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SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held in Council Chamber at the Town Hall, Swaffham at 7.00pm on Wednesday 27th April 2011.

Present: Mayor Cllr I Sherwood (in the chair)

Councillors: Mr P Darby, Mr C Gunner, Mrs T Jennison, Mr D Harman, Mrs S Lister, Mrs S Matthews, Mrs J Skinner, Mrs P Wade, Mr D Wickerson

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Deputy Clerk: Mrs D Turner
Youth Council: Mr L Hanrahan, Miss S Willis
Iceni Partnership: Mr T Dickens
Norfolk County Councillor: Cllr A Steward

Public:- 23

1. Mayor's welcome and opening remarks.

1.1. The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Assembly Meeting.

2. Apologies for absence.

- 2.1. Cllr C Baker – Holiday
- 2.2. Cllr D Butters – Health reasons
- 2.3. Cllr Frank Sharpe – Personal reasons
- 2.4. Mark Keddie – Community Orchard Steering Group

3. Declarations of Interest (for items on the Agenda).

3.1. There were no declarations of interest.

4. To agree minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday 28th April 2010.

4.1. The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday 28th April 2010 were agreed and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

5. Community Reports:-

5.1. **Police Report** - There was no report given as there was no Police representation.

5.2. **Iceni Partnership** - Report by Chairman Tony Dickens. Chairman's Report to AGM 2011:

The 2010 AGM was delayed until October and was stated that it would be the intention to get back to having AGMs earlier in the year following the completion of the previous year's accounts. As a result this report is for a six-month period.

At that meeting it was reported that Iceni had just reached a satisfactory resolution of an issue with the Town Council regarding our Friday Indoor Market. In effect the agreement meant that Iceni could carry on trading as before and, as a result, the Indoor Market has continued to flourish and grow in popularity. A recent footfall check showed about 600 visitors on that day.

A workshop on Future of Iceni Partnership took place on 30th Nov with 18 participants. Following presentations by Rob Walker and Dennis Tallon, three options were discussed at length:

Option 1 - Continuing with our current work

Option 2 - Seek to be the lead body for Advance Swaffham

Option 3 - Take on additional work being outsourced or discontinued by District & County Councils

It was decided to go for Option 2 and, with the Town Council's blessing, Iceni took over responsibility for the Town Partnership Committee and thus became the Lead Body in driving forward Advance Swaffham, the 10-Year Town Plan. At the following TPC meeting it was decided to make a fresh start by changing its name to the Advance Swaffham Action Group (ASAG) with a new structure and terms of reference.

Kate Francis' contract has been transferred to Iceni Partnership so she is now Iceni's Projects Development Officer with particular responsibility for supporting ASAG and Advance Swaffham. Kate is a most able and well qualified addition to Iceni staff.

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Dennis Tallon will be retiring as Partnership Manager at the end of May. Don Saunders has been appointed as the new Partnership Manager, someone that many people will already know and perhaps have worked with. Don brings Iceni great organisational skills and is very much a 'people person' with a successful track record in community work. He will, no doubt, be a different kind of leader from Dennis but a change of style can often prove to be a good thing.

Don's and Kate's contracts are both part-time, 3 days per week.

Vicky Mason will be continuing her excellent work in the role of Community Support Officer and, as the only full-time officer, she will effectively be running all Iceni buildings on a day to day basis. She has shown many times that she is capable of managing this work and has a thorough knowledge of all the procedures.

The Directors are confident that in these three officers there is a strong, well-balanced team that will carry Iceni forward in the difficult times ahead.

It was a bitter blow when it was known that Norfolk County Council were axing the entire youth service which put our all Iceni youth groups at risk. Iceni are working on ways to sustain their future.

In 2001 when, after several public meetings, just five people signed up as the first directors of the newly established Company. They were County Councillor Ian Monson from Oxborough (served 2years), Derek Howard from Hilborough (served 3 years), Helen Neale (retired after 1 year through her young family commitments), Pam Buxton happily still with Iceni, and Tony Dickens.

It does seem a long time ago but it is worth reminding ourselves that with help from:

the architects Jeremy Stacey and Rhona Fleming, Breckland Officers especially Gill Tavender and Alistair Rhind; Iceni Officers: Bernie Rappensberger, Dennis and Vicky; Iceni Directors: Myself, Pam Buxton, Martin Hickey, Jim Mullenger, Philip Bray, Dave Williams and from others on the OB2 steering group such as Richard Bishop, James Dean, Barbara White, Dorothy Dickens and Shirley Matthews

we delivered a £3.85 million CER Package on time and within budget. Everyone involved is entitled feel very proud of that achievement.

