



Somersham Annual Parish Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Parish Meeting held at the Village Hall on Wednesday, 6th May 2026 at **7pm**

PRESENT: Cllr J Rook (PC), Cllr J Caston (PC), Cllr S Barrell (PC), Cllr P Jousiffe (PC), Emma Lister (SC&DA), T Fordham (S&DCA and WD), Kate Dines (TL and Church), Alastair Becker (School), J Hutchinson (TC), Becky Jones (CS), Claire Rees (DofM) and two members of the Public.

IN ATTENDANCE:

Mrs J Blackburn (Clerk)

SPC021/25/26 - CHAIRMAN'S WELCOME

The Chairman of Somersham Parish Council, Cllr James Rook, welcomed those present.

SPC022/25/26 - APOLOGIES

Apologies had been received from Cllr S Wright (PC), S Dines (C), J Hitchcock (GofS), County Cllr Oakes and District Cllr Marriott.

SPC023/25/26 - MINUTES 1st MAY 2024

The minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting, held on 1st May 2024, were approved as a true record and were duly signed by the Chair.

SPC024/25/26 - REPORTS RELATING TO THE PARISH

Representatives of the following organisations were invited to speak and answer any questions. Where received, their reports are attached to the Minutes.

- a) Report of the Chairman of the Parish Council – *Cllr James Rook*
(Full Report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Rook read his report, which would be published on the village website.

- b) Report of the County Councillor – *Cllr Kay Oakes*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Oakes was not present at the meeting. Her report was circulated prior to the meeting and would be published on the village website.

- c) Report of the District Councillor – *Adrienne Marriott*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Marriott was not present at the meeting and a report had not been received.

- d) Report of the Duke of Marlborough Public House – *Claire Rees*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Claire Reese read through the report, which and would be published on the village website.

- e) Report of the Community Shop – *Becky Jones*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Becky Jones went through her report, which and would be published on the village website.

- f) Report of The Link Magazine – *Kate Dines*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Kate Dines read through the report, which would be published on the village website.

- g) Report of St Mary's Church PCC – *Kate Dines*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Kate Dines read through the report, which would be published on the village website.

- h) Report of the Baptist Church – *Stephen Bullard*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Stephen Bullard was not present at the meeting and a report had not been received.

- i) Report of the Somersham & District Community Association / Wheelie Fun Day – *Terry Fordham*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Terry Fordham read through his report, which would be published on the village website.

- j) Report of the Tennis Club – *John Hutchinson*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

John Hutchinson read out his report, which would be published on the village website.

- k) Report of the Football Club – *Darren Luck*
(Full report attached to these Minutes)

Cllr Rook read out the report, which would be published on the village website.

- l) Neighbourhood Watch – *Colin Burrows*

Colin Burrows was not present and a report had not been received.

- m) Report of the Primary School – *Alastair Becker*

Alastair Becker went through his report, which would be published on the village website.

- n) Report of the 'Friend of Somersham Primary School' – *Sarah Hitchcock*

Sarah Hitchcock was not present and a report had not been received.

- o) Report of the Youth Club – *Sarah Freeman*

Sarah Freeman was not present and a report had not been received.

p) Report of Greening Somersham – *Jenny Hitchcock*

Jenny Hitchcock was not present and a report had not been received.

SPC025/25/26 - PUBLIC FORUM

Two members of the public was present, but no matters were raised.

The meeting closed at 7.55pm.

Chairman Date

Draft

Chairman's Report – Somersham Parish Council AGM

Good evening everyone,

It is a privilege to present my report as Chairman of Somersham Parish Council and to reflect on the past year in our village.

This year has been a powerful reminder of both the challenges we face and the strengths we share as a community. Like many across the country, residents here in Somersham have felt the impact of rising fuel prices, increasing energy costs, and the general pressure on household finances. These are not issues unique to our village, but they do shape how we live, work, and support one another.

And yet, in the context of these wider challenges, it is important to recognise just how fortunate we are. Somersham benefits from a remarkable range of local amenities that many communities would envy. We have a community pub and a community shop, both now under new and energetic management, bringing fresh ideas and enthusiasm at a time when such assets are increasingly difficult to sustain. Their success depends not just on those who run them, but on all of us who choose to use and support them.

Beyond this, we are incredibly well served by our facilities: playing fields, football pitches, a grass speedway track, tennis courts, swings and a children's play area, as well as allotments and multiple churches that continue to play an important role in village life. We are also home to a wide variety of clubs and groups—from gardening and art to many others—offering opportunities for people of all ages and interests to get involved.

All of this is set within the backdrop of the beautiful Suffolk countryside that surrounds us—something we should never take for granted.

