

**SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting on Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> December 2007 at 7.00p.m. in the Community Centre, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr S. Matthews (in the chair)

Councillors: - Mrs C Baker, Mr D. Butters, Mr P. Darby, Mr C. Gunner,  
Mr D. Harman, Mrs T. Jennison, Mrs S Lister,  
Mr F. Sharpe, Mrs J. Skinner, Mr I. Sherwood,  
Mrs P. Wade, Mr D. Wickerson.

Clerk:- Mr R. Bishop.  
Deputy Clerk:- Mrs M. Meyrick  
Project Officer: - Mr D. Bek

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**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

1.1. There were no apologies for absence.

**2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST – for items included on the Agenda.**

2.1. Cllr Butters declared an interest on item 6.1a, 6.1o, 6.3c, 6.4b and 6.13a. as he is a Museum Director.

2.2. Cllr Baker declared an interest on item 6.1a, 6.1o, 6.3c, 6.4b and 6.13a. as she is a Museum Director.

2.3. Cllr Matthews declared an interest on item 6.1a, 6.1o, 6.3c, 6.4b and 6.13a. as she is a Museum Director.

2.4. Cllr Wickerson declared an interest on item 6.1a, 6.1o, 6.3c, 6.4b and 6.13a. as he is Company Secretary of the Museum.

2.5. Cllr Jennison declared an interest on item 6.1g, 6.1m and 6.8a-e as she lives adjacent to the allotments.

2.6. Cllr Darby declared an interest on item 6.1g, 6.1m and 6.8a-e as he is an allotments tenant.

2.7. Cllr Harman declared an interest on item 6.1i as he is a member of the Royal Naval Association.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

3.1. The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2007 were agreed and signed as a true record.

**4. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

4.1. The Accounts to date for Receipts and Payments 2007/08 were circulated to Councillors.

4.2. A report from the Internal Auditor for 2007/08 was circulated to Councillors.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. The Town Clerk (supported by the Deputy Town Clerk and the Project Officer) gave a Budget presentation for 2008/09.

5.2. A budget report was circulated to Councillors.

**6) 2008/09 BUDGET**

**6.1. CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**a) Town Hall & Museum**

The Town Hall extension (access) budget is to be carried forward from the current year and the Museum enhancement retention carried forward to be paid in the next financial year.

**It was agreed to retain Town Hall budget of £25,000 and carry forward the retention for the Museum enhancement of £4,457**

**b) Cemetery & Chapel**

The Cemetery Improvements and Chapel Restoration have had to take a back seat. These project needs to be taken forward in 2008/09; a Quantity Surveyor has been instructed to carry out the necessary costings for the restoration of the chapel and conversion of a garage into a workshop, inclusive of gaining water supply and electricity (or using a generator).

There is also the costing out of a wall and gates at the entrance to the Cemetery to consider. A further meeting is required with the Development Officer from the Heritage Lottery Fund in order to complete the necessary groundwork for the grant application. The budget proposed is the same amount carried forward from the current year. There may be additional funds required from the match funding budget when the full costs are known and the possibility of obtaining grants are fully assessed.

**It was agreed to carry forward into 2008/09 the two £5,000 budgets (£10,000 in total) for the Cemetery & Chapel projects. These projects are to be regarded as high priority for delivery during 2008/09.**

**c) Recreation Ground Project**

The Recreation Ground Project has been broken down into smaller projects for funding purposes and to allow realistic delivery targets. There has been substantial progress since the budget last year, with all eight projects in progress and at various stages of delivery or development. The only project costed out in this budget is the £60,000 for the Multi-Use-Games-Area (MUGA) as the funding would come directly from Budget heading 35 Section 106 Planning Gain and from Breckland Council match funding budget of £20,000. All other remaining projects have been allocated a share of the match funding of £50,000 previously allocated. There is only £6,000 of that money to be used in the current year, the remainder carried forward into 2008/09.

**It was agreed that the Recreation Ground Project should retain its £44,000 of earmarked match funding in 2008/09 and use the projected £60,000 (or the negotiated sum) of Section 106 money for the Multi-Use-Games-Area.**

**d) Other projects under development**

The Swimming Pool Land purchase has been a long running saga and will be resolved in this financial year. The costs are therefore accounted as such and no figures are brought forward into 2008/09.

With 'The Shambles' the main progress this past year has been to evaluate results of last year's consultation exercise. In the longer term there are possibilities for improving the area, this is despite the challenges of land ownership, multiple rights of

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way, sense of entitlement concerning parking rights and a variety of architecture. This complex area/issue needs to be integrated into broader strategies for the town's development. With the Town Plan the obvious route in which to explore the options for improvement.

**It was agreed to complete the shambles Project which is currently at the development and research stage and to present a case to full Council for funds from the 'Match Funding' budget in 2008/09 in order to obtain grant funding from elsewhere.**

### **e) The Town Plan**

The Health Check is well underway under the direction of the Town Group and four thematic working groups of Economy, Social and Community, Environment and Transport. The data collecting is a long process and as part of that various consultation events and exercises have been organised. There are surveys being conducted for business, youth, visitors and a main general survey. The data will be used to guide the Town Group when proposing a 'Vision' for the town and a 'Plan' for say the next decade. Grants have been forthcoming from Breckland Council £1,000, the Rural Community Council £1,000 and matched with a £1,000 from the Town Councils match funding budget. In 2008/09 a full draft of the 'Plan' will emerge in the second quarter. Further funding will be required to produce a quality document, circulation and promotion.

**It was agreed for the Town Group to complete the Health Check, and fully cost out the production of the 'Town Plan' and to present a case to full Council for funds from the 'Match Funding' budget in 2008/09 in order to obtain further grant funding from elsewhere.**

### **f) Northwell Pool**

There has been good progress this year on the Northwell Pool Project. The Town Council are in position to implement an £8,000 project to put vegetated, floating eco-islands in the centre of the pond with duck houses. Vegetating the concrete edges of the pool with a variety of plants, humane duck management (egg removal from nests) and to tidy the environment in the area. This follows from the consultation conducted in 2006, also engaging with Anglian Water, Norfolk County Council, the Police, Breckland Council, the Open Spaces Committee, pest control, tree surgeon and other contractors. Stage two will take place in 2008/09 which will establish a boardwalk over the edge of the pool along New Sporle Road, finalising a management agreement and looking at other improvements.

**It was agreed to fully develop Stage Two of the Northwell Pool enhancement and to present a case for funds from the 'Match Funding' budget in 2008/09 in order to obtain grant funding from elsewhere.**

### **g) Allotments**

In order to build on the substantial investment in the allotments this past year, a review will be necessary with a proper four year regeneration plan as the aim. The budget allocated comes from investing part of the proceeds in an Allotment Investment Fund. It is projected to complete the sale of surplus land by the end of September 2008 and the interest earned from budget heading No. 33 in the latter half of the financial year is reflected as the available budget. The majority of this cost may be needed to conduct the review. It is essential to establish a good working relationship with SCALGA the newly formed Allotment Association.

