

Sulgrave Parish Council



Annual Report 2010

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I. Annual Report Introduction and Chairmans statement



Introduction

Welcome to this year's Annual Report. Your Parish Council has been working hard over the past year to improve services in the village and to communicate, inform and represent views in a wide range of activities.

We have also included items in this report that will hopefully illustrate the contributions made by the many voluntary groups and societies that thrive within the community and enhance village life for us all.

There is a section on the Parish Council finances to provide information on income and expenditure and the management of our funds, this information is provided in addition to the full and published accounts, copies of which are available from the Parish Clerk

The Parish Council Annual Assembly on the 8th April in the Church hall will also give you the opportunity to meet and discuss any matter of interest or concern with Parish and District Councillors, so please come along and put your views forward.

The names and contact details of your Councillors and the Parish Clerk are given below.

Officers of the Council 2009/2010

Chairman Cllr Graham Roberts (07778 584108)
Vice Chairman – Cllr David Kellett (07747 808574)
Cllr Clare Pollak (01295 768224)
Cllr Jane Osborne (07879 624375)
Cllr Jo Powell (01295 768243)
Cllr Andrew Waite (07787 502260)

Parish Clerk Mrs Christine Coles (01295 276229)

Parish Council Mission Statement

Sulgrave Parish Council intends to undertake its responsibilities and duties in a manner that:-

- Is representative of and actively engages all parts of the community providing vision identity and a sense of belonging
- Is effectively and properly managed and articulates the needs and wishes of it's community
- Is committed to work in partnership with principle authorities and other public service agencies
- Works closely with voluntary groups in it's community
- And, working with partners, acts as an information point for local services.

I. Annual Report Introduction and Chairmans statement

This year some very important issues have captured the attention of the Parish Council, not least the decision by two companies to locate wind turbines in close proximity to the village.

Whilst the impact of these applications is not to be minimised it would be unjust of me not to recognise that many other activities have been continuing, thanks to the hard work of Councillors and village volunteers that contribute their time and efforts to serve the community. I hope that we have been able to express our gratitude for these commitments by describing their achievements within the pages of this report.

As a Conservation Village we concentrated on projects that will retain the tranquillity and beauty of a quintessential english village, restoring drystone walling, undergrounding overhead cables, maintaining the footpaths and byways, improvements in the pocket park and seeking to introduce traffic calming. However the Parish Council will shortly have to make decisions on two wind turbine farms which will change the outlook from the village in a significant way affecting the whole village and its setting in the county.

We have and will continue to seek information, ask questions and communicate to the villagers about these schemes; it is our duty to be fully informed when decisions are to be made and to represent the views of the village as a whole.

We expect this matter to come to a head in the near future and ask for the support and contributions of all villagers as we deliberate on the planning applications.

Graham Roberts

Chairman
Sulgrave Parish Council

2. Allotments



SULGRAVE ALLOTMENT SOCIETY

Report to Sulgrave Parish Council 2010

This year was a very successful year for the Allotment Society; all allotments were let, allowing 8 residents to grow their own fruit and vegetables. Although one person has resigned her allotment, we did have a waiting list and we have offered the vacant allotment to a lady that is new to the village.

We have twice approached, Hook Norton Brewery, to request some extra land to extend the allotment area. At the moment the piece of land immediately to the north of the allotments is redundant and overgrown. I believe they are considering our request.

All allotmenters were involved in a 'working party' in the spring to tidy the area and to trim back overhanging branches and tidy the hedges. We also had an additional day of fencing the north boundary. The previous year we had a problem when a flock of sheep escaped from a local field and ate most of the winter vegetables.



We applied for a grant for the installation of a water supply from South Northants Homes and were fortunate as they donated funds to cover the whole cost of installing a standpipe and water connection (£1500). We are waiting for the plumbers to fit the standpipe and then we will arrange for Anglia Water to make the connection to the mains supply. This will make a vast difference to allotmenters as we will no longer have to transport water by hand. Water will be metered and will be covered by the plot rent.

