

IN TOUCH

with your

TOWN

The Town
Newsletter

JANUARY 2005

Issue 26

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Town Hall, 4 London St, Swaffham, Norfolk, PE37 7DQ

Editorial & Commentary by the Town Clerk

Richard Bishop

Tel: 01760 722922 Fax: 01760 720469

E-mail: towncouncil@swaffham.fsnet.co.uk

Web Site: www.swaffhamtowncouncil.co.uk

BUDGETS, MONEY and the X-FACTOR...

The X-Factor is not something you associate with either politics or democracy at whatever level let alone here in Swaffham. Town Council meetings can sometimes be entertaining of course and probably because of its importance the budget debate each December can be the most entertaining of all. The presentation by the ghosts of Christmas past, present and future respectively are followed by the setting of the Precept and this affects everyone who pays Council Tax in the town. So to cut a long story short, it didn't go down but whether this goes down well with the town is another story, you decide whether your Council has the X-Factor.. Take a look at the budget details in "Under the Buttercross".

By the time this newsletter reaches you the Assembly Rooms will finally be closed for refurbishment, a new Community Centre has just begun to emerge out of the grounds of Camping Lands, work is soon to start on the town centre enhancement scheme, the Museum is steadily going into storage for its own refurbishment and enhancement, then on 17th January the Town Council move into its new offices complete with Council Chamber for the first meeting of the Town Council two days later in its new home, with the town hall extension fully completed.

The Town Hall will be closed to the public from lunchtime on Friday 14th January and re-opening on Monday 31st January, with access only from the new Cley Road entrance opposite the Oasis Centre. The entrance from London Street will be closed whilst the refurbishment of the Museum is in progress, due to be completed by July 2005. There will also be no Breckland Presence Office, Registrar or Citizens Advice during the two-week closure. The Museum and Icen Offices are accessible by appointment only. If you need to urgently contact the Town Council during this period please do this via e-mail, fax, letter or by answer-phone.

From 31st January there will be new opening hours for the Town Council. Monday, Tuesday and Thursday 9am – 2pm, Friday 8am – 1pm and the office will be closed to the public every Wednesday. The aim of this is to cover three lunchtimes and one early start to allow more people to access the office. Appointments can of course be arranged outside of these hours, most meetings are on Wednesdays and closure of the office allows for proper preparation time.

HAPPY NEW YEAR and enjoy your read.... RB Town Clerk

COPY DEADLINE for next issue

N.B. Your copy DEADLINE for the next issue due out in April 2005. All copy in by Friday 18th March 2005 at the latest. Thank you to all contributors of the newsletter, new contributions always welcome.

CONTENTS

- Editorial & Under the Buttercross - Town Clerk
- From the Mayor's Parlour by Cllr Pam Buxton
- Homewatch Association by Barbara Clarke
- Homestart by Eve Harris
- Swaffham Twinning Association by Barbara Clarke
- Community Events by Pam Buxton

FROM THE

MAYOR'S PARLOUR

By the time you read this all the Christmas festivities will be over. It was very pleasing for me and the Town Council that Swaffham had an exciting switch-on with all the fun of the fair. Our thanks to all who worked so hard to make the event happen and contributed to all the decorations.

Buildings are very much in the public eye at the moment. We hope to be in the new Town Hall extension this month with the work on the Museum to follow. We intend holding an Open Day for all to view the offices and the Council Chamber which we hope to use for the January Council meeting. The Community Centre is taking shape and the Assembly Rooms will soon start to see some enhancement. We also see the new Health Centre rising on the EcoTech site. The one disappointment has been the failure of the PFI which would have seen great improvements to the schools. I know as a governor of Hamond's that hours and hours of work have gone into this project and we hope that something soon will emerge in its place.

As your Mayor I have had the privilege of attending a number of community events. November seemed to be the month of Annual General Meetings which made me realise again just how much goes on in our Town. The Remembrance Concert on the 11th brought back so many memories. Last month I was welcomed on many festive occasions and, as I write this, I am looking forward to seeing this year's pantomime presented by the Players. I feel so lucky to be living in Swaffham, a town I have felt at home in since spending many holidays with my aunt and uncle as a child before finally settling here with my husband eighteen years ago.

A happy and peaceful New Year to you all.

Pam Buxton, Mayor of Swaffham

Underneath the Buttercross **SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

In December every year your Town Council look ahead to the next financial year. The following notes are some of the issues debated recently. Some are of course routine issues and may not interest everyone but they are included to show the kind of things your Council have to consider each year on your behalf.

BUDGET NOTES 2005/06

This budget was recommended to the Town Council on 8th December for the financial year 2005/06 starting 1st April 2005.

