

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Wednesday 13 May 2026 in the Town Hall

Councillors: K Alford, L Beech, W Bensley, D Braithwaite, S Cooper (arrived at 6.07pm), B Couzins, P Darby, G Eves, J Mander, L Scott, J Skinner and J Zielinski

Town Clerk:	H Carrier
Deputy Clerk:	L Jarrett
Minute Taker:	D Hamilton
Members of Public:	16
Norfolk County Councillor:	J Lister
Breckland District Councillors	D Wickerson and J Morton

1. Welcome by the Mayor and apologies for absence

The Mayor opened the meeting and welcomed those present.

Apologies were received in advance from Breckland Councillor J Anscombe. Cllr Ellerbeck was marked absent

2. Minutes

The minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 14 May 2025 were agreed and signed by the Chairman as an accurate record, with 11 Councillors agreeing and one abstaining

3. Public Open Forum

A member of the public asked how the Town Council, as a public body, is protected against cyber-attacks and whether documents are securely stored. The Town Clerk advised that the Council uses an IT provider who delivers cybersecurity protection as part of their contract. In addition, the Council has adopted both an IT Policy and a Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) Policy, which apply to all staff and Councillors. In relation to document storage, the Council has transitioned to electronic record-keeping. Historical archives and deeds are retained securely in private storage

Another member of the public noted that there are a lot of rumours and comments on social media relating to the play areas in the town and asked if the Town Council could provide a direct update on social media to update the public on the progress of the play areas

ACTION: It was agreed for the Town Council to provide an update on social media regarding the play areas in the town

Another member of the public asked for an update on the monies from the S106 agreement regarding the U8's play area on the recreation ground as it has been four summers now without it in working order. The Town Clerk explained that unfortunately they are still waiting for the monies from the developers and the council is waiting for an update from Breckland District Council. Cllr J Morton added he will follow up as to where they are on the building control

4. Reports received from Community Groups and Organisations

Reports received from the Fountain of Life, Icen, Swaffham Museum, St Peter & St Paul's Church and the Swaffham Rugby Club
(Appendix 1 - 5).

5. Mayor's Annual Report

The Mayor gave an overview of the past year, reporting that the Council has recently submitted a planning application to refurbish the town centre toilets, with the aim of improving provision and better meeting the needs of the local community and the thriving market.

The Council has agreed to take ownership of the Theatre Street and Lynn Street car parks in advance of upcoming local government reorganization.

Several successful events and activities have been delivered for residents over the past year, alongside the installation of streetlight banners to promote local events within the town centre.

Work is currently underway to update the Neighborhood Plan, enabling the Council to better influence the location and design of new housing developments in Swaffham.

The Town Council has worked in partnership with Breckland District Council, Historic England, the Norfolk and Norwich Festival, and the National Lottery Heritage Fund to deliver shopfront improvements and associated training opportunities.

Funding has also been successfully secured from Breckland District Council and Norfolk County Council through the 'Love Your Market' scheme, aimed at increasing footfall in the town. As part of this initiative, a town trail guide has been produced, and four themed twilight markets will be held throughout the summer months. In addition, the Community Engagement Officer and the Mayor were interviewed for Norfolk Magazine, with Swaffham featured in the March edition.

Improvements have been made to the Town Hall to enhance accessibility for residents, and the Council's older vehicles have been replaced with safer and more efficient models. Two Town Wardens have been appointed to support the maintenance of the town's cleanliness, and a 'Glutton' litter collection machine has been purchased to assist with this work.

Meeting finished at 6.08pm

Chairman _____

Date _____

Annual Report on The Barn - 2025-2026

Over the past 12 months, The Barn has continued to grow into a vibrant and welcoming hub for the whole community. Now in its second year, The Fountain of Life Church, working alongside Swaffham Town Council, has built on a shared vision: creating a space that brings people together and offers real support where it's needed.

After around 18 months in operation, The Barn is now regularly filled with activity. Each week and month, a wide range of groups and events are creating opportunities for connection across all ages.

For families, Noah's Ark supports parents and toddlers, while Family Nights and Kidz Klub bring fun, food, and faith into the mix. Our Youth Drop-In provides a safe and welcoming space for young people, and "Who Let the Dads Out?" gives dads and male carers time to connect with their children.

We've also focused on those who can often feel overlooked. Our Place supports those with special educational needs and disabilities. Warm Space has offers companionship and practical help for those facing loneliness or hardship. Heartstrings concerts have brought music and connection to older members of the community, and The Bereavement Journey has supported those navigating loss.

