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Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly meeting held on Wednesday, 24th April 2013 at 7.00pm in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr T Jennison (Chairperson)

Councillors: Mr P Darby, Mr C Gunner, Mrs S Matthews, Mrs C Staines, Mrs A Tigue, Mrs P Wade

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk: Mrs R Noble
Assistant Town Clerk: Mrs S Porter

Breckland Councillor: Mr F Sharp
Norfolk County Councillor: Mrs A Steward

Internal Auditor: Mr B Clements

Community Speakers: Ms K Francis
Ms K Fullilove
Mr S Gregory
Ms S Palmer
Mr C Parsons
Mr L Scott
Mr D Tallon
Mr R Trowel
Ms T Welham

Public: 30 including the 9 Community Speakers.

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 commitments.
- 2.2. Cllr M Edwards - work commitments.
- 2.3. Cllr S Lister - unwell.
- 2.4. Cllr J Skinner - prior engagement.
- 2.5. Cllr D Wickerson - work commitments.
- 2.6. Breckland Cllr I Sherwood - work commitments.
- 2.7. Ms H Neale (Churches Together).

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, 25TH APRIL 2012

4.1. The Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly meeting held on Wednesday, 25th April 2012 were agreed and signed as a true and accurate record by the Chairman.

5 "WHY SWAFFHAM NEEDS A MUSEUM" (Keynote address and Presentation by Steve Gregory, Chairman, Swaffham Museum Ltd)

5.1. Mr Steve Gregory gave a presentation on the Swaffham Museum (Appendix 1).

6 COMMUNITY REPORTS

6.1. **Police** - There was no police representative present at the meeting.

6.2. Breckland District Council (Cllr Shirley Matthews, Cllr Frank Sharpe and Cllr Ian Sherwood)

Cllr Matthews' Report:

Cllr Matthews reported that one of the biggest current social problems was the lack of sufficient suitable affordable housing to satisfy the demand in the area.

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An Enabling Team of officers are working to improve the position and one of their initiatives is encouraging landlords with empty properties to help bring them up to standard for re-letting by giving them a grant of £5,000. Breckland District Council will also take responsibility for the properties when let and will collect the rent, etc, if the landlords wish.

The Enabling Team has also built a total of 118 new dwellings this last year by identifying small parcels of land belonging to the Council and getting planning permission to build on them. One such area is in Sandringham Way where there will be two houses built - the numbers soon add up.

There has been a reduction in anti-social behaviour of 16% this past year which is a significant figure as it is the third year in succession that this has achieved a double figure reduction.

Democratic Services - Nationally the Electoral Commission is looking at the number of Councillors serving in a particular district to ensure that there is an even distribution of population per Councillor. The Electoral Commission has been cutting the figure of Councillors rather severely but Breckland has been able to hold on to 50 out of the present 53 with the help of District Councillors all submitting their workloads over a specified period of time. Attention is now being paid to the boundaries of the various parishes and there is no doubt there will be some changes but it will be many months before a decision is received on that matter.

Environmental Health - Food Inspectors in this sector work hard; they have carried out 707 inspections and worked with 221 new businesses to help them understand food safety principles and best practice. They have offered 13 Food Hygiene courses to over 200 food handlers. There are 1141 eligible food premises and over 96% have a top grading in the 3 to 5 ratings; of those 8% are categorised as Generally Satisfactory, 27% as Good and 61% as Very Good. Only 4% were not considered to be broadly compliant and the worst 50 have been targeted by the officers.

Breckland Officers have also taken part in a multi-agency initiative with Norfolk Constabulary, Breckland Council, Broadland Housing Group and Flagship, aimed at stopping the illegal sale and handling of scrap metal following high profile national concerns.

Human Resources Department - Having recognised that the Breckland District Council trainers were of an excellent quality, they were launched into the business world as a team last October. They entered a National competition and left with the National Local Government Association liking their module and asking them to visit their Head Office to train their staff.

Cllr Sharpe's Report:

Cllr Sharpe reported that the financial challenge faced by Breckland is highlighted by the fact that unless action is taken now to address shortfalls, the Council will cumulatively be £8 Million short in revenue terms by 2017/2018. This sum does not take into account a recently announced additional 10% cut to Local Authority funding. The details of how this will impact is as yet unknown. Actions required to counteract this shortfall will include the costed options for greater alignment or sharing of services with South Holland District Council, i.e. shared procurement and contracts, joint communications team, shared election services, integrated asset management team and a joint growth team.

Additional projects currently being, or to be developed, include a review of Environmental Services, a review of Corporate management structures, a recent initiative to return the empty homes in Breckland back to full occupation, continuation to seek options for shared management and services with a third Authority, particularly King's Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council (at present the Chief Executive and the Housing Manager are shared between three Authorities).

Through the Rev Active Project (a three-year package of free, confidential and impartial support for small and medium-sized enterprises) businesses have had site visits from a Breckland Economic Development Officer and £1.3 Million in cost savings have been identified over the last twelve months. Through this, project grants in excess of £350,000 has been taken up by small or medium enterprises over the last twelve months. In Swaffham eleven small or medium size businesses have directly benefitted from the project. Breckland has teamed up with Norfolk and Waveney Enterprise Services to provide business support activities within the District. This includes 4 day business support courses involving one to one sessions with a business advisor, self employment awareness events and business introduction workshops. Having launched the programme in January 2013, eight Swaffham residents have already attended a workshop in one of the other market towns of which four have already started a new business in Swaffham.

