas boilers capable of burning 20% Hydrogen now and 80% after a retrofit are a**

solution. That is despite the problems of delivering that gas mixture over the current network of iron pipes. The fitting of air or ground source pumps is something only some are undertaking. A frequently cited reason is that the way the Government SAP calculations work drives builders to a gas boiler installation which will need retrofit.

## **The Environment**

### Climate change and biodiversity

**To reach net zero carbon emissions by 2030 and protect and strengthen the district biodiversity we have, transferred our waste fleet to Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) reducing its emissions by 90% and the councils CO2 by 25% and reached halfway investment a £2.8m Government grant in 604 solar panels at Stowmarket and Stradbroke leisure centres to generate 235.6kW**

### Net Zero for Housing Guidance

**The Green and Lib Dem group proposed, and Council accepted, adoption and promotion of a “Net Zero Carbon Toolkit” document. It is a useful guide for small developers and individuals to the actions necessary to move to net zero for housing and industrial premises.**

### **Sustainable travel**

**We have produced and agreed a Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan an LCWIP. This works with the County’s plans and uses Government funding to improve the walking and cycling facilities in the district. There are short-, medium-, and long-term proposals for improvements.**

## **Freeport East Port 1 and Gateway 14**

### Freeport East

The full business case for Freeport East has been submitted to Government. The council is a core partner and a member of the Shadow Supervisory Board. Once approval has been gained the Freeport will exist officially with all customs and tax powers for 25 years.

Both Port one at Great Blakenham and Gateway 14 at Stowmarket are incorporated in the Freeport, so it is important to the district. Sites can opt to enjoy the Taxation or the Customs benefits

I want to see sound actions by Mid Suffolk to help create a range of high-quality local jobs in growing industries that have high value add. The hope is that these can pay salaries significantly above the living wage while providing good working conditions and sound careers. Clearly not all jobs can meet those criteria, but the Freeport gives an opportunity for progress providing we push beyond the restrictions of the leisure, tourist, and logistics industries.

However I am concerned at the possible impacts on existing businesses of competitors in the Freeport who, exempt business rates, national insurance and import duty, have a cost advantage. If those exemptions attract new investment in industries that we currently do not have then that’s largely good. If they just succeed in moving businesses from one site to another, then we have a problem.

### Gateway 14

Work at Gateway 14 has commenced with a ground-breaking ceremony last week and we are told that the first deal is nearing completion.

If you have queries, please phone me on 07756292320 or email me at: [john.field@mid.suffolk.gov.uk](mailto:john.field@mid.suffolk.gov.uk)

## **Duke of Marlborough, Somersham Update for the Parish Council, May 2022**

### **Introduction**

The Duke of Marlborough reopened in April 2017, having been bought by the local Community; we have therefore now been trading for 5 years. We celebrated our 5<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with a programme of special events, including a Thank You event for our band of loyal volunteers.

### **Financial Situation**

The original Business Plan predicted that we would lose money for the first 3 years due to start-up costs and the need to rebuild the trade, and this indeed proved to be the case. However rather than then running into profit, we ran into Covid, and the last 2 years have been all about survival.

A brief summary of the impact this had on the business during the 2020/21 fy can be seen in the following Table

**2020/21 Trading Figures**

Month	Status	Takings
April	CLOSED	£0
May	Window sales	£1,959
June	Window sales	£2,262
July	Partly open	£9,250
August	Open - EOHO	£21,927
September	Open	£11,106
October	Open	£14,905
November	CLOSED	£2,788
December	Partly open	£10,697
January	CLOSED	£0
February	CLOSED	£0
March	CLOSED	£0

We were only fully open for 3 of the 12 months during 2020/21, with a total turnover of ~£75k compared to £250k+ the previous year. We only survived due to Local Authority Grants and the Furlough scheme.

We reopened in April 2021, and the turnover was building steadily, the fy turnover was £209k, so a great improvement on the previous year, if not back to pre-Covid levels. However the pre-Xmas Covid scare really hit us hard and our banker months of November and December were disastrous; we had so many cancellations we lost a lot of money, whereas we normally rely on the profits from these 2 months to see us through the winter.

We therefore decided to take drastic action in January of this year to get us through to Easter. Our major cost is Staffing, so in order to reduce this we had to cut back on our offer.

We wanted to stay open for 5 days, but at the moment we are offering a drinks-only service on Wednesdays and Thursdays, staffed by volunteers, except when there is a Thursday quiz or other event, when there is food and paid Staff.

Wednesday is now Darts night – our newly formed darts team is proving very popular, and indeed we now have a second team. Thursday is Games night, which is building slowly. There are no lunches

Friday or Saturday. The Friday Happy Hour stays and we have introduced a Friday TakeAway service which has proved quite popular, and brought us new customers.

