

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly meeting held on Wednesday, 22nd April 2015 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr S Matthews (Chairman)

Councillors: Mr P Darby, Mr C Gunner, Mrs T Jennison, Mrs P Wade, Mrs A Thorpe

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

Breckland Councillors: Mr I Sherwood

Community Speakers: Chief Inspector Wheatley
Inspector Papworth
Mrs J Anscombe
Mr D Saunders
Mr S Gregory
Mrs H Neale
Mrs S Palmer
Mr R Trowell
Ms K Fullilove
Ms C Hill
Ms T Welham

Public: 24 including the 11 Community Speakers

1. MAYOR'S WELCOME AND OPENING REMARKS

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

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2.1. Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Bell, Cllr Lister, Cllr Scott, Cllr Sharpe, Cllr Skinner, Cllr Smyth and Cllr Wickerson.

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, 30th APRIL 2014

4.1. The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday, 30th April 2014 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

5. POLICE – Closure of the Public Enquiry Office' and Public Engagement from 1st July 2015

5.1 Chief Inspector Wheatley gave a presentation detailing the background to the decision to close the Public Engagement Office at Swaffham Police Station. He began with an overview of the financial position, it highlighted a funding gap of £26M. £16M in savings had already been identified, however a further £10M savings would need to be made by 2020. Priorities included shielding front line services and avoiding redundancies. A review of the Public Enquiry offices across the county was undertaken. The review included a footfall survey, completed in October 2013, and an engagement media access survey. In terms of the numbers of people using the PE office's, Swaffham was in the five least visited offices, four of these five would be closed. The exception was Hunstanton where the seasonal influx of visitors meant that figures could not be usefully compared.

5.2 The closure of the office would not mean the closure of the station, Police officers would still be based at Swaffham Police station. Members of the public could pick up the yellow telephone, situated at the front of the offices, if they wanted to contact the Police. Appointments could be made to speak to a Police Officer however those on bail would need to report to Dereham Police Station. The offices that remained open were situated where there was also greater need, Swaffham was described as a low crime area and so resources were targeted to areas where more crime was committed. The announcement regarding the decision to close the Office was not made until after all staff had been informed. Chief Inspector Wheatley accepted that there were issues around communication with the community about the decision, information could have come quicker and it was regrettable that the consultation process had not gone more smoothly.

- 5.3 Chief Inspector Wheatley reported that the precept for the Police Commissioner would rise by 1.98%. However no new services would be available, this rise was in order to help close the funding deficit. The Mayor thanked Chief Inspector Wheatley for his presentation, there followed an opportunity for attendees to ask any questions. Cllr Sherwood raised his concern that the consultation was not thorough enough, and that as 1235 people visited the station, this was equivalent to 20% of the population of Swaffham. This challenges the premise that the office was underused. Cllr Darby felt that as the people of Swaffham were being charged the same as those in other towns they should receive the same level of Policing. Chief Inspector Wheatley explained that services across Norfolk were planned and delivered targeting the areas of greatest need.
- 5.4 Inspector Papworth outlined the current arrangements and initiatives in Swaffham to further community engagement. This included the Safer Neighbourhood Action Panel, reinvigorated engagement at the splashes, a PCSO based at Hamond Academy and close engagement with local residential homes. Priorities had been identified with vehicle nuisance and anti antisocial behaviour being targeted. The police would be looking at implementing a respect zone and using CCTV to identify any areas that need attention.
- 5.5 Police departments based at Swaffham would include a vulnerable person department, roads policing and vehicle recognition systems and officers dealing with the travelling community. For Swaffham policing a new beat manager, Jo Higgins PC was now in post. Community engagement arrangements included a monthly presence in the market place, drop in surgery at the Community Centre and regular attendance at Town Council Meetings. Inspector Papworth reported that there had been 200 fewer reports of anti social behaviour in the last year. Cllr Thorp asked if it was possible to have more police officers walking a beat around the town. Ch Insp Wheatley confirmed that response officers, although based at Dereham and Thetford were instructed to come to Swaffham and walk around. The mayor thanked Chief Inspector Wheatley and Inspector Papworth for their contribution to the meeting.

6. COMMUNITY REPORTS:

6.2. Breckland Council

6.2.1. Cllr Sherwood gave the report. – It had been a very busy year again at Breckland Council, with your three elected representatives ensuring Swaffham's voice is heard loud and clear at Breckland, as always we have worked with the Town Council to ensure that Swaffham is well represented.

6.2.2 Firstly with the elections in just two weeks time we must say thank you and goodbye to Cllr Frank Sharp who is standing down as one of Swaffham's Breckland Councillors, he has chosen to stand in Ashill. We would like to thank him for his eight years service to the town as a Breckland Councillor. You may also be aware that as Paul Darby, Shirley Matthews and Ian Sherwood were the only candidates to put themselves forward for election on 7th May, that they have been elected unopposed, and will serve as your Breckland Councillors for the period 2015-2019. The report continued with a detailed summary of Breckland Council's activities and work for local residents over the last 12 months. Areas included environmental services, economic development achievements, detailing the successful grant bids gained during the year. MTF project highlights, Community Developments, promoting the health and well being of Breckland residents. The report also included an outline of measures to promote Community safety through the Operational Partnership Team. Copies of the district council report would be available from the Town Council Office.

