

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly meeting held on Wednesday 17 May 2023 in the Town Hall

Councillors: Cllr Bell, Cllr Bensley, Cllr Cooper, Cllr Darby, Cllr Ellerbeck, Cllr Eves,
Cllr Pickard, Cllr Skinner, and Cllr Zielinski

Town Clerk	Richard Bishop
Deputy Clerk:	Helen Carrier
Office Administrator:	Nicola Forrest
Communication Engagement Officer:	Phoebe Harrison
Members of Public:	Three

1. Welcome by the Mayor and apologies for absence

The Mayor welcomed everybody to the meeting

Absent

Cllr Beech, Cllr Braithwaite, Cllr Edwards and Cllr Scott

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 18 May 2022 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record.

3. Public Open Forum

No comments

4. Mayor's Annual Report

The Mayor gave a verbal report - Appendix 1

5. Synopsis of Accounts

The Town Clerk gave a verbal synopsis of the Accounts - Appendix 2

Meeting finished at 6.06pm

Chairman_____

Date_____

Mayor's overview of the year 2022-23

A report by the Mayor Cllr Stewart Bell given to the Annual Town Assembly on 17th May 2023: -

Elections 2023 –There was no need for a Town Council election in May 2023, as there were 13 candidates for 13 seats on the Council, all 13 were elected unopposed. We welcome four new Councillors, David Braithwaite, Caroline Ellerbeck, Sarah Pickard and John Zielinski. We also pay tribute to our four retiring councillors, Judy Anscombe, Colin Houghton, Shirley Matthews, and Ian Pilcher.

At Breckland Council level there was an election, with a welcome to Judy Anscombe and Jacob Morton, joining David Wickerson re-elected for another 4-year term. With Ian Sherwood choosing to stand in a different area and Ed Colman resigning back in February due to a change in circumstances. Ed Colman also resigned as our Norfolk County Councillor, and we welcome William Nunn as our newly elected representative on the County Council.

Staffing Changes – Helen Carrier joined us a Deputy Town Clerk in April 2022 and will take over as Town Clerk on 1st July when Richard Bishop our long serving Town Clerk of 22 years retires at the end of June, Leanne Jarrett will be joining us on 1st June as our new Deputy Town Clerk, Nicola Forrest joined us in July 2022 as Office Administrator, and very recently Phoebe Harrison joined us as Community Engagement Officer and Ryan Folker as a Trainee Grounds Maintenance Operative. We thank all our previous staff for their dedicated service and give a warm welcome our new staff.

Queens Platinum Jubilee Weekend – events took place on Thursday 2nd June through to Saturday 4th June; the town was very 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 unfortunately the planned Big Jubilee Lunch and Family Funday on Campinglands on the Sunday afternoon had to be cancelled due to adverse weather conditions.

Operation London Bridge – was the code name for the sad death of her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, in September 2022, a book of condolence was held at the Town Hall, a civic service was held in the Church of St. Peter & St. Paul, then a proclamation was held to proclaim King Charles III outside the Town Hall.

King's Coronation – 8th May – unfortunately the live streaming of the kings Coronation and the Concert could not take place, for technical reasons, but there was an outdoor cinema organised with Top Gun Maverick and Matilda the musical. The Cultural Consortium organised Swaffham's attempt to beat the cream tea world record on the bank holiday Monday, they await verification, but we think they did it...

Orford Road Play Area - work was completed on the new Orford Road play area, revamping the under 8's area and providing new equipment for over 8's. The new facilities were launched successfully in June of last year 2022. Unfortunately, the areas have been subjected to vandalism both in the form of graffiti and damage to the equipment.

Classic Car Show & Funday - on Sunday 28th August 2022 the Classic Car Show & Funday had a record number of cars on the Rec, a successful event. It is planned again for Sunday 27th August later this year.

Christmas Market Weekend – a successful event was held on the 3rd and 4th December, including a return of the 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. The Council agreed that I would be organising the Switch On event in December 2023, on the first Sunday 3rd December.

Twinning - our twinning partnership with Couhe in France and Hemmoor in Germany still exists in name only, as the demise of the Swaffham Twinning Association last summer meant that the bi-annual

trip to Hemmoor put on hold for Covid, in 2020 and in 2021 did not take place in 2022 either. There are no plans to resurrect the civic twinning visits.

