**Minutes of Swillington Annual Village Meeting meeting held on Tuesday 16th April 2024 at 7.00pm**

1. **Welcome address to the Annual Village Meeting by Swillington Village Council Chair, Cllr Jake Knox.**

Cllr Knox welcomed new Councillors and staff this year, including Cllrs Sissons, Young and Wallace, as well as new Clerk Kate Goodare. Cllr Knox thanked the three outgoing Cllrs – Cllrs Bramma, Crossley-Rudd and Howson – for the abundance of personal time they had committed to the Council and for successfully progressing a number of Council initiatives. Cllr Knox highlighted that there is currently still one vacant Councillor space available for co-option onto the Council and encouraged any residents who were interested to contact the Council.

Cllr Knox explained the funding of the Village Council through the precept and highlighted the projects and initiatives that it enables the Village Council to run or help to fund, including the free Little Cinema screenings, subsidised local events such as the string quartet evenings and the Coronation event, Christmas lights, and the Cosy Café which is free to attend and offers a warm environment, public health service and entertainment to Swillington residents every Tuesday. The Council has also been in a position to offer funding to local groups such as Swillington Scorpions rounders team, Swillington Saints Junior Football Club, Swillington in Bloom, and St Mary’s Church who needed funding to help maintain the memorial garden.

Cllr Knox encouraged residents to follow the Council’s Facebook page to keep up with all of the council’s community outreach, and noted that Cllr Musther regularly updates the noticeboards throughout the village also.

Cllr Knox thanked the Village Hall Management Committee, which is made up of volunteers who give a lot of their time to keep this fantastic village resource running smoothly.

Cllr Knox finished by thanking his fellow Cllrs for their support in his recent transition to Chair of the Council and for all of their dedication to serving the village.

1. **To agree the minutes of the Annual Village Meeting 2023 held 4th April 2023. – It was resolved** that the minutes were a true and correct record.
2. **Addresses by various village groups and persons, including:** Summaries of the addresses by the following:

**3.1 Ward Councillors Mark Dobson and Sarah Field**

Cllr Dobson offered his congratulations to Swillington Village Council for the amount of work and the phenomenal pace of change in recent years, and gave credit to former Chair Jacqui Smith and others who took it forward, also crediting the Little Cinema and other events which make a tremendous difference to the village.
Cllr Dobson spoke about the work of ward councillor and the different challenges faced in representing a semi-rural, diverse area. He highlighted that the village will soon face a particular challenge in the site allocation process for housing development, as the principal authority is looking to develop, and said it was important and timely that the village will be working towards a Village Plan to help residents shape the future of their village; the relationship that residents have with the Village Council is important and that an active Village Council needs to be part of the process of managing the impact of any development on various aspects including school places, highways and infrastructure. He also updated on the parking issues around Church Lane and Neville Grove which will soon be subject to a traffic regulation order to restrict parking and encouraged all residents to support the order.
Cllr Field praised the Cosy Café team and in particular Shirley Ashby for doing a brilliant job. Cllr Field and her fellow Ward Cllr Sarah McCormack are regular attendees, and Cllr Field highlighted that people can approach them at the café if they have any issues. Cllr Field also praised the work of Swillington Village Council Cllr Cummings in delivering the Christmas lights for the village last year.

**3.2 St Mary’s Church**

New Team Vicar Sarah Harrison addressed the meeting. The Vicar encouraged anyone and everyone to services, socials and get-togethers at the Church, including bacon sandwiches on the first Saturday of every month. The Vicar stated the Church’s gratitude for the grant funding afforded to the Church by the Village Council for maintenance of the remembrance garden, and looks forward to working together with the Village Council again in the future and for the people of Swillington.

**3.3 Friends of Swillington Church**

Co-founders Lauren Hilton and Rebecca Donnelly addressed the meeting. Friends of Swillington Church is a small group created to help villagers be involved with the church, raise money and create events, and assist in bringing a feel of community to the church and the village. They gave an update on their Easter event in the Church which had gone well. Future events will include a pay-as-you-feel clothes sale on 22nd June and they asked for donations of clothes in clean and good condition. The event will be hosted in the Club from 11-3 and further details are in the village noticeboards and on the group’s Facebook page. In November, another event will be held at the Club with a local band and a raffle, with £5 entry and all funds will go to the church.

