

SOUTHOE & MIDLOE PARISH COUNCIL

MINUTES of the ANNUAL PARISH MEETING/ASSEMBLY

Held on WEDNESDAY 3 April 2024

at 7.30pm

at Southoe Village Hall

Present: Alan Marnes (AM) Chairman, John Taylor (JT) Vice-Chairman, Andy Kiley (AK), Sharon Mitchel (SM), Barry Butler (BB) and Scott Wells (SW).

Ms R. Mimiene (RM) Parish Council Clerk

HDC Cllr Martin Hassall

2 PCSOs

4 members of the public

MINUTES

1. Welcome by the Parish Council Chairman

2. To receive apologies for absence

Cllr Angela Ellmer sent apologies for absence. CC Cllr Ken Billington sent apologies for absence.

3. To approve Minutes of the previous Annual Parish Meeting 5 April 2023

Proposal: Proposed by Councillor SM, seconded by Councillor JT, all in favour, and it was RESOLVED that the minutes be accepted and signed as a true record of the meeting. Carried

4. To receive Parish Council Chairman's Report, report attached, please see Appendix 1

5. Written reports by County Councillor Ken Billington and District Councillor Martin Hassall

Cllr AM reported on behalf of CC Cllr K Billington that Kimbolton Fire station closure on hold. He thanked PC Cllrs for looking after the parish for the last year.

HDC Cllr MH issued a report, he is privileged to be part of this community and thanked PC on behalf of the District.

HDC Cllr MH – slides shared for the Annual Assembly, there was no report as such this year.

Stable Budget for 2024/2025

- **Council Tax Adjustment:** A modest increase of £5 per year for Band D, equating to less than 10p a week.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** Overcoming a multi-million-pound budget gap to ensure the delivery of vital services.
- **Fairer Pay:** Implementing pay structures for HDC staff to ensure fair compensation.

Supporting Our Community:

Cost of Living: Initiatives to assist residents financially.

Community Spaces: Creation of warm spaces for public use.

Market Town Investments: Fostering economic growth in local towns. Part of levelling up initiative.

Climate Action: Advancing environmental initiatives for sustainability.

Flood Mitigation: Facilitating and influencing measures to protect against flooding.

Biodiversity and Green Spaces

- **Enhanced Biodiversity:** Recognized efforts to improve local open spaces.
- **Looking Ahead:** Commitment to a greener and fairer Huntingdonshire.

Grants available from Natural England, Biodiversity Net gain. 10% Biodiversity must be shown before building housing estates. Scheme is run to encourage landowners.

• **The Issue:**

- Southoe's sewer system is being overwhelmed by flood waters, causing distress and unsanitary conditions.
- Temporary mitigation by Anglian Water is not sustainable and costly.

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Our Concerns:

- **Health Risks:** Residents face health hazards due to prolonged sewage problems.
- **Environmental Damage:** Sewage overflow harms our gardens and waterways.

Our Call for Action:

- **Immediate Relief:** We demand immediate steps to mitigate the crisis.
- **Long-Term Plan:** We urge Anglian Water to commit to a permanent fix.
- **Open Communication:** We expect regular updates and transparency.

6. Finance report

Due to the early date of this meeting the Year Ended 31 March 24 financial reports have not yet been issued.

We set precept each year (starting the discussions in Sep / October and approving Nov / December (submitting mid-December) depending on HDC deadline. We receive precept in April. External (appointed by the CAPALC and NALC for us) and Internal audit (we have a choice here) have just started.

7. Policing matters in the village

1) Parking issues in the village - blocking access and parking on footpaths presenting pedestrian hazards.

Parking sadly cannot be enforced. Inconsiderate parking at junctions at the moment, for example at Lees Lane. Due to this kind of parking some people are forced into the road which is in close proximity to A1. People have to walk into the road. Wheelchairs cannot go on the path as cars parked half way through the path. Sadly there are no resources to enforce.

Police come through the village a lot but not much crime and resources are going to somewhere else, like St Neots.

2) Thefts from garages - this has been an on-going issue.

In the last 6 months x 2 actual crimes / thefts reported in the village. Thefts tend to be in the barns. The last break in did not even get reported.

Missing number plates reported.

Dogs been reported.

3) Understanding of frequency of police visibility in the village.

The new PCSO does not drive. Village is not on the top priority due to low crime area.

Suggested to do an online form – quicker to report issues than calling.

Speeding at Bell lane issues reported.

