

SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Full Council meeting held on Wednesday 16th May 2007 at 6.45p.m. in the Assembly Rooms, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr S. Matthews

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

Town Clerk: - Mr R. Bishop
Deputy Town Clerk: - Mrs M. Meyrick

Public: - 20

1154. WELCOME BY THE MAYOR

1154.1. Before proceeding with the Agenda the Mayor stated "what an uncomfortable weekend I have spent hearing a lot of unhelpful comments on how it was perceived this council is run. The misunderstanding which resulted from a piece of misinformation has now been cleared with all Councillors concerned but I am mentioning it publicly as I know some of you also were concerned. I can certainly assure you that no body armour is needed this evening."

The Mayor extended a warm welcome to everyone at the Annual meeting which is followed by the full council meeting. She especially welcomed the five new Councillors as well as the re-elected Councillors. She hoped they would settle in really well and it is hoped the meetings will have a little tolerance, respect and good humour.

1155. DECLARATIONS OF OFFICE

1155.1. All signed Declarations of Office have been received from Councillors attending this evening.

1156. APOLOGIES & REASONS FOR ABSENCE

1156.1. PC Partridge

1157. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1157.1. Cllr Gunner declared a personal interest on item 1165.2, planning application 0614/A.

1157.2. Cllr Wickerson declared a personal interest on item 1166.2 as he is a member of SCALGA and item 19.1. as he is Company Secretary.

1157.3. Cllr Butters declared a personal interest on item 1173.1. as he is Chairman of the Museum.

1157.4. Cllr Darby declared a personal interest on item 1166.2. as he is a member of SCALGA.

1157.5. Cllr Lister declared a personal interest on item 1173.1. as she is a Director of the Museum.

1157.6. Cllr Jennison declared a personal interest on item 1165.2. planning application 751/F.

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**THE MEETING WAS ADJOURNED AT 6.50p.m.
THE MEETING WAS RECONVENED AT 6.53p.m.**

PART TWO – ANNUAL MEETING

1158. MAYORS' REPORT

1158.1. The Mayor attended numerous engagements including: -

20 th April	Mayors Reception in the Assembly Rooms
29 th April	Remembrance Service at Dereham Church to remember the war dead of Australia and New Zealand
4 th May	Age Concern's Art Exhibition in the Assembly Rooms
8 th May	Guest speaker at the Ladies Section of the British Legion
10 th May	Official Opening of the Dereham Leisure Centre

1158.2. The Mayors Reception's guests were mainly from the voluntary sector workers of Swaffham who are the thread which becomes the very fabric of this town. Swaffham is fortunate to have so many who do so much and it was a real pleasure to offer them something in return. The Mayor had met many of them during her term of office and that it certainly one of the beauties of the year, that of meeting so many good people.

The Mayor reflected on the year past and felt she must mention the Councillors who sat around the council table and of whom shall be indeed missed. Mrs Pam Buxton who has been with the Council nearly 20 years, her calm, common sense will be sadly missed. Also Mr David Cannon and Mr Les Wise who had served us well also and whose faces were very familiar after 8 years and of course Mrs Carol Baker exactly the same. The Mayor paid a particular tribute to Mrs Anne Greaves who stepped in to the breach last year as Deputy Mayor when the Mayor was parachuted to be Mayor on Cllr Darby's resignation. Mrs Greaves was an enormous support to me throughout the year, it was such a loss that she decided not to seek re-election so she could take her place as Mayor, she will be sorely missed.

The Mayor also thanked all the staff; they work extremely hard and are devoted to their jobs.

1159. ANNUAL APPOINTMENTS & POLICIES FOR 2007/08

Nomination for Mayor

1159.1 Nominations for Mayor for 2007/08.

Cllr Butters proposed to suspend standing orders to allow the nomination of Cllr Matthews to take place.

It was agreed with 10 votes for to suspend Standing Orders.