**3.4 Swillington Saints Juniors Football**

Helen Womersley addressed the meeting on behalf of Swillington Saints Junior Football Club. She began by thanking the Village Council for their grant sponsoring hoodies for the team, which had been well-received and in this year’s weather had got a lot of use. The Club thrives on providing every child with access and for every child to be equal and join in. Over the past year the Club has added three age groups and their first girls team and there are now 220 local children involved in the Saints Junior football. The football club has benefited from the pavilion refurbishment which has increased their revenue at home games and they intend to work on using the pavilion as a community hub to provide coffee, bacon sandwiches, hosting events, and more. The Club recently received a grant for floodlight installation which has gone ahead and will enable the football club to train year-round; future grounds/facilities development aspirations include an all-weather pitch to further facilitate year-round play. Helen Womersley also noted feedback from residents taken on board by the Club regarding some of their larger events such as the Gala and related traffic-calming measures and community communication.

**3.5 Swillington in Bloom**

Margaret Best spoke on behalf of Swillington in Bloom. The group was created in 2002 by a group of residents who wanted to improve the environment and three of those founding members are still regular members. This year’s challenges were highlighted as continual rain, the reduction in Leeds City Council grass-cutting making the flowerbed maintenance more difficult, and the increasing age of the SIB team. Margaret offered special thanks to Stuart Williams and Andy Best for always willingly helping out with the group’s heavier work. The group has considered climate change and the environment in its recent decisions to eliminate seasonal bedding and there is an ongoing programme to introduce the planting of shrubs and perennials; along with reduction of bed size this will also ensure it is sustainable for the group to manage. The group is grateful to the Village Council for its ongoing support and generosity through its grant programme. The group is always looking for volunteers, and would like to hear from anybody who would like to help or sponsor the group’s work.

**3.6 Swillington Scorpions Rounders Team**

Team Captain Stacy Smith and Vice-Captain Michaela Hirst addressed the meeting. The team was established 7 years ago and is self-funded. Swillington Village Council granted funding for kit and equipment last year and this year. The team plays in the competitive West Yorkshire Rounders League. Funding has enabled them to expand the team and set up a 2nd team. They are always looking to get more people involved and highlighted the fitness and social benefits of training which is held at the Miners Club every Wednesday at 6pm. The team also has the benefit of the new pavilion when they play home games and would welcome involvement in fundraising for an all-weather pitch. The team is always looking for players 16 and over who wish to play both competitively and non-competitively.

**3.7 Village Hall Management Committee**

Committee Secretary Jacqui Smith addressed the meeting. Village Hall Management Committee meetings are held on the last Tuesday of every month and deal with maintenance and day-to-day staffing for the hall, reviews of safety and risks for visitors, and Hall bookings. The committee would welcome further involvement by members of the community in the running of the village hall and encouraged anyone interested to contact the Council or a committee member directly.

**3.8 Elderberries**

Elderberries member Jacqui Smith addressed the meeting. Elderberries is a not-for-profit community group for over-50s which meets every Friday in the Village Hall. It was established to offer a place for people to meet and chat over a cuppa, and activities, chats and talks are regular features. Jacqui Smith listed various events of interest that had taken place in the group over the past year, including craft sessions, Macmillan coffee morning, Christmas lunch, and regular visits from the healthcare team, as well as the ever-popular weekly card bingo. The group is free to attend and has around 20-30 participants. Volunteers are wanted to expand the scope of the group, and the group is interested in hearing from anybody who is able to help on a weekly or monthly basis, or anyone who can take on the task of organising activities and trips. Jacqui paid tribute to all the volunteers in the group who already give generously with their time.

1. **Presentation by Swillington Village Council Vice-Chair Cllr Leanne Cummings regarding the Council’s plans for a Village Plan** – Cllr Cummings introduced the Village Council’s plans to create a Village Plan, which will start with a public consultation to establish what is important to villagers and what is wanted for the village going forward. Topics will include traffic, health, and schools, amongst others. Initial plans are to create a questionnaire which will be hand-delivered to each home in Swillington; once these are returned, the results will then be converted into statistics which will inform the Plan. Residents were encouraged to return any questionnaires they receive. A Working Party has been set up by the Council to manage the process and create a questionnaire particularly relevant to Swillington; if anybody would like to join this group as a resident then please do get in touch with the Council to express interest.
2. **Opportunity for attendees to raise any other business for discussion by villagers** – None was raised.
3. **Closing address by Cllr Jake Knox** – Cllr Knox thanked everyone for attending and closed the meeting.