In 2011 we are hoping to open the allotments as part of the village open gardens.

3. Castle Green Annual Report 2009-10

The Castle Green Management Committee has continued to work hard on the Restoration Project that commenced in 2006. Due to be completed in April 2009, the project has continued to be beset by delays caused by problems with the rebuilding of the retaining wall around the South and West sides of the Green, and the Management Committee were forced to negotiate an extension of the funding agreement with the Heritage Lottery Fund to April 2011.

Nonetheless, many of the project's aims were completed during the year.

The Access and Permissive Path has been much appreciated by locals and visitors alike. The Northamptonshire County Council's Voluntary Sector Support Unit gave funding for a new mesh-reinforced path and steps to provide access suitable for disabled people. In June their representative came to inspect the site, and was delighted with the work. She also congratulated the Management Committee on the responses from a survey of villagers conducted. This showed that more people were using the green, because the path provides better access, and a safe route for pedestrians wishing to avoid traffic in the narrow lane. The new steps and handrails also provide safe access.



Benches

During the summer three splendid benches were purchased and installed in suitable sites around the green. They were sponsored by the families of Emma Cave, Joan Gascoigne, and Sid Wootton.

Wildlife Survey and Management

The laid hedge was trimmed in early February, to provide cover for nesting birds, and in June the Northants Wildlife Trust conducted an Ecological Survey covering Castle Green, the Castle mound, and St James the Less Churchyard.

Their report and advice on site management and suitable sites for nest boxes will be available on the village website in due course.

In late summer the Northampton Bat Group conducted a Bat survey and Common Pipestrelle and Brown Long-eared bats were noted. Another survey may be conducted in the spring.



Wall rebuilding

In spring and summer 2009 protracted negotiations and a site visit with the Contractors resulted in their acceptance that much of the previous year's work on the wall would need to be redone, owing to frost damage to the mortar during the winter. This work was carried out in July, and further defects repaired in September. In October, after another site inspection, the Committee finally agreed to accept Practical Completion. A Certificate was then issued by TRP, the Management Company, and a payment was made to the Contractors. The retention sum will be paid after 6 months, once any defects have been repaired.



Event to celebrate completion of the Restoration works

Plans for a May Fair are well under way, and the event will take place on Sunday 2nd May 2010. It is hoped that sign and interpretation boards will be finished and installed for this event.

Cllr Clare Pollak, February 2010

4. Pocket Park

Sulgrave PCC hosts a bi-annual village fete where 50% of the proceeds are donated to the Church and the remaining 50% is allocated to a community project which the PCC Fete Committee deem beneficial to the community as a whole. It was decided for the 2008 Sulgrave Fete that this allocation should be given for the refurbishment of Sulgrave Pocket Park and the proceeds were duly passed to the Parish Council and banked in the Pocket Park account. This amounted to just over £4000.

The play equipment is 15 years old and is reaching the end of its useful economic life as stated in the recent annual ROSPA inspections. It is limited in its appeal to a wide ranging age group of children and therefore is not used greatly by children.

In order to establish the priorities of the refurbishment, a questionnaire was delivered to every household in the village. Villagers were also invited join a working party for this project. The results were published at a following Parish Council meeting. The majority voted for improvements to play equipment and for the rejuvenation of the pond area. A smaller number of responses were for the provision of a picnic area.

Investigations into feasibility revealed that there were insufficient funds to complete a meaningful project without sourcing external funding. The core group of people who had volunteered on the original questionnaire to be part of the group was then formed. Further research was then undertaken by group members for sourcing funding agencies, finding suitable suppliers and appropriate materials and obtaining advice from local authorities.

An application was then made to Community Spaces which falls under the National Lottery funding umbrella. The Stage 1 application required ample research and quotations for the project, along with confirmation that some funding had already been secured from the community. The mums and tots group made a donation of approximately £700 and a further donation from Ben Smith, our local County Councillor was added to the funds already secured and the group submitted an application for a further £48,500 from Community Spaces.