Creativity and wellbeing have been another key strand. Busy Bees, our craft group, continues to thrive, alongside art workshops and a growing programme of concerts and theatre, including three musical events this year.

Alongside all of this, we've continued to offer counselling and regular Sunday services, ensuring both practical and spiritual support are available.

Looking ahead, we're planning pottery workshops, a summer holiday club, and outdoor events this year, with a longer-term vision to launch a Life Skills programme and expand our theatre and film offer. Some of these activities will need additional funding so are likely to take longer to build up.

What's made this possible is a commitment to accessibility—nearly everything has been free or low-cost—and the work of Tanya Lynn, our Children, Youth and Families Worker, supported by a dedicated and growing team of volunteers. High standards have been a priority, with investment in training for safeguarding, first aid, and food hygiene, reflected in our 5-star Environmental Health rating.

We've also continued to build strong relationships with local schools, churches, and other agencies, strengthening our role within the town.

Put simply, The Barn is becoming a place where people belong, where support is real, and where community is growing. And we're not done yet.

REGULAR EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Noah's Ark – Parent and toddler group meets on Friday mornings

Youth Drop in – Wednesday evenings

Our Place – a group for those with special educational needs and disabilities – Saturdays monthly

Busy Bees – a sociable craft group that fosters creativity and wellbeing

Family Nights – a monthly evening of food, fun and games for all families

Kidz Klub – Saturday morning fun and games with a Christian message for Primary School children – monthly.

Warm Space - A community hub offering warmth, companionship, and conversation for those experiencing loneliness or hardship.

Heartstrings – A monthly daytime concert designed for the elderly, including those in care homes, offering music and social connection.

The Bereavement Journey – A 7-week course for those experiencing loss including 1 optional session on the Christian perspective around loss.

Who Let the Dad's Out? – A termly event for Dads/male carers to have fun with their kids.

Quiz Nights – a popular termly quiz night for adult teams of up to 6

Concerts and Theatre – 3 musical events and a theatrical production have been run during the last 12 months.

Art Workshop – A termly opportunity to explore a range of art forms and techniques

Counselling Service – available to all

Church Services – Sunday mornings throughout the year

Future Developments: Pottery workshops – Summer 2026 Holiday Club – Summer 2026

Outdoor sports and games events – Summer 2026

Life Skills – A longer term project offering a broad range of skills training and support for people struggling to cope with everyday life. January 2027

Ongoing development of a programme of musical events, movie nights and theatrical productions in the theatre.

Report prepared on 29th April 2026

Rev'd Paul Wilkinson (Senior Minister)

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ANNUAL TOWN MEETING – ICENI PARTNERSHIP REPORT 2025

2025 was a busy year in which the Icenis Partnership proved its resilience and sustainability with forecast turnover and cost of sales holding steady year on year and a budgeted deficit. This has only been achieved by a strong leadership team and loyal, proactive staff who share the same core beliefs.

Hirers & Residents

Over both our venues we currently host around 60 groups, activities, societies, and services on a weekly or monthly basis. We continue to keep in close contact with our hirers and offer any support we can to help sustain their activities. Our value-add services have increased allowing those hosting special events to enjoy all-inclusive packages including catering, audio visual enhancements and room dressing. We market flexible meeting rooms and office space. We have seen an increase in sole trader and charity groups' consultations for physical and mental wellbeing.

Our diversity of events and activities is extraordinary, whether you are interested in beekeeping, spiritual enlightenment or physical wellbeing, heart health or giving blood, carpet bowls or table tennis, martial arts or girl guiding, weight loss or lunch club; these and more you can be found at our venues. We retain a strong long term tenant base at the Community Centre; Family Action, Teenie Icenis, HomeStart and West Norfolk Community Travel are all based here providing essential local services.

Our Social Objectives

We pride ourselves on being a warm, welcoming and safe place at the heart of the local community. Friday Lunch Club continues to be successful. We regularly see around 30 diners each Friday for our home-cooked 2-course meal with tea & coffee. Feedback is very positive not only complementing our food but also helping to combat loneliness and build friendships. Without our crucial volunteer base, we would not be able to provide this initiative.

Youth Provision is also strong, welcoming around 35 girls from Rainbows, Guides and Rangers each Friday evening. There are youth dance/stage classes every Tuesday, martial arts classes and 3 baby and carer play groups.

