

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the **Annual Town Assembly** meeting held on **Wednesday, 26th April 2017** at **7.00pm** in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr P Darby (Chairman)

Councillors: Mr R Bartram, Mrs B Bowler, Mrs Buckley-Stevens, Mrs A Thorp, Mrs T Jennison, Mr C Houghton, Mrs S Lister, Mrs S Matthews, Mrs J Skinner.

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk: Mrs C Smith

Norfolk County Councillor: Mr P Smyth

Community Speakers: Mr D Saunders, Mrs S Gattuso, Mrs S Palmer, Miss L Smart, Mr C Travers, Mrs C Cogliatti, Mr S Gregory, Mrs H Manson, Mr C Mason

Public: 18 including the Community Speakers

1. MAYOR'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

1.1. The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Assembly and reported that the presentation on Human Trafficking would be rescheduled for another time.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bensley, Cllr Scott and Mr M English.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (*for items on the agenda*)

3.1. There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY HELD ON WEDNESDAY, 27th APRIL 2016

4.1. The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday, 27nd April 2016 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman subject to Cllr Bartram's title being corrected, the date had been previously corrected.

5 COMMUNITY REPORTS:

5.1 **Police** – No representative in attendance.

5.2 **Breckland Council** - Cllr Matthews reported that Breckland Councils vision is to make Breckland a place where people and businesses can thrive. This is underpinned by four priorities, outlined in the Corporate Plan. Examples of projects that have contributed to the priorities/vision include:

- **Website Review** – The website has been relaunched with a modern design and format and is accessible on a table or phone, as well as pc or laptop. It offers ability to report issues via a form, make payments online and submit applications eg for licences – making key council functions available 24/7.
- **One number for Breckland** – A new single number for the council has been adopted with touch tone options for callers to select the department they need. Call waiting times are down and most people can be helped by the first person they speak to.
- **Garden waste collection service** – The council launched the new option to pay online in April 2016. This has had a good take up. We can now accept payment via credit card, as well as debit card. Around 21k subscribers are now signed up to the Garden Waste service.
- **Creating one-stop shops** - We have been developing opportunities to co-locate public sector organisations to deliver a one stop shop for customers and ensuring value to money is achieved for residents and the wider public purse. This has included the DWP, based in Dereham, co-locating in Elizabeth House with shared reception. We have also worked with partners to establish an Early Help Hub in Thetford, providing early

interventions to ensure a better quality of service for children and families. Partners include Children's Services, Norfolk Constabulary and Flagship Housing. Work has commenced on a second Hub which will be located in Dereham.

- **Anglia Revenue Partnership (ARP)** – Since July 2015, the ARP enforcement agency has collected over £1.1m of council tax arrears. This has reduced the need to use private bailiffs, costs for which were previously passed on to debtors.
- **Breckland Fit Families** – Facilitating health behaviour change in reception-aged children and their families in areas of Breckland identified as having high levels of children at risk of developing weight related conditions in later life. The UEA undertook an evaluation of the project and found significant possible impact on health behaviours of both children and parents.
- **Reducing crime and anti-social behaviour (ASB)** – Reducing crime and ASB is about helping communities to feel safe in the district. The Breckland Operational Partnership Team (BOPT) has been successful in reducing anti-social behaviour year on year, resulting in reported instances reducing by over a half since 2010.
- **Increase in Leisure Participation** – Overall participation in activities at leisure centres is up by around 6% compared with last year. Dereham Leisure /centre will shortly celebrate its 10year anniversary. Parkwood Leisure provides sport centres on our behalf in Dereham, Thetford, Attleborough and Swaffham.
- **Housing and Homelessness** – At least 100 affordable homes are in the pipeline resulting from direct investment from the Council.
- **Unightly Sites** – We've launched a new initiative to tackle unsightly and derelict buildings. Neglected sites can be a blight on communities and attract anti-social behaviour. Our councillors will be working with residents to draw up a list of sites suffering from serious long-term neglect, are unsafe, or in disrepair. Where necessary, we'll seek to use our legislative powers to require landowners to act and help improve the appearance of the sites.
- **Commercial property** – we continue to set the lowest district council tax in the country. This is achievable in part thanks to our successful commercial investment strategy. Our commercial properties are 99% let and these investments bring in around £2.4m per year. Around the same amount as is raised through council tax. Our commercial income helps us to keep the financial burden off resident and businesses.
- **Local Plan** – Breckland Councils Local Plan sets out our vision for how the district is expected to grow over the coming years. We have further refined the plans following meetings and continue to refine the plan through parish council and feedback from residents.

