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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 25th April 2012.

Present: Mayor Cllr S Matthews (in the chair)

Councillors: Mr P Darby, Mr M Edwards, Mr C Gunner, Miss A Head, Mrs P Wade, Mr I Sherwood and Mrs A Tighe

Norfolk County Councillor: Mrs A Steward.
Breckland Councillor: Mr F Sharp.
Newsletter Editor: Mrs E Blake.

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Deputy Clerk: Mrs D Brown

Public:- 31

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 S Bell - Work commitment
- 2.2. Cllr T Jennison - Unwell
- 2.3. Cllr S Lister - refused attendance
- 2.4. Cllr J Skinner - Family reasons
- 2.5. Cllr D Wickerson - Work commitment
- 2.6. Mrs K Francis – Annual Leave
- 2.7. Mr 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 27th April 2011 were agreed and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

5 Localism Act 2011:

The Town Clerk gave a brief insight into the Localism Act 2011 and what this means for Swaffham. The Big Society will allow local Council's the right to challenge and bid for services with transparency being fundamental. The Localism Act 2011 will enable Swaffham to deliver more services at a local level.

6 Community Reports

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

6.2. **Breckland District Council Report:** – Cllr Shirley Matthews, Cllr Frank Sharpe & Cllr Ian Sherwood
To make monetary savings Breckland has had to make some hard choices. The principle of the three authorities, Breckland, South Holland and Gt Yarmouth working together with a joint Chief Executive and shared management team was approved at a Full Council Meeting recently which would save £100,000 per year. Consultation will now begin and the final structure will go to each Full Council on 24th May 2012. A saving of £500,000 has already been achieved by Breckland and South Holland's shared management project by working in partnership and Gt Yarmouth would hopefully join as an equal partner.

A new grant scheme called 'Reable' with grants of up to £7,000 will assist those with independant living and aims to cut down waiting times and enable applicants to quickly receive financial support needed to allow them to stay in their own homes.

Grants of up to £100.00 towards festivals celebrating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee have been awarded to 4 separate applicants in Swaffham.

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The abolition of the Standards Board will give a saving as this costs approximately £55,000 per year. Councillors will still come under the same scrutiny as before as the law continues to apply to all criminal activity.

Despite the economic downturn the Council is continuing to invest in property and is receiving £2million in returns from this each year. The Council's portfolio includes 200 individual properties and 5000 pieces of land and occupancy levels are being maintained at around 95%. The Council is always looking for suitable property to invest in and is looking at the possibility of introducing a finders fee.

Breckland has been involved in various activities throughout the year for the benefit of residents:

- Food safety training courses
- First Aid classes in conjunction with St John's Ambulance - aimed particularly at parents and the elderly
- A photographic competition, with TV presenter Chris Packham as one of the judges
- Dance classes at Litcham High School on Thursdays
- A book festival with contributions by Henry Blofield and Bill Turnbull. Also a creative writing workshop run by Claire Sharland from UEA
- The loan of energy monitors to residents. These provide instant information on the amount of electricity being used, in terms of power use and energy cost.
- Breckland Food Festival was held in September with the theme "Farming, Food and the Countryside".

In October the Older Peoples' Forum was launched and its first AGM was held at the end of March this year. This is a user-led group, run by older people for older people, and supported by the Council. It offers a platform for the over-50's to make their views known and to contribute to the planning of policies and services.

The local Development Framework was submitted in May last year. It was publicly examined in July and finally adopted by Council in January this year. This important planning document will bring greater certainty to the development planning process, enabling land owners, developers, existing residents and other service providers to be involved in the planning of where new developments will take place.

To mark the Queen's Diamond Jubilee it was hoped to create a living landmark. Land owners, community groups and individuals were asked to identify and put forward pieces of land that have the potential to become "The Breckland Jubilee Wood", suitable land is yet to be found.

6.3. Norfolk County Council Report: – Cllr Ann Steward

This has been an exceptionally challenging year for the County Council - The Big Conversation has helped reshape and deliver some key projects:

- Savings of £60million were secured by the transformation of services with some 111 change programmes underway
- There was a zero increase on the County Council Tax and it is planned for this to be repeated next financial year
- The Broadband bid was successful, with a County Council investment of £15million to be match funded by the Government. In due course this should lead to 99% County coverage of Broadband, the majority being superfast Broadband
- The economic case for Make it Marham campaign was researched and by working closely with MP's, including Elizabeth Truss who led the campaign
- Successful grant award of £86.5million for the Northern Distributor Road
- The local Enterprise Partnership was established between Norfolk and Suffolk, with a further Enterprise Zone established for Gt Yarmouth
- An investment of £10million grant was made into new fire appliances. Norfolk now has some of the best fire appliances in England. It was also agreed not to close any fire stations.
- An investment of £190,000 in road safety activated signs - Norfolk is the safest County in England for both Highways and Crime
- NCC was one of the first Council's to oppose the Forest sell-off
- None of the library's were or are planned to be closed
- The collection of over 14,000 signatures for Fair Fares Campaign - a campaign adopted by many other County Councils
- 24% of looked after children in Norfolk achieved five or more A* to C grades at GCSE, including English and Maths, up from 11% on 2010
- New recycling centre opened in Dereham, with investment in others around the County showing a strong commitment to recycling

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- The final part of the A11 is to be duelled at last. Norfolk County Council collected more than 16,000 signatures on the County Council's petition
- NCC has spent £43,000 upgrading Holt Hall Environmental and Outdoor Learning Centre, also investing in Care Farms whilst also extending County Estates
- NCC provided a £340,000 boost for co-sponsored Academies in Thetford and Kings Lynn

Swaffham and the area has also benefited from:

- £10,000 of youth funding - the highest allocation of funding awarded to youth projects throughout Norfolk
- £15,000 match funding grant for signage - the full amount again as requested by the Swaffham Action Group
- The launch of the Healthy Walks initiative here in Swaffham
- The Swaffham Gritters - recognised as The Real Big Society, and a lead model for the rest of Norfolk County Council

6.4. Icen Partnership Report: - Icen Chairman Tony Dickens

2011/12 has been yet another good year for the Partnership. There was a change of leadership mid-year when Don Saunders took over from Dennis Tallon following his retirement. Kate Francis also became a fully contracted staff member as our Projects Development Officer responsible for the delivery of Advance Swaffham in conjunction with ASAG.