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There are two business start up events planned for Swaffham; 'Starting a Business' on Thursday, 9th May 2013 and Business Introduction Workshop' on Tuesday, 11th June 2013. At present, Breckland Commercial Assets stand at 97% let, and year to date have generated £2.1 Million.

At present there are a number of public consultations taking place. With the introduction of new legislation the Government has signalled that Local Authorities should produce new plans for their areas. A Local Development Framework (LDF) currently exists and will remain in force until a new single Local Plan is in place. There are three main reasons for a new Local Plan; the regulations relating to the Planning System has changed, parts of the present LDF are dated and the economic climate has changed since 2009 when the present strategy was adopted.

The consultation on the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is presently underway. The CIL is basically a tax on new development and will, in some areas, will replace S106 Agreements presently used. All money generated by a CIL will go into one District-wide pot and will be paid to Councils towards the beginning of a development. This differs from present S106 monies which are tied to a development and is paid towards the completion of a development.

The consultation on the Preliminary Draft Charging Schedule will be between Monday, 15th April 2013 and Tuesday, 28th May 2013. Publication of this document will be in October/November 2013. In January 2014 there will be a public recommendation by an independent inspector.

Cllr Sherwood was not present at the meeting.

6.3. Norfolk County Council (Cllr Ann Steward)

We are in the process of trying to resolve the Tesco Section 106 money, which is coming to Swaffham. There are two principle contributions from the scheme: a bus service linking the site to the town and surrounding villages and a 'Community Contribution' which will be administered by Norfolk County Council.

An 'Apprenticeship Roadshow' had taken place across the county which received a positive response and good attendance from several businesses and youths aged between 16-24. The Town Council could employ apprentices.

More than 80 percent of Norfolk homes and businesses will be able to access superfast broadband services by the end of 2015, initial connections will commence in July 2013.

RAF Marham's future is secure, which will protect the thousands of jobs and millions of pounds it brings to the region's economy. It was not known if more personnel would be employed by RAF Marham, but both Norfolk County Council and Breckland District Council will continue to work closely with RAF Marham.

Cllr. Stewart was pleased to have been able to support the Town Council with its application for the refurbishment of the Cemetery Chapel which will hopefully take place later this year.

6.4. Icen Partnership (Chairman, Dennis Tallon)

The Icen Partnership is a charity that was formed in 2001, the Partnership received a European grant of £3,840,000 (including match funding from Norfolk County Council, Breckland Council and Swaffham Town Council) to refurbish the Assembly Rooms, build the new Community Centre and upgrade the town centre.

The Icen Partnership receives no government or Council funding for its core activities. Its income comes from hiring rooms at the Assembly Rooms and Community Centre and rental from eight business units.

The Icen Partnership has also:

Investors in Personnel - 55 extra contracted man-hrs/week including getting 2 long term unemployed into work.

Investors in Unpaid Placements - Swaffham Community Centre has a regular volunteer base who gain as much as they give.

Investors in Places - £20K has been spent in the last twelve months on infrastructure maintenance and public area furniture.

Investors in Perception - Awareness of what we do including information screens at the Community Centre and in-house rebranding.

Investors in Patrons - New initiatives including Work Club, Icen Lunch Club, Handyman Services and dementia friendly Swaffham.

Handy Person - If you are over 60 or living with a long term disability Swaffham's own handy person Jamie might just be able to help - general chores like changing light bulbs, fitting hand rails and moving furniture, garden tidying including hedge cutting and lawn mowing. Telephone: 01760 722800 to discuss your needs.

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The Partnerships aim for Swaffham and its villages are:

To assist and provide improvements to housing, transport, recreation and other services in the area.

Advancing education and training in the area.

Relieve unemployment through assistance to find employment.

Work with other organisations to assist those in financial hardship.

To improve and beautify the area.

Deliver the Advance Swaffham Action Plan.

6.5. Advance Swaffham Action Group (ASAG) (Project Development Officer, Kate Francis)

Our aim is to develop Swaffham as a thriving market town that actively supports businesses, the community, tourism and care of the environment

Our objectives are to 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

Advance Swaffham Action Group:

Dennis Tallon - Chairman and Social & Community Working Group chair

Anne Tigue - Swaffham Town Councillor representative

Pippa Wade - Environment Working Group chair

Chris Parsons - Swaffham Business Forum chair

Kate Gordon - Transport Working Group chair

Richard Bishop - Swaffham Town Council Officer

Don Saunders - Icen Partnership Manager

Kate Francis - Advance Swaffham Projects Development Officer

Stuart Weaver Marian Clements James Dean - working group members

Environment Working Group, Includes liaison with the Transition Swaffham Group

Key achievements:

- ✓ Overseeing activities at the Community Orchard
- ✓ Raising awareness of local environment issues
- ✓ Developing local recycling leaflet

Transport Working Group, Regularly meets with Paul Groom, NCC Highways to help address issues of local concern

Key achievements:

- ✓ Promoted infrastructure projects to improve the attractiveness of town for visitors and residents
- ✓ Improved town signs including new gateway signs
- ✓ Pollution & traffic monitoring studies
- ✓ Identified road/pavement improvement priorities

What's on in 2013

•Cycling and Walking events 1-9 June

•Charity "Norfolk Style" fashion show 13 July

•Norfolk-themed Carnival 21 July

•2nd Swaffham Free Music Festival 24 & 25 August

•3rd Brecks Food & Drink Festival 13-15 September

•Hosting National Walkers Are Welcome conference
19 & 20 October

•Progressing town's application for Anglia In Bloom competition, e.g. Swaffham Spring Clean Week

•Developing joint bid with Swaffham Museum and STC Market Committee for celebrating 800 years of Swaffham Market Charter

•Working with STC & SBF to maximise positive impact of any funding available, including S106

•Promoting Swaffham as a great place to live, visit and do business

6.6. Swaffham in Bloom (Cllr Charles Gunner)

The Swaffham in Bloom 2013 team is led by Dennis, Don, Kate, Jonathan, Charles, Anne and several other enthusiastic volunteers. The aim is to co-ordinate Anglia in Bloom competition entries and activities for Swaffham and villages to maximise volunteer efforts and get results.