USE OF RESERVES

In respect of Reserves, the aim is still to keep these at a reasonable level to cover any emergency that might occur in the course of a financial year. The Reserves at the end of each financial year are contained in the General Fund Balance on the End of year Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet. These are distinct from the earmarked Reserves, as any money held in reserve that is specifically earmarked is seen as money allocated to a budget heading agreed by the Council and waiting to be spent at some point. The Reserves we are talking about is an amount of money within the accounts held in Reserve that is not allocated for anything in particular but essential nevertheless. A rough guide for Reserves is that they should as a minimum cover six months of expenditure as a maximum one year of expenditure. The current situation is that the Town Council Reserves are low.

ALLOCATION OF SALARIES

A staff appraisal process is set in place to deal with changes as they are required. There is a rise in the level of salaries this next year, due to increased administrative workload and a further member of staff being needed specifically to cover reception and basic administrative duties and to take account of annual increment rises etc. It is envisaged that staffing levels and salaries may well rise in the future, but that the vast majority of any increase will be funded from an increase in income received from Agency and Service Level agreements and not from the Precept. The Town Council have also taken on the responsibility of PAYE/Employment issues for Swaffham Museum Ltd under an agency agreement. The Personnel Committee have recently been informed of a new NALC/SLCC agreement which could impact on the salaries of administrative salaries in 2005/06, this agreement has to go through various stages but is expected to be implemented from 1st April 2005. It will result in new Contracts of Employment for the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Assistant Town Clerk. In view of the current workload problems the following recommendation is put to you.

(R.1) The Council should consider bringing forward the start date of the new member of staff and the additional hours for the Deputy and Assistant Town Clerk to 31st January 2005, i.e. the day the new office opens. AGREED

1) MARKET

The Saturday Market has taken a downward turn over the past year or so. It has been difficult to replace some traders that have retired, moved on or ceased trading. The income from casual traders has increased; this confirms a larger turnover of traders than in the previous two years. It is therefore recommended to increase the difference between casual trade and licensed trade with an increase of 5%.

(R.2) Casual Traders increased by 5% from £21 to £22 from 1st April 2005. AGREED

A more moderate 2.5% increase is recommended for the Licensed Traders who are subject to the same discount structure as previously. The overall long standing debts have been reduced by more than 60% in the past 18 months. There is a year of disruption to follow with the Town Centre Regeneration ahead of us. The Council will do their best to look after licensed traders to

ensure that their livelihood is protected. The projected income for next year is reduced to take account of this.

(R.3) Licensed Traders increased by 2.5% to £3.40 per foot. AGREED

The Farmers Market has been running now for nine months and is coming into the worst time of the year of Jan, Feb and March. This is promoted on the web site, with banners and signs as the first Wednesday in each month approaches. The Council will continue to do their best to advertise and reinvest all monies into establishing the Farmers Market. The recommendation is no change to the pricing for this year, there is a need to retain those who come regularly and get more traders if possible.

(R.4) No change for the pricing structure to Farmers Market for 2005/06. AGREED

The Market expenditure is projected to take account of re-negotiated waste collection contracts. Reverting to a self-cleansing market is always an option that could save in overall costs but may be more difficult to enforce. It is not recommended to change in the financial year 2005/06; more information is required to allow the Council to consider this at some point in the future.

2) TOWN HALL

The budget for the Town Hall incorporates the various changes going on and already agreed by the Council as follows:-

- **Rent for the offices to be let.**
- **Income from hiring fees for the Council Chamber.**
- **Upgrading of telephone system via leasing arrangement.**
- **Installation of sound system via leasing arrangement.**
- **Upgrading of CCTV and alarm system via leasing arrangement.**
- **Overhead costs for running the town hall extension.**

There are of course many factors that can affect the budgeted income and expenditure, not in the least of these is the continuation of work on site at the Museum in the early part of the financial year and members of the public having to use the Cley Road entrance as the only way into the Town Hall. It is a period of change and we have estimated for the year ahead for utility costs. It is recommended that the Council should keep a close eye on actual income & expenditure and make adjustments as necessary.

(R.5) The Town Clerk to carefully monitor the income and expenditure for the Town Hall and recommend adjustments to the pricing structure if required. AGREED

3) MUSEUM

The Museum expenditure is in two sections within this budget, a third section is contained within the Capital Projects cost centre as Stage Two of the Town Hall project, with £50,000 being allocated to the Museum enhancement to attract match funding for Swaffham Museum Ltd. This project will follow on from the work on the Town Hall extension, with completion by July 2005 now that grant funding is forthcoming. The first section of the Museum expenditure is the annual grant, increased this year by 3.3% to £3,100 as per the STC/Swaffham Museum Ltd agreement.