We also continue to demonstrate what can be achieved when we come together. Events such as Wheelie Day and our beer festival are fantastic examples of community spirit in action—bringing people into the village, supporting local organisations, and creating opportunities for people to connect and enjoy where they live.

Earlier this year, the art event held in our village pub further highlighted this. It showed how a simple idea, driven by motivated individuals, can grow into something that benefits many—supporting local artists, strengthening the pub, and bringing the community closer together. It is exactly this kind of initiative that makes me proud to be part of Somersham.

Of course, alongside these positives, we have faced our share of difficulties. Flooding remains an ongoing concern for some residents, and I would like to again recognise the efforts of councillors who have worked hard to clear ditches and maintain drainage wherever possible. We have also experienced disruption from roadworks and road closures, as well as several power cuts, all of which have caused understandable frustration.

Looking ahead, we are also aware of wider infrastructure proposals, including solar developments and pylons, which have the potential to impact our landscape and will require careful consideration and strong representation of local views.

However, what stands out most is that despite these challenges—local and national—we are not a community that stands still. We adapt, we support one another, and we make the most of what we have. If there is one message I would like to emphasise this evening, it is this: we should continue to use, support, and take pride in the incredible amenities and organisations within our village. Their success and sustainability depend on all of us.

As a Parish Council, we will continue to do everything we can to protect what makes Somersham special, to address the challenges we face, and to support the people who make this community what it is. Finally, I would like to thank my fellow councillors and all members of the community who contribute their time and effort—often quietly and without recognition. It is those contributions, large and small, that truly define our village.

Thank you.

Draft

County Council Annual Report 2025-2026

Suffolk County Council confirms decision to bring Library Services back In-House

Suffolk County Council has confirmed that it will be bringing all 45 libraries back under its care and control. The decision, made at the Cabinet meeting, will ensure continued access to high-quality, community-focused library services across the county. As part of this move, the council plans to:

- Keep all 45 libraries open
- Maintain opening hours
- Create job security for all frontline staff
- Secure a sustainable future for Suffolk's library services

In addition to continuing its core library services, the council is investing £200,000 in mobile libraries, with a further £157,000 for new books and to replace public computers in libraries across Suffolk.

Looking to the future, Suffolk County Council envisions libraries becoming even more integrated into the wider community, serving as convenient access points for a range of essential council services. This includes providing information and support around Adult Social Care, offering health and social care services, facilitating Family Hub activities, and promoting digital inclusion. The aim is to make it easier for residents to access vital services and support, all within the welcoming, familiar setting of their local library.

Nature recovery plan aims to revive Suffolk's wildlife

A new strategy has been drafted to help restore and enhance nature across Suffolk, and a consultation has been launched (Wednesday 16 April) for you to share your views.

Suffolk's Local Nature Recovery Strategy is one of 48 across the country, aimed at addressing the decline in nature and identifying a network of areas to help it recover.

Together these strategies will form a national 'nature network', proposing actions such as the creation of wetlands, restoration of peatlands, planting of trees and hedgerows, and more sustainable management of existing woodlands and other habitats like grasslands.

Suffolk County Council has been leading on a strategy for the county, working closely with other local authorities, nature experts, and a wide range of interested organisations.

£8m funding for Bus Service improvements

The funding from the Department of Transport's Local Authority Bus Grant can be used to create new bus services or enhance existing routes.

Following on from previous grants from the Department for Transport to improve bus services, totalling £3.7m of revenue funding between 2023 and 2025, the new grant which has been allocated for 2025/26 comprises of:

- £2,805,076 revenue for delivering new or enhanced services.
- £5,229,805 capital for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

This money will enable Suffolk County Council to invest up to £5 million in capital projects to increase bus priority on congested streets, make improvements to bus stops and gain a better understanding of the journeys people are taking, paving the way for more innovative fare offers in the future. The council also plans to upgrade the

current Real Time Passenger Information system, giving live updates on when buses will arrive at stops across the county.

The remaining £2.8 million will be spent supporting the existing services on the county's bus network and working with bus companies to finalise several route improvements and new services, set to launch later this year.

Council remains opposed to pylon project, as application submitted

Primarily, the county council maintains that offshore and undergrounding solutions should be priorities for the scheme, not 114 miles of pylons cutting through countryside, sensitive landscapes and communities in Norfolk, Suffolk, and Essex.

Previously, SCC has formally and strongly requested that National Grid pauses the Norwich to Tilbury proposals, to allow for effective consideration of offshore alternatives.

32,000 solar panels and counting for Solar Together Suffolk project

The group-buying programme enables Suffolk residents to buy solar panels and battery storage, helping to save money on their energy bills and cut carbon emissions.

It is backed by Suffolk County Council and all local borough and district councils.