6.1 Norfolk County Council – Cllr Paul Smyth reported on some of the issues and projects NCC had been involved with, they included;

- The year had been one of budget cuts and that there was still a £70m funding gap, £35m of these cuts were still to be identified.
- A Public Health strategy has been produced and would have a positive impact in a number of areas including obesity in school children, sexual health and drug and alcohol addiction.
- The adult education department had failed OFSTED so this has been redesigned with the emphasis on enabling second chances and helping those that struggle with life issues.
- A conference had been organised to look at how Arts and Culture have a positive impact on a wide variety of people facing different challenges including Alzheimer's, children's literacy and the impact on carers wellbeing.
- Fire and rescue services had found the funding for another year, it has been established that there is no statutory duty to deal with flooding.
- Norfolk Tobacco control alliance – this project aims to discourage smoking, protect non-smokers and help people give up.
- Collaborative working had resulted in a TROD being built to make the journey to school safer for Swaffham school children.
- The summer reading scheme was very successful with around 12000 children reading up to 6 books, this scheme helps with children's literacy.

6.2 Icení – Mr D Saunders reported that It had been a busy year. New cinema equipment had been installed in the community centre and a film club runs once a month. A work club also runs from the Community centre once a week and ICENI works in partnership with Family

Action to help people negotiate the benefits and credits system. The food festival had been a remarkable success as had the Christmas Lunch attended by the Mayor. Mr Saunders expressed his thanks to Kay Wells for stepping in at the last moment and cooking all the vegetables.

- 6.3** The Community Centre and Assembly Rooms have had over £75k of maintenance work over the last five years and the issues with the painting of the Assembly Rooms are close to resolution. The Community centre hosts several community organisations and they have been joined this year by Age Concern.
- 6.4** ICENI partnership has also been involved in bringing about the TROD at the junior school and raising money for and siting 5 defibrillators. There are now 10 of these spread around the Town.
- 6.5 Youth Development** – Sally Palmer, helped by Leanne and Connor gave a presentation detailing the youthie project. In the year youth clubs, holiday clubs and training courses have all been running. There had also been a successful away weekend trip to the Nurture by nature Forest School. It was hoped that more funding could be secured to help fund another trip.
- 6.6** Youth group leaders and attendees had also taken part or contributed to many projects and local events, including the opening of the Skatepark and MUGA on 5th July. Anyone wishing to know more should get in touch with the Youth Team.
- 6.7 Swaffham in Bloom** – Cllr Bowler reported that the Swaffham in Bloom project adds value to what the Town Council are already doing with the lovely floral displays around the town. The Town Team now takes the lead for Swaffham in Bloom complemented by the IcenI Partnership, who for the time being will be presenting the required portfolio, also with the added benefits from the Town Team a new volunteer hub which is being run by Sue Gattuso.
- 6.8** This year's theme would be 'Pride in your Community'. Cllr Bowler felt honoured to be part of the Swaffham in Bloom team as we all have a pride in our lovely market town and to dress it in flowers each year is very exciting, but Anglia in Bloom is not just about flowers it also embraces our community spirit and the environment of Swaffham, so each one of us who belong to this very iconic town, can play a part and to have a pride in the lovely gift we call Swaffham. Thanks go to the outside staff, who will no doubt be diligently watering and maintaining the flowers around the town.
- 6.9 Civic Twinning** – Cecilia Cogliatti, chairman of the Twinning Association reported that the French and German Towns of Couhe and Hemmoor had visited Swaffham in 2016. A successful programme was held with social events and a civic business meeting. Discussions were around modernising the charter and Swaffham had taken the lead with this drafting a new charter which should hopefully be agreed at the 50th year celebrations in Couhe in Sept 2018.
- 6.10 Volunteer Hub** – The Volunteer Hub was launched in a presentation from Sue Gattuso. The Hub had developed from a number of enquiries by people who would like to volunteer in the community. The Hub would signpost people to the available opportunities. The first newsletters were circulated and these would be available from the Town Hall, Museum and Community Centre. There was a short form to fill in and an advertising call for volunteers would go out. The project should provide many benefits for individuals and organisations including development of a Town Skills list, upskilling, preparation for work and new learning opportunities. Work on one project – to pledge to litter pick a patch - was already up and running, volunteers had successfully been matched to pledge areas.
- 6.11 Swaffham Museum** – Steve Gregory, Chairman of the Museum, reported on the very busy year for the Museum with the list of activities and use of resources up on the previous year. Visitor surveys showed that most of the visitors were from a 50 mile radius and that the Carter Room is very popular, there would be more promotion on social media to try and attract people from further afield. The Museum was only able to exist with the support of volunteers and the Town Council and this was appreciated by all. It is to the Museums credit that it is run to professional standards, recognised by the accreditation that will run for a further 3.5 years. The Museum had also been chosen to be one of four pilot projects in the County.
- 6.12 SCALGA** – A written report provided by Graham Edwards was read out at. It reported on SCALGA activities in the last year with reported successes on the take up of starter plots, with some moving on to full plots. Several social events had also been held and were well

attended. Concerns were raised regarding the cutting down of the walnut trees, SCALGA expected to be consulted on this project. There was also concern that during neighbourhood plan discussions, a proposal had been made that land currently used for allotments could be reallocated for sport and leisure. The Town Clerk responded that there were no proposals on the table at the current time, discussions had been an open forum to bring ideas forward on the best way to develop sport and leisure facilities.