But that was only the beginning because the funding we were granted was not simply for the buildings and environmental improvements but more importantly what happened afterwards and what it has contributed to the community and the general well-being of Swaffham and its hinterland.

Dennis Tallon retires after 8 years of service, with five of these as the manager. He has ably led the developments and activities that have been made possible by the project.

5.3. ASAG – Advance Swaffham Action Group (pka Town Partnership Committee) – Report by Chairman David Wickerson.

Firstly a word of explanation – it was agreed by all parties that the interests of Advance Swaffham moving forward would be best served by changing the lead agency from the Town Council to the Iceni Partnership and in doing so also to transfer our Project Officer, Kate Francis to the Community Centre. These changes were made effective this month along with the newly constituted Advance Swaffham

Action Group, which will still include Town Council representation through a Councillor and the Town Clerk.

During the last 12 months the four Core Groups – Economy, Environment, Social & Community and Transport have donated countless hours of volunteer time researching their respective areas of interest; many of which overlap in more than one way with each other; and bringing the results to the ASAG Committee to further enhance our 10 year Plan for the Town. Thanks to all of those involved in this process and in addition to our three officers, Kate Francis, Richard Bishop and Dennis Tallon, whose combined input has been invaluable.

All of the achievements over the past year are not listed but on the Town Council website you can view and download the first recently published Annual Report. However a brief summary of the highlights would undoubtedly include:

Action for Market Towns award for Strategic Partnerships

Silver Award in the Anglia in Bloom Competition

NCC/EDP Pride in Norfolk Community Award for towns with over 5,000 populations

Plastic Bag Free Launch in May

Formation of a Community Orchard Scheme with a £9,700 Big Lottery Grant

Revival of our Saturday Market including the return of the Auction

Resurgence of a Business and Retail Group to promote trade in the Town

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Moving forward, ASAG are in the process of obtaining funding from the Rural Development Programme to facilitate several of our original objectives; including new Welcome to Swaffham signs on all of the major approach roads into town and improved promotion of the Town via local food and produce festivals plus a range of leaflets highlighting Swaffham as a tourist destination.

Many of you will know that the Corn Hall has been leased to Costa Coffee, a division of Whitbread plc, and in discussion with the franchisee with a view to allowing ASAG to utilise some of their unused space for community displays and exhibitions. The initial response has been positive and ASAG are therefore hopeful of an arrangement which will benefit both parties.

Finally, on May 19th, in conjunction with NCC, a new Health and Bio-Diversity Walks Booklet will be launched detailing fourteen walks in and around Swaffham, all under 5 miles in length, which it is hoped will encourage more visitors and residents alike to learn about and enjoy the Town and its environs.

5.4. Community Orchard Steering Group – Chairman Mark Keddie.

A Big Lottery Fund grant of £9,700 administered by Swaffham Town Council has allowed a group of volunteers to clear and prepare the site off Orchard Road, Swaffham, for planting 200 fruit trees to create a haven for wildlife and an attractive place for local people to visit and use.

Start-up publicity for the project began in September 2010, which helped to recruit volunteers of all ages and abilities to help clear the site. The hard work commenced in October 2010, with up to 65 volunteers working tirelessly on site throughout the winter months to prepare the site for the tree planting. The manual work has been extensively supported by the Community Payback workforce, who have worked enthusiastically to achieve an amazing transformation of the site so far.

The tree planting started with a well-publicised and attended special evening planting event in February 2011, which despite near-freezing temperatures was attended by approximately 80 people.

The core group of volunteers have now organised themselves into a properly constituted steering group to drive the project forward, under the umbrella of the Advance Swaffham Action Group (ASAG) via their Environment Working Group.

With only a few weeks to go before the Big Lottery Fund grant is spent, funding for the next phase of the project is actively being sought. This currently includes bids to improve access to the site from Northwell Pool, and to rebuild the signal box whose footings were uncovered during the clearing work, to be used as the orchard's site office.

Work will continue on the orchard site over the coming weeks and months to construct three poly tunnels and an interpretation board. A wildflower planting event, recently awarded funding via Breckland's Participatory Budget scheme is planned for Saturday 27 August.