After the demise of Norfolk Youth Service the Partnership has also been able to employ Sally Palmer for 12 hours per week to continue her work with the young people of Swaffham. Together with Jane MacLennan, our Catering Manager, this brings the number of Icen employees up to five.

Staff changes of this magnitude can initially feel disruptive to the incumbent staff and inevitably take time to settle down. But despite this upheaval, the cuts, and the state of the economy, and the financial squeeze, our staff have given their all and beyond and because of this I am happy to say that bookings are holding up very well, projects are being developed and delivered; day to day management of buildings is functioning well and relations with tenants and user groups are generally very good.

The Community Centre was often described by Dennis Tallon as the Community Hub and it continues to live up to that name. The Centre is often fully booked with the small meeting room being particularly popular. This size of room seems to be in great demand and we could do with another if we can make one available.

The Wellbeing Group has long been a success story for the Partnership, for Family Action and the other agencies. It has now outgrown the Small Hall and will be moving into the Large Hall in June where all its activities, refreshments and meals will take place. This will relieve pressure on the café space at a busy time of day.

Two new health-related clinics have started weekly – West Norfolk NHS Health Trainers and Community Alcohol & Drugs Service.

At the start of last year the Community Café was running at a considerable loss and there was even some talk of closing it. But we kept faith with it and under Jane's excellent management the café has been re-branded, more volunteers have been recruited and it is working its way towards being self-sufficient. Their occasional evening themed banquets have been well –supported and several events have been serviced with catering after the normal opening hours.

A successful bid to Job Centre Plus gained £10,000 for equipment to run a Jobs Club. This is due to start in May subject to another small bid to fund running costs. Thanks go to Dave Williams for his support in facilitating this.

We also secured a six month placement through Pinnacle and Job Centre Plus for Jamie Young. His main duties are assisting in the café and setting up for events in the Assembly Rooms. He has been a really willing worker and is especially valued by the Indoor Market where his help in setting up and clearing has been a godsend.

Now to the young people: - Sally Palmer managed to successfully bid for £10,000 from the Youth Transition Fund to help finance projects.

With Sally's support the youth club, ACOSY, has continued to thrive with a new intake of young people together with older hands. Some of these have become leaders in their own right and effectively run most aspects of the club including their own Youth Café.

Lewis and Sophie will be giving a report for the young people later and furthermore, Lewis Hanrahan was elected to the Icen Board at their AGM last night.

Turning to the Assembly Rooms, bookings here are steady but still below what we would like. The mainstay of activity here is the Friday Indoor Market and associated Craft Fairs which are well attended and popular. They have fully taken up their allocation of roll-overs to Saturday and hold some Craft Fairs in conjunction with the Sunday Farmers market. This partnership has proved beneficial to both parties and has brought more people into the Town.

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Finally the Icen Partnership won the EDP Pride in Norfolk Award for communities over 5,000 in recognition of its work in the Community Centre and more widely in the Town.

Now I want to move on to ASAG. Unfortunately neither David Wickerson nor Kate Francis could be with us this evening.

Firstly I'd just like to re-affirm what ASAG is. It's a partnership between Swaffham Town Council and the Icen Partnership to deliver the 10-year town plan launched in 2009 and called Advance Swaffham.

Kate was initially employed by the Town Council with a financial contribution from Icen. Last year this situation was reversed so Kate is now an Icen Officer with a financial contribution from the Town Council.

ASAG operates four Core Working Groups covering Economy, Environment, Social & Community and Transport.

At the end of Year 2 of Advance Swaffham, a strategic review resulted in a new vision statement and nine revised objectives.

Vision statement:

To develop Swaffham as a thriving market town that actively supports businesses, the community, tourism and care of the environment.

The nine objectives can be found in the Advance Swaffham Annual Report 2011.

In the past year ASAG has successfully bid for project funding from various sources including Breckland Council, Natural England, NHS Healthy Towns, LSP, Norfolk CC and the Brecks Rural Development Programme. Kate has proved to be very effective in formulating bids but other staff also contribute ideas.

New 'Welcome to Swaffham' Town signs have been installed on the four 'gateways' to the town and will shortly be landscaped. A number of community events and activities has been organised throughout the year. ASAG has helped to establish the Swaefas Swale Community Orchard, the Swaffham Business Forum and the Brecks Food & Drink Festival, a pilot for an annual event. It has been actively involved in the ongoing discussions about the proposed TESCO development.

The Brecks RDP granted us £18,000 which is the mainstay funding for a programme of forthcoming events.

