

**SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Spaces & Amenities Committee meeting of the Town Council held on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September 2007 at 6.30p.m. in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: - Cllr Matthews (in the Chair)

Cllr Jennison, Cllr Lister, Cllr Sharpe and Cllr Skinner.

Town Clerk:	Mr Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk:	Mrs Meyrick
SCALGA	Mrs Christine Wright

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

- 1.1. Cllr David Harman due to a hospital appointment.
- 1.2. Sue Polaine Leonard (SCALGA) – prior engagement.

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

- 2.1. There were no declarations of interest.

**3. MINUTES**

- 3.1. The minutes of the Open Spaces meeting for the 6<sup>th</sup> June 2007 were agreed and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

**4. TOWN CLERK REPORT**

- 4.1. Allotments

The following news were recently received from Go. East:-

**ALLOTMENTS ACT 1925 – SECTION 8 – SALE OF ALLOTMENT LAND AT THE DAYS FIELD & SHOULDER OF MUTTON ALLOTMENTS, SWAFFHAM, NORFOLK**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government (“the Secretary of State”) to refer to your letter of 16 January 2007 and further information of 23 May 2007 and 26 June 2007, about the Council’s proposal to sell 2.06 hectares of allotment land at Days Field Allotments and 1.40 hectares of allotment land at Shoulder of Mutton Allotments, both areas shown highlighted in yellow on the attached plans.
2. The Secretary of State has received several letters of objection to the Council’s proposals from local residents and allotment holders, including those that have been required to transfer to new plots. She notes that some of these letters relate to the transfer of land for housing and the possible flood risk these developments may pose. Such matters must be considered in relation to any planning application which may subsequently be submitted for residential development on this site. They are not matters which the Secretary of State may take into account when considering proposals for the sale of allotment land, under section 8 of the 1925 Act.
3. The Secretary of State has however considered those objections relating to the present and future demand for allotment land in the area; that the allotments are not sufficiently publicised; that the local authority has not properly maintained the allotments in the past and that the replacement sites are not in a suitable condition for

spade cultivation. The Secretary of State is satisfied that, despite the loss of these sites, there will be an adequate number of allotments to meet any immediate demand and future allotment sites in Swaffham and she notes that there is currently no waiting list for sites. The Secretary of State is also satisfied that Swaffham Town Council has taken reasonable steps to advertise allotment availability in the form of advertisements in their quarterly newspaper delivered to every household. The Secretary of State also notes the Town Council's admittance that it has not properly managed the sites in the past but that this matter is now being addressed. The Secretary of State also notes that the local authority is willing to pay reasonable compensation to reflect investment in the original plots and that it has shown flexibility in the reallocation of plots. **The Secretary of State is therefore minded to grant the disposal.**

3. However, the Secretary of State is concerned with the condition of the replacement allotment sites at Shoemakers Lane and Tumbler Hill. She notes that efforts have been made by the local authority to clear the sites and make them suitable for spade cultivation, but is still of the opinion that the alternative sites are not yet acceptable.
4. In conclusion **the Secretary of State is minded to grant consent** to the disposal, however she considers that before any consent can be granted evidence should be supplied to this office which shows that:
  - i. all plots on alternatives sites have been clearly marked and fenced off;
  - ii. the plots have been cleared of excessive weeds, ploughed and manured, and
  - iii. all debris and fly tipping is removed from the sites.

**Such evidence to should be submitted to this office by 5<sup>th</sup> November 2007.**

The Town Clerk has actioned all three issues. Thus bringing forward the clearance and preparation programme from 8<sup>th</sup> January 2008 to mid/late October 2007. The actual cost will be somewhere between £30,000 and £35,000. It has already been approved by full Council that this expense currently being met from Reserves would be reimbursed by some of the money coming in from the sale of the surplus land. A press release has been sent to both the Lynn News and the EDP. Further issues relating to the land sale will be discussed by the Finance Committee and full Council in due course both prior to and after receipt of the consent after providing the necessary evidence to meet the three conditions.

The Clerk informed the committee that he has met with the contractor and has instructed him to take care of any weeds that have grown. He has requested a quote for the placement of manure on the vacant allotments. Allotment holders who have moved recently to the site will be given the opportunity of having some bags of manure for their site. It was requested that the manure to be used be animal manure.

Cllr Skinner arrived at 7.36p.m.

At the budget meeting in December the additional cost of keeping the banks and gangways clear on a regular basis will be considered. The Council have a contractor that cuts the hedges around the allotments.

#### 4.2. Campinglands - Cemetery - Churchyard

The contractor was made aware that the Campingland hedge had not been cut for most of the summer, it has not been checked in the past couple of weeks so this may have

happened, if not then it is imminent. There has been contact from one resident who lives adjacent to the Cemetery regarding the ownership of trees. He was asked to supply deeds and the matter has been referred to our Solicitor W.F. Smith & Co. The advice is still awaited.

#### 4.3. Town Centre – including street furniture

The Town Centre street furniture licences are now all in place. These had to be photographed, mapped and then cross referenced. This brought the matter of hanging baskets to the attention of Norfolk County Council who have not given a license to the hanging baskets. It has resulted in an on-going dispute which looks like ending with the hanging baskets being removed from all street lighting columns on health & safety grounds as reported to full Council last week. This matter was taken up by the Sunday Express last Sunday and Radio Five Live, as the Mayor and a spokesperson from the County Council featured on a news programme on Sunday evening. The officer concerned is back in the office tomorrow morning; therefore the Town Clerk will continue to take this matter up on behalf of the Council. The Clerk has received a verbal objection to the placement of a bench on the corner of Northwell Pool Road and Station Street. It was agreed by full Council some time ago to place a bench in this area following a number of requests from members of the public. Since then a street furniture licence for the bench has been received from Norfolk County Council. The Clerk has requested this in writing which will be referred to full Council for consideration.