HAZ/Cultural Consortium -Town Delivery Plans - MTI (Sustainable Swaffham) - The HAZ project is to support heritage and future planning projects in and around Swaffham Market Place public realm, a Masterplan was published last year. The recent addition of new planters was added to the new seating around the town, as the HAZ project starts its delivery programme.

The Cultural Consortium is an offshoot of this, to deliver Cultural Events in that same period, as further funding is secured. The Consortium Events last year were 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 final document was adopted by the Town Council in January 2023 at the start of this year.

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 2021. 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 in the next 4-years.

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 Padley Ltd currently has a planning application going through the system. The solicitors for the Town Council, Breckland Council, landowners de Merke Estates and the developer Padley Ltd are currently working on resolving all legal issues, and when finally agreed all parties must sign concurrently. Everything hinges on the planning application by Padley Ltd, which is due to go to Breckland planning committee in July.

Sacred Heart Barn Theatre & Swimming Pool the Town Council acquired the Barn Theatre and Swimming Pool for an agreed price of £325,000 in the autumn of 2021.

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. An agreement has been reached with the Fountain of Life Church to lease the building as a sole tenant, as their plans deliver all that the Council first hoped for in relation to this building, and more.

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.

Work has to be carried out to the Barn before the lease is operational, the new Council have this before them at their first meeting. It is hoped that a similar arrangement can be resolved with the Swimming Pool Charity for the pool, but further investment was put on hold at the budget meeting in January, awaiting the capital receipt due from the sale of Days Field, and this would have to be agreed by the new Council.

Days Field - A decision was taken a few years back 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 with Breckland Council, 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. Originally the planning applications were scheduled to be determined by 16th May, we have been notified this week that this has been extended

by two months to 16th July – the planning permission then triggers the completion of the sale and the receipt of an agreed sum of £1.47 million.

War Memorial Garden – we are nearing completion for the transfer of ownership of the land surrounding the War Memorial to the Town Council from Breckland Council – improvements to the area are in progress.

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 Stewart Bell, Mayor of Swaffham

SWAFFHAM TOWN ASSEMBLY – FINANCE REPORT 17 May 2023**STC Budget 2023-23**

The budget set this year is for 2023-24 financial year. The outgoing Town Council budgeting for the year starting in April 2023, so, a legacy budget for the financial year starting just one month away from the end of the Council's four-year term, the election in May 2023. The Council make some difficult decisions at their budget meeting, they always do, trying to balance up the services, projects, and facilities that the town needs against the cost to the Council Taxpayer.

In the year 2022-23 the money raised by the £161.22 was £448,500 which the Town Council use for their expenditure. This sum of money is called the Council Precept. For 2023-24 next year the budget is looking at making an increase of £46,000 which will give the Town Council £494,500, which due to an increase in the Council Tax Base this year it will mean at Band D the Council Tax will be £169.29 (an increase of 5% or £8.07) taking into account the new Council Tax base of 2,921.00.

This is considerably lower than the current inflation rate of 10.7%. 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 2022-23

The Income & Expenditure accounts for the accounts at year ending 31 March 2023 are as follows: -

SYNOPSIS OF THE ACCOUNTS 2022-23

INCOME	DETAILS	EXPENSES
448,500	Precept	0
1,500	Un-earmarked Capital Reserves	50
3,403	Earmarked Capital Reserves	188,370
55,979	Earmarked Revenue Reserves	20,785
726	Town Hall	45,677
5,442	Administration & Misc.	376,613
34,514	Market	4,507
14,202	Events	13,614
3,307	Outside Equipment & Vehicles	21,831
8,586	Allotments	3,636
783	Toilets & TIC	5,232
19,156	Cemetery & Churchyard	12,199
4,322	Open Spaces	28,054
7,558	Amenities & Agency	36,634
	Barn Theatre	4,655
	Barn Swimming Pool	1,003
	Barn Flat	1,616
607,978	TOTAL	764,476

The accounts have been internally audited by Auditing Solutions Ltd, with the audit report presented to the Council this evening and will be externally audited by PKF Littlejohn later this year.