Forthcoming events

- Jubilee Celebrations – There will be a "Jubilee Journey" around Swaffham on Wednesday 9 May with £100 funding provided from Breckland. Tickets are £2.50 per person, available from the Icen Partnership office and Swaffham Museum.
- Cycling & Walking Festival – various events will be running every day from 1-10 June including guided walks, cycle races and fun sessions. There will also be a Jubilee Picnic in the market place on Tuesday 5 June.
- Olympic Carnival – A procession lead by a former Olympian carrying the Breckland Olympic Torch will assemble at Swaffham Infant School to parade down Beech Close and around the Campingland on Sunday 15 July commencing at 1.30 pm. The Campingland will then be used as an arena for a packed afternoon of games for all ages and abilities.
- Swaffham Free Music Festival – A packed programme of a wide variety of music will take place in the town centre with Lynn Street closed from the bus stop to the Buttercross for the afternoon and evening of Sunday 26 August 2012.
- The 2nd annual Brecks Food & Drink Festival is planned for the weekend of 14-16 September. A whole range of events are already in the planning, with ASAG, Swaffham Business Forum and many others working collaboratively to achieve an even bigger & better event than last year's success.
- Plans for the Ancient Egyptian festival to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Howard Carter's discovery are underway. The festival will be linked to the Rotary's visual arts festival in October, and will include a spectacular and unique Mummy Trail. Local groups, clubs and businesses are being challenged to create an Egyptian-style mummy out of whatever materials they wish

Swaffham is set to become the first 'Walkers are Welcome' town in the whole of East Anglia. It is hoped to launch the scheme during the Cycling & Walking Festival in June.

ASAG meetings are open to the public so anyone interested in coming along is welcome. The next meeting is on 12th June at 6pm in the Council Chamber.

Finally I would like to make a few personal comments. As most of you know I am retiring from the Chair of the Icen Partnership as of now. I have occupied this hot seat since 2001 with a short break in the middle.

It has been a really interesting, exciting and rewarding experience despite the many difficulties that had to be dealt with from time to time. Looking back I feel very proud of what we at Icen have achieved through partnership working.

I have had the privilege of working with many very special and genuinely good people throughout this period and I would like to mention a few before I step down.

Firstly, I want to single out someone who has been with me on the Board from the very start. I think she has been working out a penance for nominating me as Chairman in the first place and I refer, of course, to Pam

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Buxton. I single out Pam because she has always been a source of great calm and reason in challenging times. I have greatly valued her support and I know that she is one of the most respected people in this town and deservedly so.

Then there are the directors that saw us through our major project the CER package. In particular Philip Bray, still on the Board and contributing his wisdom and perception to the Buildings Management Group and the ASAG Transport Group; and Jim Mullenger, whose skills and knowledge as a Quantity Surveyor were so invaluable to the buildings work; and Martin Hickey, always a strong contributor at our many, many project meetings;

Then there were the top quality Breckland officers, Gill Tavender, Alastair Rhind and Mark Stanton, terrific people to work with.

I must not forget the Town Clerk, Richard Bishop, who has been a stalwart supporter of the Partnership since the early days, particularly as not all councillors at that time were convinced of its value.

There are many, many others I could mention but I want to end with our own Officers, Lucy Evers at the start, now sadly deceased. Then came Bernie Rappensberger, Dennis Tallon, and Vicky Mason, who and has been with us since she left school. They were a very effective combination and together with Jim Mullenger were key to delivery of the CER package on time and within budget.

I've been thinking for some time about retiring from the Icen Chair but I've have probably just been waiting for the right person to come along and take over. At our AGM last night I handed over to our new chairman, Dennis Tallon, and I have no hesitation in commending him to you as my successor. He and Vicky have done the most magnificent job, particularly in building up the Community Centre to become the award winning, best practice model that it is today.

6.5. ASAG - Advance Swaffham Action Group Report: – Report prepared by Kate Francis

The Advance Swaffham Action Group (ASAG) is a partnership between Swaffham Town Council and the Icen Partnership to deliver the 10-year town plan launched in 2009. ASAG operates 4 core working groups covering Economy, Environment, Social & Community and Transport.

Progress in the last 12 months

ASAG has successfully bid for project funding from various sources including Breckland Council, Natural England, NHS Healthy Towns/LSP, Norfolk County Council and the Brecks RDP.

New town signs have been erected and will shortly be landscaped and a number of community events and activities have been organised throughout the year.

ASAG has helped establish the Swaefas Swale community orchard, the Swaffham Business Forum and the Brecks Food & Drink festival and been actively involved in the ongoing discussions about the proposed Tesco development.

A strategic refresh at the end of year 2 of Advance Swaffham resulted in the following vision statement and objectives:

Vision Statement:

To develop Swaffham as a thriving market town that actively supports businesses, the community, tourism and care of the environment.

Objectives:

Work in partnership to:

- 1) Promote and further develop market activities*
- 2) Improve visual attractiveness and the natural environment*
- 3) Support and enhance local businesses and promote local shopping*
- 4) Promote more sustainable transport and improve management of traffic and parking*
- 5) Enhance visitor appeal and promote tourism*
- 6) Increase opportunities for sport, leisure and recreation*
- 7) Improve communication between organisations and the community*
- 8) Support all sections of the community in promoting environmental awareness and good practice*
- 9) Encourage more volunteers to support the delivery of Advance Swaffham*

Awards

A regional award from Action for Market Towns (AMT) in their Environment and Culture category, and a Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) award were presented to ASAG for the community orchard project.

Swaffham is set to become East Anglia's first **Walkers Are Welcome** town. It is hoped that the scheme will be launched at the Cycling & Walking festival in June. Further information is at: <http://iceni.weebly.com/walkers-are-welcome.html>

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Forthcoming events

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- Plans for the **Ancient Egyptian festival** to celebrate the 90th anniversary of Howard Carter's discovery are underway. The festival will be linked to the Rotary's visual arts festival in October, and will include a spectacular and unique **Mummy Trail**. Local groups, clubs and businesses are being challenged to create an Egyptian-style mummy out of whatever materials they wish.

ASAG meetings

Anyone interested in coming along to an ASAG meeting is very welcome. The next meeting will be on 12th June at 6pm in the Council Chamber. The agenda will include a discussion on future funding requirements.