Solar Together Suffolk has been running for seven years, and in that time has:

- installed 32,024 solar panels at 2,651 Suffolk households
- installed 1,768 battery storage systems
- reduced 1,900 tonnes of carbon emissions across the county

Suffolk County Council announces £63m A12 highway improvement proposals

Suffolk County Council has unveiled a full planning application for a package of highway improvements worth in the region of £63 million along the A12.

The works will be between the A12/A14 Seven Hills Junction and Woods Lane junction north of Woodbridge.

They aim to enhance transport connectivity, safety, and accessibility for all users, including motorists, cyclists, pedestrians, and public transport passengers.

Suffolk secures more than £26 million bus funding over three years

Millions of pounds of investment are to take place in Suffolk's bus network over three years following allocation of Government funding.

Services, ticketing, and infrastructure will all benefit under the package worth nearly £27 million between 2026 and 2029.

Suffolk County Council will receive a total of £26,813,760 under the Local Authority Bus Grant (LABG).

This funding will enable the continuation and expansion of new and improved services introduced over the past two years through LABG support and its predecessor, the Bus Services Improvement Grant (BSIP), many of which were shaped by community feedback.

Suffolk will receive:

- 2026/27 - £8,849,119
- 2027/28 - £8,937,920
- 2028/29 - £9,026,721

"With guaranteed funding in place we can deliver the improvements our communities have asked for—better services in our towns and rural areas, and more accessible stops.

"This investment will help us make bus travel a more attractive, reliable, and sustainable choice for everyone."

Last July Suffolk County Council announced a £2.8m investment in new bus routes and improved services following announcement of LABG funding of £8 million for 2025-26.

As well as new routes, some services gained increased frequency and a Sunday schedule added.

Alongside the £2.8m revenue for delivering new or enhanced services, the county council also [previously announced £5.2m of capital funding from the DfT](#) for new and improved bus stops, bus stations, bus priority measures or vehicle upgrades.

For more details of public transport in Suffolk go to the [Suffolk On Board](#) website.

Suffolk County Council proposes new 20mph speed limit policy for communities

A new 20mph speed limit policy to enhance road safety and improve quality of life across Suffolk's communities is to be considered by county councillors.

Suffolk County Council's Cabinet is to discuss a proposal to give communities greater opportunity to reduce the speed limit, where appropriate, in residential and high-pedestrian areas to 20mph.

Studies have shown that reducing speed limits can significantly decrease the number and severity of road accidents.

Slower speeds also contribute to a more pleasant and liveable community, encouraging outdoor activities and fostering a sense of neighbourhood cohesion.

However, the proposal says that 20mph limits can be unpopular with motorists, and with police enforcement capacity limited it was important that such schemes were introduced with community backing to ensure as much local support as possible.

Communities, typically parish or town councils, will be invited to come forward with proposals for 20mph limits, supported by their local county councillor and backed by local engagement.

This could include formal surveys or consultation through neighbourhood plans to demonstrate community support.

It is anticipated that these community led schemes will be locally funded.

As part of the new system Suffolk County Council has developed assessment criteria to consider observed average traffic speeds, the role and character of the road, and the presence of vulnerable road users.

Where average speeds are already low, there will be a presumption in favour of a 20mph limit, often supported by clear signage.

Where speeds are higher, additional measures such as traffic calming may be required to ensure good compliance.

Duke of Marlborough report | Somersham Annual Village Meeting, May 2026

Our opportunity to inform residents about the pub's activities as a local and economic hub, and community asset.



BACKGROUND

The Duke of Marlborough is community-owned and the shareholders are represented by a Community Benefit Society – and officially opened on 20th April 2017 – next year will be the 10th anniversary. Initially the CBS Committee formed a group of volunteers to run the pub, but this proved unsustainable. In 2024 they moved to having a Tenancy Agreement – and this continues. The local population of potential customers is circa 2,500.

INTRODUCTION

On becoming responsible for running the community-owned pub in Somersham, The Duke of Marlborough – we wish to do what we can to ensure that the pub continues to be cherished, and is a well-used, safe and welcoming community hub. We plan to reflect as much as possible the original aims of those who campaigned for so long and raised substantial funds in order to purchase the pub, and the over 250 people who became Shareholders.

To run a viable, thriving and sustainable pub with a friendly, welcoming, community focus, and a food and drink offer that is of good enough quality to attract people from a 10-mile radius.