To find out how you can be involved, please contact Mark Keddie, the volunteer project leader on 07919 492241 or Kate Francis at the Icen Partnership, tel: 01760 722800, or come to the group's next meeting at the Assembly Rooms on Tuesday 17 May at 10 am.

The "Swaefas Swale" community orchard steering group would like to say a special thank you to everyone who has been involved in the project in any capacity. As well as the considerable volunteer effort, there have been various in-kind contributions from numerous individuals and organisations, including the Town Council, District Council, County Council, Rural Community Council, Ecotech and Wayland Radio.

The project name is name is made up of the Old English name of the people who gave their name to Swaffham (Swaefas' ham) and the Middle English East Anglian dialect word Swale, meaning "shady place", derived from the Scandinavian word svalr, meaning "cool" which well describes the kind of environment being created for local people to enjoy for generations to come.

Report prepared by Kate Francis on behalf of the Swaefas' Swale Steering Group.

5.5. Relief in Need Charity – Charity Correspondent Richard Bishop

The Relief in Need Charity Trustees now meet six times a year and consider applications from Swaffham residents for a variety of things. Grants are given to aid people who are in need, not to replace a state benefit but can be used to supplement grants from elsewhere. The charity is often in partnership with a Housing Association to improve disabled access or provide facilities that cannot be provided by the state. It could be moving costs, or moving in costs, basic white goods such as fridge, washing machine and cooker.

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The cost of school uniforms, support of school breakfast club, school mini-bus and the replacement of St. John's Ambulance are just some of the ways this charity has helped those in need. Each application is taken on its merit and often results in a home visit as part of the assessment. Historically where has the money come from? There is a sum of just over £300,000 invested from the sale of Brandon Road allotments and the trustees only use the interest earned each year in grants. At present with interest rates very low the amount of money available is not as much as in previous years, but applications are still welcome, application packs are available at the Town Hall reception.

5.6. Swaffham and District Swimming Pool Association (SPA) – Report by Cllr Pippa Wade.

It must seem to some members of the Swimming Pool Association that they've been waiting a lifetime for a pool in Swaffham, unfortunately it looks like they will have to wait a bit longer - but it's not all gloom and doom.

At the SPA AGM last week there were some very positive discussions and although nothing definite, it is clear that there are still avenues open to explore and great support still exists for a pool in the town.

Due to the current economic climate and no *imminent* prospect of a swimming pool, it was decided to reduce the charge for membership of the Association to nil and to suspend fund-raising activities for the time-being. The Committee will continue to run and will be ready for action if circumstances require it.

As noted in last year's report, Swaffham has been identified as a suitable venue for a new pool and sits at the centre of the area of highest demand, so we're not giving up yet!

All the members of the Committee who have worked so hard were thanked, especially Marian Clements who has stepped down as Chair, but will still be working for the cause on the Advance Swaffham Action Group.

5.7. Swaffham in Bloom – Cllr Charles Gunner - See Appendix 1.

5.8. Swaffham Museum Ltd – Report by Company Secretary Cllr David Wickerson.

The Trustees gave a vote of thanks to David Butters, one of the founder members of the Museum, who has just resigned his position as Chair of Trustees as he is a Town Council appointee and will not be standing as a candidate at the Town Council elections next week.

The Museum Trustees have lost track of the number of volunteer hours David has spent over the years working for and promoting the Museum and it would be fair to say that without his input they would not have the fantastic facility that is enjoyed by many today. Thank you David.

It has been an eventful year for the Museum with much time being taken up with the application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a two year grant to support a new initiative "Swaffham within Living Memory". In December the Museum was advised that the submission had been approved and would receive £50,000 to cover the costs of two part time employees plus a capital element to allow the purchase of audio visual equipment to enhance the project and to effectively display the results of our endeavours. The official start up date of the project is May 3rd and Swaffham community will be involved over the next 24 months.

There was a small downturn in visitor numbers in 2010 – in line with many local, independent museums – the comments from the public and museum professionals alike continue to be very positive and show that the overall visitor experience is appreciated. However, as a balance to the income budget, there has been, thanks to the sterling efforts of our Learning and Access Officer, an increase in the number of school visits and outreach service requests from the community, resulting in a rise in revenue from these activities.

