

## **Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council**

**Good evening, everyone,**

Although I have only recently taken on the role of Chairman, I feel privileged to present this annual report and reflect on the Parish Council's work over the past year.

### **Remembering Former Councillors**

Firstly, I would like to acknowledge the sad passing of two former councillors and Chairs of Somersham Parish Council Penny Pearson and Stella Salter. Both individuals gave so much of themselves to our village, and their legacy of service, dedication, and community spirit will not be forgotten. They played a significant role in shaping the strong foundations we continue to build upon today.

### **A Thank You to Thomas Hallett**

I also want to extend a huge thank you to Thomas Hallett, our outgoing chairman. Thomas has led with commitment, clarity, and kindness — all while balancing a very busy life. His tireless work and deep care for the community have been deeply appreciated by both the council and the wider village. I know I speak for many when I say we're incredibly grateful for his leadership. We are very fortunate he continues with us as a councillor.

### **Looking Forward**

It is an honour to follow in his footsteps. I am committed to continuing the good work of Thomas and my fellow councillors, and to working closely with the community as we plan for the year ahead.

In that spirit, I'd like to propose three simple goals that we can agree on together — as a council and as a community. These goals are intended to be realistic, meaningful, and a way to help measure our success.

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### **1. Community: Strengthening Connections**

Somersham is home to an incredible range of groups and amenities — from our local pub and community shop to the church, speedway, football club, tennis club, community association, mother and baby group, and many more.

Each of these plays an important role, but I wonder: could we achieve even more if we worked more closely together?

With VE Day commemorations taking place this week, there is much to celebrate, but I believe there's still potential to bring our community even closer. Let's explore opportunities for greater collaboration between local groups and volunteers to make the most of what we already have — together.

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### **2. Aspiration: A Shared Goal for Our Village**

We are lucky to live in such beautiful Suffolk countryside. While much of our focus has understandably been on proposed developments like solar farms and pylons, I'd love us to set a goal of our own — something positive and community-driven.

One idea is to enter the **Blooming Village** competition. A shared project like this could beautify our village, foster collaboration, and strengthen community pride — while potentially adding value to our homes and surroundings.

Let's work together to choose a visible, uplifting goal that brings people together and benefits Somersham as a whole.

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### **3. Communication: Listening More, Reaching Further**

In recent years, our parish council has made great strides in improving communication. I hope we can build on this further.

The council should be more than a group that meets once a month. I'd like us to continue finding new ways to connect with residents, listen to their ideas and concerns, and ensure everyone feels heard — especially those who may not be able to attend meetings in person. This is not just about addressing issues — it's also about recognising and celebrating the individuals and groups in our community who quietly make a difference every day.

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### **Closing**

In closing, I want to say how delighted and honoured I am to serve Somersham in this role. I look forward to working with my fellow councillors, local groups, and residents to build on the strong foundations already in place.

Your ideas, feedback, and involvement will be key to everything we do. Let's move forward together — with respect for our past, pride in our present, and ambition for our future.

### **Thank you.**

James  
James Rook  
Chairman Somersham Parish council