- **Operational Overview:** *A summary of the year's progress, including key milestones.* In December 2025, Claire Rees and Ann Fitzmaurice became Directors of the management company – with an instant leap into Christmas and New Year – both of which proved to be the most successful seasonal periods in recent years; both economically and socially.
- **Community Engagement & Role:** *How the pub has acted as a hub, supporting local events, groups, or acting as a community library or meeting spot.*
- The Duke of Marlborough presents or hosts monthly programmes of live music, quizzes, book club, darts league matches, social pool and other events.
- Live music and events take place weekly...and prove to be a great way to attract and retain a wide-range of customers and diners. Music includes pop, rock, soul, swing, boogie-woogie, jazz, rockabilly singer-songwriters and folk – as well as our monthly acoustic-music busking nights since January 2026. In the future, we plan to enhance this further by potentially having acoustic music on Sunday afternoons during the summer, out on the patio.
- Local musicians have a platform at the Duke of Marlborough.
- In January 2026, we hosted the village art & craft exhibition Winter Warmer, organised by Village Creative – including the Opening and Closing events – which further featured acoustic music, poetry readings and spoken-word.
- *Over recent years, our fundraising quiz nights have raised thousands of pounds for local charities, local offices of regional and national charities – and particularly, charities with a special meaning for those who live and work here.*
- Past Duke of Marlborough fundraising quiz beneficiaries include: Barking Pre-School, Bumblebee Children's Charity, Combat2Coffee, Stowupland Pre-School, Friends of Somersham School FOSS, Marie Curie End of Life charity, MND Association Rob Burrow Leeds Marathon, Somersham & District Community Association (inc Wheelie Fun Day), Somersham Youth Club, and many more.

- Villagers are encouraged to nominate charities – such future charities include Dogs for Autism and the Lighthouse Charity (support for construction workers and their families).
 - We have held numerous events proposed or booked by local people – including birthdays, weddings and celebrations of life – all very successful and a pleasure for us to host.
 - Kind customers have donated rum, cordials and liqueurs to the bar.
 - The August Bank Holiday Weekend Beer Festival continues to be a great success, attracting large numbers of attendees – estimated to be over 800 across the weekend – Sunday is the busiest day.
 - Our Christmas Market also continues to flourish, we were particularly pleased with the stalls this year (circa 20) – the pub and outdoor market area were packed (estimated 250 attendees across the evening).
 - A new event is the Village Get Together – an informal night held to encourage community involvement and communication, we host these in collaboration with the Community Association, Community Shop and Parish Council. To boost knowledge of volunteering opportunities and engagement with activities and initiatives across the local community.
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- *Financial & Business Performance: High-level summary of performance, including challenges (e.g., rising costs, cost-of-living crisis).*
 - Turnover has increased, but outgoings have risen sharply, including the costs of services and stock; but also various taxes and employments costs.
 - The Cost of Living Crisis has two fronts for The Duke – increasing customer-numbers as people stay local to socialise – but also belt-tightening means far fewer visits for many.
 - We have made some initial alterations to the menus – and there's the potential for sporadic long-table community meals to help our outgoings and our customers' pockets.
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- *Future Outlook: Plans for the coming year, including any planned improvements to the building or services.*
 - We have carried out a deep clean, an inventory of stock and assets, the public rooms have been redecorated (met with great enthusiasm!), the outdoor has been cleared, cleaned with tables repainted.
 - Kind customers have built a new gate for the outdoor area – and a sandwich board for the entrance to the carpark.
 - Events-wise there are plans to host The Duke Talks, speakers on a wide range of subjects – the first is planned to be the Sutton Hoo Ship project, we collaborate with the Community Association for this programme.
 - Also villagers have proposed chess nights, jigsaw sessions, and we also have our new pool table – social pool for now.
 - There is interest in screening classic films (Flicks in the Sticks only presents new releases) – though this needs research regarding licences, equipment and costings.
 - The Community Benefit Society owning the pub is looking into replacing the boiler – currently oil-fired. At present the fuel consumption is high due to inefficiency of the boiler.
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- *Volunteers & Staffing: Recognition of staff, volunteers, or changes in management, particularly relevant for community-owned pubs.*

- Our staffing levels remain the same currently, Matthew Rees has joined the team as a manager – overseeing the day to day running of the pub, ensuring the orders go through smoothly, keeping things running behind the scenes and general maintenance, ensuring the pub is kept in tip top shape. We are well supported by our valuable volunteers who help paid staff provide impeccable customer service. Our volunteers enjoy the social aspect of the role and many have been with the pub since it first opened as a community owned pub.
- Events & Marketing: *A summary of social events hosted, marketing initiatives, and social media reach.*
- We have worked to improve the user navigation and clarity of our website, and our social media continues to inform and pull existing & new customers.
- The village website now increases the breath & depth of our reach.
- For some events we successfully produce and display printed posters.
- We have an advert in each issue of The Link Newsletter
- We ask customers how they found out about us, in order to qualify and quantify the success of our marketing in general terms.