2 actions to approach CC Highways:

- PC to ask CCC to move 60mph sign further to A1 at Bell Lane

- PC will ask new signage for Rectory Lane.

Residents noted that the farmers renting industrial units – cars are being sold from one unit there, they are being tested in Bell Lane. It is not illegal though. Speeding was explained could be a perception.

Could request speed cameras – we tried and could not get any.

The blocking of the roads in harvest time, tractors cannot get through. It was explained that tractors are limited to 28 mile an hour.

Police checking for road traders.

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Speed limit for the village 30mile per hour – as you come into the village.

HDC Cllr MH and two Police Officers left the meeting

8. To Receive Village Representatives written reports:

Cllr AK left the meeting

Cllr SM left the meeting

8.1 Church representative – report attached, please see Appendix 2 - chairman read out the report Perception was a closed Churchyard, this now changes our position for what we are responsible.

The wall repairs, the contractor is coming next week. It is down to the church council to deal with it at them moment.

Letter received today, it will be taken to account and discussed at PC meeting in May.

A member of the public left the meeting

8.2 Village Hall representative – report attached, please see **Appendix 3** – chairman read out the report.

8.3 The Hub – report attached, please see **Appendix 4** – Cllr JT read out the report

9. Public participation

Trees and hedgerows – many trees were planted along A1 between Southoe and St Neots – in the boundary inside the fence which is National Highways area. Some trees planted were accidentally cut again by NH grass cutting contractors.

Residents would like trees planted along A1 where there is a gap.

Noise pollution and air pollution is the issue.

PC will raise the issues at the next A1 meeting in April. Ask to supply the trees across from the layby on the path which has no trees. If it is Highways land it is unlikely that residents can plant. If landowner, they will need permission from them. If it is a ditch or a hedge – the middle of that is taken as a boundary.

Hedgerow along Bell Lane – any change hedge being replanted?

PC website – A volunteer is working on vix website which is community website. Thank yous were expressed to the volunteer.

10. Chairman's Closing Remarks - the Chairman AM thanked everyone for attending and contributing to discussions tonight.

Meeting finished at 9.42pm

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APPENDIX 1

SOUTHOE & MIDLOE PARISH COUNCIL

CHAIRMANS REPORT ANNUAL PARISH MEETING/ASSEMBLY

Held on WEDNESDAY 3 April 2024 at 7.30pm

This year we had sad news that we lost councillor Dick Saw. Our community lost a true champion I am truly sorry that My wife Jenny and I could not be at the funeral as we were away on holiday.

Even though we all knew Dick was struggling in the last few years with health issues he was always there as ever, when there was a meeting or an event being planned or organised, Dick was there with ideas and enthusiasm that we came to rely on.

Dick was so proud of his wife Andi his boys Tom and Ben and their families. Southoe wont be the same without him. All of us that knew him in our sleepy little village here by the A1, we will never forget the tireless work and commitment Dick gave so passionately to our community. Andi has now left the village, we were so sorry to see her go after so many years being part of our lives.

If it wasn't for Dick the likes of the Parish Council, village hall and most importantly the Church, they would not have survived without his input and support. I know that the Parish councillors our Clerk Ramune and I were devastated to have lost a dear friend.

The parish councillors here are volunteers and spend many 100's of collective hours making sure that the parish has a voice and we try to administer for benefit of the residents in a open and democratic way.

Last years Assembly meeting the parish was still feeling the affects of the COVID 19 pandemic but gradually getting back to normal. I gave notice that I wish to stand down as chairman of the parish council and asked for councillors to volunteer to put themselves forward, there were none. Councillors asked me to continue, which I accepted and therefore elected as chairman, John Taylor elected as Vice Chair.

The current councillors Anglea, Sharon, Andy, John and myself have carried the council over the last year, last month we welcomed 2 new co-opted councillors in Barry and Scott. We all have 2 more years to serve until the next election year. I thank all the councillors for their commitment to the community. We are thankful for Sharon for returning after severe problems and a long time being cared for by the NHS.

As parish councillors we have attended many meetings on behalf of our community, Where the council commented on many issues sometimes in person and sometimes online. The some of the big issues of the year were:-

HDC's Call for sites, The failure of the sewage system, The solar farm at Diddington, The A428, The A1, the Flooding, the roads, the Coronation.

The HDC's call for sites, in which District council were instructed by central government to find potential sites for development. This as we all know has resulted in local land owners submission to potentially create a garden village with a possible 3500 homes, which stunned most residents of the parish. We were only one of the 260+ plus submissions, which HDC will be assessing in the near future anyone can check the HDC website for updates. Our council submitted our thoughts to the consultation where we said that there needs to be some development, but limited to a small percentage in each planning period.

