

Chair's Annual Report May 2025

Southorpe Parish Council (SPC) elections were held in May 2024 and councillors Corinna Blackmore, Carl Brown, Peter Corder, Simon Little and Clare Peacock were elected without contest. Councillor Little was duly elected Chair of the parish council at the Annual General Meeting on 8 May 2024. Councillor Brown was elected as vice Chair.

Peterborough City Council (PCC) ward council elections also took place in May and councillor Irene Walsh was elected as the Barnack Ward councillor.

SPC continues to attend all ward meetings and to be actively involved in all discussions affecting the parish and Barnack ward.

Following the elections regrettably the discussions regarding speed restrictions across the Barnack ward and those within the various parishes, including Southorpe, failed to continue at the pace they were prior to the elections.

Multi-Agency Group meetings (MAG) have continued throughout the year with, PCC Highways, Anglian Water, Barnack ward councillors and landowners. As a result, several improvements have been made to drainage systems within Southorpe and across the ward and problematic field and land drainage sites have been identified with a view to resolving potential local flooding issues. This initiative continues and further positive results are anticipated.

In July councillor Simon Little resigned from the parish council, having served as councillor and Chair since May 2021. Simon was thanked for his service and participation in parish council matters.

During the year SPC has migrated to using gov.uk email addresses and a new website domain under the same umbrella has been adopted.

During November 2024 Gareth Brown was co-opted onto Southorpe parish council. With a specific responsibility for traffic, Gareth made great progress with PCC and thanks to successful grant applications, the village will now benefit from new VAR cameras and a series of signage improvements to be rolled out over the next few months.

In November a further call for sites application was notified to SPC for 40 dwellings in Middle Farm Fields. Following research and consultation with parishioners SPC submitted an objection to the proposal.

Throughout the year SPC members have committed considerable time and energy in responding to PCC 'call for sites' locations in Southorpe in respect of the impending new PCC local Plan. Discussions have been held at parish and ward levels and various documents have been prepared and forwarded to PCC objecting to all the sites submitted.

During March 2025 PCC revealed their new draft local plan which has excluded all sites previous submitted in Southorpe. The draft plan has been examined and endorsed by PCC executive committee and has now in the public consultation stage.

Throughout the year SPC has worked closely with the John Clare Countryside to engage on environmental opportunities and issues – with particular regard to the village field; while Corinna attended a series of modules on Climate Change to ensure SPC is abreast of the latest thinking.

A whole raft of work was done to ensure Southorpe Parish Council met the legal requirements to operate efficiently and transparently and that work was independently audited. It also included a risk assessment review which was delivered by Corinna and Clare.

Councillor Carl Brown resigned from the council on 31 March 2025, having served as councillor and vice chair since 2019. Carl was thanked for his service and involvement in SPC matters.

Ward councillor Irene Walsh also resigned during March 2025 triggering a local by-election on 1st May. Independent Kevin Tighe was appointed in her place.

As we look forward to the next 12 months the parish council will continue to champion the village – to preserve its integrity; ensure planning guidelines and rules are followed; develop environmental initiatives and work closely with newly appointed Barnack Ward Councillor Kevin Tighe to support a range of ward issues where appropriate.

We exist to represent the best interests of Southorpe residents and all decisions we take should be based on that premise.