It was also a very good year for the Museum Shop, very effectively managed by two of the volunteers, but the museum cannot be complacent and the recession is taking its toll on both the number of visitors to the town and their spending habits.

Our fantastic band of volunteers, now totalling in excess of 60 in number, makes an immense contribution to the day to day running of the Museum and if anyone was looking for a fine example of the "Big Society", they need look no further than Swaffham.

The Friends of Swaffham Museum continues to be one of, if not the largest, such group in Swaffham with over 250 members and the Trustees are forever grateful for their financial support and encouragement.

The Trustees would also like to thank the Town Council for their contribution to our running costs by way of the annual grant which greatly assists our ability to continue to deliver both the visitor with an experience described by the Visit Britain Inspector as "good to excellent" and an outreach service to the Swaffham community and beyond.

The Museum's status in the county's museum sector has also been recognised and enhanced as Swaffham Museum now hold the Chair of the Museums in Norfolk Group and a seat on the Norfolk Joint Museums and Archaeology Committee.

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Next year will be the “Silver” anniversary of the Museum and it is hoped to celebrate this milestone with many special events to mark 25 years of achievement and success.

5.9. Breckland Council – Cllr Shirley Matthews, Cllr Frank Sharpe & Cllr Ian Sherwood.

It was reported that due to difficult budgetary times the Council is required to reduce spending and needs to save approximately ½ million pounds per year. The cuts will mainly be behind the ‘scenes’ rather than front line services. One way to achieve this is a joint management team between Breckland and South Holland.

Two award ceremonies were held during the year, firstly The Pride in Breckland Awards, held at R.A.F. Marham, was a very moving ceremony and secondly the Young Achievers Awards, held in Swaffham, awarded Swaffham’s Youth Group ACOSY as deserving winners.

Businesses, members of the public in Swaffham and Swaffham Town Council all joined forces to work together and approached Breckland to prevent the Funeral Parlour taking the lease on a vacant premises within the town centre. This has proved positively how public feeling and unity can make a difference within Swaffham Town.

It was reported that the Strategic Partnership has awarded grant money to the five main market towns with Breckland. This grant money will be used to help fund various organisations within the town.

New CCTV within the community costing £3.5million will enable members of the public to have better access to reporting incidents via a number of different mediums, such as a text reporting line and a website which will hold a public forum.

Breckland has awarded Wayland Community Radio a grant of £24k in support for the Watton and Swaffham areas.

The Council Tax has been able to remain low due to the amalgamation of Breckland and South Holland management team.

Registrars are now able to offer ‘one stop shops’ which will enable them to hold all relevant details on one system, allowing access and information to be gained more effectively and efficiently.

5.10. Norfolk County Council – Cllr Ann Steward.

It was reported that the Council was facing difficult budgetary times however they will continue to support many services including: to protect and care for the young and old, support schools, fire and rescue services, highways (gritting / maintenance of), libraries, The Arts, Counties waste, improve recycling and also to invest in the infrastructure.

The Council has to make cuts of approximately £155million over the next 3 years and some of these cuts can be achieved by redesigning better services and by working more closely with Town Councils. It is regrettable however that redundancy will also be a factor.

The local Enterprise Partnership at Hethel has seen a steady increase in business growth and support is needed to encourage further economic growth within the area.

The long awaited bid for a better, faster Broadband will finally be known by June 2011.

6. Reports of Councillors & Officers on the work of the Town Council during 2010/11.

a) Market Committee – Cllr Sheila Lister.

The Market Committee have had the benefit of some grant money allocated from the Market Traditions Group. This has resulted in a number of events throughout the year, advertising boards within the market and the re-launch of a weekly Auction with our new auctioneer David Gilham. The extra publicity has resulted in a slight upturn in the number of new stalls, with the new casual traders showing a big increase, double on last year. But we need to convert these casual traders into regular licensed traders who are still in decline. Overall our income still shows a slight drop on last year. So in summary our Market is showing signs of recovery, it is good to have our auction back, but we still need more licensed traders to commit to the Market.

b) Planning Committee – Cllr Paul Darby.

The planning Committee has received a number of planning applications during the year and a good many of them have been approved by Swaffham Town Council. The proposed development plan at the Redlands Site has been re-submitted.

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The Local Development Framework Plan is now in its final draft and the Localism Bill will allow some issues to be decided on a local level.

c) Recreation Ground Committee –Town Clerk Richard Bishop.