Just before Christmas 2009, a letter was received to advise that the Stage 1 funding application was successful. The group now need to complete the extensive Stage 2 application and Community Spaces have allocated a facilitator to assist them. The current timeframe for completion and final quotations is June 2010.



The main aims of refurbishment are as follows:-

Replace the current play equipment with materials suitable for a conservation area which provides a more challenging and interesting play area for a wider age range. This will offer the children of the village and the wider community a focus for outdoor activities, encouraging natural play within safe and secure surroundings and a stimulating area for children of different ages to socialise and hopefully encourage the community to engage in a healthier and active lifestyle.

There is also a provision for a seating area providing opportunities for picnics and reflection.

The pond provides a habitat for frogs and newts, the surrounding pond boundary contain a variety of marginal plants. We wish to sustain the ecosystem and to encourage more wildlife including insects, small mammals and amphibians and it is therefore our intention to rejuvenate the pond area so that it is safely fenced and clearly signposted. The main objective is to provide a walkway so that the area is accessible to all members of the community regardless of their physical abilities and to include the provision of a dipping area to promote people of all ages to take an interest in the established wildlife, flora and fauna present in the vicinity.

Whilst the investment is substantial, we do not anticipate that the project will deviate from the original aims of the pocket park which is to offer a bio-diverse wildlife area whilst encouraging children's play.

There will be an opportunity to review the plans and to see the materials suggested at the Castle Green event on 2nd May where there will be an opportunity to complete a further viewpoint card in response to the proposals.

If in the meantime, any further information is required, please contact either Jane Osborne or Lis Stuart (Chair).

5. Report from County Councillor Ben Smith

Since June I have a new job with the County Council as the Chairman of the Development Control Committee. The committee determines planning applications on Minerals & Waste as well as considering applications relating to land and buildings in the ownership of the council. I am a member of the Police Authority and this year I am the Chair of their Partnership and Collaboration Committee. I am still a board member of WNDC (although that is likely to end soon), a director of the River Nene Regional Park Company and a member of the Anglian (Northern) Flood Defence Committee. I work occasionally as a consultant for the Improvement & Development Agency (IDeA) and last year I did some interesting work mentoring two parish councils in Hertfordshire. With all these commitments, as you might expect, I have retired as a Landscape Architect and more or less closed down my practice which I established in 1985.

6. Website

SULGRAVE VILLAGE WEBSITE



The village website has now been in existence for almost five years. In that time it has been visited at least once by approximately 14,000 people in 61 different countries, the most frequent visitors from outside the UK being from the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. During that time there have been numerous emails to the website editor, some of which have been published from time to time. However, there was no easy way of posting comments on individual items and perhaps in this way initiating an exchange of information, opinions and ideas. Since the beginning of January, the website has been in a new format designed to make this possible and it is hoped that site users will be able and willing to play a more interactive part in future.

It is now possible to get an idea of what people are looking for when they visit the website i.e. what they type in when using a "search engine" such as "google". Unsurprisingly, the main words are: Sulgrave, or Sulgrave village. The next most frequent entry is: Sulgrave shop or Sulgrave village shop, followed by Sulgrave newsletter, Sulgrave Windfarm and Bus timetable. The most frequently visited "page" is "photographic archive".

With these results in mind, steps are being taken to include more items on the village shop, perhaps on a daily basis as to promotions and items generally available.

All items for inclusion on the site are welcome and any old photos of the village itself, people and events are especially valuable.

As far as possible all village public events are reported upon, usually with photographs. As soon as an item is removed from the home page it is made available in the archives, accessible from the home page on a year by year basis.

Parish Council meetings are advertised and the minutes are available on the Parish Council Home Page.

The new format for the website was designed by my grandson Sebastian, at no cost to the Council. My thanks are due to him for this work and his prompt and freely given assistance when things go wrong!

