**Minutes of** **Swillington Annual Village Meeting held on Tuesday 15th April 2025 at 7.30pm**

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

Cllr Knox welcomed everyone attending the meeting. Cllr Knox highlighted the number of vacancies on the council and encouraged anyone in attendance to think about becoming a village councillor. He explained how due to a small number of councillors that the Council had seen its ability to plan and deliver events suffer, but that with the recent recruitment of a new Councillor and the hope to secure more, that the Council hoped to turn this around in the year to come.

 Cllr Knox discussed the challenges that the village had faced this year, including the potential closure of the medical practice in Swillington and stated that it was important to maintain a facility that provided such a vital service to the community. He also highlighted the Council’s issues with ongoing vandalism in the playground, including to surfaces and the swings, arson, and flytipping.
 The Council had continued to support several community groups this year, and has progressed its efforts to be able to utilise the Village Hall as a community emergency hub, successfully applying for and receiving a grant for solar panels and storage batteries.

 Cllr Knox closed his address by stating that the Council was hoping to achieve more next year, hopefully with a full council, and build a more resilient, stronger and connected community.

1. **To agree the minutes of the Annual Village Meeting 2024 held 16th April 2024. – 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 Swillington Scorpions Rounders Team**
Vice-Captain Michaela Hirst addressed the meeting. The team was lucky to get support from the council again this year through its grant-funding. The team has lost some experienced players this year but has had 16 new starters. The money from the council helped with league fees, tournament entry fees and new kit for new players; keeping subs down for new players and keeping it accessible. Only three of the current players are from Swillington but they are always open to new players. On June 8th the team will be hosting a big event at the social club with Rounders England.

**3.2 Ward Councillor Mark Dobson**Cllr Dobson stated that it is always a pleasure to support the village council, including with the match-funding for Christmas lights that they hope to repeat this year. [Cllr Knox thanked the Ward Cllr for the funding and highlighted that the council’s three-year plan for the Christmas lights was achieved in two years with the help from the ward councillors.]
Cllr Dobson agreed that it was difficult for the Village Council losing councillors and encouraged those in attendance to consider the role and support the endeavour.

 Cllr Dobson went on to discuss the variety of casework received by the ward councillors, and highlighted flytipping as a particular recent issue. Cllr Dobson also spent some time discussing plans for volume housebuilding in Leeds in the coming years and had recently attended a meeting discussing a Leeds Plan to cover until 2040, and assured those present that there was currently nothing regarding volume housebuilding in Swillington contained within the plan. However, he did highlight plans to create a community between Kippax and Great Preston which could have an indirect impact in terms of stress on GP services, schools, highways and public transport, and offered the ward councillors’ willingness to work with the village council to discuss a joint mitigation strategy to move forward.
 [Cllr Knox passed on resident concerns regarding a potential rise in applications for HMOs, putting stress on services such as those highlighted by Cllr Dobson and removing family homes]
 Cllr Dobson agreed with the challenges and highlighted a recent HMO planning application in Swillington which had been rejected by the council but was now being passed under permitted development laws, which he noted was disappointing. However, he noted that the council will still have a role in mitigating the negative effects, with key consultees such as Highways playing a role.

 Cllr Dobson also discussed the impact of the GP surgery closing and shared that the Integrated Care Board had confirmed the surgery is set for closure, as the GPs say they can’t afford the rent and that roll numbers are dwindling. Cllr Dobson has written to the Primary Care Trust to understand the plans for Swillington and is hoping to get some positive feedback, and again highlighted the Ward Councillors’ willingness to work with the Village Council to mitigate any negatives for residents.
 **3.3 St Mary’s Church** Vicar Sarah Harrison addressed the meeting. She has been in place just over a year and noted the importance and privilege of being part of the community. She highlighted many events that the Church has been a part of this year, including school visits and the Christingle, as well as the privilege of holding weddings, baptisms and funerals. The Church is extremely grateful to the Friends of St. Mary’s group who have raised over £6000 for the Church in the last year, including over £1000 on an incredible Easter event, all due to the involvement of the community. This is especially important because the Church receives no funding from the government. There is a variety of events coming up including a scarecrow festival, hot drinks at Halloween, and a variety of Christmas events.
 The Church is part of a team of churches in Kippax and Allerton Bywater, helping people to grow in faith, friendship and community. Thankyou for support in the past and the Church is looking forward to working with you in the future.

 **3.4 Swillington Miners Sports & Social Club** – did not attend

 **3.5 Richard Burgon MP**

 Richard Burgon introduced himself as this election is the first time Swillington has been included in his constituency. He has a constitutency office in Seacroft and is generally in the constituency between Thursday and Sunday. He has a weekly advice session which is held across the whole constituency, including one every month at the Garforth One Stop shop and advised people to contact his office to make an appointment if they wished to raise an issue with him.

 He described himself as a ‘Labour MP with an independent streak’ and will put the views and interests of the constituents first, and noted he had been suspended from the Labour whip for 6 months for voting to lift the 2-child benefit cap as the quickest way to lift children out of poverty. He is also a leading voice in Parliament against the change in PIP eligibility as he believes it will make it harder for disabled people to get the help they need and is working with disabled groups. He also stated his willingness to discuss the Assisted Dying Bill with constituents, which he voted against.

 He receives around 1000 emails a week from constituents raising issues, which is very important in informing the work he does. He agreed with the issue of housebuilding raised by Cllr Dobson, and also the issue of the GP surgery. He arranged his own meeting with the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and raised residents’ concerns and discussed scope for the rent charged by the NHS property services to be reduced. He has also approached other GP surgeries to see if they would be willing to open in the building. Additionally, the MP has asked the ICB if the pharmacy could use the building to provide some NHS services but was told this was not possible; he is currently enquiring if the consulting room in the pharmacy could be used for some GP services. The government is committed to 1500 extra GPs, but because GPs are private concerns, it is a challenge to get the best services for Swillington.

 He closed by encouraging constituents to never hesitate to contact him with their opinions, and to ask him to attend or support events or promote a cause.

 He took questions from the Village Council Chair on various aspects of his political beliefs, including the role of the constituency in politics, voting reform and turnout, and the House of Lords.

1. **Opportunity for attendees to raise any other business for discussion by villagers –** resident Margaret Best spoke here on behalf of Swillington in Bloom. She thanked the Chair and the Village Council, and Cllr Mark Dobson for their support over the years as the main funding contributors to the group. She appealed for contributors and volunteers.
2. **Closing address by Cllr Jake Knox** – Cllr Knox thanked everyone for attending the meeting.