Swaffham in Bloom 2013 entries include: Town Centre, Community Centre, Suffield Court, Oakleigh Drive, The Maltings and others.

The Swaffham in Bloom key dates are:

Thursday 4th April - Youthie & Safer Neighbourhood Team refurbishing Community Centre Front Patio, including memorial.

Monday 8th April - Deadline for receipt of Anglia in Bloom Entry Forms and cheques.

Tuesday 22nd - Monday 28th April - Spring Clean Swaffham Week.

Wednesday 24th April - Town Assembly.

Thursday 2nd May - Icen Partnership AGM.

Friday 28th June - Deadline for Portfolios.

The Spring Clean week will be undertaken by Swaffham in Bloom, Swaffham Town Council, Swaffham Business Forum and Advance Swaffham Action Group in a co-ordinated effort to improve the visual appeal of the town through cleaning, weeding, maintenance, litter picking, planting and general tidying. The Key stakeholders include: Swaffham Town Council, Breckland Council, Norfolk CC Highways, Business Premise owners, tenants and residents. The Key volunteers included are; Icen Partnership, Scouts, ATC, Youthie, Rotary, Community Allotment/Orchard and other groups.

6.7. Swaffham Business Forum (Chairman, Chris Parsons)

Well, it's been a busy year for the forum since the last town assembly.

At that time we were in the middle of the Tesco debate and we organised a members evening with reps from the development to aid our understanding and help frame our response.

We held an informative Social Media evening where some of us learnt a bunch of new skills in that regard.

We have worked throughout the year on the Car Parking issue, successfully opposing Breckland District Council's charging proposals, but also working with the town council on potential alternatives.

We decorated the town for both the Jubilee and the Olympics, including shop window competitions and the like, and held a Jubilee BBQ.

We successfully campaigned to get Small Business Rate Relief extended, having calculated it would remove another £200k from the town if not.

We hosted our 'Adapt and Survive workshop, of which more later, and we received a commendation from Action for Market Towns, for which we were very grateful.

We participated in the Breckland Could We-Should We debate, and of course, we once again put together a really effective festive lights display for the town.

This year, we have already held a business development evening looking into business support and Apprenticeships for our members, and the Swaffham Spring Clean idea came out of the work we have been doing, and thanks to those taking part this week.

As you might expect, we have more ambitious plans for the rest of 2013, and look forward to working with the rest of the towns organisations in making it a very special year for Swaffham.

So in all, we feel that we have continued to build on the success of our first year in Promoting, Communicating, Supporting and Networking for the business community of Swaffham

6.8. Swaffham Regeneration Project (Cllr David Wickerson)

Mr C Parsons gave a report on behalf of Cllr. D Wickerson:

Swaffham Business Forum held a workshop in the town last summer entitled **Adapt and Survive** at which many key people and businesses in the town met to discuss the challenges facing our market town and its economic viability.

As we will all recognise, retail is changing, the advent of internet and home delivery alongside mobile phone and tablet technologies is changing the way many people shop. Coupled with reduced economic activity at the moment these changes threaten to combine into a perfect storm that could have a significant and long lasting impact on the town centre.

However there is a national rise in the number of retail outlets in certain categories and a change or shift between the types of products that people still shop for. There is also a change in the way people want to use the town centre spaces, and an increased demand for social and leisure uses. There is a change in the demographic and related behaviour of the retail shopper.

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At the same time, rising concerns over empty shops and the closure, or threatened closure, of some major stores in the town, alongside the imminent arrival of Tesco and the publication of the Portas review led us to realise that we needed a town wide, professional and strategic approach to economic development and regeneration.

Most of what came out of the Adapt and Survive workshop coincided with the economic objectives of the town plan and it was felt that, rather than duplicate our efforts, cooperation and collaboration between ASAG, Town Council and SBF would be a way to move forward on these objectives. Consequently, SBF were asked by Advance Swaffham to take on the Economic Development

We believe there is still a viable and exciting future for our town centre. After all, it's been here for nearly 800 years and reports of its demise, in our view, are premature.

So, we set about gathering together representatives from the various stakeholders, carrying out research into the issues of concern and trying to understand the changing retail and economic landscape. That has not been helped, as I said, by an untimely economic recession, but actually, we believe that the way out of recession will be led by activities such as this, by a collaborative, town wide response to all of the issues affecting our economic well-being.

The first activity was to undertake a review of the **existing situation**. With around 16% of the shops being vacant, some matters are very obvious, but others are less so and we really wanted to know exactly where we were starting from. That way, we stand a chance of knowing where we need to get too and maybe how to get there!

We then put together the bones of an action plan which we are currently trying to implement. Amongst matters within that plan are:

Rates. A project to understand non-domestic rates and how they are calculated and collected, considering anomalies and disincentives within the regime, and then to campaign for sensible changes or amendments where possible. Also to understand where challenges to rating may be successful and to assist businesses in undertaking sensible rating revaluations. To this end we are preparing opposition paper and the SBF has arranged an open meeting with Liz Truss MP to talk about these and other matters.