We now do breakfast every Saturday – having it every other week was confusing, and this is now producing a very steady trade.

On Friday and Saturday evenings, we offer food from a small Blackboard menu – old favourites and some specials. We cater for both vegetarians and vegans.

Sunday lunch has been extended and is now 12-4pm, and we stay open until 8pm.

We are still doing special Events, e.g. Burns Night, Valentine’s Night, music events. The current offer is summarised in the below Table.

Day	Lunchtime	Evening	Food	Staffing
Darts Wednesday	Closed	7-11	No	Volunteers
Games Thursday	Closed	7-11	No	Volunteers
Events Thursday	Closed	7-11	Quiz menu	Staff + volunteers
Friday	Closed	6-11	Blackboard menu Take Away Service	Staff + volunteers
Saturday	Breakfast 9-12	6-11	Blackboard menu	Staff + volunteers
Sunday	12-4	4-8	Sunday lunch	Staff + volunteers

This has enabled us to cut our staff costs to ~£5k month and we have indeed got through to Easter. We had hoped to break even in the first Calendar quarter but in fact made a small loss, ~ £1k per month, which is sustainable in the short term. The final April figures are not yet in, but the turnover has increased, not least due to the 5<sup>th</sup> Birthday celebration.

## Staffing

We employ 7 regular staff:

- Head Chef
- Manager
- Sous chef
- 2 other FOH staff, who also deputise for the manager
- Cleaner
- Book-keeper

We have some other casual staff and a number of Volunteers who mainly work behind the bar; we could do with a few more.

The staff have been very understanding about the need to cut back their hours. We hope to be able to increase these again as trade picks up.

## Increasing Footfall

We are not quite breaking even and we urgently need to start making a profit; we will shortly have to start paying back out Bounceback loan (which was much cheaper than our previous Co-op loan).

In order to do this, we are undertaking the following

- Targeting the 42 new households right on our doorstep (Lark Grove). We have already had an initial Welcome event.

- Trying to understand customer needs better – we have just carried out a SurveyMonkey exercise.
- More big Events (Platinum Jubilee Weekend, Beer Festival)
- Introducing a Loyalty scheme (25% off your next meal when you visit the pub at least 5 times in 3 months - a minimum per head spend applies).
- Darts night and joining a local Darts league.
- Thursday Games night/quiz
- Targeting local businesses
- Targeting Holiday Accommodation (AirBnB etc.)
- Marketing more as a wedding venue

### **Events**

Past events include:

- Wine tasting
- Art Courses
- Book Club
- Beer Festivals
- Oktober Fest
- Wide variety of music
- 70's Disco
- Burn's Night
- Quizzes
- Film/Music quizzes
- Cocktail evenings (in the Birch Bar)

We welcome suggestions for new events.

We are playing a major role in the forthcoming Platinum Jubilee weekend (quiz, village BBQ, music, mini beer fest) and will rerun our hugely successful Beer festival over the August Bank Holiday weekend.

### **Summary and Conclusions**

We think we have done well just to still be here, unlike several other local pubs, but the survival of the pub over the coming months will depend on our shareholders, and the wider local community, patronising the pub on a more regular basis. We have to be profitable by September 2022.

There is a virtuous circle here; the greater the footfall, the wider and more varied the offer we can make on both food and drink and the more staff we can afford to employ.

Any suggestions as to what we can do to make our customers feel even more welcome are always gratefully received.

We feel that the pub is truly the centre of the local community, and Somersham would be a lesser place without it. We are also providing significant training opportunities for local young people, which we see as part of our role.

*We have worked hard over 8 years to get to this position; it would be tragic if the pub succumbed just as Covid is receding. It has been estimated that 35% of pubs will not make it through the pandemic, together we can ensure that the Duke of Marlborough is not part of that unfortunate statistic. It has been a struggle, but we believe a thoroughly worthwhile one.*

### **Acknowledgements**

We would like to thank the following people:

- The Chef and Manager, April and Aaron Douglas

- The rest of the loyal staff
- Our Volunteers
- Our Customers
- Our Shareholders
- The Management Committee

We are very grateful for financial support from the following:

- The HMRC Furlough Scheme
- Power to Change
- The Plunkett Foundation
- Mid Suffolk District Council
- Suffolk County Council
- Somersham Parish Council
- Hopkins Homes

*David Thorne*

*MC Chairman, Somersham Community Pub Ltd.*

*May 2022*

### **Somersham and District Community Shop April 2021 – April 2022**

Like many others, Somersham and District Community Shop has experienced a great deal of change in the last twelve months. April 2021 marked the end of the Covid-19 pandemic lockdowns, and all involved with the shop were very proud to receive a certificate from the Lord Lieutenant of Suffolk Award in recognition of outstanding services to the community during the pandemic.