6.6. Swaffham in Bloom Report: – Cllr Charles Gunner

Swaffham in Bloom gained its second Silver award in 2011, this time getting 'high Silver'. The RHS yearly awards start with large cities and goes down to small villages and includes part of large town conurbations. Cities and large towns are often sponsored by well known companies and we often think that e.g. City of London has a built in but unfair advantage. But there is a lot of interest in small town 'results' but this year none of the 7 small towns in Anglia got Gold and Swaffham with high Silver almost topped the list. In their report the judges said 'the Swaffham in Bloom team have progressed their campaign in a very short time scale. There is no doubt that Swaffham has considerable potential for future development'.

As areas of achievement they considered and noted

- Oakleigh Drive community for their planting project
- The War Memorial planting scheme
- New play equipment at the Recreation Ground
- A very good quiet garden project at the Cottage Hospital
- Excellent allotments and the ESCAPE project
- Conservation in general
- Children involved in bulb planting
- The garden and wind turbine centrepiece at EcoTech gained a Special Award

As areas for Improvement

- Try again to involve Iceland store in campaign
- Continue with negotiations to adopt area at start of Theatre Street car park
- Improve publicity for campaign
- Remove weeds and provide picnic tables

EcoTech got its second and well deserved award for bio-diversity in 2011, following an award in 2010.

6.7. Swaffham Business Forum Report: – Report prepared by Chris Parsons

Early 2011 and some interested parties gathered to talk about these issues and eventually a consensus emerged around four priorities or objectives:

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- **Promote** Swaffham as a viable business location
- Act as a single point of **communication** between businesses and the wider community
- **Support** each other in what looks like difficult times ahead
- **Network** between each other to increase local awareness, identity and effectiveness.

Initial projects undertaken included decorating the town for the **Royal Wedding** in April and joining in with some other events organised by Lions and the like, an example of businesses working with the community.

We also joined up with the **Brecks Food Festival** and helped out with a number of those events including flags around the town.

However one of our main aims was to promote Swaffham through the **Christmas lights** campaign and to do this we needed to raise some funds. A couple of hog roasts and a Bingo evening later and we were on our way, with some match funding from Barclays, local donations, some funding from the Town Council and some from Breckland meant that we could promote a £4000 event in the town. Overwhelmed by the turnout we are busy learning lessons and we have formed a sub-committee that is already working on the 2012 version.

As well as events, we host regular 6 weekly meetings intended to be of interest in the other objectives of support and networking, and of course we are participating in ASAG economy and the Tesco consultation. We held an audience with Elizabeth Truss recently and have other similar things planned.

In respect of Tesco and other town centre issues, we remain concerned to ensure the vitality of our town and particularly its retail centre, and we are currently promoting several initiatives to understand issues around this and to formulate ideas and actions that can contribute to a lively and vital town centre.

We now have over 50 members and this is growing, membership costs just £20 per business and includes a newsletter/update, a web site and advantageous rates at events and functions.

We are planning to be involved with the **Jubilee** and the **Olympic Carnival**.

Going forward we want to build on these early successes and continue to fulfil the objectives we have outlined.

6.8. Swaffham & District Tourism Association Report: - Report prepared by Mrs Vanessa Scott
Both the Website and Brochure have been re-launched during this winter and they include a new guide to self funding. The brand new website, which cost £985, was commissioned from the association built up reserves.

To create another revenue stream & build the Swaffham brand, we plan to extend the website www.aroundswaffham.co.uk to include a wide range of Swaffham based businesses – retail, commercial and services – each entry with multiple images, copy and hyperlinks for £50 per annum. The businesses are all part of the unique resident & visitor experience.

Benefits to members include:

- A classified entry in 30,000 Swaffham Visitor Guides that are widely distributed both locally, nationally and, from e-mail requests, to Europe.
- An entry on the new, acclaimed www.aroundswaffham.co.uk website – No 1 website on Google by searching just 'Swaffham' or accommodation/attraction terms plus 'Swaffham'. Thanks to Julie Lock & Hannah Scott for the hours they put into content & picture downloads. Visitor numbers to the new site have increased dramatically, for example the old site attracted 3209 visitors from Jan to April 2011 compared to 9658 visits this year, representing an increase of over 200%
- A discounted listing on the county's No 1 tourism website www.visitnorfolk.co.uk
- Referrals from member businesses
- The benefits of PR and promotional activities that increase visitor numbers to this area (eg. the Brecks Food & Drink Festival))
- Regular information by e-mail (tourism trends, warnings of scams etc)
- Help and advice
- Local and county-wide lobbying on members behalf and for tourism in general.

The Brecks Food & Drink Festival in Swaffham
Key Points;

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The kick-start; I was asked in May 2011 if there was a willingness to stage a Food Festival in 'my' region by EDP editor Pete Waters; the EDP had North Norfolk, Aylsham, Norwich & PIN on board and were now seeking to be county wide and market the festival as the biggest of its kind in the country. Pete suggested it might be called the West Norfolk Food Festival & said if we were not interested he would pitch the idea to the Broads. We therefore had 3 months to pull the month together whilst other festivals had been working on their content for a year!

Time restraints & name; We pulled together a group of interested parties. Personally I was very keen to call it the Brecks Food & Drink Festival in Swaffham; **The Brecks** already had developed our regional identity and it meant we could cast our net further than Swaffham for food & drink content and look to the Brecks partnership for support. This came mostly in the form of Michelle Turner who tweeted for us and loaded event content onto the Brecks website & liaised with the EDP site for us with Martin Hickey. Likewise Neil Featherstone who promoted it down into Suffolk and to Eleveden's Big Onion event and also physically helped us stage key events like the pop-up, cookery theatre and Farmers Market. (I have worked closely with the Brecks Partnership since the formation of the BTP which I subsequently chaired until Lord Iveagh took over).

We were able to get some funding help through Mark Stanton & Lindy Warmer's support at Breckland Council and via Waitrose although this was a torturous process.