**It was agreed to establish the principle of an allotment regeneration budget with the interest earned from the Allotment Investment Fund, which would be earmarked and enshrined in Council Policy for a period of not less than 10 years.**

**h) Other projects under development**

The latest project to be drawn to the attention of the Town Council is the need for new changing facilities at Swaffham Bowls Club. The project cost is estimated in the region of £17,000 and a request came in to divert some Section 106 money towards this project but the need is far more urgent as the changing facilities need attention now. The Council agreed at their November 2007 meeting to support the Bowls Club in principle. There is a very strong case to divert some of the Section 106 money for this purpose, however to meet the urgent need it may be necessary to look to other avenues on a temporary basis to allow the project to proceed and then reimburse the Council with the Section 106 money when it comes through.

**It was agreed to earmark a budget of £10,000 from Section 106 receipts if/when they are received and consider ways in which this project can be funded in 2008/09.**

**i) War Memorial**

The War Memorial plaque is another project that is in its infancy, but agreed by the Council in principle at their September meeting. This would be in the form of an additional plaque to the memorial to commemorate those who have lost their life in service since the Second World War. In a liaison meeting between the Town Council, Royal Naval Association and the Royal British Legion in November it was agreed in principle to have a contribution of £250 from each of the RBL and RNA and the balance to be met by the Town Council, subject to approval by all three organisations. The aim would be to get the addition to the War Memorial in place to enable it to be dedicated at the Veterans Day in June. Veterans Day is the 27<sup>th</sup> June 2008, but it has been suggested that Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> June is the preferred day for this to happen. There followed a short discussion.

**It was agreed to earmark £1,200 towards the proposed plaque on the War Memorial from the 'Match Funding' budget on the proviso that contributions would be forthcoming from both the Royal British Legion and the Royal Naval Association of £250 each.**

**j) Money held in trust**

The Town Council hold money for the Friends of Swaffham Rec, this is currently overseen by the Deputy Town Clerk as Lead Officer for the Recreation Ground. The War Memorial Fund was set up following the work carried out by volunteers to clean up the War Memorial earlier this year. This account is overseen by the Town Clerk.

**It was agreed that the Council would continue to hold funds for both the Friends of Swaffham Rec and the War Memorial Fund, both overseen by Town Council staff.**

**k) Community Centre Association**

The Community Centre Association account is still in existence. This money could effectively be transferred to Icen Partnership who manage the Community Centre or it could be specifically earmarked within the Asset Maintenance Fund and the bank account wound up. The latter would start a contingency that could be used in the future. The Community Centre is still owned by the Town Council and there could

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still be financial obligations placed upon the Council as the Landlord. For example the cost of a Quantity Surveyor to carry out a survey to establish true maintenance costs.

**It was agreed to re-allocate the balance of the Community Centre Association account into the Asset Maintenance Fund, but specifically earmark the balance of £664 to the Community Centre. To then close the Community Centre Association bank account.**

### **l) Public Toilets**

The Commuted sum for the Public Toilets will be invested and the interest used to maintain the toilets in the foreseeable future. This heading highlights where it is held within the accounts. It is a capital sum specifically earmarked, and it has to have a transparent audit trail. The Capital amount can be used only on providing toilets in Swaffham.

**It was agreed to establish a bank account for the Public Toilets Commuted Sum with an opening balance of £130,000**

### **m) Proceeds of Surplus Allotment Land**

The final three headings in this section all come from the projected proceeds of the surplus allotment land. The bulk of the money would be invested in a Match Funding Capital Fund and the interest earned to add value to the Match Funding pot established at heading No. 40. A substantial amount would be invested in an Allotment Investment Fund to give income to heading No. 27 Allotment Regeneration. Then finally a Capital Project Development Fund to be established and provide income to heading No. 39 for Project Development inclusive of Salaries and Administration relating to Capital Projects. If the amount received for surplus allotment land is less or more than the projected figures then this will be reflected in the balance of the Match Funding Capital Fund Account.

**It was agreed to establish a bank account for the Match Funding Capital Fund Account with an opening balance of £2,500,000 or such an amount realised by the balance of the sale of surplus allotment land.**

**It was agreed to establish a bank account for the Allotment Investment Fund with an opening balance of £250,000.**

**It was agreed to establish a bank account for the Capital Project Development Fund with an opening balance of £500,000.**

### **n) Planning Obligations**

The budget heading for Section 106 Planning obligations was agreed last year. It has only been during the course of this current year that the Town Council have been involved in discussions with developers to negotiate planning obligations for the town. It is expected that during the financial year 2008/09 that funds will start to come in specifically for projects related to the Recreation Ground.

**It was agreed to receive planning obligation/Section 106 money £60,000 as and when it becomes available and to also continue negotiating with potential developers at every opportunity in order to get facilities for the town.**

**o) Public Works Loan Board**

Two years ago the Town Council took a hard decision to borrow funds from the Public Works Loan Board for the Town Hall & Museum project and purchase of the Swimming Pool Land. These are both capital projects and can therefore be funded from the proceeds of the sale of surplus allotment land. It seems eminently appropriate to use this opportunity of clearing outstanding debts by repaying these loans.

Later in the budget it is necessary to highlight cash flow problems in the financial year 2008/09. A form of temporary borrowing may be necessary to fill this financial void for a short period of less than twelve months, but this may cut across two financial years. It is therefore necessary to reflect a little flexibility in this recommendation to allow the Council the discretion to deal with this situation should it arise.

**It was agreed to repay the balance on the public works loans of £50,000 and £70,000 respectively as soon as the cash-flow allows. It was also agreed to similarly, if any further loans are deemed to be necessary, then in principle the Council declares its intent to settle these as soon as the cash-flow allows.**

**p) Capital Project Development**

The idea of a budget for 'Capital Project Development' is not new, as the Town Council made a decision last year to support a new staff post this being the 'Project Grant Support Officer'. It was funded initially for one year from the Match Funding Budget, with the aim of bringing in grant funding to make the post self sustaining. This is very a 'work in progress' situation, with the Town Council agreeing in principle to extend the Project Officer's post for a further 12 months, it raises the question of where this would be funded from. The answer is coming from interest earned on the Capital Project Development Fund cost heading No. 34. The aim is to make the post of Project Officer a permanent one and to establish a regular budget for capital project development.

**It was agreed to create a budget for Capital Project Development inclusive of salaries and admin £27,426. This receives money via interest on the Capital Project Development Fund estimated at £12,500 in 2008/09.**

**q) Match Funding Budget**

In recent years Swaffham Town Council has been slightly ahead of the game by establishing a Match Funding Budget. There is a number of good examples now where match funding has enabled the Council to draw in grant funding from external sources, locally, nationally and from Europe. Sometimes working within the Icen Partnership or with other organisations such as Swaffham Museum Ltd and at other times leading the project from start to finish such as with the Recreation Ground. The income to the match funding budget will come from interest earned on the Match Funding Capital Fund, plus the carried forward balance.