The Recreation Ground Committee have had a mixed year, enjoying the success of installing the outdoor gym equipment, despite having one piece of equipment vandalised damaged beyond repair prior to the official opening in June. The gym equipment is very well used and has been an extremely popular addition to the Rec. The Friends of the Rec helped to organise the Funday launch event and were prime instigators in the construction and funding of 'Anne's Garden' opened by the Mayor at the end of July who completed a double 'double act' with former Deputy Mayor Anne Greaves as both were involved with the previous event. Anne sadly passed away later in the year, but at least she got to see the garden in her name.

The latest project is the teenage area which includes a zip-wire. This project is funded mainly from Section 106 money and work commences on site next Tuesday 3rd May. The project is due to be launched in early June with the Friends of the Rec again involved in the organising of a launch event. Other works that has taken place this year are the demolishing of a storage room adjacent to the old toilet block and re-roofing of the old toilets. A number of the skateboard ramps have also been replaced recently after 7 years of use, so they haven't done so badly in the time they have lasted considering the use they have. The Rec has made a lot of progress over the past five or six years, largely due to the Recreation Ground Committee under the guidance of my former Deputy Town Clerk Michelle Meyrick who left us at the end of January.

d) Twinning Civic Exchange – a report by the Mayor Cllr Ian Sherwood.

Swaffham hosted approximately 60 visitors with 30 from each of our twin towns back in September last year. There was a full weekend of events including a constructive civic meeting between the three towns held at the Town Hall on the Saturday morning. The Town Council would like to thank all the hosts for allowing our visitors to share their homes and the Twinning Association members for their support. The chief organiser of the weekend was the former Chairman Stan Sole who worked tirelessly. A memorabilia display from over 40 years of twinning visits is now a permanent feature in the corridor between the Museum and the Council's archive room adjacent to the Council Chamber and the lift.

At the April 2011 Council meeting the Town Council agreed a new twinning policy which re-affirmed their commitment to the spirit of the PLEDGE OF FRIENDSHIP and TWINNING OATH and to look forward to the next three way cycle of Civic visits to Couhe in 2012, Hemmoor in 2014 and Swaffham in 2016. The Council clarify and confirm the commitment as follows:-

- The Town Council shall fund the travel cost for the Mayor &/or a Council representative to the Civic visits in Couhe in 2012 and Hemmoor in 2014.
- The Town Council will fund and host the Saturday morning Civic meeting between the three towns in Swaffham in 2016
- The Mayor &/or Council representative shall attend events associated with the Civic visit to Swaffham by invitation of the Twinning Association.
- The Town Council invite the Twinning Association to submit a grant application in advance of the 2016 visit by end of September 2015; which will be considered and determined on its merit at the Council's budget meeting in December 2015.
- The Town Council encourage the Twinning Association to take a lead with organising/funding the Civic visit and programme of events for 2016.
- The Town Council shall host liaison meetings between the Town Council and the Twinning Association at the Town Hall when or if appropriate.

Swaffham Town Council may review this policy once during a four year term and again in the year following the Civic visit to Swaffham in 2016. In general the Town Council shall endeavour to promote and educate through modern technology; to integrate twinning as part of community development to improve well-being, maintain the twinning memorabilia display at the Town Hall, recording historical data and support the Twinning Association in their efforts to preserve and enhance the links between the three towns.

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e) **Youth Council** – a report by the Chair Lewis Hanrahan and Vice Chair Sophie Willis.

A trip to an orphanage in Cambodia by Amy Head and Sophie Willis was taken in February 2010 and this was achieved by combining the Youth Council's own funding with grants. The trip enabled their support for the 'Youth Go Global' organisation which helps improve conditions for the orphans.

A survey was completed by over 300 people with one outcome showing the youth wish to have more say about what is going on in Swaffham however they were not sure whether they would be prepared to sign up to become a volunteer.

A date for the launch of the Youth Forum is scheduled for 18th June 2011 and it is hoped this new format will be positive move forward for both the Youth Council and ACOSY.

f) **Finance & GP Committee** -Town Clerk Richard Bishop.