The second section of the Museum expenditure is a percentage of the Town Hall day to day costs i.e. Electricity, Heating, Rates and Water Rates. A calculation of 50% of all these items has been budgeted for in year 2005/06. It should be noted that all Museum expenditure is now shown in the new format; i.e. non-statutory and not funded by the Precept and subsequently the Council Tax payer. There will be a saving on Rates which will be exempt when Swaffham Museum Ltd achieve Charitable status in 2005.

(R.6) No change to Museum finance policy. AGREED

4) ASSEMBLY ROOMS

The Assembly Rooms closes at the end of this year and as reported to you last year as work is also in progress at the Community Centre too, there may be an opportunity to tender for a Service Level Agreement in the favour of Swaffham Town Council. This could provide sufficient income similar to an Agency

Agreement to enable the Town Council to deliver a service, in the case of both buildings an agreement could be beneficial to the Council to provide a bookings service at the Town Hall as at present, plus cleaning and care-taking as required.

(R.7) The Finance Committee consider the Town Clerk's report when an invitation to tender comes from the Icen Partnership. AGREED

5) ALLOTMENTS

The allotments are well used in some areas of the town and underused in other parts. In 2004/05 the Council increased the rents considerably. Last year a projected downturn did not happen and as a result additional income has been forthcoming. There have been a lot of petty arguments about a 90p water rates charge, it is therefore recommended to abolish the water rates charge in favour of an all inclusive charge for the allotments. It is further recommended to continue with the policy to make the allotments a viable concern by increasing by £5 each to £20 and £25 respectively with no charge for water.

(R.8) To increase allotments from 1st Oct 2005 to £20 and £25 respectively and abolish the water rates charge. AGREED

Whilst this pricing policy will inevitably produce the expected downturn, the projected income may hold up next year as a result of the increased rent. If all sites are retained then there could be a surplus that could be reinvested in clearing up other allotment sites. The projected expenditure on the allotments will not exceed income, although this does not take into account any administration charge. It should be the overall long-term aim to make all sites viable to include an administration charge.

(R.9) The issues report agreed last year will be forthcoming in the first quarter of the financial year 2005/06 with the overall long-term aim to make all allotment sites viable inclusive of an administration charge. AGREED

6) CEMETERY

The Cemetery is an on-going project where many improvements were made in the past year and many more are planned for 2005/06. A little investment in officer time for research, preparation of grant bids and use of existing outside staff can deliver all the Council's requirements. The aim is to restore the Chapel, look at a permanent solution i.e. a wall and gates for the Cemetery entrance, improve the driveway kerbs and provide a workshop store in one of the garages. There is also an urgent need for a health and safety programme for checking gravestones, repairing gravestones and surrounds, levelling sunken graves etc.

(R.10) To continue with on-going improvement programme, and look to develop project for grant funding within the Capital Project cost centre. AGREED

Following initial research it is apparent that exclusive rights charges could be increased substantially. This additional income could initially produce a useful additional income that can help to support the capital improvements proposed for the Cemetery. However, once completed it is envisaged that this will produce a long-term saving for the Council as this income should be put towards staffing costs i.e. groundsman and administration. This is another area where the ultimate aim should be that expenditure should not exceed income. In the short-term this is not possible but over time this is a realistic aim.

(R.11) To delegate responsibility to the Town Clerk and the Finance Committee to review the Cemetery Charges, in addition to the normal RPI % increase, implement an appropriate pricing structure in line with other burial authorities from 1st April 2005. AGREED

7) OPEN SPACES & AMENITIES

The income budgeted is from the Recreation Ground and the annual visit of the travelling Circus. It has also got estimated income from sponsorship of floral displays in the town agreed in principle; this needs to be taken forward as a matter of urgency.

(R.12) Early in 2005 the Town Clerk to send a circular letter to traders inviting sponsorship for the forthcoming summer season. AGREED

Outside Equipment was necessary last next year mainly for the Cemetery. The budget this year is for maintaining the equipment and replacing some smaller equipment such as strimmers etc.

(R.13) A reduced budget of £1,500 for outside equipment maintenance or replacements for 2005/06. AGREED

The Buttercross is the responsibility of the Town Council; it is therefore necessary to continue building a contingency fund for future repairs and maintenance. Similarly the Pedlars Sign needs to be looked after and is currently with Wayland Prison for refurbishment.

(R.14) A sum of £2,500 has been added to the £2,500 set aside last year as a contingency for the Buttercross and the Pedlars Sign. AGREED

In Sept 2004 Swaffham hosted their two twin towns from Hemmoor and Couhe Verac respectively. It was subsequently agreed in principle at the October 2004 meeting to set aside a twinning bursary and discuss the detail of how the town council policy can be delivered over the next six years with the Twinning Assoc.

(R.15) A sum of £2,000 has been budgeted for a twinning bursary for this financial year 2005/06. NOT AGREED – AMENDED TO REDUCED SUM OF £1,000

NEW WEB SITE: www.swaffhamtowncouncil.co.uk

The new web site is now on-line. You will find it at: www.swaffhamtowncouncil.co.uk There is a lot of information contained on the new web site and much more will be added as time allows.