**It was agreed that the Match funding budget on the expenditure side shows a total of £77,300 available for projects, this includes balances carried forward plus money received through interest earned on the Match Funding Capital Fund estimated at £62,500 in 2008/09.**

**r) Public Toilet Refurbishment**

The Public Toilets refurbishment will be completed in the current financial year and this particular budget is straight forward. It is the 2.5% retention on the refurbishment works that needs to be held back.

**It was agreed that the Public Toilets refurbishment has a retention estimated at £5,750 that needs to be carried forward into 2008/09.**

**6.2. REVENUE BUDGET 2008/09**

**ASSET MAINTENANCE FUND** (*Finance & General Purposes Committee*)

This is a new cost centre and a new bank account. It is set up to establish sufficient contingencies for the proper maintenance of all the council's publicly owned or managed assets in the town. Some of the headings have previously been contained in other cost centres, other headings are completely new. In this first year there are no amounts placed upon many budget headings and this clearly demonstrates how far behind the council is in putting funds aside. If the Town Council in their deliberations manage to save or cut funding from any other budget headings either capital or revenue, then it is recommended that a similar sum should be considered to place in the new Asset Maintenance Fund either earmarked to a particular asset or allocated to General Reserves. Any interest earned from this Bank Account in future years could go into General Reserves.

**a) Asset Maintenance Fund Bank Account**

The only income to the bank account would come from budgeted contingencies set aside or from interest earned on the balance in the account. It is envisaged that any cash flow difficulties within the Revenue Budget would be managed by the use of General Reserves being transferred to the Council's main bank account in the short term.

**It was agreed to establish a bank account for the Asset Maintenance Fund and all interest earned to go into General Reserves.**

**b) Buttercross**

Part of the budget for the Buttercross has been used this past year to fund additional costs relating to restoring the supply of electricity amounting to £1,393. The Council started to put money aside for future maintenance some four years ago. This was put on hold whilst other pressures were placed upon the Council's resources. Icen Partnership was able to fund the majority of the cost of restoring the electricity supply. However, the balance has been reduced and now needs to be replenished to its previous level as a minimum.

**It was agreed to replenish the Buttercross budget to £5,500 for 2008/09.**

**c) Toilets & Tourist Information Centre**

With the Toilets and TIC building featuring in a new Cost Centre No. 10 the budget set aside for this particular building comes from a proportion of the income. This is for letting out of commercial space of the old TIC, interest from investing the commuted sum and from paying public into the toilets. The amount set aside will need to be reviewed year on year until such a time that a regular income is well established.

**It was agreed to receive £4,150 from the Toilets & TIC income as a proportion towards the future maintenance of this building.**

**d) Professional Fees**

The budget for Professional Fees is set aside to employ the services of a Quantity Surveyor. This recommendation is all about good housekeeping, which is a criticism directed at previous Town Council's who failed to set aside sufficient funds for our three main public buildings. This resulted in facilities such as the Assembly Rooms, Community Centre and Town Hall & Museum needing vast sums of money for refurbishment, enhancements, demolition and rebuilding, all funded via grant funding from external sources. This kind of investment cannot be relied upon in the future and the Council should not neglect its overriding responsibility to the Council Tax payers to look after the towns assets. The starting point is receiving the professional advice for a maintenance programme over a 4 year period, so that this can be debated at least once in the lifetime of each Town Council.

**It was agreed to establish a budget of £5,000 for professional advice from a Quantity Surveyor to prepare a 4 year rolling programme of maintenance costs, which will determine how much needs to be budgeted for in future years.**

**e) General Reserves**

The General Reserves are running at less than £10,000 at this moment in time due to pressures of on-going projects, having to fund advance expenditure for the allotment preparation and other unforeseen expenditure. The situation will be rectified when all of the projected receipts are received. If the temporary cash flow situation is dealt with by the Council, then there will be no need to increase the Reserves in this financial year. If it is not, then a sum of £70,000 should be added to the Precept.

**It was agreed for the Town Clerk and the Finance Committee to monitor Reserves and consider temporary borrowing as appropriate and to review the Reserves at the point where all receipts are received and adjust balances accordingly.**

**6.3. TOWN HALL (*Finance & General Purposes Committee*)**

The Town Hall extension has now had two and a half years to function with the last eight months or so alongside a fully refurbished Museum. It was difficult to see how the two sides of the building would gel together and operate separately. Sometimes there can be no separation, other times it is good to operate independently. There are minor changes necessary within the office layout in order to cope with additional staff. In the main reception there is a major problem with circulation of air particularly in the summer months and any proposed layout changes would take this into account. Air conditioning is a possibility as funds allow, but only after any structural changes have taken place. There has been an access audit for both the Town Hall & the Museum, and this will result in some minor health & safety issues being addressed, with other matters being picked up at the point where regular maintenance occurs.

**a) Office & Chamber Hiring Fees**

The two small offices are well used at the Town Hall by Breckland Council, Citizens Advice, the Registrar and Age Concern. With hiring fees there is a need to keep pace with inflation to meet the cost of overheads.

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The Council Chamber has suffered greatly from adverse publicity relating to the Platform Lift and the temporary measure of the Council moving full Council meetings to the Assembly Rooms. The projected receipts for hiring fees are therefore reduced by 75%.

**It was agreed that all hiring fees for offices and the Council Chamber are increased by 4% in line with the RPI for 2008/09.**

### **b) Alarm/CCTV**

The alarm system has been changed so that one company looks after both the Museum and the Town Hall. Similarly in what remains of the current financial year the CCTV system will be updated and taken over by the same company. These costs were budgeted for in the current year and as a result have greatly reduced the on-going maintenance for 2008/09.

**It was agreed that the cost of maintenance to the Alarm/CCTV system will be reduced to £1,500 for 2008/09.**

### **c) Business Rates**

Swaffham Museum finally achieved its charitable status in the summer of this year, this means that an application can be made for a reduction in non-domestic rates for that part of the Town Hall occupied by the Museum.

**The cost of rates to the building is expected to reduce to £4,500 in 2008/09 due to the charitable status of the Museum.**

### **d) Council Chamber Sound System**

On the twinning visit to Couhe last year, the Mayor and Town Clerk came across an extremely good sound system. It has made a great deal of difference at the Assembly Rooms having a sound system for all the Councillors instead of just the Mayor and the Town Clerk. Debates across the Chamber are difficult for members of the public to hear and a sound system should be a priority for when full Council meetings return to the Town Hall.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £5000 for a good sound system in the Council Chamber.**

### **e) Buildings Maintenance and Health & Safety**

The two new headings of Buildings Maintenance and Health & Safety have emerged out of the Repairs & Replacements and sundry budget respectively.

**It was agreed that two new budgets for building maintenance at £1,100 and for Health & Safety at £500 are included in the budget for 2008/09.**

### **f) Other Budget Headings**

All other headings are straight forward in this cost centre showing a 4% RPI increase for 2008/09. The exception being the Repairs & Replacements and Sundry budgets which have been reduced to take account of the two new headings that have been included above.