6.2.3 Anyone wishing to find out more about the plans for the future could visit the Breckland Council website, the corporate plan document could be found at:

<http://www.breckland.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Uploads/performance/corporate%20plan%202015%201920final%20version.pdf>

6.3 Norfolk County Council – Paul Smyth

6.3.1 Cllr Smyth's report was circulated at the meeting. (attached at appendix A)

6.4 Town Team – Mrs Judy Anscombe gave a presentation outlining the background and activities of the Town Team. The group had been formed last year and membership included representatives from the statutory, voluntary and business community. One of aims of the group was to aid regeneration by promoting Swaffham as a place to visit. Current projects included organising the 800 year market celebrations, revamping the visitor information boards and improving signage. It was hoped that the Theatre Street car park would be better used by improving the signage to and from the town centre. Grants applications had been made for the 800 year celebrations and it was hoped that a number of

events and educational activities would mark the anniversary. The largest event would be 18/19 July with a medieval market event held on Campingland. Local businesses had started to express interest in the event and anyone wanting to be involved were encouraged to come forward. More information would be available in the newsletter.

6.4 Icen Partnership – Don Saunders

6.5.1 Don Saunders reported that the February Newsletter was the first edition edited by ICENI and all was going well. The organisation comes together with the help of volunteers and advertisers. ICENI continued to manage the Assembly Rooms, which had been redecorated, and the Community Centre, which would also be getting an up-lift in the coming year. The Centre was now ten years old and required brightening up. A gallery of local artists work had been created along the main corridor. All involved in Anglia in Bloom were thanked for the excellent communications which helped achieve effective cooperation. It was hoped that Swaffham could be classified as a dementia friendly town in the near future. There were just a couple more steps to finish and some more volunteers needed. The carnival and music festival had not been quite as successful as in previous year's, it was felt that staff were stretched too thinly for the occasion. ICENI had joined in with the Norfolk food festival and provided international dishes. These proved very popular and were sold out. More would be made this year.

6.6. Swaffham in Bloom – Cllr Paul Darby.

6.6.1 "Despite best efforts by all concerned, we were rather disappointed by not getting Gold at Anglia in Bloom awards last autumn. We were presented with a judges appraisal letter which highlighted area for improvement, most of which were procedure in nature rather than any lack of effort by the town. The judges felt that there was not a visible strong committee base, this is untrue but we can stress the partnership working methods that we use in Swaffham. There are also tricks of the trade in maximising the effective time allowed with the judges, noted and acted upon'.

6.6.2 'Swaffham has a strong entry again this year in which we will emphasise how different groups work together; Swaffham Town Council trading allotment space for plants around the town, Partnership meetings of all concerned group s at the allotments to explain what each other are doing and why, ESCAPE liaising with Graham and the ground staff for suitable bedding plants etc. All groups and organisation have new, strong projects going on this year which will add up to an interesting portfolio, judges are always interested in new project and initiatives'.

6.6.3 Anglia in Bloom is all about being proud of your town and how making small changes can improve the wellbeing of us all. The 800 year Market Celebrations are a sign that we care, as citizens of an historic mid Norfolk market town, about our environment and that we are proud of our history whilst evolving Swaffham in a manner which will be celebrated in the future.

6.7. Swaffham Museum – Steve Gregory.

6.7.1 Steve Gregory, Chairman of Swaffham Museum, reported that a new curator, Sue Gattuso, was now in place. Volunteers were able to undertake training to build up skills and it was hoped that the museum could help with the 800 year celebrations. There was currently a WW1 exhibit at the museum, which was opened by Stella Rimmington. Looking to the future it was hoped that a new display room could be added to existing facilities. There would be a review of the IT systems. The museum remained in good financial health.

6.8 Churches Together – Helen Neale

6.8.1 'Every Sunday, more than 500 people gather in the various church buildings in Swaffham. From four of those churches, we have representatives who meet regularly forming Churches Together in Swaffham. The churches represented – in alphabetical order – are Anglican, Baptist, Catholic and Methodist.

6.8.2 As in any walk of life, people doing the same thing have differing ways of doing them. Christian churches are no exception hence the varying denominations. However, Churches Together seek to worship and work together at various times of the year in unity respecting the differences and sharing in those matters that unite us.

6.8.3 Some of the activities are decidedly 'churchy' though open to all – as any church should be – and these would include the Lent meetings which take place on four Thursday evenings leading up to

Easter. These are extended on a Friday, by way of a frugal lunch which is surprisingly more sociable than the name suggests and contributions from these are added to the fund raising efforts for Christian Aid. In 2014 the total raised for Christian Aid was £950 and this was in no small part thanks to the dedication and enthusiasm of our co-ordinators at that time Rod and Sue Goodwin. Some of you will know, the community as a whole, has a gap once filled by Rod Goodwin who sadly passed away on New Year's Day this year. No doubt he's keeping heaven busy.