SUMMARY FOR THE FUTURE

- Target Customers: Attract people with good quality, affordable events, food and drink.
- Community Engagement: Involve the community in developing activities through meetings, consultations and feedback - the Village Get Together events grew from this aim.
- Social Events: Encourage community members to organise social events like lunch clubs, talks, and games / music evenings. There's currently interest in afternoon events.

The 20th April 2027 will be the 10th Anniversary of the re-opening of our community-owned pub. Events will be held at The Duke of Marlborough, many in collaboration with local groups.

May I close with a great big thank-you to our fantastic staff team and volunteers – and the support from villagers and customers for The Duke of Marlborough. We have been made to feel so welcome in our new role over the last few months.

Thank you, Claire Rees



Somersham Annual Parish Meeting Wednesday 6th May 2026
Somersham and District Community Shop April 2025-April 2026

Introduction

This report gives an update on the recent and planned changes happening at Somersham Community Shop. Overall, the aim is to keep improving how the shop is run, make it more sustainable, and keep it at the heart of the local community.

Committee and Directors

There is a proposal to bring in more committee members and potentially increase the number of directors. This will help spread the workload, bring in new ideas, and make sure the shop is well supported when making decisions about the future.

New Manager

After stepping in to help the shop after Covid, Jennie Hutchinson has stepped down and we now have a new manager (Becky Jones) who has joined the shop and has already started making some small but positive changes. They are very approachable, proactive, and genuinely excited about what the shop can become. There is a real sense of positivity and fresh energy about the direction things are heading in.

Customers and Products

We are seeing more regular customers placing orders and engaging with the shop. The manager has been very responsive to what people want, which is helping improve the overall customer experience. The range of products has also improved, especially with a wider and better selection of alcohol, including low and no alcohol options. Our pies continue to be a big success, and we are also selling more snack items than before. We are now looking into the possibility of making our own cakes, although we need to carefully think through how that would work in practice.

Community Events

Community events are a really important part of what we do. Regular activities such as Meet Up Mondays, Petrol Heads, and the Macmillan Coffee Morning are well supported and enjoyed by the community. There is real enthusiasm to build on these and run even more events like them to help bring people together and strengthen community connections.

Additionally, we are planning an event in July to celebrate the shop's birthday and the wider Somersham community. The details of which are still in the planning stage. The hope is that this will become an annual event, bringing people together each year alongside other local projects such as the scarecrow trail. We are also hoping to have our own scarecrow entry this year, which will add to the community spirit and involvement.

Local Links

We are also developing stronger links with the local pub and the primary school. These partnerships are still in progress but are expected to help bring more people into the shop and increase both footfall and income. They also help strengthen the shop's role in the wider community.

Improvements and Sustainability

Some operational improvements are also being explored. This includes upgrading the till system so we can produce better sales reports and keep a closer eye on stock levels and changes. We are also looking at installing solar panels on the roof, which could help reduce ongoing running costs and support long-term sustainability. We are also hoping that potential new benches on the playing field will encourage customers to enjoy ice-creams and drinks bought from the shop.

Planters Project

A new project is being considered to build planters outside the shop. These would include plaques in memory of staff and loyal customers who are sadly no longer with us. It is hoped this will create a meaningful tribute while also improving the look of the shop's entrance. There is also potential, with the support of the Parish Council, to have additional benches in the field outside the shop to encourage customers into the shop and enjoy drinks and ice-creams they have purchased. It will also develop a more social setting to the shop.

Volunteers

The volunteers continue to be an amazing, loyal, and enthusiastic team. They are always keen to help the shop grow and succeed, and they regularly share ideas and suggestions, which are very much appreciated and taken on board.

Conclusion

The shop continues to be financially viable, with steady income supported by regular customers and improving sales across key product areas. Careful management of costs, alongside planned improvements and investment in systems and initiatives, will help ensure this remains the case going forward. There is a strong sense of positivity and teamwork, and the focus remains on keeping the shop sustainable, welcoming, and a valued part of the community for years to come.

Report to the Parish Council, 2026

Little has changed since our report last year. The LINK magazine has continued to be produced throughout the year, with double editions in August-September and December-January. While it continues to be primarily a church magazine, it also informs villagers of what is happening throughout the area, and reports on events that have been held. We receive articles from the school, local clubs, the community shop as well as Parish Councils, Village Halls and the churches and chapel. The children of Somersham School continue to take up our colour picture competition for the Christmas edition, with all entries then displayed in the shop. The front letter spot is taken in roughly alternate issues by our Rector, Revd Dan Harrison, with the other writers being chosen to highlight varying areas of general interest. The summer double edition features writing by children moving on from Somersham primary school to high school.