It is necessary to continue updating the Town Council website established earlier this year. There were additional set up costs but now the budget has evened out.

(R.16) To continue updating the website within the budget of £600. AGREED

The Town Clock is in need of further repairs in the long term; it is therefore sensible to build a contingency to replace the worn cogs at some stage. They continue to exist on a wing and a prayer, the close proximity of pigeons and the location within the church tower is a mere coincidence.

(R.17) To establish a budget of £800 for the Town Clock for 2005/06. AGREED

The Tree Pollarding programme has been in progress for three years now and it is proposed to continue for the next year as a minimum. A lot of the major works have been carried out and it is envisaged that most of the expense will be out of the way after the next financial year. It should be possible to reduce this budget in 2006/07 to a more reasonable annual maintenance fee.

(R.18) To continue with the tree pollarding programme within a budget of £1,500 for 2005/06. AGREED

8) ADMINISTRATION & MISC

The change of financial policy is reflected in 2004/05 repaying two outstanding loans and using the capital to fund various projects rather than using interest earned to sustain loan repayments. This means that projected interest earned in 2005/06 is significantly less than last year and loan repayments are reduced to zero.

The Office Equipment Lease/Maintenance has been increased this year to allow for upgrading and replacement of the photocopier.

(R.19) A budget of £1,600 allows an additional £100 per quarter to upgrade and replace the current photocopier. The Town Clerk delegated authority to negotiate the best deal for the Council using best value principles. AGREED

The office equipment replacement fund has been reduced this year as the majority of equipment is now either replaced or upgraded. The purpose of the budget is to complete the process.

(R.20) A budget of £1,500 allows the Town Clerk the discretion to complete the office equipment replacement or upgrading using best value principles. AGREED

The only other changes in this cost centre are for one new budget heading this year for Scribe Accounts & Computer Software and one amalgamated heading of Election/By election/Parish Poll. The new heading highlights an expense that has been within part of another heading previously thus it now gives more information to councillors. The amalgamated heading brings together two contingency items in the event of a by election or a parish poll being called. It would be unlikely if both happened in any one financial year, but sensible to retain this contingency.

(R.21) A budget of £800 is established for Scribe Accounts & Computer Software. AGREED

A budget of £3,000 combines the contingency of a by election and a parish poll. NOT AGREED – AMENDED TO REDUCED BUDGET OF £2,500 AGREED

In respect of Members Allowances and Travel Expenses, the Council agreed to budget for allowances within their last term to come into effect for a newly elected Council.

New Office Furnishings & Equipment are required to service the new facilities within the Town Hall extension. An initial budget was agreed in the current years budget, there will be some essential furniture, shelving and many other smaller items that will be necessary to function properly. These are all items that would not be included in any capital project.

(R.22) A budget of £2,000 will be required to finish off the new office furnishing and equipment to service the new facilities, at the discretion of the Town Clerk under best value principles. AGREED

10) CAPITAL PROJECTS

This cost centre is completely new for 2005/06; in fact some changes will be made in the current year to enable things to be carried forward properly. This cost centre separates all capital expenditure from all the revenue income and expenditure. The main purpose is to be able to monitor each project as it unfolds, to see clearly when grant money comes in and how it is used. You can see that the £50,000 recently agreed for the Recreation Ground Project is listed, plus the depleted Match Funding Budget down to just £14,000. It is recommended that the Council consider increasing this budget this year but be wary of the impact it will have on the precept. It is further recommended that year on year this budget is increased to allow Swaffham Town Council to compete for various funding initiatives in the future.

R.23) It is recommended that the match-funding budget is increased from £14,000. DEFERRED DECISION TO R.26

The other budget headings within this cost centre are for Town Hall Extension with the balance being carried forward being the 2.5% retention on this project of £8,300. The Museum Enhancement Project which will be financed through the Town Council's accounts for cash flow purposes as claims are retrospective on a quarterly basis. The Cemetery project is in an early stage and with feature in finance committee reports. The grants made to Icen Partnership for the on going Town Centre Regeneration scheme to include rebuilding the Community Centre and refurbishing the Assembly Rooms. There is a balance for maintenance within the Skateboard Project of £5757 this is reflected in the Capital Projects accounts, as this has come via the various grant funding. This will revert to a revenue expense in 2006/07. The carry forward earmarked funds for Swimming Pool Land £83,001 and the Sports Fund £10,000 remain earmarked. There is a heading to deal with Capital Expenditure or the sale of assets, the sale of a painting is

budgeted for in this financial year. Other headings are suggested for Northwell Pool Enhancement and the Food and Drink Festival.