Cllr Butters proposed and Cllr Darby seconded for Cllr Matthews to be elected as Mayor for 2007/08.

It was unanimously agreed to elect Cllr Matthews as Swaffham Mayor for 2007/08.

Cllr Butters proposed to resume Standing Orders.

It was agreed to resume Standing Orders.

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1159.2. The Mayor stated that she is pleased to take on the role of Mayor for Swaffham and will be happy to do that. She thanked the Council for nominating her. She will serve the town to the best of her ability.

A resignation has been received from Jerome Stockdale who has been on the Council for 8 years; I wish to extend our warmest thanks to him for his hard working during those years. The Council has declared a vacancy and unless 10 electors come forward to request an election to take place then this Council will be able to co-opt someone.

1159.3. Nominations for Deputy Mayor for 2007/08.

Cllr Matthews proposed Cllr Sherwood. Cllr Sherwood stated that he is very honoured to receive a nomination but fortunately he has been nominated for a senior place on a committee at Breckland Council.

Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Jennison seconded for Cllr Sharpe to be Deputy Mayor.

It was agreed with two abstentions for Cllr Sharpe to be Deputy Mayor for 2007/08.

1159.4 Town Clerk report regarding new Committee Structure.

The Town Clerk briefly outlined a new Committee Structure with the Council at the training event on 9th May. It is recommended to continue with the committees as they are at present. It is further recommended that a review of the Committee Structure takes place over the next six months. The review would be with a view to looking closely at the delegated authority and terms of reference given to each Committee. The Town Clerk has registered concern at the increasing pressure being put on the full Council agenda.

Nominations for Committees at present or as amended:-

1159.4.i. Finance & General Purposes (9 members including Mayor & Deputy ex-officio)
Cllrs Butters, Darby, Sharpe, Sherwood and Wickerson.

1159.4.ii. Open Spaces & Amenities (9 members including Mayor & Deputy ex-officio)
Cllrs Harman, Lister, Jennison, Sharpe and Skinner.

1159.4.iii. Recreation Ground Project Sub-Committee
Cllrs Jennison, Lister, Sharpe and Wade.

1159.4.iv. Town Group
Cllrs Darby, Gunner, Lister, Jennison, Matthews and Wade.

1159.4.v. Icen Directors
Cllrs Darby, Lister and Matthews.

1159.4.vi. Planning
Cllrs Butters, Darby, Gunner, Harman, Jennison and Skinner.

1159.4.vii. Personnel (Mayor, Deputy Mayor, Past Mayor + one substitute)
Cllrs Butters, Matthews and Sharpe with Cllr Gunner deputising.

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1159.4.viii Market (6 councillors + Mayor & Deputy ex-officio + 3
Cllrs Harman, Lister and Sharpe.

Standing Orders were suspended to allow photographs to be taken of the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the Lynn News. 7.10p.m.

Standing Orders were resumed at 7.15p.m.

1159.5. Nominations for representatives on outside bodies.

1159.5.i. Relief in Need Charity – six trustees appointed by the Town Council for a period of four years.

Cllrs Butters, Darby and Jennison as well as Mr D. Cannon, Mrs A. Greaves and Mr P. Ison.

1159.5.ii. Swaffham Museum Ltd – three councillors appointed by the Town Council for a period of four years. Cllr Darby proposed and Cllr Sherwood seconded for this decision to be put at the June meeting.

There were 5 votes for, 6 votes against with 1 abstention. The vote was lost to put this decision to the June meeting.

Cllr Butters and Cllr Gunner are the representatives appointed to Swaffham Museum Ltd.

1159.5.iii. Twinning Liaison Group - four Councillors appointed to meet occasionally with Twinning Association.

Cllr Matthews.

1159.5.iv. Icen Management Group - three councillors appointed to the buildings management group.

Cllr Darby and Cllr Lister.

1159.5.v. Neighbourhood Policing Group – one member.