B2B promotion of the town and specific research and targeted approaches to selected candidate businesses that would benefit from our catchment profile in terms of size, demographic and retail mix.

Maintaining a **register of vacant properties**, including all the relevant detail to facilitate prompt and efficient responses to enquiries and opportunities.

Contact with the owners and agents of these retail premises to investigate the barriers to letting and use. From their perspective. This includes acting as introducers for tenants or 'meanwhile uses' such as pop-up shops, vinyl shop fronts, suggesting community uses, help with alternative uses for accommodation above the shops.

Attention to the **public realm** and exploring opportunities for improvements to make the town more attractive to business and shoppers alike. We are currently in the middle of the Spring Clean week and only this morning one of our town businesses was cleaning the pavements in front of his shop as part of this initiative.

Working with the other stakeholders including Breckland District and Norfolk County economic development officers to see what opportunities they can provide and what assistance they can give.

To encourage, and try to funnel resources from these sources into assisting with business start-ups and business development. The SBF has held a business development and apprenticeship evening to act as a link for existing and new businesses to access the significant help there is out there for new enterprise, particularly for young people.

We would like to access Tesco section 106 monies to fund **professional strategic advice**, retail nursery units and other initiatives, all designed to counter the potential harm, and to harness the linked trading that the stores arrival might offer.

The committee we have working on these ideas is full of positive and forward thinking people and if we can translate half of that energy into effective action we will be able to make a significant impact on the towns fortunes, to the point where other towns will eventually look and say.... See what Swaffham did....!

6.9. Swaffham & District Tourism Association (Chairman, Vanessa Scott)

Mrs Vanessa Scott was not present at the meeting. Mr Les Scott gave a presentation on her behalf. The following key points were raised:

- There are currently 50 members of the Around Swaffham website www.aroundswaffham.co.uk.
- Around Swaffham was the main deliverer of the Brecks Food & Drink Festival and has organised this event for the past two years. This year's event will be held mid September. This event provides a trio of markets over a three-day period and also makes a profit.
- Last year's event had 53 Farmers Market traders, a pop up restaurant which hosted 80 diners and many local producers (opened by Elizabeth Truss MP and Dr Pixie McKenna), a chefs' race, poultry, a cookery school hosted by many different chefs and a treasure hunt led by Radio Norfolk.
- Around Swaffham sits on the Norfolk Tourism Board, is a member of the Brecks Partnership and has input in the Brecks Explorer publication. This would be available in the TIC in the Swaffham Museum.

- Swaffham has even appeared in 'The Best of Norfolk' book.

6.10. Swaffham Community Allotments & Leisure Gardeners' Association (SCALGA) (Chairman, Roger Trowel)

Mr Roger Trowel circulated and read a report as follows:

SCALGA has been in existence for nearly 7 years and is affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners (NSALG), now renamed the National Allotment Society (NAS). The NAS is owned, managed and funded by its members to protect, promote and preserve allotments for future generations to enjoy. SCALGA's mission is to do its very best to uphold these three key points which are of course interlinked. As a Committee SCALGA cannot fulfil its duties without the advice and support of the NAS, Swaffham Town Council and its individual members.

SCALGA's overall aim is to make the allotment fields of Swaffham the best they can possibly be, given the restraints of the current financial situation, and to help home gardeners accomplish what they want to achieve. With the Town Council, the aim is to have every allotment tenanted, which will enable the maximum revenue 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. In the majority of counties there are waiting lists and in some cities the lists are so long that it is almost impossible to rent even a small plot. Some enthusiasts are even taking over roundabouts to grow vegetables and flowers!

It's often stated that Norfolk is always a little bit behind the rest of the country but it is catching up and with certainty Swaffham will have a waiting list too in the near future. Publicity and raising public awareness of allotments for rent is paramount and a regular article in the Swaffham Newsletter is a regular feature.

Since this time last year SCALGA has participated in raising awareness by participating in Swaffham's first Christmas Tree Festival. The SCALGA tree took the theme of 'Grow Your Own' Decorations which included packets of seeds. This was a fun event and thoroughly enjoyed by all taking part. All the publicity leaflets and recipes were taken.

Every year SCALGA takes part in the National Allotment Week, usually held in late August. This gives the opportunity for prospective allotment holders to visit, have a chat and get the feel of becoming an allotment holder. Last year this formed part of the Escape Project.

By August, the Best Kept Allotment competition had been completed and judged. The winners were presented by the Mayor of Swaffham at SCALGA's well established and attended annual tea party. This event is open to all allotment holders, be them members or not, and Town Councillors are always welcome to attend.

Coupled with this is the Seed Scheme organised by NAS 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 which helps to fund the association.

SCALGA distributes a regular newsletter to all its members with copies being pinned to all non-member plots. It is through the newsletters that tasty and delicious recipes made from allotment produce can be passed on. Adverts on the notice board offer free sheds, greenhouses and gardening equipment that have been donated 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. It is amazing what articles and information comes to SCALGA and how a newsletter goes from nothing to a full and interesting document. The Escape Project also has an input into this.

The art of a good allotment holder is based on their dedication to recycling. If any homeowners have any greenhouses, sheds, pieces of fencing, etc. SCALGA would be pleased to hear from them.

In the future SCALGA will continue to:

- raise awareness of becoming an allotment holder so that all plots are taken.
- encourage half allotments for new to growing tenants
- provide information for the Town Council website and maintain contact via email at swaff.allotments@btinternet.com.
- regularly attend the Town Council Finance meetings.
- continue to be involved in regular allotment inspections and report problems as and when they occur.
- provide advice and practical experience to new and established tenants.