**It was agreed that all the other budget headings either stay the same or are increased by 4% in line with the RPI, other than Repairs & Replacements and the Sundry Budget both reduced due to the new budgets at 6.27.**

**6.4. ADMIN & MISC** (*Finance & General Purposes Committee*)

The administration and miscellaneous cost centre contains the usual suspects like insurance, salaries, training, audit, newsletter and website. There are some changes this year with new headings highlighted in the recommendations and some headings moved from other cost centres, again these are explained below.

**a) Administration & Miscellaneous Income**

The only budgeted income in this Cost Centre is for bank interest earned. The monies are distributed through a number of different bank accounts. This amount is projected to decrease in the 2008/09 financial year

**It was agreed for the income from the general bank account interest is offset against administration costs. This is projected at £2,000 for 2008/09.**

**b) General Insurance & Museum Artefacts Insurance**

The insurance costs have been separated out this year to General Insurance, Museum Artefacts insurance and the Icenis insurance which reimbursed now features in the Amenities & Agency cost centre. The general insurance is reviewed annually and is in line with our asset register. The Museum artefacts are owned by the Town Council and it is therefore their responsibility to insure them. It may be necessary to have certain valuable items professionally valued to ensure that we are not under insured.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £9,725 for general insurance and £600 for Museum artefacts insurance for 2008/09.**

**c) Salaries**

The salaries net precept figure has gone down this year in this cost centre. This is because salaries have been apportioned to more cost centres in order to try and understand how much certain areas cost to manage. This exercise is encouraged by our internal auditor to enable the Council to be more transparent. All staff salaries have been increased by 4% in line with the RPI. Any variations to staffing levels have been discussed with Personnel Committee.

**It was agreed that the budget for Salaries net precept is a reduced figure of £104,605.**

**d) By Election/Parish Poll**

The By Election/Parish Poll contingency budget was taken out of the final draft budget last year as it was argued that it was a reasonable risk to assume that after an election it was unlikely to have a by-election. A resignation 4 days after the election was the worst case scenario, as the cost of the By Election had to be met by Reserves. It therefore demonstrates that this particular budget is essential every year as a contingency.

**It was agreed to reinstate the budget for a By Election/Parish Poll contingency of £2,500.**

**e) Internal & External Audit**

The Council are extremely lucky that their internal audit is carried out by Brian Clements as a volunteer. It is important that proper provision is made to cover the cost of both internal and external audit in the future. The contingency could be used if and when required and carried forward from year to year if not required.

**It was agreed that a budget of £1625 be set for the Internal and External Audit for 2008/09.**

**f) Hospitality**

This is a growing cost contained within previous sundry budgets. The number of ad hoc meetings where it is customary or good manners to offer hospitality is increasing all the time. The Council are being invited to the table as a key player for many important issues.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £300 for meetings hospitality in 2008/09**

**g) Travel Expenses**

The Council decided last year not to pay themselves an allowance, however it is only fair to highlight that Councillors can claim travel expenses when they are on business representing the Town Council. For example, at a development control meeting in Dereham or attending a training event out of the town.

**It was agreed for a budget of £200 is set for Councillors Travel Expenses**

**h) Office Equipment Maintenance/Lease**

The headings for Office Equipment maintenance/lease and office furniture has been moved from another Cost Centre. The photocopiers/printers are the main lease/maintenance costs and all three budgets have been increased by 4% in line with the RPI.

**It was agreed that the budgets for Office Equipment Maintenance/lease £3,300, renewals £1,250, and office furniture £1,250 are increased by 4% in line with the RPI.**

**i) Website**

There are varying reports regarding the standard of the Town Council website. It is generally felt that we have a lot of information on there but not always what the public are looking for or they have to search hard to find it. In order to address these problems research is underway to either revamp the existing site or develop a new site. Recommendations will be coming to the Council for approval in the first half of 2008/09.

**It was agreed to increase the Website budget to £1,100 to allow for improvements to be made in the year 2008/09.**

**j) External Meeting Room Hire**

The hire of meeting room budget is necessary as the Council currently use the Assembly Rooms for full Council meetings. They also have the Town Assembly at the Assembly Rooms. The budget could be reduced in future years if and when the Council decide to have their meetings in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall.

**It was agreed to set a budget for the hire of meeting room of £480 for 2008/09.**

**k) Other Expenditure**

The other expenditure headings in this cost centre are subject to the usual RPI increase, which is 4%.

**It was agreed to increase the budget by 4% for all other expenditure with the Administration & Miscellaneous cost centre for 2008/09.**

## **6.5. MARKET (Market Committee)**

Swaffham Market has suffered in recent years from the disruption caused by the town centre regeneration work, long standing traders retiring or moving on to other markets and fighting against a national downward trend in market trade. The loss of a regular auction has left a gaping hole in the market and one the Market Committee have worked hard to try and fill. A new auctioneer has been found and a new era starts mid-November on a monthly basis to try and build new custom. The market itself still remains viable and produces a useful income after all expenditure is paid. The Farmers Market had to cease trading earlier this year due to lack of interest in both stall holders and members of the public attending. It could be that it was the wrong location or the wrong day etc., more research will be necessary before such a venture is tried again.

### **a) Market Rents**

The charges for the market remain very reasonable compared to other markets of a similar standing. Nevertheless it is still necessary to increase the market rent in line with inflation at 4%, this is for both Casual and Licensed Traders. The little and often increases are far more acceptable than a larger increase every three or four years.

**It was agreed to increase both Casual Pitch hire and Licensed Trade hire by 4% in line with RPI for the year 2008/09.**

### **b) Farmers Market**

It is hoped to replace the Farmers Market at some stage, but no budget is put forward for 2008/09. It is envisaged that if there is any income generated by a future Farmers Market then all of this would be used to try and re-establish it by advertising or promotion. The Market Committee can use their advertising budget at their discretion for the Saturday, Themed or Farmers Markets.

**It was agreed not to set a budget for a Farmers Market for 2008/09.**

### **c) Themed Markets**

The introduction of themed markets has proved relatively successful. We have a new French Market who would like to attend twice a year. The Market Committee have also considered German and European Markets.

**It was agreed to continue with the policy of introducing themed markets throughout the year and to ensure that the income is paid in advance and they are not to the detriment of the Saturday Market.**

### **d) Waste Clearance**

The big talking point last year was the substantial increase in waste clearance. This resulted in a new specification and revised arrangement with Serco. The budget this year allows for a 4% RPI increase on last year.

**It was agreed to continue with the waste clearance contract with Serco at £20,000 for 2008/09.**

### **e) Non-Domestic Rates**

The Market Non Domestic Rates are increased due to a staged increase in revaluation.

**It was agreed that the budget for non-domestic rates for the Market in 2008/09 is set at £3,100**

**f) Salaries**

The salaries calculation for the Market has been reduced to take account of the reduced manpower required as a result of the loss of the Farmers Market.