Town Clerk

1159.5.vi. Breckland CCTV Group – one member.

Cllr Darby.

1159.5.vii. Swaffham St. Raphael Club – one member.

No nominations put forward.

1159.5.viii. Swaffham First School – one member.

Cllr Lister.

1159.5.ix. Hamond's High School – currently no members

Cllr Skinner declared an interest in being a school Governor if there is a vacancy.

1159.5.x. Swaffham Town Estate – two members

Cllr Butters and Cllr Darby.

1159.5.xi. Swaffham & District Tourism Association – two members.

No nominations put forward.

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1159.5.xii. Crime Prevention Panel – one member.
Cllr Skinner.

1159.5.xiii. Olive Tree Project – one member.
No nominations put forward.

1159.5.xiv. Swaffham Transport Project – one member.
Cllrs have requested Mrs Buxton carry on being the Town Council representative if she is agreeable.

1159.5.xv. Learning Partnership – one member.
Cllrs have requested Mrs Buxton carry on being the Town Council representative if she is agreeable.

1159.5.xvi. Hamond's Trust – one member.
Cllr Lister

1159.5.xvii. Horticultural Society – one member
Cllr Darby

1159.5.xviii. Swimming Pool Association one member + one substitute
Cllr Wade

1159.5.xix. Garden Science Trust – one member
Cllr Darby

1159.5.xx Access Group – one member
Cllr Gunner

1159.5.xxi Health Forum – one member
Cllr Wade

1159.5.xxii Cheque signatories
Cllrs Butters, Gunner, Matthews and Sharpe

1159.6 Request for review of Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Council Policies.

The Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Council Policies were circulated to councillors in the Information File handed out at the training evening last Wednesday 9th May. Whilst this is an issue that is standard on the Annual meeting agenda in fairness to new Councillors they will not have had time to absorb the information let alone seeing the protocol in action. It is therefore recommended to allow a further period for reflection and a full review to take place at the September meeting. In this interim period if Councillors could feedback any recommendations for changes to the Town Clerk.

It was agreed for a review of the Standing Orders, Financial Regulations and Council Policies to take place September/October time.

1160. MAYOR'S REPORT.

1160.1. Vacancy due to the resignation received from Councillor Jerome Stockdale. A letter of resignation has been received by the Mayor and circulated to Councillors at the meeting. The notice declaring a casual vacancy has to be displayed now for 14 days. If there is no call for a by-election then the Council would be free to co-opt at their June meeting. If the co-option is carried out at the beginning of the June meeting then the successful co-opted member could sign their declaration of office and participate as a Councillor for the remainder of that meeting. In the event of a by-election not being called the Town Council could issue a press release inviting anyone interested in filling the vacancy by co-option to write to the Town Clerk by close of business on 6th June. This would enable all letters expressing an interest to be circulated to the Council in their meeting pack for the June meeting. One expression of interest has already been received this week from Sandra Kerridge who offered herself for election on 3rd May.

It was agreed to issue a press release, if a by-election is not called, inviting people to put themselves forward for co-option by the 6th June.

1160.2. The Deputy Town Clerk is finalising updates for a new Town Guide to go to print later this week. A request has come in from the Chairman of Icen Partnership regarding the use of the logo "SWAFFHAM TRADITIONAL VALUES MODERN OUTLOOK". It is suggested that this could be part of branding and Councillors were asked whether they have any objections to using this logo? Cllr Wickerson proposed and Cllr Skinner seconded to use the "SWAFFHAM TRADITIONAL VALUES MODERN OUTLOOK" logo on the town guide.

It was agreed to use the "SWAFFHAM TRADITIONAL VALUES MODERN OUTLOOK" logo on the new town guide.

1161. POLICE REPORT

1161.1. Cllr Lister reported that she has received complaints regarding quite a number of lorries which are going down Whitecross Road even though it has a weight restriction on it.