We also approached Elizabeth Truss and Dr Tim Kinnaird (Master Chef runner up) to open it.

Logo; The logo was really key to having impact and defining our offering. Our logo dominated the EDP website and all the pictures had various foodie people in our unique aprons

It was a success; we were inundated with e-mails & cards & letters saying how much people enjoyed it and asking for an assurance we were going to do it again-including Elizabeth Truss.

The coverage we received from the EDP & its media arm amounted to a value of £33,500K.

The EDP recognised our festival as having the best and most diverse engagement from the WI with their ½ km bunting to the schools, cookery theatre, SCALGA, the Business Forum flags & art trail, farmers market, Icen partnership, ecotech picnic & events held all over the town and its outskirts within the month too numerous to mention here.

For this coming year It will of course be bigger & better! Taking place the third week in September. We have our fingers crossed for a well known name to open it alongside Elizabeth Truss. Watch this space but we still need help and financial aid will be welcomed with open arms.

6.9. Swaffham Museum Report: – Report by Cllr Ann Tigue

This time last year we were offering a vote of thanks to David Butters, our retiring Chair of Trustees, for his years of dedication to our Museum. Most of you will be aware that in December David suffered a fatal heart attack – he will be greatly missed by those who knew him through his many activities around the town and certainly by all of us connected with the Museum. A sad start to 2012, particularly as March 14th marked the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Museum, an event attended by many of David's colleagues from those days back in 1987.

The first major event in 2011 was the launch on the first of May of our ambitious oral history project – "Swaffham Within Living Memory" (SWLM) it is very rewarding to be able to report outstanding success for the first 12 months of the project thanks to the enthusiasm and hard work of our two employees, Sian Hogarth and Alice Mouncer. Much positive publicity has been gained for SWLM and for the Museum itself through a variety of excellent events and it is encouraging to note the partnership opportunities that have been developed with other organizations in the town, notably the Swaffham Players, the Brecks Food Festival and the Icen Partnership. The first anniversary is being celebrated on Saturday May 5th and all are welcome in the Museum, with free entry, from 10.00am to 1.00pm

On a less positive note, unfortunately we were unsuccessful in our bid to secure funding for a part time Curator, given the validity of our application to the HLF, masterminded by one of our volunteers, Anne Fairweather. However, we will continue our efforts through alternative funders as this is a very important post and one which is vital to provide the necessary leadership and professional input to our fantastic band of curatorial volunteers.

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During the year, much work went into trying to arrange a loan from the Castle Museum of artefacts from the Paddocks excavation in 1970, which uncovered an Anglo Saxon cemetery. Such effort was rewarded when several items were secured and which are now on display in our Archaeology Room. The loan expires in April 2013 but is hoped that we might be able to retain the items in perpetuity, as we believe that Swaffham is where they belong. We have also been able to extend our loan of ancient Egyptian artefacts from the British Museum for a further three years, an endorsement of our relationship with national institutions. Our thanks go to both Jamie Everitt, our Norfolk Museums Development Officer and to Cathy Terry, our Curatorial Advisor for their input and advice in such ventures.

It is always a challenge to maintain the interest of the public but by presenting a range of imaginative and informative displays we hope to achieve that objective and our thanks go to all of our volunteers who work tirelessly to fulfil this task. We are conscious of the need to encourage new and returning visitors alike as the future of the Museum much depends on the revenue so developed along with that generated by Shop sales and the income from our much praised Learning and Access offer. The recession has impacted on visitor numbers and more so on what is described in the sector as "secondary spend" in gift shops and cafes. In addition, we were sorry to recently lose the services of our volunteer Shop Manager, Irene Gibbons but our thanks go to Irene for the success of the Shop over the past seasons.

We are therefore extremely grateful for the financial input from the Town Council and the Friends of Swaffham Museum, whose combined support enable us to continue to offer a value for money visitor experience which in turn benefits the Town. A recent detailed research paper from the Association of Independent Museums indicated that every 1,000 museum visitors generated £30,000 into the local economy.

Finally, the Museum will be holding it's AGM on May 21st at 10.00am, here in the Council Chamber, to which all interested parties are invited to hear in more detail of our activities over the 2011 – 2012 season.

6.10. SCALGA Report: – Report prepared by Christine Wright.

Swaffham Community Allotments & Leisure Gardeners' Association which is frequently shortened to the acronym SCALGA has been in existence for nearly six years and are affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners - this is also referred to as NSALG.

The NSALG is owned, managed and funded by its members to protect, promote and preserve allotments for future generations to enjoy.

So at the heart of SCALGA'S raison d'tera is the mission to do our very best to up hold these three key points which are of course inter- linked.

As a committee, SCALGA cannot fulfil its duties without the advice and support of the NSALG, Swaffham Town Council and of course its individual members.

So moving on to what SCALGA has been doing this past year I will give a quick run-down of the activities we have undertaken, meetings we have attended, our current initiatives and what we are hoping to achieve in the forth coming months.

Our overall aim to make the allotment fields of Swaffham the best they can possibly be given the restraints of the current financial situation.

We are working towards having every allotment tenanted. This will mean that the maximum revenue will be available to help maintain the excellent current standard.

The take up of plots has never been so good. At the moment there is only a handful of plots still vacant. Nationally, there is evidence that the 'grow your own movement' is gaining popularity. You may already be aware that in the majority of counties there are waiting lists and in some cities the list is so long that it is almost impossible to rent even a small plot.

It's often stated that Norfolk is always a little bit behind the rest of the country but we are catching up and I am certain that before very long Swaffham will have a waiting list too.

Publicity and raising awareness to the general public that there are allotments to be rented is paramount a regular insert/article the Swaffham Town Newsletter is our first port of call so to speak.