**It was agreed that the budget for salaries calculation for 2008/09 is £13,713.**

**g) Promotion/Advertising, Entertainment, Health & Safety**

There are 3 new budget headings to allocate/reinvest more of the money generated by the Market into the Market itself.

**It was agreed to introduce budgets for market Promotion/advertising £750, entertainment £750 and health & safety £250 for 2008/09.**

**h) Sundry**

All monies received on themed markets to be spent on promotion/waste clearance etc, with a sundry budget for unforeseen expenses maintained.

**It was agreed that money received for themed markets is used to pay for all expenditure and to maintain a sundry budget of £500.**

**6.6. NORTHWELL POOL** (*Open Spaces & amenities Committee*)

This is another new Cost Centre, as the Council via the Project Officer has started to get to grips with providing local management of this potentially attractive part of the Town.

**a) Northwell Pool Income**

The income for the Northwell Pool maintenance will come from Agency agreements with both Anglian Water and Norfolk County Council. This would be to share the cost equally three ways, the third contributor being the Town Council.

**It was agreed to set up agency agreements with Anglian Water and Norfolk County Council to offset two thirds of the on-going maintenance costs for Northwell Pool in 2008/09. It was also agreed to set a budget of £1,000 each, £2,000 income and sharing expenditure of £3,000.**

**b) Northwell Pool Expenditure**

The on-going maintenance for the Northwell Pool area i.e. the Pool itself, the surround fencing, the new structures, the trees, the embankment, seats, bins, strimming and litter picking would be carried out by contractors. In future years this could be something that could be given to an additional member of the outside staff.

**It was agreed to establish a maintenance programme as listed in the cost heading in this new cost centre with an overall expenditure of £3,000.**

**6.7. YOUTH COUNCIL** (*Youth Council Steering Group*)

The work of the Steering Group will come to an end at the formal setting up of the Youth Council in February 2008. The nominations are in progress with 5 members coming from the Community, 5 from Hammond's High School, 5 from the Sacred Heart Convent School, 5 from the Sixth Form College and 2 from the Breckland Park Private School.

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The Budget for the Youth Council this year is designed to give them sufficient funds to function properly in their first full year. There is a great deal that is unknown in as much as the activity and decisions have yet to be taken. Next year things should be clearer as the Youth Council themselves can present a case for their own proposed budget for the following year. The Youth Council have just been notified that they have their first grant of £1,075 for setting up costs from the Norfolk Youth Fund. This fund is managed by Norfolk County Council. The Youth Fund Panel stated that they felt the Town Council should be funding this, and the grant offered was 50% of what was applied for.

### **a) Youth Council Income**

The Youth Council to have a Bank Account administered by the Deputy Town Clerk incorporated within the Town Council Accounts structure. This would allow grants to be paid directly to the Youth Council and interest to be earned on earmarked funds set aside for the Youth Council.

**It was agreed that a bank account is set up for the Youth Council to give autonomy to them which will be overseen by the Deputy Town Clerk.**

### **b) Youth Council Expenditure**

The Match Funding figure of £2,000 is £1,000 carried forward from this financial year and a further £1,000 towards Youth based projects in the town.

**It was agreed to increase the Youth Council match funding budget by £1,000 to £2,000 in 2008/09**

### **c) Other Budget Headings**

The other four budget headings are straight forward with £750 each to Youth Council events, administration, project development and a sundry budget.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £3,000 to the Youth Council for 2008/09 divided equally (4 x £750) amongst Youth Council events, administration, project development and sundry.**

## **6.8. ALLOTMENTS (*Open Spaces Committee*)**

The allotments have had a bit of a makeover this past year with substantial funds being spent on preparing the vacant overgrown sites for those tenants moving from Shoulder of Mutton or Days Field. There is still a lot of work to do to ensure that this is not a wasted expense. The next phase is a year of consolidation, building on the investment and putting in place proper maintenance programmes and procedures to ensure that the allotments never return to the bad state they were in at the start of this process. Decades of neglect reflect badly not only on the Town Council but on the town as a whole. The budget this year is all about good housekeeping and making sure things are kept in good order, this policy will save in the long term.

### **a) Allotments Income**

The only income to offset against the expenditure is received from allotment rent. It is necessary to increase the allotment rent slightly above the RPI of 4%, with a 6.5% increase. This gives an allotment rent of either £24 or £32. As steps have been taken in recent years to increase allotment rent year on year above the RPI to bring the allotment rent in line with other authorities, the Council should be able now to look to an RPI increase next year.

**It was agreed to increase the rents by 6.5% for 2008/09 giving an allotment rent of £24 or £32 (50% reduction for half size allotments). It was also agreed to increase allotment rent no more than the RPI in 2009/10.**

**b) Allotments Expenditure**

The water supply has been installed to both Shoemakers Lane and Tumbler Hill Allotments. The water usage will therefore increase considerably this next year and the Council need to increase their water rates accordingly. The Repairs/Replacements budget has been increased in line with the RPI.

**It was agreed to increase the budget for Water Rates to £700 and a budget of £3,500 for Repairs/replacements for 2008/09.**

**c) Access/Clearance**

There are new budget headings for Access/clearance which will be used to keep all tracks open to the allotments. Maintenance of vacant sites is needed to keep them in a reasonable condition before they are taken on by new tenants. Hedge cutting and waste clearance are both straight forward. Health and safety is to cover risk assessments, record keeping and actions arising from them.

**It was agreed to introduce new budgets in 2008/09 for Access/clearance £752, Maintenance of vacant sites £2,750, hedge cutting £400, waste clearance £600 and health & safety £400.**

**d) Allotments Expenditure**

The salaries figure is a calculation to cover the cost of administration and outside staff time required in managing the allotments. This again is something that has been under discussion for sometime now with the Internal auditor. It is obviously a hidden cost that has been absorbed by the Town Council ever since they have managed the allotments. This is to allow the town to see a more accurate cost of maintaining allotments in the town.

**It was agreed that a budget for salaries calculated at £2,335 be set for 2008/09.**

**e) Sundry**

The sundry budget is maintained for those unforeseen expenses.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £500 for allotment sundry expenses for 2008/09.**

**6.9. RECREATION GROUND (*Recreation Ground Committee*)**

The Recreation Ground is a new cost centre expanded from the Open Spaces in the current year. The reason for this was to try and give a more accurate detail of how much the Recreation Ground costs to maintain. Things like Grounds Maintenance, Hedge Cutting and Tree Maintenance are now apportioned to difference cost centres instead of being grouped together as one.

**a) Recreation Ground Income**

The only income for Recreation Ground usage comes from hiring fees received for the travelling Circus. This past year there have been two.