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The Sewage system is inundated every time there is heavy rain, AW have spent many many thousands of pounds tankering away contaminated water from the village. With as many as 3 or 4 tankers a day blocking the roads in Thurley Close. The parish council have asked for urgent meetings with AW and CCC to try and resolve the very serious issues, least of which are flooding in Lees lane and many of the residents been unable to flush toilets for weeks on end. The problem is surface water getting into the sewage system and the outfall pipe plus pumps are unable to cope with the excessive volume.

The A428 upgrade is well underway, which is causing big problems at the Blackcat roundabout and the approaches, this will continue for the next 2 years with completion due autumn 2026. Digging out all along the route has taken place the project has started in earnest this year, when finished as we have pointed out many times, there will only be 4 roundabouts on the A1 between north London and Scotland. We keep asking where are junctions 11, 12 and 13, as Baldock has junction 10 and Alconbury has junction 14.

We were told there are plans to put traffic lights on A1 roundabout if the aspirations of land owners and developers in Buckden come to fruition, this we believe is on hold at the moment but it is feared that if and when this does happen this would only compound the traffic problems in the area around Buckden and would affect us here at Southoe.

As members of the A1 safety group which is not a parish council appointed position, John and I have attended several meetings I have met the A1 local route manager and C.C.C. local roads supervisor several times over the last year to talk about local issues, With Alan Trille our A1 man, had taken up our aspirations to explore the notion of a northbound side foot/cyclepath to help us get to the Paxton flyover. This we were told would need to be developer led. But our fundamental aim is for better access in and out of the village for all traffic users.

We had a visit from the new rights of way officer and spent a few hours walking round to high light potential problems. There has been a lot less people walking in and around the village since the covid pandemic, but still with residents and visitors using the footpaths and tracks throughout the year. We haven't had any reported issues with footpaths this year, but we still need to keep an eye on all the public paths.

Again I report there is a limited time to look at old paths that have been lost and to see if any of these can be reopened, the limit for this is 2026 so there is a lot of work to be researched here if anyone can help with this.

Paxton pits reserve of which most is actually in Southoe. The reserve is still planned to be further developed when the gravel extraction comes to an end in 2025, the new workings in our parish are in full operation to the east of the water sports area. This area is the last area left to the east of the A1. Last year we reported there have been test drillings to the south of Manor farm and to the south of Lees Lane, but we have not seen any plans to extract minerals from these areas at the moment.

Our parish council are part of management group for the Ouse Valley path trust (GOVT) a very important pathway, I have attended meetings about the future of the long distance footpath. There are plans to make this path and the areas adjoining even more attractive to those that like to wander the course of the Great Ouse valley.

The wind farm community fund, over the 25 year life of the turbines we are well into the term now and I for one hope the turbines will be here for many years after their current planning permission has run its course, not only for the benefit will come to Southoe but for the green power they produce. As far as the councillors are aware there have been no reported issues with the turbines this year. But unfortunately there has been a breakdown in the control room which the operators are waiting for parts. With the current energy price now stabilising it's still a great shame that the wind farm panel turned down the application for the Village hall green energy application, this would have saved our parish council a major part of our funding that we could have used for other things or ever reduced our call on the precept.

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The Plans for a large solar farm at Diddington have raised serious concerns that good agricultural land is being taken up rather than using buildings or Brown field sites.

There are many outstanding C.C.C. Highways faults according to the website. Many of which I have input to the system. The plans to try and sort out Rectory Lane drainage issues have stalled, The water flowing down the road is worse this year. This last few months we have seen severe problems with flooding in Lees lane and Rectory lane, then also High Street, All of which have been reported over and over again, CCC have been out and potholes highlighted, but the root cause is still not being sorted out. if anyone has an issue with highways matters, then report directly to the C.C.C. highways website or phone them in. News today is that the Local Highways Officer is moving on and we will have to work with a new officer when we know who they are.

There has been no advancement on the aspirations of producing a "Parish Plan" this will take a lot of work to bring to fruition, so I hope we can all help lighten the load to make this work for our community. This is something we need to pursue if we want a say in how the parish is to develop in the future This is even more important if we want a say in how our parish develops or not.

Meetings and working groups all take a lot of councillors' voluntary time, we do this for the good of the parish. We are well aware that we don't always do everything residents would like, but we try our very best.