While we do not aim to make a profit, when the cost of paper & printing rises, we do have to make sure we have enough funds. Advertisers continue to be our chief source of funding, supported by donations from individuals and organisations in appreciation of this community outreach. We would hope this includes Somersham Parish Council! A small increase in charges was made last year and we probably need to revisit this next year as costs continue to rise. Each issue, with a print run of around 800 copies, currently costs at least £450.

The LINK is distributed free of charge to every house in Somersham, Flowton, Offton and Willisham. Additionally, a few copies are available to visitors in the shop and there are 18 postal copies, mostly to past residents who are glad of this means of keeping in touch with local events and happy to pay the postage. It is also available on-line.

The current editorial team of 7, 10 magazine distributors in our village (plus more in the others) all volunteer because we feel it is important to keep this service available into the future.

Kate Dines,
Chair of committee

Parish Council AGM 2026 – Report from St. Mary’s Church PCC

The Parochial Church Council (PCC) continues to support Rev. Daniel Harrison in managing and maintaining the Church of England presence in the village, including providing for the spiritual needs of the population and maintaining the historic building. In addition to our regular services the church conducts baptisms, weddings and funeral services when required.

Dan is responsible for 8 parishes in all. As a result, we perhaps don't see as much of him in Somersham as we would like but his telephone number and email address are included on the back cover of the Link magazine each month so anyone can contact him if they want/need to.

Everyone is welcome at our services and we regularly hold 2 per month; a communion service at 9.30am on the second Sunday and a less formal 'Family Service' at 10am on the 4th Sunday (except August). Details are published in the Link magazine. Attendance at the regular services is generally quite low but loyal and enthusiastic. Rather more people attend the 'big' services such as Harvest Festival, Carol Service and Service of Remembrance.

In respect of outreach, we are particularly pleased that we are still able to visit the school most weeks (as 'Somersham Storytellers') and share bible stories with the children. The reception we receive from the children is always encouraging and the head teacher and his staff continue to be very supportive of our efforts. We have also been pleased to welcome a small number of new and enthusiastic volunteers during the year.

We continue to support the 'Lighthouse' Women's Refuge and locally hard-pressed families as well as the annual Christian Aid appeal.

Our main preoccupation with the building in the past year has been the urgent repair of ceiling plaster above the chancel. The cost of this was covered by money in the Fabric Fund although this means that the fund is now significantly depleted.

More generally we are very grateful to people in the village for the support that they give to all of our fund-raising activities throughout the year. Even so, we continue to struggle to meet the costs of the day to day running expenses and are once again very grateful to the Parish Council for their generous help towards the cost of maintaining the churchyard. We hope that you will be able to continue this support in the future.

Thank you.

Stephen Dines

28th April 2026

Report 2025/26 | Somersham Annual Parish Meeting | 6 May 2026

Somersham & District Community Association (S&DCA) - Registered Charity No: 1214025

- S&DCA exists with the aim to improve the conditions of life of the persons residing in the area of benefit with facilities and activities that support health and wellbeing.
- Core to this is the maintenance of the playing field and associated activities / facilities.
- We operate as an association of groups and individuals who can be from Somersham, Little Blakenham, Nettlestead and Flowton
- These villages form our area of benefit.
- We are a registered charity with an established purpose to provide recreational facilities, playgrounds, community centres and other amenities of a similar character for the benefit of the community. Fundamental to this is our management of the playing field under a Declaration of Trust between Somersham Parish Council, the owners of the playing field, and ourselves.
- The Somersham & District Community Association was established during 1966. This year we updated the Constitution for the third time since then - and although the organisation has the same name, each Constitution created a new legal entity. Working with the Charity Commission and with input from Community Action Suffolk, a Charitable Incorporated Organisation has been registered. The Charity Commission re-wrote the Charitable Objects to ensure that we had a contemporary remit that would enable increased options for activities and fundraising opportunities.
- Our projects and activities are devised, funded and delivered in the interests of social welfare, and with the object of advancing education, furthering health, relieving poverty, distress or sickness by improving the conditions of life of the persons residing within the area of benefit.
- We are proud to be able to provide the community with the opportunity to enjoy activities, events, leisure; both casually and in an organised way.
- Currently organised activity includes youth club, tennis, football (both youth and senior) and cycle speedway.
- Future developments include acoustic music, boules, netball, Somersham Book, talks (in collaboration with village organisations) and walking groups.
- We believe the facilities could be used for more organised activity, for example: exercise/running, hockey, cricket (fielding training currently being explored) outdoor gym/ table tennis, and female football.
- We have started to work with Sport England and Mid Suffolk regarding the MSDC Sport Infrastructure Fund to form a local hub for well-being, including schemes for coaching / instruction / training across yet to be specified forms of exercise and sport – as well as equipment and facilities.
- The new play equipment continues to be very well used and we have made good progress with our new project, supported by the Parish Council as part of its CiL strategy. The aim to upgrade our pavilion to address the needs of the Youth Club and local community, and provide facilities that comply with the current regulations of Sport England and the National Governing Bodies (NGBs) for sport, for changing, sanitary, and gender expectations.
- The resulting community building will need to be energy efficient, climate resilient and adaptable for future decades.
- With the funding support of the parish council we have an outline project plan and a design outline for an extension to the existing pavilion. The current stage of the project is to work with our architect and a quantity surveyor to achieve pre-planning advice and also an estimated construction cost. A forthcoming stage will be to consult with the community on this design and also to identify how the use of the facilities can be broadened.
- Tidying up of the field boundary, the tree survey, and the care of the local amenity trees