Colin Wootton (Website Editor) February 2010

7. Police

SULGRAVE CRIME FIGURES FOR YEAR MARCH 2009 – FEBRUARY 2010



Dear Villagers,

Over the past 12 months we held several Community Panel Meetings across the area, and dealt with issues that members of your community have raised, some of these have included speeding, increase communications and more visible policing.

We have visited village surgeries and coffee mornings in most of our villages, and completed 370 Interactions with members of our community, we have also when requested submitted items for village newsletters. We have also visited many of our local schools and patrolled at key times, and we hope that this has not gone un-noticed in our attempts to improve our communication and visibility within our villages.

At our most recent Community Panel Meeting, villagers again wished us to prioritise speeding within area, to arrange for Smartwater Presentations to Community Panel that was in December and lastly parking issues around the village of Croughton. We have been working with our partners for the last 3 months on these priorities.

We regularly advertise surgeries, meetings and events on the Northamptonshire Police Website, which can be accessed at www.northants.police.uk. You can also apply via this website to receive community messages, just follow the links for community messaging.

Our next community Panel Meeting will be held at Syresham Village Hall on 23rd March at 7.30pm.

Of course if you have any questions or queries please contact me at Brackley Police Station and I will do my best to help. I can be contacted via e-mail on either gez.shillito@northants.police.uk or brackleypolicestation@northants.police.uk or you can phone 03000 111 222 and ask for me at Brackley on ext.3124.

Below is a list of crimes that have been reported within the village and outlying area over the past 12 months.

Violent Offences - ONE - Detected
Dwelling Burglaries – TWO
Thefts – ONE
Criminal Damage – ONE
Other Offence – ONE - Detected

A total of 6 crimes for this year, this is the same number of offences as the previous year.

Thank you

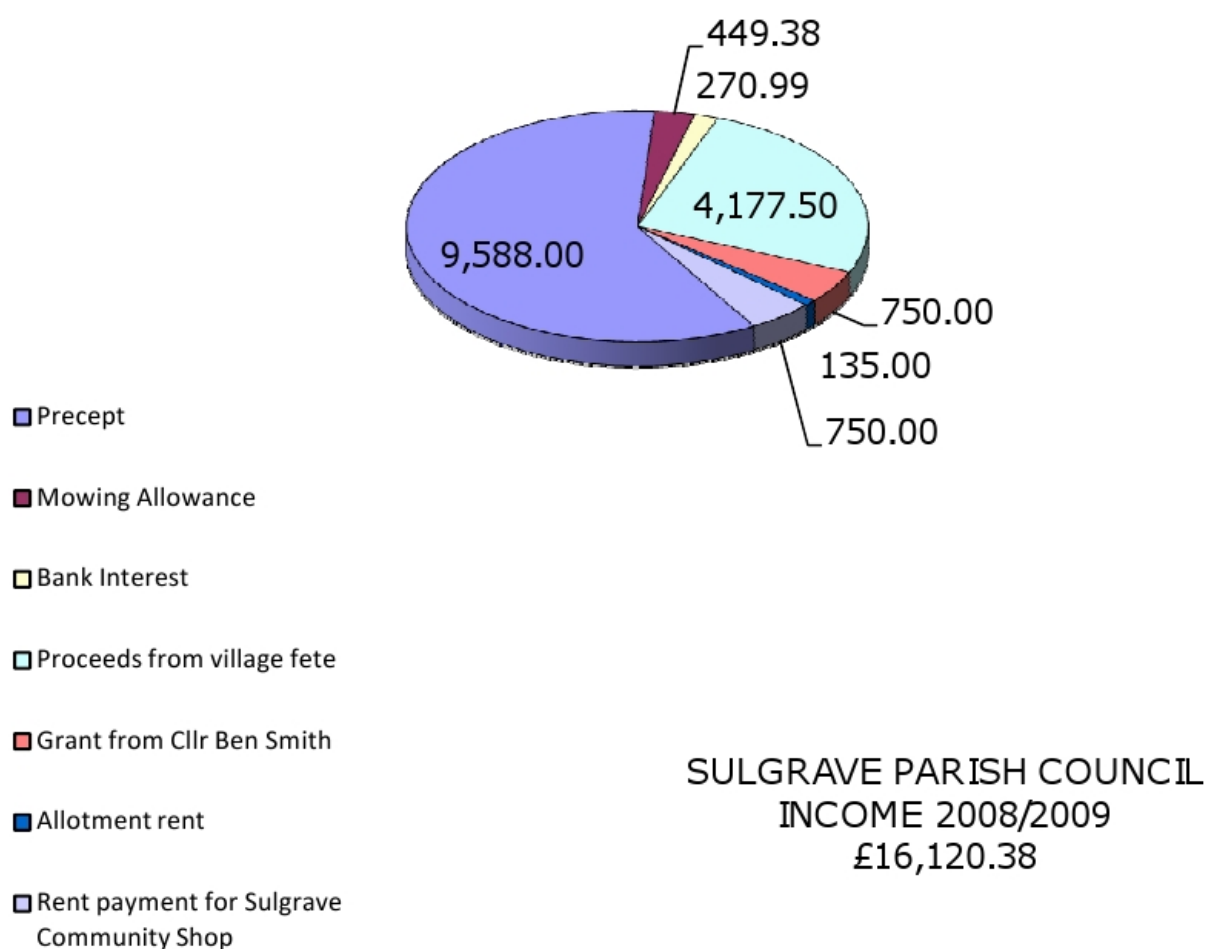
Gez Shillito
PC 105 Safer Community Officer
Brackley Rural SCT

