



# Annual Report 2023–2024

## Report from the Chair

Welcome to the 2023-2024 Annual Report of the Parish Council. It has been another eventful year and your Parish Council has been busy on a full programme of work often supported by members of the community.

The Council welcomed two new councillors, John McDermott and Paul Shultz, to fill the vacancies left when two former councillors stepped down in the preceding year. I would also like to thank Cllrs. Binns, Drew, Edmonds, Fullerton, McDonald and Taylor for their work for the parish. Ian Fullerton has since stepped down from the council and Victoria Adams has been co-opted in his place.

Your Parish Council relies on volunteers to support the council's work. My thanks go to Graham Stanley and members of the Flood Resilience Group. Also to Angela King for her work in support of the Van Demans biodiversity project (see page 3).

I would also like to thank the officers and staff of the council for their dedication and excellent work.

*Cllr. J. Anderson*

## Swallowfield Parish Hall

After a hiatus due to COVID the Hall Upgrade Project has picked up a pace. 2023/24 has seen significant background work and planning to finalise the requirements and prepare the tender. The key elements to the project are: upgrade of the fire safety system, new doors on the atrium and main hall to improve access, insulation of the atrium, corridor to facilitate better access to the disabled toilet, full refurbishment of the kitchen and a reconfiguration of the office to improve safety and resident access. The building contract was awarded at the end of February, planning permission has been granted and building work started in April and should be completed by the end of August. We hope that there will be minimal disruption to our users and we would like to thank all of our hall users who have been very understanding and are working with us.

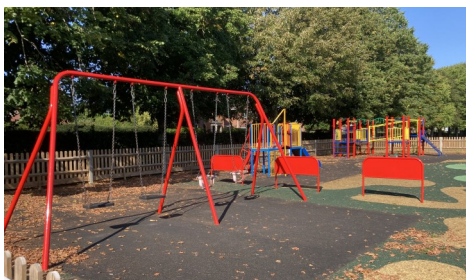


## Planning

The council reviewed and commented on a total of 48 planning applications throughout the year. The most significant of which is an application to build 81 homes on the field west of Trowes Lane and north of Charlton Lane. This application was refused by Wokingham Borough Council and is now the subject of an appeal.

## Playgrounds

Play equipment at Swallowfield, Riseley and Farley Hill has been rubbed down and repainted, which not only looks great but helps to prolong the life of the equipment. All council owned play equipment is independently inspected three times a year to ensure that it is safe. A program of further refurbishment is being developed.



## Riseley Village Team Room



This year we said farewell to Pam Wright, who 10 years ago had the vision to transform a tired village hall into a top class tea room. We must also thank all the volunteers and staff who committed so many hours into making it such a success, we wish them all a relaxing retirement. The Parish Council was delighted when Debbie Johnson and Karen Patrick stepped forward to take over from Pam. They have continued the tradition of celebration teas and community events and are now opening for drop-ins on a Thursday morning.



## Health and Wellbeing

The seated exercise classes continue to prove very popular and offer not only a chance to exercise but also socialise. Swallowfield Parish Council was delighted to accept a substantial grant from The Riseley, Swallowfield and Farley Hill Charitable Trust which will ensure that these classes can continue for the rest of the year, if not longer.

We continue to host the Citizens Advice mobile unit in the car park at Swallowfield Parish Hall. The day/time does vary so please watch out for posts on Facebook or the CA Wokingham website.



## Parish Clean Up Day

Once again our residents turned out to pick up litter so carelessly discarded/dumped by others. 54 people filled over 100 bags and collected a variety of other interesting articles which would not fit into bags, 4 estate agent signs, 40+ empty vodka bottles, an entire pumpkin, 12v battery, a blow up doll (plus packaging which was found a mile from its contents), a consumer unit and an interactive teddy and numerous road signs including a "Police Road Closed" sign.