- 6.13 Swimming Pool Association** – Helen Manson reported that the plans were out and would be displayed at Tesco and the Community Centre. It would be a self-sustaining project with good facilities. A business plan and feasibility study had been completed and the Association hoped to raise awareness of the project and approach funders in the near future.
- 6.14 Neighbourhood Plan** – Cllr Skinner reported that the Neighbourhood Plan is an important part of the planning system. Currently Swaffham does not have a Neighbourhood Plan, so our planning authority Breckland Council only have their 'Local Plan' which is a guidance document that applies to the Breckland District.
- 6.15** A Neighbourhood Plan when agreed, will only apply to the Town of Swaffham. It is a document which sets out the needs and plans for the town until 2036, almost a futuristic document. A Neighbourhood Plan must comply with Breckland's Local Plan, but it can go into more detail, add to and complement the Local Plan.
- 6.16** We have five topic groups; Education and Young People, Business and Employment, Health and Community Services, Open Spaces, Sports and Leisure and Town Centre, Visitors and Heritage.
- 6.17** These groups give an opportunity for local people to get involved to ensure that the place they live in and love gets the right kind of development that reflects the priorities of the area. Because the Neighbourhood Plan is an important document with real legal force we have to get through certain formalities. This does involve employing consultants to write the document, paying for this is done by grant applications. To date we have received £7,750 and have applications in for a similar amount to keep the process going.
- 6.18** There has been a positive response from the town to join these groups which meet informally and formally once a month, collecting data, producing evidence and ideas. Every month reports are given to the Planning Committee who act as the Steering Group for the Neighbourhood Plan.
- 6.19** We expect the groups to overlap and share information. We very much welcome more people to come on board with this rather mammoth task, anyone interested to please contact the council. There will be consultation with the public along the way. You can follow our progress as all details are on the Town Council website, we have a Facebook Page and a Twitter feed on Social Media.
- 6.20** Eventually when everything is formulated and documented this will be presented to the town as a Referendum sometime next year, we need 51% of those who vote to support the plan, then it will sit alongside our Local Plan as part of the statutory planning system, that our planning authority must take account of right up to 2036.
- 6.21 Town Team** – Cllr Colin Houghton outlined the structure and vision of the Town Team. The independent group, with close links to the Town Council, hope to help the Town develop and improve for residents and visitors. One current project under consideration was to identify empty buildings and work with the owners to bring them back into use. The town Team had been instrumental in the 800 year celebrations and had also helped to facilitate the school TROD. One project on the horizon was to bring the park run movement to Swaffham.
- 6.22 Swaffham Trade Association** – Colin Mason, Chairman reported in the first year a lot had been achieved by the STA, the Christmas event was a success and it was hoped to build on this this year. A new major sponsor had come on board for the Christmas lights and it was hoped that the scheme could be extended. A vintage car rally was to be held as the first event of this year. The STA would continue to work with other organisations for the good of the Town and if anyone wants to join in they would be welcome.
- 7 Mayors Annual Report** – The Mayor Cllr Anne Thorp read her annual report a copy is attached at appendix A
- 8 Accounts 2015-16, Budget and Neighbourhood Plan Consultation** – The Town Clerk tabled the accounts and reported that we had ended the year within budget. Any questions regarding the accounts could be directed to the office for a detailed response.

- 8.1 It was reported that the precept had risen by 5.1%, the decision had not been taken lightly but prudent finances had meant that the Council was in a stable position with some reserves.
- 8.2 The internal auditor would review the accounts in the coming week and a synopsis would be in the newsletter.
- 9 **OPEN SESSION** – including correspondence received and any questions from the floor.
- 9.1 **Mr S Sole - Would the residents of Swaffham support a lorry ban through the Town and possibly introduce a charge?** – The Assembly discussed the merits of keeping lorries out of the Town Centre. There were concerns regarding the pollution and traffic congestion in the Town Centre. Cllr Smyth reported that all the market towns would have a traffic review at some point but he was unaware that any would consider a congestion charge. It was agreed that this question should be taken forward to the Neighbourhood Plan groups.
- 9.2 **Mr S Sole - Swaffham is supposed to be a Dementia Friendly Town, where is the Evidence?** – The Assembly discussed the initial work that had been done to declare the town dementia friendly. It was agreed that this had stalled and more needed to be done. Particularly with raising awareness and training for businesses. It was thought that this could be an area where the Town Team and ICENI work together.
- 9.3 **Is there an up-date on car parks being taken over by the Town Council?** – The Town Clerk reported that this would be discussed at the finance meeting in May.
- 9.4 **Budget** – Cllr Matthews recommended that any resident interested in Council finances should attend the budget meeting in January. She congratulated the Town Clerk on his budget report and presentation as he could communicate the intricacies of the budget in a way that everyone could understand.
- 9.5 **Community Orchard** – It was commented that the community orchard area was now a lovely area.

9. MAYOR to close the meeting at the end of the Open Session

9.1 The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and expressed his gratitude to those who had given a report.

Meeting closed at 9.03 pm

Mayor.....