1161.2. Cllr Sharpe reported that he has received complaints regarding vehicles parking outside Hamonds High School, on the corner of Merryweather Road just before the end of the school day. The concern is that this may result in an accident.

It was agreed for both of these complaints are passed onto PC Partridge by the Town Hall.

1163. MINUTES

1163.1. The minutes of the Full Town Council Meeting of Wednesday 11th April 2007, amendments were agreed and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

1163.2. Former Councillor Mrs Pam Buxton has offered to proof read the minutes as she has done previously.

It was unanimously agreed for Mrs Pam Buxton to proof read the minutes for the Town Council.

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1164. TOWN CLERK REPORT:-

1164.1. Correspondence has been received and circulated to Councillors from Breckland Council, NALC, NCAPTC, Standards Board for England and the Department for Communities and Local Government in relation to the Local Authorities (Model Code of Conduct) Order 2007.

There are two options for Councillors to consider prior to 1st October 2007 as follows:-

Whether or not to adopt the code with the optional clause of 12 (2) Effect of prejudicial interests on participation which reads (2) “Where you have a prejudicial interest in any business of your authority, you may attend a meeting (including a meeting of the overview and scrutiny committee of your authority or of a sub-committee of such a committee) but only for the purpose of making representations, answering questions or giving evidence relating to the business, provided that the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose, whether under a statutory right or otherwise.”

Adopting this clause would also bring into play clause 12 (1) (a) “you must withdraw from the room or chamber where a meeting considering the business is being held – (i) in a case where sub-paragraph (2) applies, immediately after making representations, answering questions or giving evidence;” It is recommended to adopt the code with the optional clause. If Councillors are unsure about any aspect of the new code or need more time, then it is recommended to defer this decision for a further month.

It was agreed to adopt the revised Code of Conduct including clause 12(2).

1164.2. (a) Progress of Swimming Pool Land Purchase.

The Clerk has been through the paperwork with the Council's solicitor and the searches are now completed. A response is awaited for clarification of certain issues and then it will be complete.

(b) Progress made with War Memorial project.

The Town Clerk has been in contact with Karl Dunbar and RAF Marham, a risk assessment is being carried out and the work is programmed to start next week. The Legion is keen for a press release with the Mayor and volunteers assembling at the War Memorial at a mutually convenient time early next week.

It was agreed for a press release to be carried out with the Mayor and volunteers at the War Memorial at a convenient time.

(c) Councillor Training Day on 9th May

All 13 elected Councillors attended the training day on 9th May, plus four members of staff and the internal auditor. Each Councillor was handed an information and guide file with the Council's standing order, financial regulations, policies and other important documents including a copy of the good councillor guide.

(d) Update on the Notice Board to be donated by the Rotary Club.

The Council have been informed by the Rotary Club that the new notice board will be available for collection on 21st May. The Rotary would then arrange for this to be put in place adjacent to the ramp leading into the Assembly Rooms. They would then like the Mayor to receive the notice board on behalf of the town. There will be a need to sort out an appropriate date for the Mayor, Rotary Club and the press to be in attendance.

1165. PLANNING/DEVELOPMENT CONTROL:

1165.1. Notification of Decisions from Breckland Council:-

3PL/2007/ 0198/F Planning permission granted for the Erection of two dwellings. Land behind Garden Lodge, Campingland. Development Insight Ltd.	3PL/2007/0379/F Application withdrawn for Demolition of conservatory, erection of 2 bungalows with garages and new shared vehicular access. Land adjacent to Cubello, Whitsands Road. Highbury Developments Ltd.
3PL/2007/0326/F Planning permission granted for two one and a half storey dwelling houses with associated garages. 28 Whitsands Road. LGL Developments Ltd.	3PL/2007/0450/F Planning permission granted for single storey rear extension. 16 Pedlars Grove. Terri Birchall.
3PL/2007/0486/F Planning permission for conservatory to rear of property. 9 Hillside. Mr. & Mrs. J. Pitt.	3PL/2007/0529/F Planning permission for addition to front porch (revision to planning permission 3PL/2006/1326/F) Purbeck House, Whitsands Road. Mr. & Mrs. Aynsley.