6.8.4 Conversely, the Town Carol Concert which aims to be more community based whilst not shying away from the wonder of Christ's birth, is considerably lighter and entertaining with the poetry works of local school children featuring strongly and schools invited to participate. Donations received for the concert in 2014 amounted to more than £280 which was gladly given to the great works done at the Merle Boddy Centre.

6.8.5 Various other activities occurred throughout the year including our open evening which welcomed a visiting speaker from the Bible Society who shared various initiatives of our reach to people of all ages. Ultimately, the work of the church is not to be confined to what may be seen on Sundays, but any and every day of the week in action within the community: offering help, encouragement, comfort, love and acceptance to all who need or seek it.

6.8.6 We have been doing that in a relatively small and practical way alongside tea, coffee and of course a food parcel. In 2014, we were blessed to feed nearly 400 people from our own community – more than half of those were children. It is not about trying to highlight any negativity of government policy but it is about demonstrating the positivity of community. We are investigating ways in which we might make links with Christians Against Poverty in the area who look to provide money management advice – this appears to be a logical step. Finally as chair of Churches Together, I would love to hear from any group or organisation who feel we might be able to serve or assist them. Thank you.

6.9 Youth Development – Sally Palmer

6.9.1 Sally Palmer gave a presentation outlining the work of Youthie, the youth club project. Youth leaders had been working well and were now able to support younger members of the group. A youth café for 13-18 year olds was running and all work was supported by the qualified youth workers who were able to offer 1-2-1 support if required. Breckland grant monies had enabled the team to deliver holiday activities, day trips, social action projects with detached sessions and voice box sessions. The projects have been re-commissioned for next year and 73 new contacts had been made.

6.9.2 Next steps identified included establishing a Youth Council to give an opportunity to challenge town leaders and bring issues affecting young people to the fore. Other work included maintaining links with the Hamond Academy and facilitating the skate mob to influence the skate park project. Sally also reported that a grant from the Lions had allowed a number of people, youths and adults to receive first aid training.

6.10. SCALGA – Chairman Roger Trowel.

6.10.1 Roger reported that although SCALGA had started as a protest group, they had moved on and were looking to support the Allotment community in Swaffham. There were currently around 150 allotments, worked by people aged 15 to 90 years old. SCALGA were keen to promote a community approach and included a seed scheme, social outing and bar-b-q amongst its activities. As well as attending Council meetings they were involved in an open meeting for all allotment holders to discuss any issues affecting the allotments and management of the sites. The meeting was well attended by around 60 people.

6.10.2 There were currently no vacant plots and grow your own seemed to be a growing movement. In order to help newcomers to allotment management, SCALGA had secured a small grant to rent an allotment. This would then be split into small starter plots, new gardeners would receive practical help and advice to make a success of the small plot before moving on to a full size plot should one become available. The scheme was aimed at younger members of the community, and people who did not have a garden at home.

6.11. ESCAPE Project & Friends of Swaffham Orchard – Katy Fullilove

6.11.1 Katy Fullilove described the project currently being run with partner organisations, led by family action. The community allotment project supported people with specific needs in the community as well as providing an opportunity for clients and volunteers to develop skills. There were around 40

involved with the scheme on a regular basis. Horticultural training courses were now being offered along with other traditional skills training. Any produce grown is shared amongst the clients and volunteers with the proceeds of any surplus put back into the scheme. The project continues to supply produce to local businesses and was currently growing plants to be used in the Town Council planters, contributing to the Anglia in Bloom plants. There would be an open day in September.

6.12. Nicolas Hamond Academy – Cheryl Hill Principle & Trudy Welham Assistant Principal.

6.12.1 Cheryl Hill and Trudy Welham gave a very upbeat report from the Nicholas Hamond Academy, HM Inspectors had recently paid a visit to the school and feedback was very positive. The letter was available on the schools website and included the remark that the school was on the way to being outstanding. The academy had been invited to apply for World Class curriculum status this would confirm that the education being delivered was right and appropriate, and that the students were being armed with the tools to do their best. Progress reports submitted to the DofE demonstrated that all children were making progress and national averages had been reached. 125 new students had been recruited for the new year from an increasing catchment area and new transport had been laid on. The school had also recently celebrated the achievements and commitment of the sportsmen and women at the school. Two hundred people came along to the presentation evening. Community learning was also proving to be a success with many different subjects on offer on Thursday evenings.

7. SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1 Mayor’s Annual Report and overview of the year – The Mayor’s report was circulated at the meeting a copy is attached at appendix b.

7.2 2014-15 Accounts & 2015-16 Budget – Town Clerk Richard Bishop gave an overview of the accounts for last year and the budget for the forthcoming year. The report was circulated and is attached at appendix c. The accounts will be presented to the Full Council Finance meeting on 20th May 2015. Copies of the end of year accounts are available on request at the Town Hall.

8. OPEN SESSION – including correspondence received and any questions from the floor

8.1. No correspondence had been received and there were no questions from the floor.

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

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

Meeting closed at 8.50pm

Mayor.....