surrounding the playing field (including the high-quality hedging on the north-side of the boundary) continue as priorities this year - and we are being assisted by the parish council.

Somersham Wheelie Fun Day

- Wheelie Fun Day is the main fundraising activity for the S&DCA charity (reg. no: 1214025), to help us afford the costs of managing the community playing field and pavilion, and to underpin operations for our activities.
- The event takes place across the full area of playing field and is planned & organised entirely by volunteers - who support this great day out for Somersham & area villagers, and visitors from further afield to enjoy.
- The 2025 event took place on 5th July. Wheelie 2024 had a terrible storm to contend with - *but* we demonstrated how resilient our format is with not so good weather. Wheelie 2025 demonstrated how WELL we can do on a sunny day! This weather helped of course, but we are also getting better at what we do and are building up a following.
- We managed income of £7,085.87. After expenses, the net profit was £4,795.37. We were pleased with the continued success of our event model – plus our independent funding from our sponsors and the Wheelie Dart Tournament held at the Duke of Marlborough. This uplift is fortuitous considering the substantial increases in our energy costs and insurance.
- The **2026 Wheelie Fun Day event will be held on Saturday 4th July** from 10am to 10pm.
- As well as the Grand Raffle, other fundraising will include sponsorships, the Somersham Open Darts Tournament & Raffle (**Saturday 27th of June**) and the Wheelie S&DCA Charity Quiz (**Thursday 25th of June**) both held at the Duke of Marlborough - darts players and quiz teams need to book ASAP!
- We also thank Somersham Parish Council for their donation towards the cost of this year's event.
- Numerous of those who perform, run stalls and activities, provide food and drink are local people – Wheelie Fun Day is a local platform as well as a local event.
- Planning is well ahead for Wheelie 2026 on the playing field and we should have a good selection of food & drink - including the Street Food Bus, a German swing grill, Mexican street food, soft drinks, local beer, the Duke cocktail & wine bar - market stalls, games, vintage and classic vehicles, cycle speedway, demonstrations - and of course there's live music and entertainment on our stage all day!

Terry Fordham *Chair, S&DCA*
Emma Lister *Secretary, S&DCA*
(26 April 2026)

The tennis club has had a steady 12 months. We're working on closer ties with the Community Association and Terry Fordham has been extremely helpful securing group insurance cover for the tennis courts and tennis club house, thank you Terry. The aim is to bring the tennis club into the Community Association as a sub-group, this is a work in progress.

Thank you to the Parish Council for agreeing to include the area around the tennis club house in the ground maintenance contract. Tom Hitchcock continues to do a great job keeping the hedges trimmed and grass cut. Also, thank you for repaying the LTA loan, the final payment was processed in January. The £6,000 LTA loan was key to funding the new club house in 2021.

The junior tennis sessions restarted on Monday 13th April. There are two 45mins sessions, beginners and intermediate, with LTA coach John Tallent. Each group currently has 6 children and we can accommodate 8 in each group.

I'm administering the tennis lottery but it's proving difficult to increase the number of players. Whilst there are some new players, a few have moved out of the village or decided to stop. There are 76 players registered for May. It costs £1 to play each month, 50p is put towards tennis court maintenance and 50p in the prize pot. We are permitted to have up to 160 lottery players so please encourage new people to join. New enquiries are very welcome via Somersham.tennis@gmail.com

In discussion with the Community Association, we have mooted the idea of reinstating the tennis lottery as a Community Lottery. This is how it was originally established. Our thinking is more people might be willing to participate if it benefitted the wider community as, rather disappointingly, not everyone plays or enjoys tennis!

Thank you to Wendy Laughlin for producing the annual tennis club accounts for several years. Luke Garnham has now taken over Wendy's accounting role and is in the process of finalising the tennis club accounts for the past year, many thanks to Luke.

As was Penny Pearson's wish, the tennis courts will continue to be free for all to use, but any donations are gratefully received. There is a QR code on the court gate linking to a tennis club Just Giving page.