Thankfully, 2021 has seen the return of some of the more sociable activities which our volunteers and customers enjoy. Our regular Meet up Mondays group reconvened, with a core group of six to eight local residents meeting each Monday afternoon for a cup of tea and a chat. Then in July we held a 'birthday party' on the playing field to celebrate the 9<sup>th</sup> year of the shop with games, raffle, and of course cake, to celebrate this achievement. Throughout the summer we were able once again to engage with the wider community through our support of – and this time participation in – the Friends of Somersham School Scarecrow Trail, with Fantastic Mr Fox taking pride of place outside the shop for the six-week holiday. The shop is very much a community hub, and we are pleased to support local events and activities, advertising through our recently reinstated events diary, our noticeboards, and our social media presence, as well as being a ticket sales point for some local events too. We have remained active in charitable fundraising throughout the year, hosting our annual coffee morning for Macmillan Cancer Support in September, acting as a collection point for Christian Aid Week and for the annual Poppy Appeal, and selling Easter chicks (kindly made and donated by several of our volunteers) for Cancer Research.

In autumn 2021, we were very pleased to reach our fundraising target which enabled us to purchase two new chiller and freezer units, replacing our old, uneconomical units with smart new, efficient ones. Special thanks must go to all our generous funders, and also to Anne MacFadyen, whose hard work facilitated this improvement. At the end of 2021 there were a number of changes in the Management team at the shop; Lucy Barrett found new employment elsewhere and left her role as Manager at the end of November, and then in mid-December Anne MacFadyen and Janet Hodge decided to take a well-earned rest and step back from both committee and volunteering duties. All three remain involved and supportive of the shop, with Lucy still volunteering regularly and Anne and Janet continuing in their roles as Directors. Following Lucy's departure, Jennie Hutchinson joined the team as the new Manager, and shortly afterwards Pat Woolhouse and Gloria Sherwood joined Kate Dines, Tom Robinson and Jennie to form the new management committee.

The new team are keen to continue to support local producers and suppliers as much as possible, with products such as eggs and honey from the immediate local area, and lots of other Suffolk based produce on offer too. They are also exploring options regarding potential new suppliers and products that could be introduced in future. The customer base has proved steady and reliable, but it does still need to grow to ensure the shop remains viable. Monthly Performance Reports show the difficulty we have in making sufficient profit to cover our overheads - utility, maintenance and insurance costs, card charges and wages (although we have reduced the manager's hours to help with this). A questionnaire has been prepared for distribution with the current issue of the Link magazine to understand what would bring new and existing residents into the shop. Also, new initiatives such as the recent agreement to be a sales point for Hadleigh Show tickets are being trialled. Finally, the opening hours for the shop have been gradually increasing over the past year and we are pleased to be open for longer (Monday 8am – 4pm, Tuesday 9am – 4pm, Wednesday 9am – 1pm, Thursday 8am – 6pm, Friday 9.30am – 4pm, Saturday 9am – 1pm). The aim is to also open until 4pm on a Wednesday. We have a reliable volunteer base, but it is still a stretch to confidently cover the hours we currently open. The management committee are considering other ways of attracting new help, and new volunteers are being regularly approached and encouraged.

We are looking forward to seeing what else 2022 will bring, and of course to celebrating our 10<sup>th</sup> birthday this summer!



## Report to the Parish Council, 2022

The LINK magazine has continued to be produced every month, although 2 editions have been on-line only because of Covid restrictions. We are reliant on funding from advertising and donations, especially from regular contributors, and are very grateful for this. Printing costs, like everything else, are going up and each issue, depending on size, currently costs approximately £400. Our current print run totals 775 copies, including the new housing development. The LINK is distributed to every house in Somersham and 3 neighbouring villages, plus several mailed copies where past residents are glad of this means of keeping in touch with local events and are happy to pay the postage for the privilege. The magazine distributors - 10 in our village - and editorial team are all volunteers, who are pleased to be able to help this community outreach and communication to continue.

Kate Dines,  
Chair of committee

## **Parish Council AGM 2022 – Report from St. Mary’s Church PCC**

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) continues to support Rev. Daniel Harrison in managing and maintaining the Church of England presence in the village, including providing for the spiritual needs of the population and maintaining the building. In addition to our regular services the church conducts baptisms, weddings and funeral services when required.

Dan is responsible for 8 parishes in all. As a result, we perhaps don’t see as much of him in Somersham as we would like but his telephone number and email address are included on the back cover of the Link magazine each month so anyone can contact him if they want/need to.

We regularly hold 2 services per month; a communion service at 9.30am on the second Sunday and a less formal ‘Family Service’ at 10am on the 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday. Details are published in the Link magazine. Attendance at the regular services is generally quite low but a good number attend the ‘big’ services such as Harvest Festival and Carol Service and our Service of Remembrance which we share with the Baptist Church.