There are many people to thank, Peter and Claire Sampson for running the day and buying

all the food, Margaret McDonald for her warm welcome to everyone, Margaret Clayton and Pauline Anderson for manning the kitchen and baking delicious homemade cakes, Ed Handley, Chris Morrissey, Jim Phillips and Jon Bell for collecting all the bags from the roadside, Martin Moore and Russ Hatchet for taking care of the river, the council staff for all the preparation and set up and residents of all ages who took part. A fantastic community effort.



## Van Demans

Van Demans an 11-acre field off the Devils Highway which is owed by the parish council, has for many years, been rented as grazing land. At the end of 2022, following discussion with the tenant, it was agreed that the grazing licence would not be renewed. The council agreed that it would like to see the land registered as a Local Nature Reserve. A Project team led by Angela King has worked with the WBC, the Woodland Trust and the Newt Conservation Society on a plan to improve the bio-diversity of this field. A report to determine the bio-diversity on the site was commissioned as it may be possible in the future to "sell" Biodiversity Net Gain units to developers. Some trees and hedgerow plants have been planted, although not as many as originally intended due to the evidence of crop circles. Under the watchful eye of The Berkshire Archaeological Society test pits have been dug to establish whether the land is suitable for a newt pond.



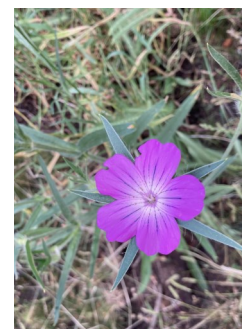
## Community Orchard



This year we have to thank Chris Morrissey for recognising the potential of our orchard in Riseley. He harvested apples from the orchard then put out a call to all residents and collected 420kg of apples and pears. He then took these to be professionally pressed, pasteurised, labelled and bottled. The result was delicious bottles of pure apple/pear juice.

## Fox's Run

The Parish Council are working to establish and develop wildflowers on Fox's Run, this is not an easy task. Wildflowers are harder to grow than you would think and at times the area will look scruffy. We will persevere.



## Resilience

The Parish Council expresses its gratitude to Graham Stanley and his team for their on-going support to ensure that our ditches are maintained and areas for concern around the parish are brought the attention of the relevant owners.

For any further information on the work of the Swallowfield Flood Resilience Group or if you are interested in becoming involved, please contact the Parish Clerk.

## Maintenance

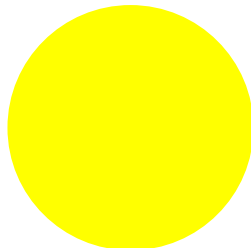
Never ending cycle of maintenance on all our assets, plumbing, electrics, roofing, trees, fences, play equipment etc

## Your Council 2024/2025

### COUNCILLORS



**John Anderson (Chair)**



**Victoria Adams**



**Mark Binns**



**Catherine Drew**



**Laura Edmonds**



**John McDermott**



**Margaret McDonald**



**Paul Schulz**



**Simon Taylor**

### STAFF

<b>Clerk:</b>	Liz Halson
<b>Finance Officer/Bookings:</b>	Sue Howorth
<b>Caretaker:</b>	Derek Norris
<b>Parish Warden:</b>	Stephen Haynes

### Keeping in touch

Councillor email addresses can be found on our website ([www.swallowfieldpc.gov.uk](http://www.swallowfieldpc.gov.uk)). Visit our website to view our Privacy Notice and complete the appropriate consent form if you would like to receive council communications. Follow on Facebook.

If you have any questions please contact the Parish Clerk, Parish Office, Swallowfield Parish Hall, Swallowfield Street, Swallowfield, RG7 1RZ. Email: [clerk@swallowfieldpc.gov.uk](mailto:clerk@swallowfieldpc.gov.uk) Tel: 0118 9885 929.

## Your Borough Councillors

### Spencers Wood & Swallowfield Ward

**Dave Edmonds** ([dave.edmonds@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:dave.edmonds@wokingham.gov.uk))  
**Catherine Glover** ([catherine.glover@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:catherine.glover@wokingham.gov.uk))  
**Stuart Munro** ([stuart.munro@wokingham.gov.uk](mailto:stuart.munro@wokingham.gov.uk))