#### 4.4. Northwell Pool

A report has been circulated at the meeting from the Project Officer David Bek; in addition there is an example of a coir island which is seen as one of the improvements. The Clerk requested the committee read the report and then raise any issues they may have. These would then be taken back to the Project Officer to give further instruction. If the Committee are satisfied with the progress made then he can proceed along the lines described. Please see Appendix 1 for the report. There were a few concerns expressed such as: -

- Would the floating island cause the pool to silt up? this would be taken back to the project officer to investigate.?
- Could contraceptives be used for the ducks?
- Would the island attract vandals?

The first two bullet points would be taken back to the project officer to look at as well as the vandalism aspect. There would need to be some talks with the community policing team if vandalism occurs to discuss who to deal with any problems that may arise.

#### 4.5. The Shambles

The Project Officer will give a progress report regarding 'The Shambles' at the next meeting. Breckland Council legal department have carried out searches regarding title. The Town Council's Solicitor's are satisfied that with these and statutory undertakings/declarations, that the Town Council would have four small areas under their ownership shortly. There is also the land surrounding the TIC/Toilets which will be looked at closely when it is conveyed to the Council, as this abuts the Shambles.

### **5. COMMITTEE REPORTS – to receive brief strategic update from the following:-**

#### 5.1. Market Committee

There was a Market Committee meeting on Monday of this week. It has now been established that:

- the Deputy Town Clerk is the Lead Officer for the Market with immediate effect
- efforts are being made to establish a Charity Auction under the direction of the Town Council to replace and fill the gap left by the auction at the earliest opportunity

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- the offer by Wymondham Town Council to come and present good practice and information in relation to their Farmers Market will be taken up shortly
- every effort is being made to regenerate the Market to bring it up to its full number

### 5.2. Recreation Ground Project Sub-Committee

It should be noted that the applications relating to Breckland's Big Lottery bid (£45,000) for Play equipment and ITV's Peoples Millions Grant (£80,000) for a Sensory Garden have been submitted. Further progress on the Recreation Ground Project will be reported to the Recreation Ground Committee meeting that follows on from this meeting.

### 5.3. Town Group – Town Plan

The Town Healthcheck is in progress at the present time forms are available at the Town Hall or an online version is available from the Town Council website [www.swaffhamtowncouncil.co.uk](http://www.swaffhamtowncouncil.co.uk). The Committee were asked that if you know of a group willing to fill in forms to collect a batch from the Town Hall. A Healthcheck is a buzzword that refers to what the town has, what it lacks, what it needs for the future. It is not strictly speaking about health, although it is about the overall wellbeing of the Town as a whole. The Town Group's next meeting is on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> October at the Town Hall. It will be the voting members that will be called to a meeting, to monitor the progress to date and to work with the Project Officer and other staff to take matters forward.

## **6. CIVIC AMENITIES – issues reports and recommendations by the Town Clerk &/or Deputy Town Clerk unless stated**

### 5.4. Honorary Citizen nominations

Currently there are three nominations to consider, all former Councillors. The proposal letters have not been circulated as it has not yet been agreed when to close nominations. The three names under consideration are Mrs. Pam Buxton, Mr. Ben Emmerson and Mr. Paul Ison. It is recommended to allow a period until 31<sup>st</sup> October to allow full consideration at your 7<sup>th</sup> November meeting. It is further recommended to review the current policy and consider an amendment to look specifically at the timing of agreeing an Honorary Citizen. Should this be towards the end of your four year term for an example, rather than in the first year? Is there merit in having a Citizen of the Year competition? With the winners automatically going forward to be considered for an Honorary Citizenship at the appropriate time? Are these awards that could be co-ordinated/ presented at your Annual Town Assembly with Section 106 Grants to successful organisations? There followed a lengthy discussion on this subject. Cllr Sharpe proposed and Cllr Skinner seconded to have a Citizen of the Year award annually and then these will go forward to the Honorary Citizen nominations at the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Council.

**It was agreed to recommend to Full Council for a Citizen of the Year award to be carried out annually and the winner's name will be put forward to the Honorary Citizen nominations at the 4<sup>th</sup> year of the Council.**

### 5.5. Mayoral duties including the Mayor's Reception and Civic Service

A provisional date for the Mayor's Reception is Friday 17<sup>th</sup> April. The venue was discussed but the committee will need to know costings per head before this can be decided.

### 5.6. Pedlars Sign - The Buttercross - Town Clock - War Memorial.

The Council recently received £1,000 from the Kingdom Film Company towards the floral display at the Pedlars Sign. The Mayor and Town Clerk were present to receive the cheque. The Buttercross has its electricity and the junction/feeder box has been moved to the satisfaction of the Historic Buildings Officer, also painted black to disguise the fact that it is there! The annual maintenance to the Town Clock has been carried out and some minor

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problems overcome. The clocks are to be changed very soon and it will be nice to have the clock chiming to mark the 11<sup>th</sup> hour of the eleventh month at the Remembrance Day Service this year. The War Memorial has been refurbished by volunteers organised/coordinated by Karl Dunbar on behalf of the Royal British Legion. The Mayor invited the volunteers to her Civic Reception in July to say thank you. A request has been received to consider moving the public seats around the War Memorial, as “you don’t turn your back on the dead”. This is something for the Open Spaces Committee to consider, and make a recommendation to full Council if appropriate. Cllr Lister proposed and Cllr Sharpe seconded not to change the seating around the War Memorial as the expense would be too great.

**It was agreed not to move the seats located around the War Memorial to a different position as the expense would be too great.**

**7. Date of next meeting.**

7.1. Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> November at 6.30pm

Meeting closed 7.20pm.

\_\_\_\_\_Chairman