8. Financial Report

The financial report will show the Parish Council is in command of its finances and working within the guidelines laid down by Local Government.

The Parish accounts are audited in accordance to the "Accounts and Audit Regulations 2003 as amended 2006" and we follow the good practice as detailed in "Governance and Accountability for Local Councils"

Audited accounts for the Year to March 2009 were published in August 2009 and can be viewed by interested parties by prior arrangement with the Parish Clerk.



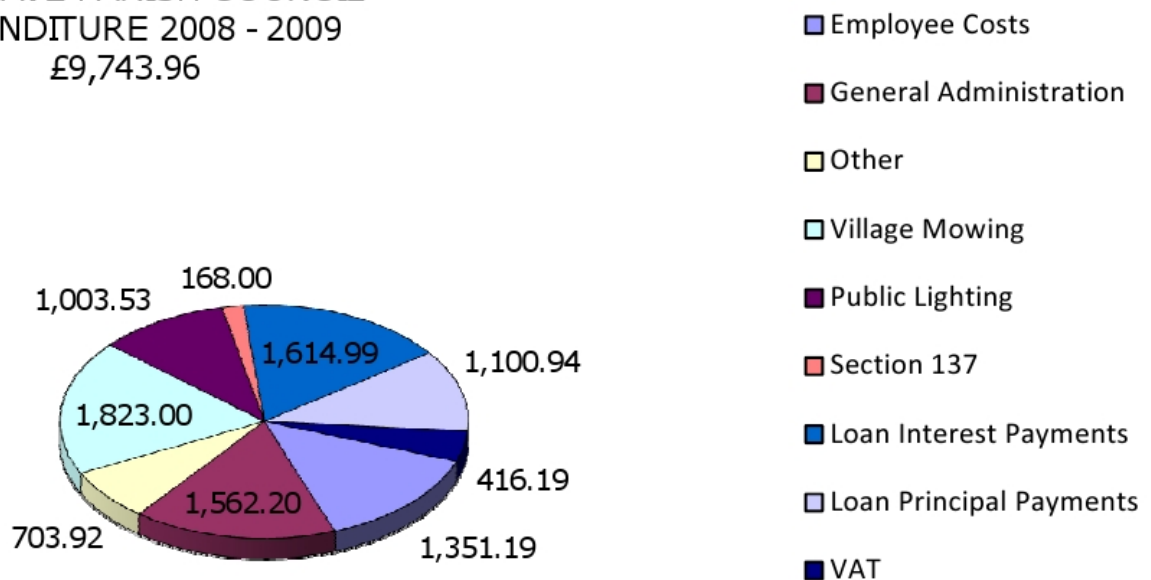
The Parish Council had an income of just over £16,120 during 2008/9 of which £9,588 was raised via the precept.