Since this time last year SCALGA has participated in –

The Brecks Food Festival and we will again be involved this coming year with participation in cookery theatre making dishes from ingredients grown on the allotments

To raise awareness we participated in Swaffham's first Christmas Tree Festival. Our tree took the theme of 'Grow Your Own' Decorations included packets of seeds, autumn harvested red apples and gardening sayings from the famous and good. A display of the traditional Christmas dinner depicted that you could 'grown your own' including making wine and fattening up the chicken or turkey for the meal. This was a fun event and we thoroughly enjoyed taking part. All our publicity and recipe the leaflets were taken.

Every year we take part in the National Allotment Week usually held in late August. This gives the opportunity for prospective allotment holders to come and visit to chat and get the feel of becoming an allotment holder.

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Also by August, the Best kept Allotment Competition has been judged and completed. The winners are presented by the current mayor of Swaffham at our now well established and attended annual tea party. This event is open to all allotment holders be they members or not and we are more than happy to welcome the town councillors to attend.

Coupled with this is the Seed Scheme organised by NSALG in conjunction with King's Seeds that are based in Essex. This firm is a long established family business. Members of SCALGA can order and receive seeds at a greatly reduced rate. It is an excellent service that serves allotment holders really well. SCALGA in return received a commission on the seeds sold and of course this helps to fund our association.

For the first time this year we held, in conjunction with, the Escape Project and the Community Orchard a free seed swap which was well attended and it was good to see so many youngsters interested in growing. There are the gardeners of tomorrow.

Building on the seed swap we are now organising a free plant swap. Gardeners always set extra seeds and often have a few left over. It is also good to try out other varieties that they haven't grown before and this event gives the opportunity to do so.

SCALGA distributes a regular newsletter to all its members with copies being pinned to all non-member plots. It is through our newsletters that we are able to pass on really tasty and delicious recipes made from allotment produce, adverts on the notice board offers free sheds, green houses and gardening equipment that has been offered free by the general public. The newsletter is also the vehicle to pass on vital information for example the recent hose pipe ban and other important issues that have arisen. I am always amazed by what comes in to SCALGA and how a newsletter goes from nothing to full and interesting document.

I am always saying that the art of a good allotment holder is how good they are at recycling and this is even truer with an initiative that has recently started just over eight weeks ago. From one phone call from a local business to The Town hall and then to SCALGA may have created a national recycling of a waste product that is normally destined for land fill. I am talking about the recycling of coffee grounds. Initially SCALGA was not aware that this waste produce is excellent for composting and it is frequently quoted as a natural source of 'green nitrogen'. A short session on the internet soon changed our perception of this produce. Four businesses are currently saving their used coffee grounds for weekly collection. So far we have collected and distributed over 200 kg of grains which are repackaged and given to members. Not only is it superb for increasing the soil fertility we are preventing this material going to land fill and therefore helping to reduce in a small way greenhouse gases. I have become not the bag lady of Swaffham lady but the white bucket lady as I collect from the cafes and hotels in the town. So if you see me around Swaffham in the next few weeks you will know what I'm up to.

So what of the future - SCALGA will be working towards -

- raising awareness of becoming an allotment holder so that all plots are taken.
- encouragement of half allotments for new to growing tenants
- providing information to be added to the Swaffham Town Council's website on allotments and maintain contact via our e-mail address swaff.allotments@btinternet.com
- regular attendance at the Town Council Finance meeting.
- to continue to be involved in their regular inspection of the allotments and to report problems as and when they come to our notice
- provide advice and practical experience to not only the 'newbies' but also established tenants
- develop the concept of voluntary on-site field representatives. (This is a long term aim which has to be carefully introduced.)
- become more involved with the management of the allotments in order to gain experience of management with the ultimate long term objective of running the day to day responsibilities of the allotments under the direction of the T C
- continue to develop the good working relationship established over the last few years between the two organisations
- continue to recycle the coffee grounds and other unwanted but serviceable items
- plan interesting events for plot holders that are educational, informative, helpful, entertaining and above all fun to participate in
- maintain a low membership fee that will encourage young families to join
- to take the steps to successfully apply for a Lottery Awards for All grant with the advice and knowledge of the Town Council

6.11. Community Orchard Steering Group Report: – Report prepared by Kate Francis on behalf of the Swaefas' Swale Steering Group

Swaevas Swale is an award winning volunteer-led community orchard utilising derelict former railway embankment land between Orford Road playing field and the Tumbler Hill allotments.

Land Lease

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The lease of the land is yet to be finalised with Breckland Council. ASAG is very grateful to the Town Council for their offer of payment of all legal fees associated with acquiring the lease and appreciates that the current delay rests entirely with Breckland.

Progress in the last 12 months

Substantial work to improve the access, appearance and biodiversity of the orchard has been carried out. The orchard position has opened up the space between the Swaefas Way footpath and the Orford Road playing field, creating a lovely vista, and convenient steps have been added to the steep bank access from Northwell Pool.

Some of the polytunnel space is currently being used by the Community Allotment and other Tumbler Hill allotment holders, and the remainder is earmarked for Swaffham In Bloom. During the year, volunteer project manager Mark Keddie has moved away from Swaffham and although is still a regular visitor, is not able to do as much as he did while living close by.

The Kings Lynn Community Payback team have been a tremendous support to the project, and this support is set to continue until June 2012. After this date, their involvement will have to be reviewed as there are plans for Community Payback teams to start charging a daily rate to work on community projects, whereas their input so far has been at no cost to the project.

The Swaffham Business Forum purchased 100 Norwegian Spruce plug plants to be grown on and harvested to supply Christmas trees for the existing brackets on various buildings in the town centre and thus reducing the cost to businesses of decorating their premises. If this is successful then it is planned to repeat this planting scheme year on year.