Our play area lease has eventually been renewed, but it will cost us a start fee of £1000per year, This has taken a lot of time to get the new lease sorted out and a lot of money that we had no option but to engage professions help to get things sorted out. There is nowhere in Cambridgeshire that we are aware of that has to pay this sort of costs for a recreation area. We are facing a massive hike in rent charges for the next 21year lease.

Mr Holdaway our churchyard contractor is unable to continue to quote due to health reasons and the need for a new playarea contract, so after difficult tendering process we have appointed 2 new specific area contracts, the other contactor for the churchyard we can announce tonight is a local resident subject to agreement.

The play area the contractor H.D.C is set for the 1st cut very soon, Last year due to the very dry summer we had quite a few cuts less than previous years. but the whole area was sometimes a struggle to kept under control.

With the help of residents We did investigate the possibility of local volunteers cutting the areas, but various issues made it impracticable.

The play equipment is inspected and with just a few small issues found in the last year with councillors making repairs needed. The whole play areas have been very well used in the last year. We still have a big problem with rabbit damage on the football pitch area. Also there has been reports of dog fouling on the football fields area, HDC have re added the field to the Dogs on leads area which upset some residents, but they must remember the area is for everyone not just dog walkers.

The road side playarea gate has been installed, with a new high level barrier added, The carpark has been shut over the winter as the ground had been churned up, but now the gate needs to be open. If we plan to use the area all year we need to make plans for upgrading the whole carpark area. The council have aspirations of making the carpark an all weather area as soon as we can. So that visitors don't have to park on the roads which annoys residents.

We still have issues with parking and speeding in the High Street Lees Lane area, there have been problems reported with visitors parking unsocially.

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I would like to thank district councillor Martin Hassle for HDC and Ken Billington for CCC for representing us at the higher level. Martin and Ken have attended many Southoe P.C. meetings when they could over the course of the last year.

Working with the Church council we hope to leave part of the old churchyard to Rewild.

Over the last year things have been difficult raising payments and getting invoices paid, we have struggled to get a new community bank account set up, as there were so many problems to resolve, but we got there, with a new online business banking provider the "Bank of Scotland".

I know there will be questions about why we have put up our council tax precept element because we have reserves. But it is quite normal for parish councils to hold twice the precept as a reserve, yes to be sure we could have kept the precept at a previous level, but the services the parish council provide would have suffered. If only the village hall Going Green application had succeeded we could have saved around a thousand pounds, which could have been assigned to other projects or reduced the need for any increase.

The parish Councillors thank Ramune our clerk, as she works so hard behind the scenes to make sure we tick the right boxes, she keeps us up to date with legislation and the finances in a very orderly fashion, which is ever increasingly complicated, and we have a diamond in our clerk.

Lastly I offer special thanks for Angie Elmer for keeping the village hall going for the last 10 or so years, for without her dedication the Hall would have closed. A new committee has taken the reins and new ideas are in the offing. Sharon and myself are Parish Council appointed members of the Village Hall committee.

We must not forget the wonderful party we had for the Coronation weekend, funded for the most part by a Lottery grant. The committee picked the right day for our celebrations, with a fantastic turn out of villagers friends and family. The village all pulled together and made the day a party that those of us that attended will never forget. We can all be proud that we welcomed our new King Charles with coronation event in Southoe that was second to none. The coronation bench is ready to be installed, this was funded by the residue of the funds of the coronation committee and made up with parish council funds, also a coronation oak has been planted in the churchyard.

I've lived here for 53 years and been involved here with many many events and projects all of my 73 years. I welcome some younger residents to take up the reins, to guide the helm towards the next decade.

Alan Marnes

Appendix 2

St Leonard's Church, Southoe

A report on the Church and Churchyard year ending 2023.

During 2023, the PCC were diligent in carrying out the required servicing and maintenance of items connected to the fabric of the church as listed below.

16th January 2023

Oil boiler serviced by Peterborough Boiler Services

January 2023

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Exterior alarm system serviced

1st March 2023

E-Bound annual alarm system check.

March 2023

Herringbone Restoration clearance of all gutters especially in the north aisle which had become blocked.

May 2023

Extinguishers serviced by Paramount Fire Armour Ltd

23rd July 2023

Full electrical Inspection by Chris King Electrical.

Works carried out:

Meter tails, loose stuffing gland into consumer unit – completed on visit

Consumer unit stuffing glands loose on cable entry – completed on visit.

Interior Tower Strengthening works – September 2023 to January 2024.