A further £4,177 was raised at the Village Fete specifically for the pocket park improvements project and this sum has been ring-fenced for that purpose. Additional income is raised via modest grants from Northamptonshire County Council and rental income from the community shop premises.

During the year the village community shop rental was renewed for a 5 year term, the Parish Council debated this issue in full and continues to support the Community Shop Association by holding the rent unchanged for the next term.

Other projects remain self financing, either through grant applications or self funding initiatives.

SULGRAVE PARISH COUNCIL EXPENDITURE 2008 - 2009 £9,743.96



The major areas of expenditure during the year have been on village maintenance and appearance, with grass cutting a major element. The contract was re-let at the start of the year as part of a cost cutting exercise. New contractors were given the opportunity to undertake the work but the outcome was less than satisfactory. The contract was finally awarded at a nominal cost increase to the previous contractor who had delivered a quality service in the past.

The remaining main areas of expenditure include public lighting, employee costs and administration costs including newsletter and web-site.

For a second consecutive year the Parish Council reserve accounts have been increased, continuing to rebuild the financial provision for the future

SUMMARY

Opening Balance	£11,426.7
Receipts	£16,120.87
Payments	£9,743.96
Closing Balance	£17,803.65

9. Sulgrave Charities

Sulgrave Charities 2009 - Account Through 9 Months

There was little activity through 2009 for the Sulgrave charities. We only received one request for swimming lessons from the Educational Charity. We are hoping that in 2010 that we will be able to raise the awareness again and have received a couple of new requests that we will be able to report back on next year. The accounts remained solid for 9 months through to December, see below. Finally we would like to thank Jill Barrett for all her work with the Sulgrave Charities, as she stood down as the Chairman last year.

James Garnett

Sulgrave relief In charity through 9 Months

Sulgrave Relief in Need Charity Charity No. 1068261

Income & Expenditure	Dec-09	2009
Income	£	£
Dividends received	31	44
Bank interest received	0	5
Total	<u>31</u>	<u>50</u>
Expenditure		
Grants & disbursements	-	-
Surplus for the year	<u><u>31</u></u>	<u><u>50</u></u>

Balance Sheet

Investments (Note 1 & 2)	995	915
Bank balances: Capital fund	139	139
Income fund	809	778
Total assets	<u>1,944</u>	<u>1,832</u>
Representing: Capital fund	1,134	1,054
Income fund	809	778
	<u>1,944</u>	<u>1,832</u>

Sulgrave Educational Charity

Sulgrave Educational Charity Charity No. 1068260

Income & Expenditure	Dec-09	2009
Income	£	£
Dividends received	800	1,144
Bank interest received	2	19
Total	801	1,162
Expenditure		
Grants & disbursements	(50)	0
Surplus (deficit) for the year	751	1,162

Balance Sheet

Investments (Note 1 & 2)	24,982	25,140
Bank balances: Capital fund	207	207
Income fund	4,763	4,012
Total assets	29,951	29,359
Representing: Capital fund	25,188	25,347
Income fund	4,763	4,012
	29,951	29,359

10. Newsletter

The Sulgrave News is edited and compiled by Tom Cockeram and delivered free of charge to all houses in Sulgrave and Stutchbury by volunteers Jill and Anthony Barrett, George Metcalf and Vera Smith who we thank for their commitment to publish and circulate an edition every month throughout the year. We are also indebted to Sulgrave Manor who print the newsletter at cost every Month.

The Newsletter is funded by the Parish Council but is independent of the council views in terms of the contributions made.

The Sulgrave news is an entertaining and informative read for all in the community and includes reports on past activities, forthcoming events and a handy calendar of events for the forthcoming month always accompanied by one of Tom's delightful cartoon friends.

Sulgrave News



January 2010