Swaffham Community Fridge opens Tuesday to Friday with supplies of food waste from Waitrose and Tesco. We have also seen surplus from allotments and gardens being regularly donated, all being saved from landfill. The Community Fridge requires the support and engagement of a strong volunteer base. As well as reducing food waste, the Community Fridge offers both a food source and additional support for individuals and families who require help, providing an opportunity to signpost other services and organisations.

Swaffham Newsletter is still produced by us every month; 2,000 copies are printed and then distributed around Swaffham. This provides local residents with updates and news on activities and clubs around the town.

Update on Objectives for 2026

The Icenis Partnership has, for many years, fulfilled a key role in Swaffham. There were board and management changes in 2025 with Catherine White joining as the new manager, Judy Ancombe taking over as the Chair and Paul Smyth as the Deputy Chair of the Board of Trustees. This provides an opportunity to review and refresh the Icenis Partnership strategic plan to ensure that we remain strong and focused on providing valued support to our hirers and tenants, improving our facilities and engaging with our community, as well as creating initiatives, working in collaboration with agencies for the betterment of Swaffham and the surrounding villages.

ST. PETER & ST. PAUL SWAFFHAM AND ST. MARY'S SPORLE

I have now been Vicar here for a little over one year. Thank you to so many people in this town that have made me very welcome. I love it here. It is a privilege to be able to minister in this beautiful, historic and vibrant town.

It has become clear to me that St. Peter & St. Paul's has an important place in the heart of the people of Swaffham, as well as for so many visitors to our town. Some seek refuge here, some are spiritual pilgrims, some are drawn by the physical heritage or by historic family connections and some are casual visitors. Regardless of their motivation, all seem to feel welcomed by the building and by the wonderful people who volunteer as stewards. I believe our parish church to be a divine gift that will, I am sure, be an even greater blessing to this town in the future. This is a physical blessing that we intend to cherish!

Beyond our building, our ministry to this town extends to those in care homes, the bereaved and in offering spiritual comfort at funerals in our church and at local crematoria. We also welcome families for baptisms and weddings. I, with one or two others, go out into our schools, seeking to be a resource to them. There is more to be done in offering more ongoing support in all of these areas. This will come, over time. I have been working to get to know and be part of as much of the life of this town as I can. This, I see, as part of my ministry here. Thank you to so many of you who inspire me in this shared service to the life and welfare of our town.

This building is a community asset as well as a spiritual place. I have therefore been encouraged by the many events held in St. Peter and St. Paul's in 2025 to share the church with everyone, including our Saturday Coffee Mornings, and events in support of organisations such as The Royal British Legion and Rotary. This building has supported music and arts (including concerts) and our Schools, as well as civic events, such as our informal Town Carol Service. The Queen concert and laser show was a huge success and further events like that are planned for 2026. Indeed, I am delighted that our community building will be used for the community even more in 2026. Thank you to our churchwardens, Veronica and Sheila and the wonderful army of volunteers that make this possible.

Music and tradition are important elements in the unique nature of our Parish Church. Our church music and choral tradition have developed wonderfully under the skilled and capable direction of our Director of Music, Jonathan Dodd. Our choir continues to develop musically and would appear to be a joy to be a part of. We now have a children's choir. This was a dream of mine and of our Musical Director, from before I arrived here in Swaffham. It is a joy to see how our Jubilate Singers have developed and are slowly becoming a part of the life of St. Peter and St. Paul's, along with their families and friends. We will continue to develop our musical offering, spiritual and secular, classical and contemporary in 2026.

The congregation here has grown over the last year. However, the more that we do, the more is demanded of our faithful few. Our finances are steadily improving but remain an ongoing concern. The increase in almost every one of our costs places huge pressures on this church financially. Thankfully, the building itself is in a reasonable state of repair but with such an old building, maintenance is expensive!

St. Peter and St. Paul's has been at the heart of the life of this town for many centuries. Whatever happens, I hope and pray that this church will continue to be so for centuries to come. It is a pleasure to be your parish priest. I again thank everyone who has made me so welcome in the last year. It really is appreciated. I look forward to 2026 in Swaffham!

God bless, Fr. Nigel.

MUSEUM OF SWAFFHAM 2025 REPORT FOR TOWN ASSEMBLY MAY 2026

There have been several changes in our management structure during 2025. We welcomed new trustees and assigned each one of our 7 trustees a managerial role within the museum. This means that responsibilities are shared more equally and it has given us a new dynamic.