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- encourage use of the suggestion boxes and feedback from allotment holders and home gardeners.
- become more involved with the supervision of the allotments in order to gain managerial experience with the ultimate long term objective of running the day to day responsibilities of the allotments under the direction of the Town Council.
- continue to develop the good working relationship established over the last few years between the two organisations.
- continue to recycle unwanted, but serviceable items.
- maintain a low membership fee that will encourage young families to join.
- take the steps to successfully apply for a Lottery Awards for All grant with the advice and knowledge of the Town Council.

Forthcoming Events:

- Annual General Meeting Wednesday, 8th May 2013 in the Assembly Rooms at 7.30pm.
- Best Kept Allotment Competition week beginning Monday, 15th July 2013 with final judging Monday, 22nd July 2013.
- ICENI Carnival Sunday, 21st July 2013. SCALGA will be hosting a pitch “Horse Shoes”.
- Best Kept Allotment Competition Prize Giving with tea and cakes Sunday, 8th September 2013 in the Assembly Rooms.
- SCALGA Annual Outing to Easton Walled Garden and Grimsthorpe Castle Gardens Sunday, 22nd September 2013 (leave Swaffham 10.00am - all welcome).

6.11. Escape Project (Project Worker, Katy Fullilove)

Ms Katy Fullilove gave a presentation. The following key points were raised:

- Escape is a community action project led by Family Action. It began as a community allotment project based at Tumbler Hill and has expanded its activities.
- Volunteers have an induction training day and are also able to attend workshops on various gardening topics to help support people from various backgrounds to get involved in activities on the allotment and/or helping older people and people with disabilities in their gardens at home. This includes gardening activities with residents at some of the supported living homes in Swaffham.
- There is also the opportunity to help organise and get involved in cooking sessions using Escape produce and help to generally develop the project.
- It is useful for volunteers to have at least basic gardening skills, although there will be opportunities to learn more throughout the programme, so this is not absolutely necessary.
- Experience of working with vulnerable adults, groups, or children is also desirable.
- Basic carpentry/DIY skills which would enable the volunteer to construct raised beds and other such tasks would be useful, but not essential.
- Even without much experience of the above, enthusiasm and a desire to support people in the community is key and people should still apply.
- The Community Café in the Community Centre and Strattons Hotel have each been supplied with Escape produce and feedback has been good.
- Funding has been secured until April 2014.
- Escape is looking to recruit more volunteers, increase produce and become self-sustaining.
- A recipe book is currently being printed and will shortly be published; a £5.00 donation will be kindly appreciated for a purchase.
- An Open Day is scheduled for Friday, 21st June 2013 from 12.00pm-2.00pm.
- Escape is sincerely grateful to all the supporting organisations which have helped this community project prosper.

6.12. The Nicholas Hamond Academy (TNHA) (Assistant Principal, Trudy Welham)

Ms Trudy Welham gave a presentation. The following key points were raised:

- November 2012 saw the change to academy status.
- Changes were also made to school uniform.
- The new principal, Cheryl Hill, is determined TNHA will be ‘the best it can be’ on its journey to ‘outstanding’.
- The focus on active learning is key to every day life at TNHA.
- There is a real community spirit at TNHA with every student and every member of staff affiliated to a college.
- There are regular college challenge days where students and staff wear their college uniform to school and take part in a competitive challenge. This promotes the team spirit with staff and students working together to earn points for their college.
- Ms Hill is keen that learning is not restricted to the classroom and has introduced ‘deep learning days’. On these days each year group focuses on one subject area and participates in activities related to this, for

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- example, groups have visited Duxford Museum, some have taken part in a 'CSI' style science challenge where they had to solve a murder mystery, Maths' teams developed their mathematical skills by making fruit smoothies and the PE Department has tried out some alternative sports such as zumba, archery and martial arts.
- Years 9, 10 and 11 have had the opportunity to take part in a residential activity at Kingswood, near Cromer.
- TNHA is keen to develop links with the wider community and already has students working on projects at the Green Britain Centre, working with the area road safety officer and helping support the 'Tidy Swaffham' campaign.
- Up to date news is available via the website www.hamondshighschool.co.uk and Twitter @teamNHA.

6.13. Churches Together (Helen Neale)

Ms Helen Neale was not present at the meeting. The Town Clerk read a report in her absence as follows:

We've had the pleasure of welcoming two new members of clergy to Churches Together - Father Gordon Williams from Our Lady of Pity Catholic Church and Revd. Manny Pillay of the Methodist Church who we have benefited from and enjoyed their involvement. Together with them and members of their churches as well as folk from St. Peter & St. Paul under the guidance of Revd. Tim Lawes and the fellowship of Swaffham Baptist Church, a number of events have taken place. Most notably, we held the Town Carol Concert in the Assembly Rooms with as good attendance as could be expected given the weather conditions but with the help of local school children, we had a most enjoyable evening and look forward to what Christmas 2013 will hold. We realise that many church events may only appeal to a certain number of people but would like to re-iterate that most of the activities organised by Churches Together are open to the wider community and assure everyone of a very warm welcome - as I'd hope anyone would receive going to a church; perhaps even for the first time! In fact, we have an 'Open Evening' on Wednesday 8th May at 7pm in the Methodist Church Rooms where our speaker will be Revd. Tim Lawes - all are welcome!