Events and Awards

Last year, the project received a regional award from Action for Market Towns (AMT) in their Environment and Culture category, and also a Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) award. Over the last 12 months the volunteers have organised 2 events: a wildflower planting day on August 2011 and a Fun day we named "Spring Into the Great Outdoors" in March 2012.

All of this has helped sustain a high volume of favourable media interest in the project, in Advance Swaffham Action Group and in Swaffham itself.

Most of the trees planted in February 2011 are thriving, and it is planned to hold the project's first Apple Day as part of the Brecks Food and Drink Festival in September, to celebrate the orchard's first small but significant apple harvest.

Next Phase

Funding bids are in progress for a large rainwater capture and storage system aimed at providing sufficient water for the orchard, polytunnels and the allotments.

The next phase of the project will be to secure funding and required permissions for the reconstruction of the old signal box to serve as a site office and the appointment of a part-time project manager to oversee the implementation of this historically important rebuild. Funding has already been secured for the installation of some play equipment. However, until the lease situation is resolved, no such infrastructure work will commence.

Volunteers

The project has a core group of volunteers which needs to expand to ensure that the orchard is well managed in years to come. The formation of a management group to look after the orchard, the playing field and Northwell Pool is currently under consideration. Anyone who would like to volunteer either on a one-off or regular basis should contact Kate Francis at the Icen Partnership on 01760 722800 or email SwaefasSwale@hotmail.co.uk

6.12. Churches Together Report:

Churches Together in Swaffham is made up by representatives of four churches in the town who meet several times a year to plan and discuss various events. These include the Women's World Day of Prayer, the Lenten Meetings (during Lent), the Easter Witness in town, which recently saw a good turnout, the Christian Aid collections - to be held in town on Saturday 19th May and there will be an open evening on Wednesday 2nd May at 7pm in the Methodist Church rooms with a guest speaker. The event that most people might recognise Churches Together for would perhaps be the 'Town Carol Concert'. A huge effort is made to involve not only people from the churches, but also from the wider community and these have proved to be a great success with 150 - 180 people have been welcomed to the event in the Assembly Rooms which is an excellent venue. It was encouraging as well to have members of the Town Council joining us at these Christmas celebrations.

The latest and biggest venture which Churches Together is due to launch will be on Tuesday 1st May - a Foodbank Distribution Centre. This will be based at the Baptist Church and staffed by volunteers from the Catholic, Parish, Methodist and Baptist Churches. For those who may be unfamiliar with Foodbanks they began a few years ago where people from the Trussell Trust in Salisbury discovered that there were some people in their community who would be considered the 'Hidden Hungry' - these are people whose work situations have changed suddenly and having paid bills, they find they have no money for food; or perhaps

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someone has been in hospital for sometime and by the time they are able to return home there is no food in the house and they might be unable to get any. Sometimes, family situations can take a sudden change for the worse - bereavement maybe - and until finances are sorted out, they have no money for food. Sadly, it happens and foodbanks are being set up at a rate of 1 every four days and it really is a very simple problem to solve. Care agencies, by arrangement with the local Foodbank, are able to issue red vouchers that can be redeemed at the distribution centre, for three days of emergency food supplies which have been carefully calculated to be nutritionally balanced. Those three days should be enough for the underlying problem to be dealt with.

The Norwich Foodbank is anticipating feeding 4,000 people this year and here in Swaffham there is a possibility of joining forces with Dereham and Fakenham to become a Mid-Norfolk Foodbank. People are asked if they are buying non-perishable items, such as a packet of pasta for themselves, then perhaps they could pick up an extra one for the Foodbank. In this way, emergency food boxes are quickly produced ready to help those in need. This is very much in the early stages, but as we go forward, we would be looking to involve the local community to help others in need within this community. Further information can be found by contacting Helen Neale on 01760 725349 or emailing helenneale@sky.com.

6.13. ICYP Youth Forum Report: Report prepared by Lewis Hanrahan

Although it might seem like the Youth Council has been relatively quiet over the past year, we have in fact been working hard of re-organising and planning for the future. Following the changes to the Youth Service, both the Youth Council and ACOSY, the youth club, looked for new ways to better use our resources and decided to merge the two groups. The ICYP - Icen Committee of Young People - was formed, a partnership of the two groups in the form of a Youth Forum, with an aim to link up with a wider range of youth groups in the area. Our main objectives are to improve facilities, opportunities, and understanding of the community, the community's understanding of young people and the overall community spirit in Swaffham. We are beginning to link with the British Youth Council on campaigns such as transport and free school meals. Once the ICYP Youth Forum is firmly established, we wish to further our work on campaigns such as these.

We have two representatives (Lewis Hanrahan and Sophie Willis) on the Breckland Youth Council and another (Lisa) who has recently become a member of the UK Youth Parliament, these being just the beginning of the connections we wish to make. Links with school councils are also of huge interest to us and steps have been taken to join with Michael Berry, who's both the chair of the school council and Head Boy at Hamonds High School. We have also joined the British Youth Council, making numerous resources available to us which we will then be able to share with other young people and volunteers. Training days are on the horizon as a result of our British Youth Council membership, allowing us to develop our skills, not only getting the most out of our roles, but enabling us to give back to other young people.

Currently, we're running the youth clubs at the community centre, along with the Youth Café, giving young people a safe and informal environment to relax in and enjoy. In the last few months, we have also organised self defence classes for the young people attending our youth projects, and have trained a few of our volunteers to coach dodge ball.

We aim to promote the ICYP Youth Forum and recruit members from a range of youth groups to ensure we have a wide variety of ideas and voices. This will allow groups in the area, such as the Girl Guides or the Cadets, to showcase their own work, and also learning more about the Youth Forum and to sign up a couple of representatives to work with us and share ideas that are important to them.