John Hutchinson
(somersham.tennis@gmail.com)

4 May 2026

Annual Report for Somersham F.C.

The 2025/26 season has seen the welcome expansion of youth football at the club.

This time last year we were faced with the prospect of becoming a two-team club, comprising a single youth team and a Veteran's team. The Adult Men's Reserve team was disbanded at the beginning of last season and the Adult Men's First team departed at the end of the season, having won promotion to the Senior Division. Our facilities at Somersham do not meet the standards required for Step 7 football and so the Adult Men's First team was forced to look elsewhere. The team (largely unchanged) has made a strong start to life in the Senior Division, following a move to Old Newton Football Club. We wish them continued success.

With the future looking less certain, the committee was delighted when Thomas and Sarah Hitchcock asked to form an Under 12s team (the Somersham Wyverns) and club stalwart, Al Chester asked to enter an Under 18s team.

The first season for the Under 12s has been a learning curve, but great progress has been made. The team has grown in strength and ability, taking the skills and sportsmanship learnt in training onto the pitch. Parents have been really supportive, encouraging the children and helping to run things behind the scenes. The squad size has grown from 12 to 14 regular players and the team has scored in most games. With several draw under their belt, a first win is only a matter of time.

The Under 15s team has had a strong season, finishing mid-table in a very competitive division. The team is unbeaten in the last 8 games and has made the Sommy slope a fortress, only losing once at home. The progress Stephen Skeets has made over the years with this group of players is fantastic.

As is often the case, the first season has been a challenging one for the Under 18 team. In the words of Al "they started badly, faded a bit in the middle and the less said about the end the better". With that said, the Under 18s did register two wins and the team spirit across the squad is superb. The team will remain in the Under 18 division next season but will no doubt benefit from players being a year older.

Having reached the dizzy heights of Division 1, the fall from grace continues for the Veteran's team! The team finished the season welded to the bottom of Division 2. Most players are now the wrong side of 40 and competing with teams comprising 35-year-old whippersnappers is proving more and more difficult. An injection of youth is much needed! Nevertheless, the players still enjoy it and fully intend to carry on next season.

The club is really well positioned for next season and we very much look forward to seeing the youth teams develop further. The committee is in early discussions about forming an Under 12 girls' team, which will be a great addition to the club and the local area. Thank you again to all those that give up their time to run Somersham Football Club. We are grateful to have the continued support of the Parish Council in funding pitch maintenance - more important than ever with the increased footfall.

The club is having its End of Season Presentation Evening at the Limeburners on Saturday 6th June. Please do stop by if you have chance.

Darren Luck
Treasurer
Somersham F.C.

Annual Parish Meeting – head teacher’s Summary Report

Over the past year, the school has continued to move forward with a clear focus on strengthening our curriculum, improving standards, and deepening collaboration across our federation.

A key development has been the introduction of a new English curriculum, built around a carefully selected range of high-quality texts from Reception through to Year 6. This approach is already helping to enrich pupils’ experiences, promote a love of reading, and support ongoing improvements in teaching and learning. Alongside this, our partnership with Bramford C of E VC Primary School has strengthened further, particularly through closer curriculum alignment and shared priorities.

Leadership across the federation has also evolved. Subject leadership is now structured across both schools rather than within each setting individually. This has supported more effective collaboration, improved consistency in planning, and enabled staff to share expertise and best practice more widely. Our REAL Life curriculum continues to be a strong feature of the school, with careers education becoming an increasingly important part of pupils’ experiences. This year will see the launch of our first Federation Careers Fortnight, bringing together a wide range of contributors from different professional backgrounds. Pupils will benefit from engaging with visitors and experiences spanning business, the arts, technology, and local industry. Crossschool opportunities, including shared visits and trips, have further enriched this provision.

Sport remains an increasingly important part of school life, with continued participation in the IPSSA football league and growing engagement in wider physical opportunities.

As with many schools, we have experienced changes in structure, including class organisation and staffing, alongside fluctuations in pupil numbers. This remains an area of focus as we look ahead and work towards building sustainable growth. We are now supported by a new Executive Head Teacher. Looking forward, our ambitions centre on further strengthening the curriculum across the federation, including greater alignment in foundation subjects to support consistency and shared development. We are also keen to continue enhancing our learning environment— both indoors and outdoors—to ensure it reflects the quality of education we strive to provide. This includes plans to develop reading spaces, outdoor learning opportunities, and general improvements to the school environment.

As always, the support of the community plays a vital role in helping us achieve these goals. Whether through time, expertise, or partnership, we welcome opportunities to work together to further enrich the experiences we can offer our pupils.

We remain proud of what has been achieved so far and optimistic about the next steps in our journey.