Last year, we introduced Foodbank to the Town Assembly. We opened the doors to the Distribution Centre on 1st May 2012 but despite faithful and dedicated volunteers staffing the centre (held in the Church Hall of the Baptist Church), we didn't seem to be needed and were just at the point in September, of deciding to close except for emergencies, when we had our first client with a voucher. Since then, the Swaffham Foodbank Distribution Centre has fed more than 150 people in crisis. Although it is distressing to know that many people in our own community are going through such difficult times, it is equally encouraging that there are so many in our community who want to help and do so generously. Most of the food donated at this time, comes from people from the various churches represented at Churches Together but Waitrose in Swaffham is very supportive of the project by allowing us to have collection days in their supermarket which has provided us with just over half a tonne of food since the end of November 2012 and the Swaffham In Need charity has funded meal vouchers for those who come to us to be able to go and have a meal at the Community Centre. It's wonderful to have so many areas of community working together and a tremendous privilege to be able to provide such practical basic support to those who would otherwise have to face days without food. This works well because of the diverse network of agencies who have agreed to come on board by becoming approved signatories for the voucher scheme and we hope that other agencies who feel they have clients who could benefit from this area of assistance will get in touch as soon as possible so we can reach all those in need. Thank you - Helen Neale

6.14. Youth Development (Youth Worker, Sally Palmer)

Projects and activities open to young people include:

Youthie

Youth Café

Youth Voice

STAR's

Holiday Activities

Youth Volunteering

Youthie

It is aimed at young people aged 8 through to Year 8. It is activity based, with themed sessions and events. Over the last year Youthie has grown week by week. Averaged attendance is now between 35 and 40 young people each week.

Recently young people have been involved in:

- Sports activities including working with Active Norfolk
- Craft activities
- A session with the PCSO's around internet safety
- Peer support

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We also have older young people acting as Peer Leaders supporting the running of the Tuck Shop and craft table.

6 young females are also now beginning to take on peer leadership roles within Youthie and three have started their ASDAN Volunteering Short Course Award.

To ensure that this project can continue to grow, we need to attract more volunteers.

Youth Cafe

This is a drop in cafe aimed at young people aged 13 to 19 years old.

There is no set agenda except to socialise with their friends in a fun, safe, supportive environment.

Many of the young people accessing the project will also gain support and guidance on life choices.

Numbers are picking up but we would still like to see this increase.

Breckland Sports Development team have been supporting with Table Tennis and Dodgeball 6 week courses.

Although we run a Tuck Shop at both projects we have also been offering free toast/crumpets. This is as a result of becoming aware that many of the young people have not eaten before coming in!

Youth Voice

We are currently holding a consultation to find out what facilities young people want and need, what they would like to see happen in the community and how they can get more involved.

This will then help the Iceni Partnership team to draw up an action plan and then look for the funding needed to move this forward.

Initial findings show that the young people like being at the Community Centre but they would like it open more often and for longer.

Young people continue to develop their voices to ensure they are heard within the community, the County, the Region, the Nation and the wider world. They are also involved in the Youth Go Global projects, who are aiming to develop opportunities to volunteer abroad and they have strong links to the British Youth Council and UK Youth Parliament.

STAR's

Over Easter, working in partnership with the SNT, a group of young people continued the work started by the Swaffham Team Activity Rebuilding Scheme (STAR's) to complete the planned STAR's Memorial. This memorial tablet is to honour the young people who have died under the age of 25 within our community.

They have built the STAR's memorial at the Community Centre. The memorial tablet is set into a wall with a star and poem engraved on it. Family and friends will be able to have a plate placed on the wall in memory of their young people.

The group have arranged an unveiling to take place in May

Holiday Activities

We have also arranged holiday activities for young people that have included working in partnership with Breckland Sports and Arts Development Teams.

Youth Volunteering

Having received funding from the **Youth Advisory Board (YAB)** to develop a volunteering project, we are now working with young people and adults to develop their volunteering skills and to gain accreditation.

We are now working on a complete support package for our volunteers. Laura is working on the Handbook.

We have produced an application form which has been adapted and will also be used for the Partnership as well.

Volunteers will support our youth projects as well as other community groups

Young people from 14 to 18 years old can gain their ASDAN Short Course in Volunteering and over 18's can gain the Community Volunteering Award at Entry Level through to Level 3.

We are also working with volunteers from Narborough so that they can access the ASDAN Community Volunteering Award and training which we will be offering in the May half term.

At a recent support meeting Anita Beckett (YAB Support Worker) was very positive and felt that the work we have done already should be used as good practice. She would like to look at using our handbook across the District (at a cost!).

What the future holds will depend on the results of the consultation but we will look to maintain the present provision and plan to extend this to address young people's needs and wants.

7. TOWN COUNCIL REPORTS

7.1. Mayor's Annual Report & Overview of the Year

The Mayor reported that the Annual Report would be delivered to every household in Swaffham with the Newsletter. She thanked the Editor, Ms Ellen Blake, for continuing to do a wonderful job.

The newest **Co-opted Councillor** who joined the Council in September 2012 is **Cllr Christine Staines**, following the resignation of Cllr Ian Sherwood. Christine joins Cllrs Stewart Bell, Matthew Edwards and Anne Tigue all serving their first term of office since the election in May 2011. There exists a casual vacancy at the present time with no by-election being called following the recent resignation of Cllr Amy Head; the Council are

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now free to co-opt at their next meeting on 8th May. Candidates to write introducing themselves and give the reason why they wish to join the Council.

The second year of our **gritting volunteers** has been fairly successful, although being slightly shorter on numbers, they have covered a wider area of the Town for a much longer period. Those who did volunteer really did make a difference around the town by clearing pathways in the town centre and in many outlying areas. Our scheme in Swaffham is being used as the blueprint for other Parishes & Towns to set up their own volunteers. There is a meeting on 13th June at 7pm at the Town Hall for gritting volunteers, any new members are welcome.