We have continued to maintain links with the school through our regular (weekly) ‘Open the Book’ sessions in which members of a team drawn from both St. Mary’s and the Baptist Church read and explain bible stories to the children. Our attendance in the school was interrupted during the recent pandemic but we have continued to provide this service by filming the readings to be shown to the children in the school. We are very pleased that we are now once again able to attend the school assemblies in person and hope that this will continue.

We are very grateful to people in the village for the support that they give to our fund raising activities throughout the year. Although opportunities for such events have been more limited of late, when we have been able to organise something it has been well supported. In the last year, we were particularly pleased with the response to our ‘mini’ Summer Fete and Christmas Bazaar. Even so, we continue to struggle to meet all of the costs of the day to day running expenses and are once again very grateful to the Parish Council for their help towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard. We hope that you will be able to continue this support in the future.

Every 5 years, the church is subject to a ‘quinquennial’ inspection into its physical condition and measures are identified to ensure that it remains in a good and safe condition. A number of repairs to items classed as ‘category A’ (the most urgent) have recently been carried out and we are again grateful to those who have given financial support, including Suffolk Historic Churches Trust and the Russel Quinton Trust.

Steve Dines  
21 April 2022

## **Somersham & District Community Association**

### **The Pavilion, Somersham Playing Field**

#### **May, 2022 report**

Over the past year activities on the playing field have been getting back to normal. Three football teams have played throughout the season in their various leagues.

A shed has been purchased to be used for storage by the Youth Club and football teams. This has been placed beside the Pavilion. The boiler has just received refurbishment! The Youth Club has just started back now the weather is getting better. This is well attended with between 15 to 20 children, this number will increase as weather improves. The access to the playing field using the bridge from the pavement requires work. We are aware of this and are waiting a quotation for this work to be undertaken. As soon as the weather improves the Speedway will commence.

We are aware that the play area needs urgent attention. Hopefully this will take place this year. The car park also needs urgent attention, Wally Binder will be putting down 'shavings' this week, this will fill the holes. A more permanent fix is required.

The playing field will be used for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee celebrations. A beacon will be lit Thursday evening 2<sup>nd</sup> June on the playing field, then on Sunday 5<sup>th</sup> June the playing field will be used for further Jubilee celebrations.



Somersham  
Parish Council

Neighbourhood Watch  
22<sup>nd</sup> Annual Crime Report

April 2021 – March 2022

Somersham  
Offton, Willisham, Flowton,



CR ref A22  
Page 1 of 1

1<sup>st</sup> June 2022

The following is a list of crimes and incidents that took place in Somersham during the year April 2021 – March 2022, plus other additional crime information.

**April** 2021. 1 Crime, no details. 1 Violence. 1 Public Order Offence.

**May** 2021. 1 Violence. 1 Criminal Damage..

**June** 2021 . 2 Violence. 1 Public Order Offence.

**July** 2021. 2 Violence.

**August** 2021. No Reported Crime.

**September** 2021. No Reported Crime.

**October** 2021. No Reported Crime.

**November** 2021. 3 Violence. 1 Theft.

**December** 2021. 1 Violence. 1 Criminal Damage.

**January** 2022. 2 Violence.

**February** 2022. No Reported Crime.

**March** 2022 Drugs crime.

**Stowmarket Area** crime figures, from April 2021 – March 2022

A total of 3552 crimes were reported.

Total crimes reported for each village from April 2021 – March 2022

Somersham 19. Offton. 18. Willisham. 8. Flowton. 5.

Note. Violence, covers domestics, assaults, G.B.H and crimes of a sexual nature. G.B.H. Grievous Bodily Harm. Public Order. Includes offences which cause fear, alarm or distress.

Colin C. Burrows – Somersham Neighbourhood Watch Co-ordinator

*Crime data provided for Neighbourhood Watch by Police UK.*

## Somersham Wheelie Fun Day

The idea of a fundraiser was conceived by Terry Fordham in 2016 when an additional income stream was needed by the Somersham & District Community Association. It had been many years since the village had run a fete and it was felt that it would be good to give the community an event to enjoy and at the same time supporting the work of the Community Association.

Events were run in 2017, 2018 and 2019 which achieved funding for the Community Association of over £8,300. This funding contributed to several projects including bridge maintenance, tree care and children's play.

The event has broad appeal and includes classic vehicle show, live music on our stage, local and commercial stalls, prize raffle, hot and cold food, traditional fete games and children's entertainment, alcohol and soft drinks bars.

Covid caused a two year break but Wheelie's is now back for 2022. The date is Saturday 2 July 2022. A planning team of 12 people work hard over many months to create the event.