9) THE PRECEPT

The Precept is the figure that the Town Council have to put forward in order to carry out most of the services that they deliver. Swaffham is fortunate to have additional income from the Market and other sources. This is highlighted again in the report showing how non-statutory items are funded in the town. The Council can and should debate all the recommendations put before them, it should be noted though that many compromises have already formed the basis of preparing the budget for 2005/06.

The new tax base for 2005/06 is not yet known, so the recommended increase of **£9,000** (6.95%) would cost approximately an additional £3.84 at Band D (less than 8p per week). However, there is a chance that the tax base will be increased this year, following the un-expected decrease last year and this will reduce the increase to the Council Tax payer bringing the increase in real terms more in line with inflation.

(R.24) £139,000 is the recommended Precept for 2005/06 subject to consideration of both R.25 and R.26 below NOT AGREED – AMENDED REDUCED PRECEPT OF £137,500 AGREED

The match-funding budget has been reduced by £50,000 and now stands at just £14,000. Whilst this is still a useful sum of money it is actually very low in terms of match funding community projects. It is recommended that the council consider adding a minimum of £6,000 in this financial year, a minimum of £15,000 in each of the following two financial years and to agree a policy to replace any match funding used in the preceding financial years to an agreed balance. This would be a proactive way of allowing Swaffham to negotiate successful grant funding bids for a variety of projects.

R.25) Subject to agreeing increase in Match Funding Budget to raise the Precept by a further £6,000 in 2005/06 to replenish the match funding budget to £20,000 and in the subsequent two years by £15,000, also to replace match funding used for community projects – this would be a match funding policy to 2007/08. NOT AGREED

The General Reserves are lower than the guidance for an acceptable minimum level to be held by the Town Council. It is therefore recommended that the Council should consider that if R.25 is accepted as policy there should be no change in this financial year but General Reserves should be increased in 2006/07 and 2007/08 in line with six months budgeted expenditure. If R.25 is rejected then General Reserves should be increased proportionally over the next three years including 2005/06 to cover six months budgeted expenditure, adjusting the Precept as required.

R.26) Subject to agreeing an increase in General Reserves the Precept should be adjusted accordingly in 2005/06 to account for this increase. NOT AGREED

**SATURDAY MARKET, FARMERS
MARKET or ALLOTMENTS
and now for the new COUNCIL CHAMBER**
*All bookings or enquiries to the Town Hall Council
(See new Opening Times for Town Hall on back page)*
Telephone: 01760 722922
* * * * *

Bingo Bingo Bingo

Valentine Barker Court

Every Thursday 7.00pm for 7.30pm start Small Prizes
Pleasant atmosphere
Tea and Biscuits 50p
All Welcome

Norfolk Rural Community Council

Grants for Children & Young People's Groups

Norfolk Rural Community Council administers the Local Network Fund which is a Government grant available to community groups working with children and young people who are facing some form of disadvantage. Groups can apply for funding of between £250 and £7,000. For example this could be to support a new group or project to get started or for existing groups to expand or develop their activities.

Over £200,000 of grants have already been awarded by the Grants Panel since April this year. There have been a wide variety of projects funded including youth clubs, parent and toddler groups, sports clubs, music groups, theatre groups, cycle tracks and outdoor play equipment.

Who can apply?

Community or voluntary groups focussing on children and young people up to 19. There is no requirement to be a registered charity but you will need to have a basic constitution for your group. Support is available for this.

What kinds of disadvantage does the Fund support?

Economic Disadvantage – projects that involve children from families disadvantaged due to low income.

Isolation and Access – disadvantaged due to rural isolation and access to facilities.

Aspirations and Experiences – It could be funding for projects providing opportunities for to experience activities that other children may take for granted.

Children's Voices – initiatives to give young people opportunities to express their views or develop self-help projects.

How can I find out more?

If you would like more information or want to discuss your project ideas contact the LNF team at the Norfolk Rural Community Council. Ring 01362 698216 or e-mail: Infchildren@norfolkkrcc.org.uk

You can also visit the NRCC website at Infchildren@norfolkkrcc.org.uk

You can also visit the NRCC website at

www.norfolkkrcc.org.uk

For a Local Network Fund application pack ring the National Call Centre on 0845 1130161

Put a spring into your step for 2005 and train to be a walk leader!

We would like to start a walking scheme in Dereham and Swaffham in 2005 and are looking for enthusiastic, reliable and active people who enjoy meeting others. We provide FREE training and ongoing support and no experience is necessary. You can choose your commitment level and all walks are aimed at improving health and are usually less than 5 miles. For more

information and to register your details please contact 01362 656820 or visit the website www.breckland.gov.uk

Why walk?

- Its FREE
- The whole family can do it
- Available all year round
- Great way of meeting new people
- Great way to explore local towns or the countryside
- Can help weight management
- Improves life expectancy

PALS

At Swaffham Community Hospital

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service now visits the Swaffham Community Hospital between 10.00 am and 12.00 noon every Thursday. Pals is a free NHS confidential service which can...

