

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the **Annual Town Assembly** meeting held on **Wednesday 18th May 2022** at **6.30pm** in the **Town Hall**.

Present: Mayor Cllr J Anscombe (in the Chair)

Councillors: Mrs N Bass, Mrs L Beech, Mr S Bell, Mr P Darby, Mr C Houghton, Mrs S Matthews, Mr K Oliver, Mr I Pilcher, Mr L Scott, Mrs J Skinner

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Office Administrator: Mrs H Duggan

Breckland Cllrs: Mr D Wickerson

Public: 6

1. Apologies for absence

Cllr Graham Edwards - holiday
Cllr W Bensley – work commitment
Cllr I Sherwood – prior commitment
Cllr E Colman – travel difficulties
PC Button – work commitment

2. Declarations of Interest

None received.

3. Minutes

The minutes of the Town Assembly held on Thursday 29th July 2021 were agreed for accuracy.

6.31pm - the meeting was adjourned to allow public participation

Graham Eves - requested an update on the Days Field sale. The Town Clerk advised the legal process was ongoing for the sale of Days Field subject to Planning permission being granted. It was on the agenda for later in the meeting.

6.33pm the meeting was resumed.

4. Mayor's Annual Report & overview of the year 2021-22

The Mayor's annual report was circulated prior to the meeting – see *Appendix 1*.
There were no questions from Cllrs.

5. 2021-22 Synopsis of Accounts, and Budget for 2022-23

The Town Clerk's report was circulated prior to the meeting – see *Appendix 2*.
There were no questions from Cllrs.

The meeting closed at 6.35pm

Mayor.....

Initials: _____

Mayor's overview of the year 2021-22

A report by the Mayor Cllr Judy Anscombe given to the Annual Town Assembly on 18th May 2022: -

Covid-19 Pandemic – A heartfelt ‘thank you’ to all volunteers who worked tirelessly and selflessly, throughout the pandemic, helping others and those in greatest need; Swaffham became ‘one community’ and should be proud of how everyone pulled together. Step-by-step the town is rebuilding after difficult times and moving forward once more.

Elections 2023 – the current Council took office in May 2019, so now enter their final year of office before the Town Council elections in May 2023. It is envisaged that some ‘Do you want to be a Councillor?’ events will be held in the run up to the election to encourage prospective candidates to stand for election next year.

Staffing Changes – long serving Receptionist (13-years) Kerry Furnass retired at the end of March, also Deputy Town Clerk (7-years) Claire Smith moved on to another Council closer to her home. There were also changes recently with two part-time posts for Admin Assistant (Caroline Payne 2-years) and Cleaner Caretaker (Pauline Daly 9-months). We thank all our previous staff for their dedicated service and give a warm welcome our new staff. Helen Carrier has joined us a Deputy Town Clerk, similarly Jane Williams as Office Administrator and Meg Felton (Apprentice) Communications Officer; we are interviewing this week to fill the vacant Cleaner Caretaker post.

Queens Platinum Jubilee Weekend – with events planned from Thursday 2nd June through to Sunday 5th June, we can look forward to the town being busy throughout this period. Starting with entertainment in the Town Centre and Beacon Lighting on Thursday, Afternoon Tea in the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul on the Friday, a Sheep Fair at our Traditional Saturday Market, then a Big Jubilee Lunch and Family Funday on Campinglands on the Sunday afternoon.

Orford Road Play Area - work has now begun on the new Orford Road play area, the plan as published earlier in the year including a revamped under 8's area and new equipment for over 8's. This is quickly coming together nicely and is due to be open this month. Please keep an eye on our social media platforms, website and noticeboards for further information, updates and confirmed dates of our opening event. We reported that a new piece of play equipment had been stolen. A duck spring rocker was taken from inside the enclosed site, on or around the evening of Tuesday 3rd May/early hours of Wednesday morning.

Classic Car Show & Funday - on Sunday 28th August the Classic Car Show & Funday will return on the Rec. Last year the Car Rally was the first public event we had held for 18 months back in August, due to the pandemic, and it didn't disappoint, we had a really good turn-out.

Christmas Market Weekend - plans are underway for 3rd and 4th December, after the success of last December's event staged over the two days for the first time, including the introduction of a Skating Rink, culminating with the light switch-on for the festive period. Our grateful thanks to all our sponsors, prize donors, trade stands, entertainers, volunteers, councillors, and staff.

Twinning - our twinning partnership with Couhe in France and Hemmoor in Germany was put on hold, with the planned bi-annual civic visit postponed in 2020 and in 2021; it is hoped this can go ahead in September 2022 in Hemmoor, an invitation has been received.

HAZ/Cultural Consortium -Town Delivery Plans - MTI (Sustainable Swaffham) -Swaffham secured Heritage Action Zone (HAZ) funding from Historic England and we are working with them and Breckland Council on the delivery of this project over a three-year period ending in 2024. The HAZ project is to support heritage and future planning projects in and around Swaffham Market Place public realm, a Masterplan has recently been published.

The Cultural Consortium is an offshoot of this, to deliver Cultural Events in that same period, as further funding is secured. The Consortium Events this year are concentrated around 'Carter 22' celebrating 100 years since Howard Carter discovered Tutankhamun's tomb.

Town Delivery Plan

Breckland Council invested in an initiative to have a Town Delivery Plan for each of the five Breckland Towns, the study for Swaffham is took place in September and October last year, and the draft document is now published.