These were essential to any introduction of new facilities into the tower base and were carried out by Herringbone Restoration.

Specification prepared by Arch:Angel Architects in their November 21st 2021 schedule of works and Kevin White's Structural Engineer drawings

Works were included in the addendum to May 26th Faculty 2022.

Total spend on the project including fees was £32,500.00 plus vat which was all reclaimed.

Also included:

Clearing out of debris from tower.

Clearing out of tower roof gutters by Steeplejacks.

December 2023

Fitting of new headstock onto tenor bell.

Manufactured by Whites of Appleton and fitted by Geoff Burn of the HCBRS.

A grant of £1,250 was found for the new headstock.

Also new safety platform created for ringers maintenance work by Herringbone.

In March 2024 a new 5 yearly Quinquennial Inspection was carried out by Arch:Angel Architects and that report has only just been sent to the PCC.

The PCC will review the various items listed as needing attention and ask the Architect to update the 2020 specification for QI repairs so that tenders may be obtained for works required. As the Church is aiming to create a Community Hub, obtaining grants for essential repairs should be far easier.

The PCC is committed to the threefold principles of Community, Heritage and Environment and trust that all the energy that goes into looking after the building and opening up its use for the whole community is done so with a keen eye on environmental factors and improvements.

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The PCC has its annual meeting on Monday April 22nd at 7.30pm at which all village residents would be most welcome. The Annual End of Year Accounts will also be presented.

The PCC remains mindful of the need to raise sufficient funds each year to carry out basic maintenance, pay for annual insurance and their share of having a Rector across the four churches of the Paxton's benefice.

St Leonard's Churchyard.

A section of the Quinquennial Report deals with the Churchyard boundary walls.

A preliminary reading of the March 2024 QI informs us that there still sections of the wall that need repairs, some more urgent than others.

As a result of the recent concern over the boundary wall and the request from the Parish council to allow partial rewilding, Annette as Rector researched some old PCC records which showed that sometime around 1977/8 the Parish Council took over responsibility for maintaining the grass and had care of the trees.

In a letter dated 20th May 1994 from the then Clerk to the Parish Council, Mrs Dodman, it is stated that the Parish Council pay £1,450 per annum to keep the churchyard tidy and will shortly be paying for repairs to the Churchyard Wall. Later minutes clearly state that it was assumed by all that the Churchyard was closed and therefore the PC had responsibility for all aspects of Churchyard maintenance including the walls.

Many churchyards were indeed closed by an Order in Council and these Orders were signed by the Queen. Little Paxton's churchyard was closed by Order, a formal legal process, on 16th May 1989. At which point, at the request of the incumbent of the time, the PC were requested to take over the care of Little Paxton Churchyard.

Annette contacted the Burial Section of the Ministry of Justice during the week beginning March 18th 2024 and it became clear that no Closure order had been applied for by Southoe PCC in 1977/8 or any other time.

Therefore, for the last nearly 50 years the Churchyard has been legally open. But the Parish Council have maintained a commitment to maintain it.

We can only assume that then Vicar of the time, Rev Whitlock, the PCC and members of Southoe and Midloe Parish council decided to have a verbal agreement to close the burial ground and not carry out any further burials in the churchyard. Around this time, the new cemetery was being created.

The PCC are currently looking at the implications of continuing with the Churchyard open as opposed to applying now for a formal Closure Order which can be done at any time. There are so many things to consider from both sides of the fence, the PCC are open to any ideas that are forthcoming. I know this will come as a shock to everyone, as were all under the impression that the churchyard was legally closed. But

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all this has happened in the last couple of weeks, and as Annette has had a medical emergency, this is the first time we have been able to formally notify the Parish Council.

Recently there has been new legislation/information from central government that under a change to the new Levelling Up Act in 2023, it is now possible for parish councils to make a contribution to church projects which have a strong community theme and input.

A local parish council clerk sent the following statement to Annette in March:

Since we last corresponded and given (in my view) still some uncertainty in the words around this subject, I had consulted the Society of Local Council Clerks who subsequently referred the enquiry onto a top local government legal beagle! He confirmed that 'it was in order for the Parish Council to consider making a grant towards the maintenance of the Churchyard'.

The revised advice of the National Association of Local Councils is here:

<https://devonalc.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/L02-23-POWER-TO-FUND-WORKS-TO-PROPERTY-RELATING-TO-AFFAIRS-OF-THE-CHURCH-OR-HELD-FOR-AN-ECCLESIASTICAL-CHARITY-E.pdf>

This is a complicated scenario and one which the PCC and Annette will be pleased to continue a dialogue on.