- Help answer questions or concerns about your healthcare.
- Offer advice and support when things go wrong.
- Listen to your suggestions for improving local services.
- Provide balanced and impartial information and advice.

You can call in without an appointment at Swaffham Community Hospital and ask for PALS at reception (Thursdays 10 am – 12 noon). Alternatively, you can always telephone PALS on freephone 0800 587 4132 (Mondays – Thursday 9 am to 5 pm Fridays 9.am to 4.30 pm).

The Pension Service holds regular advice and information surgeries for over 60's on the 2nd Wednesday of each month at Suffield Court, London Street, Swaffham from 1.00 pm – 3.30 pm. For an appointment please call 0845 6060265.

The Swaffham Evening W.I. extends a warm welcome to any lady of any age group. If you are new to Swaffham and would like to make new friends, do come along and meet us in The Church Rooms, Campingland at 7.30pm the 1st Wednesday of every month. See our notice board beside Boots the Chemist for up-to-date information or telephone 01760 722052.

COMMUNITY INFORMATION BUS

With representatives from:

The Fire Service, The Police Service, Citizen Advice Bureau, Immigration, First Bus and The Pension Service.
The Bus will be at Swaffham Market Place on the 4th Monday of the Month 1.00pm – 3.00pm

Bridge Club

Would you like to enjoy an evening's entertainment playing a game of cards amongst friends. The cost is only £1.50 including refreshments.

If so; why not come along to the Swaffham Bridge Club any Tuesday or Thursday evening, 6.30pm for 6.45 start, at The Church Rooms, Campingland. All levels of play are welcome Partner not necessary

For further information ring Peter- 01760 725406 or Nicholas-01760 722076
If you have never played, but are interested in learning, ring Barbara on 01760 723866

TO THE HARD OF HEARING

You may be a little deaf or you may be very deaf. However, did you know we have free lip reading classes in Swaffham?

We are only a small group at present but I am sure there are lots of people around who could benefit from these classes. We welcome new members so please don't be shy, come and join us. We have fun and lots of support and help with all sorts of things.

Classes are held on Thursday mornings 10.00 am – 12.00 noon at The Catholic Church Rooms, Castle Acre Road, Swaffham (Behind the Church with easy parking). New term started on Sept 30th but you can join anytime.

Anyone wishing to start a **Home Watch Scheme**

in the Breckland area should in the first instance contact:

Colin Hodge

Breckland.norpol@gtnet.gov.uk

Home Watch Administrator

The Police Station

Norwich Road Thetford

Norfolk IP24 2HU

01842 222608

FREE English & Maths Classes

All classes offer the opportunity to take the National Test

Monday

English & Maths Skills

7pm-9pm – Wayland High School, Watton.

English & Maths Skills

7pm-9pm – Hamonds High School, Swaffham.

Working with Children

9.30am-11.30am – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham. (free crèche)

Tuesday

English Skills

9.30am-11.30am – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham.

Maths Skills

7pm-9pm – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham.

Wednesday

English & Maths Skills

10am-12noon – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham. (free crèche)

Jazz up your Junk!

9.30am-11.30am – Dereham (free crèche)

Thursday

English Skills

7pm-9pm – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham.

English Skills

10am-12noon – Suffield Court, Swaffham.

Friday

Maths Skills

9.30am-11.30am – Breckland Business Centre, Dereham.

English & Maths Skills (Entry Level)

10am-12noon – Youth & Community Centre, Dereham.

Working with Children

9.30am-12.30pm – Swaffham Rugby Club (Free creche)

For more information ring Julia on 01362 697594

The new Rural Transport Partnership officer is Adam Bradley and is still based at 27 D Turbine Way 01760 725794.

Pam Buxton



Friday, January 14th, 7.30 p.m. Lydney House Hotel.
Stephen Mead "From Saints to Sinners" the Opera House.
Tickets: £6, members £5, £7 on the door.

Wednesday, February 23rd, The Convent Barn Theatre, 6.30 p.m.
A theatre show for children and childish adults!
MUTTNIK "First Dog in Space"

Saturday, March 19th, The Convent Barn Theatre, 7.30 p.m.
Talia Theatre "Life of Moliere"

Wednesday, June 22nd, Lydney House Hotel, 7.30 p.m.
Alison Neil "Shakespeare's Ladies"

SHOPMOBILITY IS COMING TO SWAFFHAM

Shopmobility provides a solution to many of the shopping problems faced by people with impaired mobility by providing wheelchairs, powered chairs and scooters. A successful consortium Lottery bid has enabled shopmobility to come to Swaffham. The service will operate from 21 Plowright Place and will bring people into the centre of Swaffham to use the equipment to shop or to take the opportunity to do things like visit the doctor or friends.