Swimming Pool Land – progress with the conveying of two-acres of land owned by the Town Council to Breckland Council to build a new sports & leisure centre, has been somewhat slow. A decision taken by the Council last July has resulted in Heads of Terms currently under negotiation. Breckland Council identified the two-acre site as their preferred option for a new 'sports & leisure' centre for the town and asked if the Town Council would gift the site (freehold) as their contribution towards this project. The Town Council agreed to release this site, with just one covenant that it should only be used as a site for a sports and leisure centre.

The matter has been complicated slightly by a developer purchasing land adjacent and subsequently negotiating a Deed of Variation to gain a better access to the site. The developer currently has a planning application going through the system, which sets out their plans for the site. The solicitors for the Town Council, Breckland Council, landowners de Merke Estates and the developer Padley are currently working on resolving all legal issues, and when finally agreed all parties have to sign concurrently.

Sacred Heart Barn Theatre & Swimming Pool the Town Council acquired the Barn Theatre and Swimming Pool for an agreed price of £325,000 last autumn. They commissioned consultants Ingham Pinnock Associates, who prepared a Feasibility Study and Business Plan; this work concluded in November last year. It has been decided not to publish the report for the time being. A Steering Group was formed to look at how to bring the facility into community use and bridge the gap between Town Council ownership and a new management structure. There are two areas which are likely to be managed separately:

1. the Barn building. The town council's ambitions for the Barn are predominately for a Creative Arts and Culture Centre, and to offer facilities that currently doesn't exist within the town.
2. the Swimming Pool. The outdoor pool at the Barn needs major investment but is an opportunity for a new facility subject to securing funding for renovation.

The current position is stalled as the Council do not have the funds to move forward with any plans, other than to set aside £25,000 in this year's budget to prevent further dilapidation of the building. The Council are currently exploring external funding opportunities and the possibility of funding for a Project Manager.

Assets Review - the Assets Review has reviewed the future use of town council's portfolio of buildings and land. The Council are still making decisions based on the work carried out, it has been decided not to publish the report.

Days Field - A decision was taken last year to sell Days Field and the Town Council have accepted an offer from a developer to purchase the land, this is subject to planning permission being granted. The planning application is imminent, as is the exchange of contracts on the proposed sale. Full details will be released when the legal matters are settled. The Council will maximise and reinvest the proceeds back into the Town and to address options emerging from the Asset Review, including the acquisition of the Barn.

Any Other Business – the day-to-day issues do not feature in this report, those dealt with by the Council at every Council or Committee meeting. There are often matters in need of our attention, to that aim there is a public open forum at every Council meeting of 15 minutes where you can 'have your say' and address the Council. We also try to keep you up to date via the Swaffham Newsletter or by Social-Media via Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Don't forget too that you can always call in at the Town Hall if you prefer to see one of our staff.

Cllr Judy Anscombe, Mayor of Swaffham

Initials: _____

SWAFFHAM TOWN ASSEMBLY – FINANCE REPORT 18th May 2022

STC Budget 2022-23

The budget set this year is for 2022-23 financial year. The current Town Council are now budgeting for the year starting in April 2022, just one month away from the end of the third year of this Council's four-year term, the election in May 2019 is now further away than the election in May 2023, next year. It has been a sharp learning curve for Councillors and Staff, no-one predicted we would have to contend with a global pandemic for so long and would spend so much time talking about a 'new normal', whatever it may turn out to be. We have learnt new skills, such as holding meetings on a virtual platform called 'zoom' and then promptly the temporary Covid-19 legislation removes the ability to legally hold such meetings, whilst we still struggle on with the pandemic – strange, but true...

The money raised by the £156.51 was £425,950 which the Town Council then use for their expenditure. This sum of money is called the Council Precept. For 2022-23 next year the budget is looking at making a minimum increase of £22,461 which will give the Town Council £448,500, which due to an increase in the Council Tax Base this year with the new Council Tax base of 2,781.70. The Council chose to make a modest increase of 3% adding a further £13,000 to the Precept, to bring their Revenue Reserves closer to the recommended level.

This is lower than the current inflation rate of 5.2%. Either way, as the budget process unfolds, the Precept was set at the end of January. Swaffham Town Council always strive to provide value for money for the services they provide.

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL - ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2021-22

The Income & Expenditure accounts for the accounts at year ending 31st March 2022 are as follows: -

SYNOPSIS OF THE ACCOUNTS 2021-22

INCOME	DETAILS	EXPENSES
142	Bank Interest/Charges	640
425,950	Precept	0
0	Un-earmarked Capital Reserves	1,765
333,279	Earmarked Capital Reserves	395,824
197,335	Earmarked Revenue Reserves	4,646
0	Town Hall	33,878
29	Administration & Misc.	329,294
32,081	Market	4,468
14,887	Events	10,130
0	Outside Equipment & Vehicles	9,926
8,797	Allotments	1,491
7	Toilets & TIC	(1,543)
17,962	Cemetery & Churchyard	4,839
2,521	Open Spaces	10,785
6,418	Amenities & Agency	26,772
	Barn Theatre	5,444
	Barn Swimming Pool	42
	Barn Flat	674
1,039,407	TOTAL	839,076

The accounts have been internally audited by Auditing Solutions Ltd and are in the process of being externally audited by PKF Littlejohn.

Initials: _____