

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 Wheely 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.