Shopmobility will be launched in January when details of how to access the service will be publicised. The Swaffham Transport Project continues to offer good service and is at the EcoTech Centre while the new Community Centre is being built. Beverley Pitcher can be contacted on 01760 720906.

The Ecotech Centre

We are proud to announce the imminent launch of the Icen cinema at the Ecotech Centre. The Icen partnership and Ecotech centre are working together on this. Instead of giving up something why not try giving instead. If it is something that will make you happy, other people happy – a whole family happy, a next generation happy and doesn't cost you anything but a little of your time- what a great resolution!!! joint project.

We at Ecotech have a well equipped 96 seat theatre capable of showing high quality films and are delighted to be launching this local community attraction.

Come along and join us, watch a film have a drink at our licensed bar or maybe just relax with a coffee. We hope you will support us and look forward to seeing you soon.

Penny Mileham
Marketing Manager
Ecotech Centre Ltd
Tel: 01760 726736

Swaffham & District Homewatch Association

Since January 1st of this year there have been only 8 domestic burglaries in the town. Homewatch was set up to prevent crimes such as burglary by getting groups of neighbours to keep an eye on each other's properties and by making everyone aware of the measures they can take to make their homes more secure. We, the members of Homewatch and the Crime Prevention Panel, think that we have helped to reduce the incidences of burglary, bogus calling etc.

Now we need to look at shed burglaries, theft from cars, theft of cars and all kinds of anti-social behaviour because these are areas of concern at the moment. Everyone who lives in Swaffham can help by joining an existing Homewatch scheme, setting up a new scheme (ring Colin Hodge on 01842 222608 – he is Breckland's Homewatch Administrator) or just looking out for your neighbours house and car and reporting anything disturbing to the Police.

Swaffham and District Homewatch Association is holding its AGM at Lydney House on Wednesday January 19th 2005 at 7.30 p.m. Anyone who is interested is welcome.

Barbara Clarke, Chair, Norfolk Home Watch Association
(01760 720140)

New Years' resolution.

What did you decide to have as a new years resolution? Was it giving up chocolate, drinking or cigarettes? It's not too late to try another resolution!



HOME-START is selecting new home-visiting volunteers to train on a ten week, forty hour course (4hours a week), term time and during school hours. Volunteers are welcome to apply from all walks of life, with a variety of life experiences and of all ages. You need to be a parent, be reliable and can offer between 2 and 4 hours a week. You must be willing to visit parents in their own home who have at least one child under the age of 5.

Volunteering is an excellent way to 'give something back', gain confidence and valuable experience. Some use their Home-Start training to help get into further education and paid employment – sometimes within Home-Start as part of paid Scheme staff or in other careers such as childcare and social welfare. If you are not apparent but would like to get involved you could help at a family group, fund-raising or as part of management committee. If you would like more information please contact Swaffham and District Home-Start (who now also cover the Dereham area.) on 01760 721271.

Other schemes in the Norfolk area are Kings Lynn 01553 762706, Thetford 01842 765206, or Norwich on 01603 616400. There is also a Gt. Yarmouth office (01493 603221), so if friends or relatives are interested in

volunteering in other areas let them know about us, Eve Harris , (Co-ordinator.)

The Swaffham Twinning Association played a big part in entertaining our visitors from Hemmoor and Couhe during their Civic Visit September 10th to 13th. Many of our members were hosts to our French and German friends - an experience they found very rewarding. Some of the hosts were non-members but they generously offered to open their homes to our visitors and joined in the activities during the weekend. They too found it an interesting and worthwhile experience.

The visitors arrived at about noon on Friday September 10th. The party from Couhe drove from Dover in their own coach, while a coach, while a coach met the party from Hemmoor at Stansted. A reception party awaited them in the Church, thanks to the kindness of the Vicar, which was a lovely setting for such an occasion.

On Saturday morning (September 11th) a meeting of officials from the Town Council, STA , Hemmoor and Couhe and anyone belonging to an organisation which wished to be represented was held at Lynford Hall, where views were traded in French, German and English. Everyone agreed that for Twinning to remain vigorous and to carry on in the future, young people through sport, clubs and school had to be encouraged to get involved.

The afternoon was spent with hosts, to sight-see and to visit the Museum which stayed open especially for the Civic visit, where there was a display of some of the gifts given to Swaffham by Couhe and Hemmoor during the 35 years of Twinning.

Lynford Hall was again the setting for the Civic Dinner in the evening. It was a splendid setting for the occasion - redolent of a grand, opulent past. Our Mayor, Pam Buxton, made us swell with pride when she delivered her speech in English, French and German - the other two mayors had to have interpreters! There was dancing after the dinner. The French treated us to their uniquely vigorous, almost athletic style of dancing.