**It was agreed that the hiring fee for the Recreation Ground is increased by the RPI of 4% for 2008/09.**

**b) Recreation Ground Expenditure**

The grounds maintenance, hedge cutting and weekly health & safety checks on play equipment are carried out by Country Grounds Maintenance and estimates have been prepared for next year. The tree maintenance is carried out by local tree surgeon David Machin and has been estimated as accurately as you can, not allowing for any storm damage. Further costs in the health & safety budget are allowed for the annual ROSPA inspection and report. The play equipment repairs and sundry budgets are estimated based on previous requirements.

**It was agreed to accept all budgeted estimates for grounds maintenance, hedge cutting, health & safety, tree maintenance, play equipment repairs and sundry.**

**c) Skatepark Board Maintenance**

The Skatepark Board Maintenance budget has also been moved to this new cost centre. It was previously part of a Capital Project and is the surplus left over from Sport England who grant aided the project. This budget is earmarked and has been brought forward from the current financial year.

**It was agreed to continue to earmark £3,600 for the Skatepark Board on the Recreation Ground.**

**6.10. TOILETS & TIC** (*Open Spaces & Amenities Committee*)

The Town Council agreed at their November 2007 meeting to let out the whole of the old TIC building to a local Taxi Company and use part of the income towards providing a TIC service elsewhere in the town. The recommendations reflect this decision and the subsequent forthcoming strategic policy to be approved by full Council in due course.

The Toilets again were subject to recent decisions taken at the November 2007 meeting, where a charge of 20p was agreed and free to access the disabled toilet. The refurbishment is planned to take place early in the New Year and to be re-opened in time for Easter 2008.

**a) Old TIC Building Rent**

The only income proposed for the chosen management option of the TIC is a rent for the building. Other headings were chosen last year for a different management option.

**It was agreed to accept the District Valuers valuation for an annual rent of £3,750 for the TIC building for 2008/09.**

**b) Tourist Information Centre Service Level Agreement**

The only expenditure proposed for the chosen management option of the TIC is the £2,500 fee that goes with a service level agreement for providing a TIC service. The location of the TIC is to be determined at a later date. The basic fee is £1,500 with a further £1,000 towards stationery etc.

**It was agreed to provide a fee of £2,500 with a service level agreement to an outside body to deliver a TIC service in the town for 2008/09.**

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### **c) Commuted Sum Interest**

Under cost centre 1 - the Capital Projects code heading - Public Toilets Commuted Sum which is the capital to be received from Breckland Council. The income will come from the interest earned on the capital sum. There would be 10% of the interest held back to be reinvested to protect the capital.

**It was agreed to estimate a full year of interest earned from the Commuted Sum to be used to partly fund the cleaning and maintenance of the toilets.**

### **d) Entry Charge**

The Town Council agreed to charge for entry to the toilets at 20p after they are refurbished. It is estimated that on average 100 people would use the toilets every day throughout the year. There is no data to support this figure it is pure speculation in order to place a figure into the budget. The Council should therefore accept that if this paid entrance figure is lower than predicted then some expenditure would have to be met out of Reserves. The budget could be adjusted accordingly in the following year.

**It was agreed that the estimated income from the paid entrance to the public toilets is to partly fund the cleaning and maintenance of the toilets. It was also agreed that any shortfall should be met from Reserves.**

### **e) Cleaning & Maintenance Contract**

The bulk of the expenditure will be taken up by the Cleaning & Maintenance contract, this will be carried out by a contractor subject to the Town Council approving a service level agreement. The budget is for a basic level of service, if a higher spec is required this will need to be budgeted for.

**It was agreed that the cleaning & maintenance contract would be £10,400 for 2008/09. This is subject to negotiation and additional requirements that may feature in a service level agreement.**

### **f) Toilets & TIC Sundry Budgets**

A small sundry budget for each part of the building for unforeseen expenditure.

**It was agreed to set sundry budget of £250 for each of the TIC and Toilets for 2008/09.**

## **6.11. CEMETERY & CHURCHYARD** *(Open Spaces & Amenities Committee)*

The Cemetery has now been grouped together with the Churchyard for the first time. The reason for this is that the responsibilities and the management required is very similar. The big issue to address this year is health & safety of the gravestones in both areas. It is an essential requirement and will impact on the current financial year as well as the year in question of 2008/09. There are some additional cost headings and others that have been transferred to the Cemetery & Churchyard for the first time. The Town Council are the burial authority for the Cemetery and the responsible authority to look after the closed churchyard around St. Peter and St. Paul Church.

### **a) Cemetery Fees**

The only income to the Cemetery comes through burial fees. The prices were brought in line with other burial authorities last year; however there is still a need to

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keep pace with inflation. Burials are of course difficult to predict in terms of budgets, dependant on the obvious it is not something that you can really promote. The income is offset against the expenditure.

**It was agreed to increase burial fees by 4% for to £5,000 2008/09.**

### **b) Business Rates, Maintenance & Waste Collection**

There are some standard expenditure that needs to be increased by the RPI of 4%, these are for the Non-domestic rates, Cemetery maintenance and waste collection including soil removal.

**It was agreed to increase by the RPI of 4% the budgets for Rates, Cemetery Maintenance and Waste Collection for 2008/09.**

### **c) Electricity, Tree Maintenance and Health & Safety**

There are new budget headings for electricity supply which will come into play after the proposed refurbishment of the Cemetery Chapel, tree maintenance which was allocated collectively to another cost centre and for health & safety, this being the gravestone checks. The latter will also generate a number of remedial actions, as it is inevitable that some gravestones will fail the safety check. Where the name of the families are known, then some expenditure can be offset by claiming back some of the costs from the owners of the exclusive rights of the graves concerned, but the bulk of the cost will come down to the Council as the burial authority and custodians of the Brandon Road Cemetery. The Town Council have to take responsibility.

**It was agreed to introduce new budgets for electricity £250, tree maintenance of £500 and health & safety £5,000 for 2008/09.**

### **d) Outside Equipment Repairs & Replacements**

The budget headings for outside equipment repairs and replacements have been transferred to this cost centre. The reason for this is that almost exclusively the equipment is used by the grounds staff at the Cemetery.

**It was agreed to move outside equipment repairs £825 and replacement £925 budgets to this cost centre and increase by the RPI 4%.**

### **e) Salaries**

The Cemetery cost centre has previously been constructed so that a contribution towards the salaries was shown to balance up the expenditure with the income received. This in no way reflects the actual expenditure incurred at the Cemetery. Following discussion with the Internal Auditor a more realistic salaries calculation has been made to take into account the work carried out by the outside ground staff and administration in respect of burials etc.

**It was agreed to increase the salaries calculation to £13,235 for 2008/09.**

### **f) Heath & Safety Check Re-Imbursement**

The only source of income to the Churchyard is a possible contribution towards the health & safety checks of the headstones

**It is agreed to proceed with the health & safety checks on the proviso that in the closed churchyard the cost is shared between the Town Council and the PCC. This is estimated at £1.000 in 2008/09.**

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### **g) Grounds Maintenance**

The grounds maintenance in the churchyard has improved considerably since Country Grounds Maintenance took over two years ago. The general public have been very complimentary.