In the meantime, I am sure that the community as a whole is very grateful for the work the Parish Council does to enable the Churchyard to be kept so tidy.

We look forward to working with the Parish council about the thoughts of rewilding of some of the churchyard in the near future. The PCC are most enthusiastic about allowing wild flowers to flourish in part of our beautiful Grade one building's grounds

Canon Annette Reed, Rector of Southoe Church. April 2nd 2024.

Appendix 3

Village Hall report

Southoe Village Hall report for Parish Assembly 4th April 2024

2023/2024 has been a good year for the Village Hall, the facilities have been used for various village community events including the coronation celebrations of King Charles III, the Community Hub project plant sale, various quizzes, and as Santa's Grotto to name a few. It has also been hired by several local residents for parties and social events. Over the year there has been one long term weekly hirer and in February 2024 we welcomed the Anchor City Church as another weekly hirer, which obviously boosted the funds.

The Village Hall Management Committee were approached by a resident to ask for the purchase of an all-in-one snooker/pool/table tennis/dart board unit for use in the hall to extend the interest by village residents. I'm delighted to inform you that this table was purchased and delivered at the beginning of February. We're now waiting for bookings. In 2023 the committee applied to the Common Barn Wind Farm Community Fund for a

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grant to install solar panels and a battery for the Village Hall. We had multiple reasons prompting this application; to make the hall more ecologically friendly, to reduce the cost of electricity and to be role models in doing something positive for our planet and the next generation. The CCF panel refused our application on financial grounds, feeling that bookings over the COVID period were poor and that although ongoing costs would be significantly reduced this wasn't financially beneficial enough for residents. We did appeal the decision and submitted yet more information but sadly this was also rejected.

Finally, on the 13th March I stepped down as Chair and from the committee. After 15 years as a member of the committee, the last 10 as Chair, I thought it was time to pass over the responsibilities. Rachael Horsman had also stepped down as treasurer, can I take this opportunity in thanking Rach for all the work she has done in keeping the accounts in good order.

Chris Faux has now taken the position of Chair with several new members on the committee.

The Southoe Village Hall is an important part of the village and I'm proud to have been a part of its long and successful history. Can I take this opportunity in wishing the new committee all the best for the future as it moves on to a new era.

Angela Ellmer

Chair of Southoe Village Hall Management Committee 2014/2024

Appendix 4

Southoe and Midloe Community Hub Project, Parish Assembly Report 2024

Over the last year a huge amount has been achieved with respect to the Hub. This has included;

- the completion of all works to the interior tower masonry and strengthening of the internal walls in the belfry
- all designs and permissions (such as the Ecclesiastical Faculty and Planning Permission from Hunts District Council)) for the Hub Project in the nave, north aisle and tower base and Air Source Heat Pump and Solar panels.
- specifications going out to tender.

Of most note recently the Hub group considered the submitted tenders. These were analysed by our architects from the firm of Arch:Angel Architects, interviewed by the Hub Group using a carefully crafted set of criteria, and after very careful consideration, including visiting examples of previous projects and discussions with previous clients, the group chose Lodge and Sons.

There now exists an estimated expenditure for the whole project, with careful preparation being carried out to assess the situation with regards to vat, of a fraction under £500,000.

Research has been carried out by the Hub Group as to the many potential grant making bodies. Some of them require the applicant to have raised some funds before making applications. To this end, the group have introduced a pledge scheme, whereby people can formally pledge to give a certain amount to the project before commencement of works. We are thrilled to be able to share that this already stands at **£18, 087.50**

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This scheme will be complemented with a regular giving scheme and obviously continuing the numerous events and activities along with a wide range of grant applications.

It is hoped that funds will be raised and works commence spring 2025. The project will take 28 weeks to complete.

Most recently, February 21st, the Hub Project Group held an open village meeting with guest speakers. The meeting was well attended with presentations from the Hub Group on progress and plans, the preferred contractors Lodge & Sons, Samuel Pedlar, The Ely Diocesan Church and Community Support Adviser and finally Suzy Dry from the Cambridgeshire Bat Group.

Moving forward the group has a very varied programme of events planned, to promote social inclusion, build community and raise some funds. Many have an ecological focus and encourage residents to explore the local environment such as a guided village bat walk and an evening focusing on hedgehogs.

Rachael Horsman

Chair of the Southoe and Midloe Community Hub Planning Group.

April 2024.