Throughout the following year, the ICYP Youth Forum will also be involved with a number of events within the town, such as the Jubilee events, Olympic events and the music festival. We have big ambitions for the youth of Swaffham and hope to create a far reaching network of young people who have big voices and big ideas.

7. Town Council Reports:

7.1. Mayors Annual Report & overview of the Year:

The Mayor reported the Annual Report has been delivered to every household in Swaffham in the Newsletter. Many thanks go to our Editor Ellen Blake who has done a wonderful job. In addition she added:

- This has been a really busy year for us with 4 new Councillors.
- The Swaffham Business Forum is now up and running, social events have been arranged including a hog roast.
- The Community Orchard is one of the largest in the Country.
- The ESCAPE project has got off to a wonderful start.
- Costa Coffee has moved into the Cornhall.

- The Farmers Market has established very well.
- Our Gritting Volunteers are the first in the County.
- There are other issues currently under discussions including Car Parking charges, Tesco, Ben Bailey homes development, Abels development.

The Mayor paid tribute to all staff and publicly thanked the Town Clerk, Richard Bishop for all his effort.

7.2. Accounts for 2011 - 2012 and Budget for 2012 - 2013:

The Town Clerk reported the budget this year is the first of a four year financial strategy agreed by the Council at the Finance & G.P. Committee meeting on 26th October 2011 where all Councillors had the opportunity to participate in the debate and to vote. In these times of austerity it is not easy to justify an increase in their share of the Council Tax (by no more than 1% in total), but this is what your Town Council are doing over the next four years. If there was ever a wrong place to start a financial strategy it is where we are right now, but we are where we are, now to explain why...

- the Town Council are taking on the funding of delivering more services locally. In the past decade they have taken on street lighting, public toilets, TIC and soon to be play areas. They purchased the Community Centre, working in partnership & with volunteers to help secure grant funding for improvements to the town.
- a decision to sell surplus allotment land in 2006 meant the Council had to obtain a section 8 consent from the Secretary of State, this process took some 15 months to be granted. In this time a global recession devalued the land and reduced the number of potential buyers.
- your Council sold one piece of former allotment land in 2009. The law prevents the Council from spending money they raise on everyday revenue expenses; £85,000 was budgeted as an expected revenue receipt, it was later ruled by the auditor to be a capital receipt, restricting how it can be spent.
- the Secretary of State Hazel Blairs insisted on improvements being carried out prior to permission being granted for the proposed sale. The cost to the Council of around £75,000 which the Council believed could be reimbursed when the land was sold - the auditor ruled against this, draining the Council of its Reserves.
- there followed a dramatic downturn in the Saturday Market which over a three year period saw a loss of budgeted income of some £42,000. The Market was proportionally costing more money to achieve less income for the Council to help subsidise the Council Tax Payer.
- in the period 2007 - 2009 the Council had committed funds to many projects, that if withdrawn would have meant the loss of grant funding to the town in excess of £120,000. So an overdraft was necessary until money was received for the land sale, a difficult period to manage and it cost money in bank charges.
- in summary the Council are Capital rich and Revenue poor, due to circumstances beyond their control as described above. On paper they have general reserves in deficit but have an agreement with the auditor to see the reserves replenished over a 4 year period.

The previous two Council's in serving their four year term no doubt have made some difficult decisions, trying to balance up the services, projects and facilities that the town needs against the cost to the Council Tax Payer. Your current Council are in their first year and the work they have done this year will set the tone for future years. The cuts to public expenditure at higher levels i.e. County Council and Breckland Council will no doubt impact at the Town Council level, we must therefore prepare ourselves for the future.

There are many ways to prepare a budget and as you would expect amongst 13 Councillors and the Town Clerk we don't always agree, but this is quite healthy. We all have a common interest of wanting to do what is best for the townsfolk of Swaffham, as always we have to plan for that unforeseen expense. We have to plan for the time when the Council Tax will pay for the Public Toilets and to look after our Market which produces a tidy sum that means our share of the Council Tax is reduced.

The Council Tax payer in Swaffham at Band D last year paid a total of £1,482.86 this was shared out as follows:-

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£1,145.07 County Council
£64.05 Breckland Council
£191.16 Police
£82.58 Swaffham Town Council

The money raised by £82.58 was £207,000 which the Town Council then use for their expenditure. This sum of money is called the Council Precept. In 2012-13 this year the budget made an increase of £37,500 which gives the Town Council £244,500 which will mean at Band D the Council Tax will go up by £13.82 to £96.40 taking into account an increase in the Council Tax base to 2536.3 (increase of 29.6).

The increase puts 1% on your total Council Tax bill, it works out at 29p per week, less than half the cost of the EDP and most daily newspapers. The Town Council's share of £96.40 equates to £1.85 per week which may just buy you a cup of coffee these days or a piece of cake, but not both. Your Town Council strives to provide value for money for what the town gets in return.

8. Open Session - including correspondence received and questions from the floor:

8.1. There was no correspondence received in advance of the meeting.

Questions:

8.2. Mr David Harman personally thanked the Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Town Councillors, District and County Councillors, the Town Clerk and all staff for their hard work for the benefit of the town.

8.3. It was stated there are great organisations and charities within the town who work hard for local people and make Swaffham a great place to live.

8.4. A question was asked with the new developments, is the swimming pool going ahead. The Town Clerk stated the Swimming Pool is no longer going ahead, the Swimming Pool Association are currently unable to take this forward.

8.5. Mrs Tallon congratulated Cllr. Amy Head for her 1st year and attending functions within the town.

9. Mayors closing remarks:

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and thanked those who gave a report and she was encouraged with the revised format of this years meeting which appeared to work well. Feed back would be much appreciated as this would allow the Town Council to again review the format for the future and make any necessary changes.

Meeting closed at 9.10 p.m.

Mayor.....