You have probably noticed the new doors at the front entrance which make access to both the museum and the Town Hall easier for everyone.

Our shop is proving popular for gifts and we decided to make the Winter period in the Museum "Donations Days".

The War Room – Swaffham and the military have been connected for many centuries - has been very popular with our visitors. Our next project, not yet dated - is to remodel Room 6 where the highlight is the Harry Carter diorama of the town.

Last year we had to reapply to the Arts Council for accreditation as a well-managed museum. Every policy and plan had to be scrutinised and updated. We are now awaiting the outcome. We are grateful to the Town Council and Councillors for renewing our lease and our service level agreement and for their support for the museum in very many ways.

We took part in Consortium events in the town –the Artisans Fayre when we created a display of artisans' tools, objects, people and pubs - and Pedlar Day in the church where, courtesy of the Parish Church, we were able to display the 15th century and onwards Black Book of Swaffham as well as retell the story of the Pedlar with a voice-over by Stephen Fry. In both the museum was helped by volunteers from The History Group and the Friends of Swaffham Museum. We also had a presence at the Car Rally and the Christmas Switch-On.

The Friends of the Museum are growing in number and we held several trips to historic places over 2025. I should add that bookings this year are equally high and some trips are full. The proceeds of the events and of the 100 club go to the museum to raise money for specific needs, such as purchases or restoration of items in the Collection. In 2025 those funds helped us buy a portrait of Howard Carter's mother.

Another addition to our collection was the donation of a grandfather clock made by Carr and Son of Swaffham in the 19th century.

Our backroom team spent the year ensuring that the Collection was in good shape and correctly entered on the database – this is continuing in 2026 – it takes a long time. And we began a schedule for ensuring that the paper archives are sorted, logged, scanned, described and easily accessed. This will take about 5 years to complete.

Again, I would like to thank the Town Council for its support. It was 40 years ago when members of the Town Council advocated a town museum, and next year we celebrate our 40th birthday.

Also, many thanks to the Friends of the Museum, the History Group and the people of Swaffham. You are our life blood.

Swaffham Rugby Union Football Club

Report for Swaffham Annual Town Meeting 13th May 2026

The 2025/26 season has been outstanding for our Family Friendly Community Club both on and of the pitch, thanks to the enthusiasm and dedication of our Committee and Volunteers.

Our Senior squad have competed strongly in Eastern Counties Division One North, and we are confident that they will play in this league in the 2026/27 season.

Our Minis and Youth sections have gone from strength to strength, with numbers growing throughout the season. The atmosphere on Sunday mornings is excellent, with players, siblings, parents, grandparents getting involved. We launched our Under 12 squad in September, and last month announced the launch of an Under 16 squad for the 26/27 season.

Our Touch sessions remain very popular, with all genders and abilities enjoying themselves each week. These sessions will continue Tuesdays throughout the summer.

Taking part in these activities gives all members of our community the opportunity to improve both physical and mental strength.

Our Vice Presidents and guests continue to support our club and have enjoyed 5 pre match lunches. We have also held a Charity lunch, which raised £1,000, and a Cheese and Wine event before matches, open to all.

In addition to our Community Annual Bonfire and Fireworks, we have held Quiz Nights, and in April held our first Car Boot sale. Holding these community events is an important part of our Club.

In June this year, we will be launching Ladies Rounders on Wednesday evenings, again open to all.

England International and Leicester Tigers player Freddie Steward started his rugby career at Swaffham. Freddie and his family came along to our Minis and Youth Christmas Party. Our young players have been Guard of Honour and Flag Wavers at Tigers matches during the season.

Young people and parents have created lifelong memories in these events!

In January, we had the pleasure of welcoming Bill Sweeney and his partner Helen to a pre-match lunch. Bill is Chief Executive Officer of the Rugby Football Union. We are grateful that he took the time to visit our Grass Roots Club and talk to members.

We are grateful for the support of our partners and sponsors, and the companies, organisations and individuals who hire our facilities. We could not do what we do without them.

Most of all, without the dedicated and committed Committee and Volunteers we could not provide the opportunity for our community to participate in a sport which focusses on Teamwork, Respect, Enjoyment, Discipline and Sportsmanship. We were proud that three volunteers were nominated to attend the RFU Volunteer of the Year awards at Twickenham.

Since January our Social Media presence has been improved dramatically, thanks to one of our Mini's parents. Not only have we promoted our club in Swaffham we believe through our actions and initiatives described above we have put Swaffham on the regional and national map.