The audits for 2008/09 and 2009/10 were signed off in March this year; we have received the paperwork for the year 2010/11 which finished at the end of last month. The Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk are working on year end procedures in order to complete the accounts to present them to the full Council at their meeting on 18th May. The Council are capital rich and revenue poor; which in layman's terms means we still have capital left over from the sale of the Shoulder of Mutton allotments in November 2009, but as a direct result of the work required to bring the retained allotments up to scratch it has left us with little or no Revenue Reserves for the day to day running costs of maintaining services to the town. Why can't we use one lot of money to balance out the other, well the short answer is that it is currently against the law, this is local government law. Capital receipts have to be used for capital projects or repaying loans. The Town Council has loans that they could pay off but because of the low rate of interest, lower than when the loans were first taken out, the Council would be penalised heavily for repaying the loans. So the current situation is not ideal. It has troubled the Council, by not leaving things as tidy as they would have liked at the end of their four year term. This is a little unfair though because the root of the problems are with decisions taken by the previous Council coupled with a global recession, both were circumstances beyond their control.

The budget at the end of last year for 2011/12 the financial year that started at the beginning of April was incredibly tough. £43,000 of savings had to be found to keep a rise in Precept to a minimum of 4% agreed at the time, but ending up as just 2.87% due to an increase in the number of Council tax payers in the town. The £43,000 was found in part by genuine savings by driving down the cost of certain services by going out to tender, but in part by cutting services to the bone. Only time will tell whether all of the decisions taken were wise ones, as we followed the previous 'make do and mend' budget for 2010/11, with a 'make do or make do without' budget. There was a cut in staffing costs and retained staff receiving a 1% increase, well below the inflation rate at the time.

The new Council are faced with managing their finances within the parameters that have been set and only six months following the elections going through the budget process all over again. To a certain extent this process never stops, as we look to achieve best value for the town for the money we take in Council Tax from the townsfolk. It is not easy and no financial decisions are taken lightly. The annual accounts will be available for public inspection following the May Council meeting and if any member of the public wishes to have a copy of the draft accounts prior to audit please ask at the Town Hall reception.

g) **Mayor's overview of the year** – a report by the Mayor Cllr Ian Sherwood.

- The highlight of the year was the Homecoming Parade for II (AC) Squadron of RAF Marham on 6th August.
- Pride in Norfolk award – 'Advance Swaffham' was successful in winning the award for the towns over 5,000 population category.
- Market Towns Award – 'Advance Swaffham' won the Strategic Partnership award.
- Anglia in Bloom Award – Swaffham in Bloom won a Bronze award.
- Funeral Parlour – that never was adjacent to the Market Cross Café and Assembly Rooms. The Town Council worked closely with over 100 objectors for a Listed Building Consent application, attending two Development Control meetings at Breckland offices in Dereham. The Town Council hosted two meetings with Fairways Partnership (Co-op) and then Pal Ison chaired a public meeting attended by 150 people at the Assembly Rooms. The Council have offered to find alternative premises for a Funeral Parlour, since the public meeting back in November the premises have been offered for sub-let and Fairways have stated that they will be finding alternative premises.

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- As mentioned earlier – the launch of the Rec - gym equipment and Anne's Garden, our hosting of the Twinning Civic
- Saturday Market/Friday Market resolving a licensing dispute with Icen Partnership.
- Work in progress with the Public Toilets working Group will come to the fore early on in the new Council as we look to improve on the long term management of the public toilets. There is also an on-going dispute with the Editor of the 'Swaffham Newsletter' – the Town Council are working with Icen Partnership to find an alternative.
- The town Council have decided to take on two Play Areas in town from Breckland Council.
- Mayoral change – at the April 2011 meeting the Council agreed in principle to split the role of Mayor and Chairman of the Council; thus creating a civic role for the Mayor and day-to-day management role for the Chairman. The details of each role are to be agreed by the new Council. The general idea behind this is to share the management responsibility amongst more councillors.
- The Mayor thanked retiring Councillors: Carol Baker, David Butters, David Harman and Frank Sharpe for their service to the Town.

7. Correspondence and questions from the floor.

There was no correspondence received specifically for the Town Assembly.

Mr Stan Sole thanked the Mayor and Swaffham Town Council for their support regarding the Twinning weekend held in September 2010 and also he welcomes the continuation of the Twinning Liaison meetings with Swaffham Town Council.

Tony Dickens commented on the idea to split the current mayor's responsibilities to allow the Mayor to continue with civic duties and a chairman to take on responsibility of charring meetings. Swaffham Town Council is currently researching this idea to ensure it is feasible and legal to achieve.