**It was agreed to set a budget for Churchyard Grounds Maintenance of £5,800 for 2008/09.**

### **h) Tree Maintenance**

The tree maintenance in the churchyard has previously been grouped together in one budget heading.

**It was agreed that the tree maintenance budget for the churchyard is £500 for 2008/09.**

### **i) Heath & Safety**

The churchyard health & safety is of similar important to that of the Cemetery. It is all about making sure that the gravestones are safe.

**It was agreed to set a budget of £2000 for the churchyard health & safety for 2008/09.**

### **j) Sundry**

The retention of a sundry budget is essential as this expanded cost centre settles down throughout this financial year. The sundry budget could be split but on this occasion it is recommended that it stays as a joint sundry heading.

**It was agreed to have a sundry budget of £500 for the Cemetery and Churchyard cost centre for 2008/09.**

## **6.12. OPEN SPACES** (*Open Spaces & Amenities Committee*)

The Open Spaces cost centre has been reduced this year, as new cost centres have been established for areas such as the Recreation Ground, Northwell Pool and adding the Churchyard to the Cemetery cost centre. The Open Spaces Committee continue to look at these areas in greater detail, as time is short at full Council meetings it is important to be able to take a strategic view of the town and see where our open space fits the town as a whole. The major expense last year was with the restoration of the Town Clock, it is hoped that this should last sometime now before its next overhaul. The cost of maintaining the pick-up truck has been moved to this cost centre as the main use is to look after our town centre flowers and maintain our open spaces.

### **a) Sponsorship & Recycling Credits**

The only potential income in this cost centre comes from the two headings for Town Centre floral displays in the form of sponsorship and recycling credits. The Council received a contribution of £1,000 from the Kingdom Film Company earlier this year and the Recycling scheme has been on the cards for quite a while. It is recommended not to estimate any potential income, but anything received in this financial year could be used at the Council's discretion. This would help to set a realistic budget for 2009/10.

**It was agreed for the Town Council to explore Sponsorship opportunities and complete the town scheme for receiving Recycling Credits in 2008/09.**

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### **b) Town Clock**

The Town Clock has survived a year or so without much expense. The annual maintenance cost is all that is required in this heading and this is greatly reduced to 50% of last year's budget.

**It was agreed that the town clock maintenance budget is set at £500 in 2008/09.**

### **c) War Memorial Electricity**

The electricity for the war memorial is increased by the RPI of 4%. The electricity supply has been checked just recently to replace lighting that was not working properly.

**It was agreed to increase the budget for the War Memorial electricity supply RPI of 4% for 2008/09.**

### **d) Floral Displays**

The floral displays have two budget headings, one for the cost of the plants, hanging baskets and planters and the other for the salary calculation for the Town Gardener. It may be necessary to start putting aside a contingency for future replacement baskets and planters.

**It was agreed for the floral displays budget is increased by the RPI of 4% and the salaries calculation has been adjusted accordingly to £13,713 for 2008/09.**

### **e) Campingland**

The Campingland is another green space cared for by the Town Council. The budget headings have been split this year to enable the Council to see the actual cost for grounds maintenance, tree maintenance and hedge cutting.

**It was agreed to introduce three new budget headings for the Campingland and set budgets in 2008/09 for hedge cutting £400, tree maintenance £400 and grounds maintenance of £600.**

### **f) Play Areas**

The Town Council are in the process of taking over three play areas and the green spaces around them in various parts of the town. It is known that a commuted sum will come to the Council on an annual basis for 30 years, however it is not known when this will happen. It is therefore recommended to insert cost headings for Play Areas – Commuted Sum and Play Areas Repairs/ Maintenance, these will be assessed by the Open Spaces Committee with recommendations to full Council as and when they are transferred from Breckland Council.

**It was agreed to introduce two new budget headings for Play Areas - Commuted Sum and Play Areas Repairs/ Maintenance in preparation for the transfer of these assets to the Town Council from Breckland Council for 2008/09.**

### **g) Truck Lease**

The Pick up truck lease is completed towards the end of the current financial year. This should now be replaced, traded in and re-financed to keep this asset up to date. It is inevitable that the cost of the replacement will be slightly more expensive. The truck is used to house the watering equipment it is also used for a variety of jobs in and around the town. If a truck with a towing bar and the adaptability to tip could be

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added to the basic model, then this would be preferred. The other cost heading for the truck is for Maintenance/Fuel/and Insurance.

**It was agreed that budget for a Truck Lease is increased to £1,600 to allow for a replacement truck to be purchased. It was also agreed for the truck maintenance/fuel and insurance budget to be increased by the RPI of 4% to £1,725 for 2008/09.**

### **h) Buttercross**

The electricity was restored to the Buttercross earlier this year; the downside is that the Council will start to receive electricity bills.

**It was agreed to set a budget for the Buttercross electricity at £365 for 2008/09.**

### **i) Street Furniture**

The street furniture maintenance budget has been well used in recent years but quite wrongly to provide additional dog bins and litter bins. These are capital expenses as additions to our asset register. If this budget is to be used in this way then there is one additional consideration this year which is for hanging basket columns/structures. This is something that will need addressing if street light columns cannot be used for this purpose. It could be something that the Town Estate may wish to support with a grant in the future. A separate consideration could be given to support such a scheme from the match funding budget.

**It was agreed to increase the Street Furniture maintenance budget by the RPI of 4% to £1,510 in 2008/09.**

### **j) Sundry Budget**

The sundry budget is retained and increased by 4% in line with the RPI.

**It was agreed to increase the Open Spaces sundry budget in line with the RPI of 4% for 2008/09.**

## **6.13. AMENITIES, AGENCY & CIVIC (*Open Spaces & Amenities Committee*)**

The Amenities, Agency and Civic cost centre has not changed must from last year. There is one significant addition that of the Museum Loan agreed last year. The insurance reimbursement from Icen Partnership has also been separated from the Council's general insurance under the Administration cost centre and is analysed with other Agency arrangements.

### **a) Museum Annual Grant**

The annual grant for the Museum is increased in line with the RPI for this year. It will be necessary to review the contribution towards the Museum in the lifetime of this Council as the current commitment to the Museum is for another four years. Similarly the calculation of Museum utility costs has also been increased by the RPI. There followed a discussion relating to visitor figures, cost of running the building and the expected figures for the following season. It was requested that the Museum Board of Directors produce this information for a future Town Council meeting.

**It was agreed that a request is made to the Board of Directors to produce information relating visitors figures, expected visitors, costs of running the museum etc.**

**It was agreed to increase both the Museum grant to £3,430 and Museum % of utilities to £2,100 both in line with the RPI of 4% for 2008/09.**

**b) Christmas Lighting**

The Christmas lighting budget for lights on the Buttercross and the Town Hall is increased in line with the RPI.