The **Pedlar Sign** has had a makeover with local sculptor Colin Yorke re-carving a great deal of the sign and Barry Joyner re-painting the sign. The Town Council staff carrying out repairs to the plinth and former Mayor Dave Cannon assisting in repairs to the planters. Cllr Stewart Bell organised a funfair at the Christmas lights switch on event, which raised £250 towards the cost of refurbishing the sign. Our grateful thanks to all concerned. BUT we still need to hear from the public on the issue of restoring the holly wreath on the sign, at present public opinion has swayed in favour of restoring the holly wreath. It was reported recently that Harry Carters daughters were in favour of restoring the wreath. A decision will be taken in May by the Council.

The second **Brecks Food & Drink Festival** took place in September last year, again this was a fantastic occasion that brought thousands of people to the Town. Our Traditional Saturday Market, our Evening Market and the CCFM Farmers Market all formed part of an exciting weekend.

The **Business Forum** in their second year are making their mark in the town. They are well led by their Chairman Chris Parsons and Committee. They have re-established the **Christmas Lights** in Swaffham as a spectacle which is a real bonus for the Town. We do look forward to working with them for many years to come.

There is still no starting date announced for the new **Tesco** store in Castle Acre Road. Behind the scenes the Council were heavily involved with the Business Forum & ASAG in negotiating planning obligations to benefit the town. Tesco first indicated they would seek to open the store late in 2013, but now that the planning permission is all signed off, the longer it goes on without an announcement it does look like being sometime in 2014 now.

The 335 home development at the former Redland site received planning approval for **Ben Bailey Homes** part of this development (90 homes) has been taken on by Taylor Wimpey and will be developed at the same time as Ben Bailey so that the first stage of the development will be delivered much quicker. The biggest immediate visible change at that end of town has been the construction of a roundabout funded by the developers. The Town Council have agreed to take on three small play areas on the site, also the street lighting within the site.

The **Abel Homes** development is moving forward with their 250 home development also in **Brandon Road**, for which they have outline planning permission. This is located between the proposed Ben Bailey Homes site and the Town. The Town Council have agreed in principle to take on the three play areas, large open space and an area of biodiversity on the site.

The **Play areas** at the Oaklands and Merryweather Road were finally transferred to the Town Council from Breckland Council this past year. This was a long drawn out process, but these areas are now under local management from the Town Hall. Serco will still be the grass cutting contractor up to March 2015, but it is envisaged that this will be taken back in house from April 2015.

The Council were successful in obtaining a grant of £45,000 from the Norfolk Community Foundation for the **Cemetery Chapel refurbishment and modernisation project**. It is hoped that a contractor will be appointed very soon and the project will be completed in the autumn. The finer detail will be discussed by the Working Group and the full Council in the coming months.

The **Swaffham Newsletter** continues to go from strength to strength; Ellen Blake our Editor consistently month after month gives us a newsletter to be proud of. It is colourful and community orientated, with a Swaffham feel. Our team of volunteers deliver to every door in the Town, so thank you Ellen and to each and every volunteer. We still need more volunteers though, so if you know of anyone who may be able to help us, please put your name forward at the Town Hall.

The Town Clerk has been on **Twitter** since July 2011 @swaffhamclerk currently has over 1,000 followers and the addition of @SwaffhamMarket last year with over 350 followers already. Social media gives instant communication with a number of people at the same time.

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The **Town Clock** spent a period of time this year without its chimes. But thanks to a donation of £200 from a local resident Mrs. Blackmore in memory of her Mother Mrs. Mary Latham, the Clock is chiming once more...

Breckland Council reviewed their services this past year with a '**could we, should we**' consultation. This process started with a discussion around the possible introduction of **Car Parking charges** and it developed into a full review costing £25,000 looking at everything that Breckland Council currently provides. An increase of £5 at Band D (the maximum allowed) was agreed to maintain most services, it was agreed that in 2013-14 there would be no charges introduced for car parking, but in years to come more than £2 million of savings still need to be found, so the process is on-going...

7.2. 2011/2012 Accounts and 2012/2013 Budget - Town Clerk, Richard Bishop

The budget this year is the second of a four year financial strategy agreed by the Finance & G.P. Committee back in October 2011 where all Councillors had the opportunity to participate in the debate and more importantly 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 0.75% 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 were last year, but if you missed the reasons back then, then this is why...

- the Town Council continue to take on the funding of delivering more services locally. In the past decade they have taken on street lighting, public toilets, TIC, with play areas and open spaces the latest addition. 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 and hope very much to sell the other in 2013-14. 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 then 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. Thankfully the past two years has seen a recovery.
- 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 and 2013-14 is the 2nd year of this financial strategy.

Previous Council's 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 second year and every year there seems to be something else that they need to take responsibility of, with other issues looming in future years. The cuts to public expenditure at higher levels i.e. County Council and Breckland Council will impact at the Town Council level, we must therefore prepare ourselves for the future. The preparation of the annual budget is not something your Council takes lightly but like everything else it is all about opinions. The 13 Councillors don't always agree with each other or the Town Clerk; and hard decisions have to be taken. 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 are already planning for the time when the Council Tax will pay for the Public Toilets, Play areas and Open Spaces. We don't take the Market income for granted either, we have to look after this wonderful asset that means our share of the Council Tax is reduced.