Jane Atkins, a volunteer delivering the newsletter, commented how disappointed she is that local events are not being well advertised now that Swaffham's Newsletter is not being widely distributed. Mayor Cllr Ian Sherwood responded by agreeing how disappointed he is with the current situation regarding the newsletter however Swaffham Town Council do not have the budget available to spend money promoting events.

Christine Haines commented on the Saturday Poultry Market regarding issues with parking and refuse being left behind. Mayor Cllr Ian Sherwood responded by confirming that parking issues are the responsibility of Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council and not of Swaffham Town Council. With regards to refuse being left behind this is the stall holders responsibility to ensure all their own refuse is removed therefore not causing a health hazard.

Anne Tigue, on behalf of Sue Chittock (apologies for absence) commented on the stall holder 'Kingfishers' absence from the Saturday Market since the Auction has returned to the Stones area. Mrs Tigue asked the council what is being done to encourage Kingfisher to return? The Town Clerk reported that there has not been any formal notification or reasons why Kingfisher has not attended the market but hopes to be in communication with the stall holder soon. Mayor Cllr Ian Sherwood reported that managing the market is a huge responsibility and the Market Committee has worked very hard with Market Traders to promote the market and increase footfall. One way this has been achieved has come about since the return of the weekly Auction to the Stones area.

8. Mayor's closing remarks.

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and everyone that gave a report including the Youth Council representatives for their report and he wished all councillors and candidates well for the forthcoming election.

Annual Town Assembly

In February 2010 Chairman of Judges for Anglia in Bloom George Dawson agreed to an evening at the Community Centre to discuss if our Town was ready to enter the yearly competition. He noted that Oakleigh Drive had entered the Neighbourhood section of Anglia in Bloom 2 year's running and been judged 'outstanding' by the judges. He noted that our Town Council had produced first class tubs and displays over the years. He was told that our 'Friends of the Recreation' had already started work on a Spring display and an 'Easter Bonnet' competition. He was pleased to note the work being done by Iceni and the group of young people he met in the Centre. He told us to 'work on what you have started, and go forward with a small steering committee now'.

Swaffham in Bloom 2010



Inspection happened on July 15th. With pleasure, we got special mentions for EcoTech which reflected the work done by Stuart Weaver as manager and the small band of volunteers. Plowright Place were singled out by the Judges and each retailer given an 'on the spot' certificate.

Green Parrot and the retailers on that side of Market Place were commended. Our special thanks for the hard work done by Sue and Richard Stanford our 2 retail business organisers.

In September at Sudbury we waited anxiously to hear our fate. EcoTech got 2 awards, featuring organic gardening and commercial achievement, but missed out on the top award for biodiversity which we are sure they will get this year. The Judges welcomed the community work which had been done in our Town. They said they had been very pleased to be taken around by a mini bus volunteer driver of Swaffham Transport for their tour of inspection. Judges had noted the work of the CADETS and STARS but we were asked why, as a rural community, we did not get an allotments certificates?

We were very disappointed that Garden Science Trust did not get a special mention for the work that they had done over the year. The War Memorial and surrounds were commended, and overall we waited to hear the verdict—SILVER.

A month later, and a special invitation from Royal Horticultural Society to attend in Birmingham to get what for me must be the ultimate honour of all. Oakleigh Drive had been judged to be the top neighbourhood in East Anglia from Suffolk, Norfolk, Hertfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Essex. A National Certificate of Distinction.

For 2011 and beyond, we must get more retail and business people to help and join in.

Judges Report. Award Mid Silver

Areas of achievement

Planters outside the Green Parrot
Geraniums and planters around War Memorial
The standards set by Oakleigh Drive community for sustainable planting
The usable public open space at the Community Centre
Block planting etc round Waitrose and EcoTech centre
Encouragement given to bijou shops around Plowright Place
Organic gardens around EcoTech centre
Pro-active approach by Brecklands DC to bringing recycling message to public
Green Plaque schemes and heritage note on Town sign
Easter Bonnet competition to raise all round public awareness

Areas for improvement

Tour must include School and nearby Town Cemetery
Pressure with use of former Job Centre
Holes in roadway near Hong Kong restaurant and Premier Travel
Encourage businesses like Iceland store to remove graffiti and help.
Work to improve public participation in planting
Improve press coverage and advertising with year-long events
Portfolio of lists of supporters and donors and supporters in kind

Ann and Charles Gunner