**It was agreed to increase Christmas lighting to £730 in line with the RPI of 4%.**

**c) Street Lighting**

The standard street lighting cost for the town in increased in line with the RPI. There are issues to consider relating to street lighting maintenance, as Norfolk County Council have a replacement programme for a number of obsolete street lighting columns in the town centre. The issue relates to hanging baskets and Xmas lighting, as the replacement columns are not strong enough to take the weight of either hanging baskets or Xmas lights. The question is should the Town Council start to put aside a contingency for meeting the difference of a standard column and a stronger column in order to preserve the floral displays in the town centre and allow some lighting columns to be used for Xmas lighting displays?

**It was agreed to increase the street lighting electricity cost to £12,500 this is in line with the RPI of 4%. It was also agreed to set a budget for Street Lighting maintenance to £2,150 which would give a sum of £1,000 towards upgrading of street light columns.**

**d) Agency Income**

The Town Council has agency agreements with Breckland Council for car parking supervision, the administration of the Relief in Need Charity and reimbursements for insurance that are arranged for Icen Partnership for the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre. The Museum loan of £20,000 has repayments twice a year of £900, £1,800 each year. The reimbursement from the Museum is shown on the income side.

**It was agreed that the Agency fees which come outside agencies are set at: -Breckland Council £2,284, Relief in Need Charity £1,167, from Icen Partnership £4,850 and Swaffham Museum Ltd of £1,800 for 2008/09.**

**e) Agency Expenditure**

The expenditure is reflected in a similar cost to the income received to deliver the service for Breckland Council and the Relief in Need Charity, where the costs are salaries. The Icen Partnership is simply arranging building insurance for the two buildings leased of the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre. The Museum loan of £20,000 has repayments twice a year of £900, £1,800 each year payable to the Public Works Loan Board.

**It was agreed that the Agency expenditure relates to Breckland Council £2,284, Relief in Need Charity £1,167, Icen Partnership £4,850 and for Swaffham Museum Ltd £1,800.**

**f) Honorary Citizen & Best Kept Garden Competition**

The budget for the Honorary Citizen relates to a presentation expected in the year 2008/09, there are nominations currently under consideration. The Best Kept

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Garden Competition was agreed last year and has been carried forward from last year as it has been stated by the Horticultural Society/SCALGA that this will be established next summer.

**It was agreed to introduce two new budget headings and set budgets for the Honorary Citizen of £150 and the Best Kept Garden of £250 for 2008/09.**

### **g) Section 137 Grants**

This budget is for community grants where there is no specific power to give a grant or support the organisation, so Section 137 of the Local Government Act 1972 is used for this purpose. The new power of well being may replace Section 137 for those Council's able to meet certain criteria such as Quality Councils for an example. The new legislation is imminent and will clarify matters.

**It was agreed to increase the Section 137 Grants budget by the RPI of 4% to £1,150**

### **h) Mayoral Expenses**

The Mayoral expenses are all increased in line with the RPI of 4%, this is for the Mayors allowance, the Mayors Reception and the Mayors Civic Service. The allowance is for the expenses incurred in the term of Mayor; the two civic events are always well attended and are reciprocated by invitations to other neighbouring Towns.

**It was agreed to increase the Mayors Allowance to £910, the Civic Reception to £1175 and the Civic Service to £365 in line with the RPI of 4% for 2008/09.**

### **i) Civic Twinning Event**

It is time to start preparing for the Civic twinning visit of Swaffham's two twin towns due in 2010 to Swaffham. The last visit in 2004 cost £6,000, with inflation in is envisaged that this cost could rise to £7,500 if events of a similar size and nature are required. In 2008 the Mayor and Town Clerk are funded to attend the civic visit to Hemmoor in Germany, with part of the budget to be available as a bursary and the remainder to be used as a contingency for 2010.

**It was agreed to set a Twinning bursary budget at £2,750 in 2008/09 to start building up a contingency for the civic visit of Swaffham's two twin town to Swaffham in 2010.**

### **k) Sundry**

The sundry budget is maintained within this cost centre for unforeseen expenses.

**It was agreed to set a sundry budget £525 for 2008/09.**

## **6.14. Cash-flow, Borrowing and Reserves**

If all the projected income suddenly arrived on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 then there would be no problems at all, but realistically that is not going to happen.

### **a) Cash Flow**

The cash flow is a real worry, in as much as the bulk of the new income budgeted for 2008/09 will come from the sale of surplus allotment land, when it is sold, after the notice to quit expires in January 2008, and providing the Secretary of State confirms

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the Section 8 permission to dispose of the land. There is no standard timetable for this; there is a target of the third quarter of 2008/09 between October and December 2008. It is during that quarter that there will be a cash flow problem. However, there is also no guarantee that the land disposal will be completed in time for next years budget or indeed within the next financial year. It is important therefore to consider that some of this expenditure may need to straddle two financial years, dictated to by the timing of receiving the income.

### **b) Borrowing**

The above concern leads into the next category which is that of borrowing. Whilst the Town Council can budget for 2008/09 with reasonable confidence, they do need to plan for every eventuality and face up to the prospect of needing to borrow in the short term until the major funds come on stream. This could be in the form of an overdraft or temporary loan repaid within a 12 month period. However, the final part of previously agreed loans to draw down are now required for Northwell Pool £5,000 and Swaffham Museum Ltd. A temporary arrangement has been set in place and having advanced the £20,000 to the Museum out of monies held for the Town Hall, but following the recent Access Audit there will be funds required soon to push forward the actions from that report. Perhaps the Council should consider increasing the amount they plan to borrow and this would ease the burden of cash flow before it becomes a problem. It is necessary to up the Public Works Loan to £35,000 instead of the £25,000 previously agreed, as the borrowing rules mean that you can only borrow in excess of your limit for Section 137 grants which is  $£5.64 \times$  the number of electors which is  $5508 = £31,065.12$ . The additional £10,000 would be allocated to the Swaffham Bowls Club changing room's project and when the funds are finally received, then £15,000 of this loan would be cleared leaving only the Museum loan remaining. The latter loan will be serviced by Swaffham Museum Ltd.

### **c) Reserves**

The Reserves are really depleted and will be severely tested in 2008/09, they will not recover until all projected income is finally received. The Council will then have to look seriously at whether there are sufficient reserves within their accounts to manage an ever growing administration, a forward thinking Town Council who want to deliver more services from the town. These are all issues that need monitoring by the Finance Committee and addressing by the Town Council in the future.

## **6.15. PRECEPT *(Finance & General Purposes Committee)***

The all important figure is the Precept as this is the one that affects the Council Tax from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008. The Town Clerk recommended that the Precept for 2008/09 is increased by the RPI rate of 4%. This budget demonstrates that the Town Council are taking on more responsibility locally; this is a budget to put the town of Swaffham firmly on the map.

<b>It was agreed to increase the Precept by £6,252 for 2008/09 in line with the RPI of 4% to £162,552 for 2008/09.</b>
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Thanks was given to the Town Clerk from the whole Council for such a clear and concise budget that he had put together.

The meeting closed at 9.15p.m.

Chairman\_\_\_\_\_