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The Council Tax payer in Swaffham at Band D last year paid a total of £1,502.44 this was shared out as follows:-

£1,145.07 County Council
£64.05 Breckland Council
£196.92 Police
£96.40 Swaffham Town Council

The money raised by the £96.40 was £244,500 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 is looking at making an increase of £23,505 which will give the Town Council £268,005 which will mean at Band D the Council Tax will go up by £9.27 to £105.67 taking into account the current Council Tax base of 2536.3 (to date new tax base unknown).

This particular year the budget needed to be confirmed in January when Breckland Council received their government grant settlement. The impact of the localisation of Council Tax benefit scheme affects the Council Tax Base rate, the rate itself was still not known. Confirmation from government was awaited that Town Council's would still be exempt from a referendum if their increase is above a certain rate. Then finally in respect of Breckland Council, the potential impact of taking on car parks to prevent charges being introduced, was a major 11th hour consideration.

BUDGET 2013-14 part 2

Revised Council Tax Base received from Breckland Council. Impact on future years with and without government subsidy.

The revised Council Tax Base has gone down to 2071.90 from 2551.90 an overall reduction of 480. There is a one off government subsidy available this year to Swaffham of £34,668.20 passed down from Breckland Council.

There is no guarantee of any subsidy in a second year and even if there is a subsidy given to Breckland Council, they are under no obligation to pass that subsidy down to Parish & Town Council's. In Norfolk the District and Borough Council's are all doing their own thing, some are covering the difference in this year, others are partially covering the difference. Breckland are calculating their subsidy by using the current years figures, not taking into account what we are Precepting for next year.

The problem will come next year with the prospect of no subsidy of £34,668.20 when the Town Council set their Precept next year the % increase will not be calculated from this years Precept requirement of £268,005. It will be calculated from £233,336.80 (£34,668.20 less) and as a result the 9% increase as agreed in your Financial strategy would then become almost 25% as you are starting with a lower figure.

A decision looks unlikely on the referenda and any potential subsidies until December 2013, although the Secretary of State announced in January he will introduce new laws to stop Councils abusing the system. Parish & Town Councils have been warned that unless they show restraint, they will too be included in the requirement for referenda. A Private Members Bill exists on the Referenda for Parish & Town Councils and progress is being monitored by our national bodies of NALC and SLCC.

Overview of Budget discussion to date from December 2012.

Town & Parish Council's are for the year 2013-14 excluded from the legislation, which would bring them in line with principal authorities for referenda, as a method of seeking approval of the electorate to increase their Precept over and above an amount set by Central Government.

The different rates are referred to in the options below. The current position to date, gives us a Budget agreed in December 2012 for a Precept of £268,005 using previous years tax base 2536.3 an increase of £9.27 at Band D giving a percentage of 9.61%

Using the old system of calculating the new tax base it would have been 2551.9 for 2013-14 bringing the increase down to £8.62 at Band D and giving a percentage of 8.94% (less than .75% increase on what the Council Tax Payer pays)

The Council considered four options below:-

Option 1

In order to keep the percentage increase at 8.94% even taking into account the one-off subsidy of £34,668 the Council would need to cut their Precept by £15,746.52 and therefore reduce their expenditure or increase their income by the same amount (**.575% Council Tax increase**).

Option 2

To take advantage of the subsidy this year of £34,668 but stick with their budgeted Precept of £268,005 using the new amended tax base of 2071.90 giving an increase of £16.22 at Band D and a percentage of 16.83% (**1.07% Council Tax increase**).

Option 3

To put to one side the subsidy of £34,668 and use this as a buffer for future years, to avoid the need for a referendum if the Council are brought into this requirement. This would give an increase of £32.95 at Band D giving a percentage of 34.18% **(2.19% Council Tax increase)**.

Option 4

To take account of proposed increases of 9% in 2014-15 and a further 9% again in 2015-16, again to avoid the need for a referendum. This calculation has been made by calculating the extra money in the precept with 9% increases in each year, taking off the one-off subsidy of £34,668.20 and making instead an allowance for a 2% increase in each of these financial years. The inflated starting point would result in a 47.95% increase of £46.22 at Band D, with a Precept of £295,500. **(3.07% Council Tax increase)**.

FINAL DECISION

The Town Council made a final decision on Option 3, a difficult decision but taking responsibility to keep services rather than making further cuts. It is a 34.18% increase through no fault of the Town Council, but in taking this decision it will give them a chance to revise the financial strategy to get revenue reserves back on track within 4 years as planned.

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL - ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2011/12

The Income & Expenditure accounts for the audited accounts at year ending 31st March 2012 were as follows:-

SYNOPSIS OF THE ACCOUNTS 2011/12

INCOME	DETAILS	EXPENSES
1,475	Bank Interest	
207,000	Precept	
3,111	Capital Projects	77,758
0	Asset Management	27
5,386	Town Hall	21,131
429	Administration & Misc.	115,147
35,239	Market	13,987
0	Northwell Pool	1,410
0	Youth Council	3,692
5,807	Allotments	5,766
3,691	Toilets & TIC	25,998
14,187	Cemetery & Churchyard	23,329
12	Open Spaces	11,847
16,847	Amenities & Agency	31,492
570	Recreation Ground	9,506
502,228	TOTAL	341,089

The accounts above were unanimously agreed by the Town Council at their meeting on 13th June 2012. Copies of the end of year accounts are available on request at the Town Hall.

8. Open Session - Including Correspondence Received and Questions From the Floor

8.1. Correspondence - No correspondence had been received in advance of the meeting.

8.2. Questions - There were no questions from the floor.

9. Mayor's Closing Remarks

The Mayor thanked everyone for attending and expressed her gratitude to those who had given a report and stated what a lovely town Swaffham is.

Meeting closed at 9.15p.m.

Mayor.....