Sunday was the day of the Michaelmas Fair, which, although it was not as well attended as it could have been, was an interesting experiment, and hopefully it will be an annual event. It was an attempt to show our visitors what can be done by a community to celebrate its past, present and future, and to provide a day of activities and entertainment for the people of the town.

The highlight of the weekend for many was the Race Night held at the Rugby Club. It was organised by the Swaffham Twinning Association. It turned out to be a very exciting evening and an excellent buffet meal completed a great night's entertainment. £225 was raised for the local Home Hospice.

For those who hosted French visitors it was an early morning start on Monday Sept 13th. The Coach left the Market Place at 6.00 a.m. It's not often that one hears the ringing tones of French people shouting their goodbyes at such an ungodly hour, outsider the TIC in the rain.

The German party left at noon amid the same cries of appreciation and affection. Ben Emmerson, Chairman of the STA and Glenn Vincent, President, accompanied the party to Stansted in the coach.

As a footnote to the visit, Dave Routledge was presented with the cheque for £225 as a representative of the Home Hospice at the Twinning Association's French evening, held on October 9th in the Church Rooms on the Campingland.

The Twinning Association has recently held its Christmas evening in the Church Rooms. The entertainment was provided by Jill Dobbs, Cyril Grant and John Clarke. Anyone interested in becoming a member, with the prospect of enjoying events here and abroad, making new friends and acting as hosts, please contact Barbara Clarke at 720140.

(Barbara Clarke, Secretary)

Community Events

January, February & March

Any organisation wishing to include events in the Swaffham Diary should leave information at the Town Hall. Please indicate the nature of the event together with date, time and venue, your name and telephone number. For details see boards at the Town Hall or Tourist Information Centre.

January:

8th – Pensioners Coffee Morning 8am-12noon at Conservative Club, London Street.

15th – Methodist Church Coffee Morning, 9.30am-12noon.

22nd – Methodist Church Coffee Morning. 9.30am-12noon which is for Junior Missions.

29th – Methodist Church Coffee Morning, 9.30am-12noon.

February:

8th – Methodist Church serving Home Made Soup and Pancakes, no tickets necessary.

12th – Pensioners Coffee Morning 8.00am-12noon at Conservative Club, London Street.

12th – Methodist Church Coffee Morning. 9.30am-12noon.

26th – Methodist Church Coffee Morning. 9.30am-12noon.

26th – Save the Children Coffee Morning, Conservative Club, 9.00am-12noon.

March:

12th – Pensioners Coffee Morning 8.00am-12noon at Conservative Club, London Street.

26th – Methodist Church Coffee Morning. 9.30am-12noon.

April:

2nd – Save the Children Coffee Morning. Conservative Club, 9.00am-12noon.

9th – Pensioners Coffee Morning 8.00am-12noon at Conservative Club, London Street.

Town Hall Office

**NEW opening times from
Monday 31st January 2005**

Monday	9.00am – 2.00pm
Tuesday	9.00am – 2.00pm
Wednesday	Closed
Thursday	9.00am – 2.00pm
Friday	8.00am - 1.00pm

REGULAR ACTIVITIES

Would organizers and secretaries of clubs and societies please check the current list in the Town Hall for their accuracy. If there are any corrections or omissions please inform Rosie at the Town Hall on 722922.

DON'T FORGET...

The Assembly Rooms is closing down in December and will not be available for hire throughout 2005.

The Community Centre is being rebuilt and will be available for hire at some point during 2005, the opening date will be published in a future 'In Touch'.

The Town Hall 'Council Chamber' will be available for hire early in 2005, please telephone 01760 722922 for details.

YOUR TOWN COUNCIL

Mayor: Pam Buxton 01760 724741

Deputy Mayor: Jerome Stockdale 01760 720985

Councillors:-

Carol Baker	01760	723733
David Butters	01760	722949
Dave Cannon	01760	723759
Paul Darby	01760	724479
Ben Emmerson	01760	720982
Anne Greaves	01760	725191
Sheila Lister	01760	720114
Frances Mann	01760	720403
Shirley Matthews	01760	723205
Ian Sherwood	01760	725076
Les Wise	01760	723825

Your three Breckland Councillors are as follows:

Paul Darby, Shirley Matthews and Ian Sherwood.

Your County Councillor is Shirley Matthews.

CALLING ALL VOLUNTEERS

We would like to thank all the volunteers who are kind enough to deliver the newsletter for us. We are still looking for volunteers for:

Merryweather Road
Lee Warner Road
Filby Road Estate including Wroxham Avenue area
Theatre Street
Tumbler Hill

If you can spare an hour or so four times a year, please contact us at the Town Hall. It would be much appreciated.

Telephone 01760 722 922

HAPPY NEW YEAR