Cllr Gunner left the meeting while planning application 0614/A was discussed.

1165.2.Planning applications:-

3PL/2007/0614/A Erection of externally illuminated shop and projecting sign. Boots The Chemist, 37 Market Place. The Boots Co, Ltd. OBJECTION - on the grounds that a projecting internally illuminated sign is contrary to the Local Plan	3PL/2007/0623/F Demolition of existing lean-to side extension and erection of conservatory (identical footprint). Pear Tree Cottage, 16 Tumbler Hill. Mr. & Mrs. G. Pettitt NO OBJECTION
3PL/2007/0643/O Erection of single storey dwelling. Land adjacent 101 Southlands. Mr. & Mrs. A. Syer. OBJECTION - on the grounds that this does not comply with HOU.2 in that it adversely affects the character and amenity of the locality; also the proposal is not of a scale, density and layout appropriate to the locality.	3PL/2007/0632/F Proposed garage. The Beeches, 114 Brandon Road. Mr. & Mrs. S. Clark. NO OBJECTION
3PL/2007/0594/O Erection of single storey dwelling (renewal). Land adjacent to 1 Spinners Lane. Mr. M. Grief. NO OBJECTION	3PL/2007/0470/F Demolish existing garage and brick up internal walls to form a separate one bedroom annexe. Mr. & Mrs. Branson. NO OBJECTION

<p>Page 620 3PL/2007/0689/LB Replacement of rotted timber windows to front/side & rear of first & second floors. 46 Market Place. Martin McColl Ltd.</p> <p>NO OBJECTION</p>	<p>3PL/2007/0626/F Extension over existing attached garage to the side. 62 Longfields. Mr. A.D. Martin</p> <p>NO OBJECTION</p>
<p>3PL/2007/0690/F Garage extension. 4 Low Road. R. Farmer esq.</p> <p>NO OBJECTION - request that Mr. Farmer be asked to replace number of trees removed with others elsewhere.</p>	<p>3PL/2007/0724/F New double garage and demolition of existing garage. 9 Beech Close. Mr. & Mrs. Anscombe.</p> <p>OBJECTION - on the grounds of overdevelopment as stated on 30th January 2007.</p>
<p>3PL/2007/528/F Change of use of amenity land to garden, plus erection of porch. Oaklands, Mr. Wright.</p> <p>OBJECTION - on the grounds that this application prevents the neighbour accessing his property via a path that has existed for 60 years and must have been made a right of way by the U.D.C. (No objections to the Porch)</p>	<p>3PL/2007/751F Dwelling and garage. Tumbler Hill. Mr. Cunnington.</p> <p>NO OBJECTION</p>
<p>3PL/2007/759/F Side extension. Stratton Close. Mr. Riedlinger.</p> <p>NO OBJECTION</p>	

1166. FINANCE:

1166.1. Accounts for Payments for May 2007.

The list of Accounts for payment was circulated to Councillors. See Appendix 2.

It was unanimously agreed to accept the accounts as listed

1166.2. Issues relating to proposed disposal of surplus allotment land and subsequent correspondence including:-

a) A signed request from five elected members to place issues listed below on the May agenda, as previously requested by SCALGA:

Cllr Sherwood read out a statement he had prepared. "We all remain very concerned for the future of Swaffham Community Hospital. Now that the new Town Council has been elected, on behalf of the Conservative Group I would like to propose that we look at ways in which we might work with Norfolk PCT to find a long-term solution to maintain intermediate care in the town. To review where we are, I have met our MP Christopher Fraser, who has been leading the campaign to save Swaffham hospital. At the public meeting he chaired at the end of March and in the PCT's drop in session in April, we were told that the community hospital in its current size is not economically viable as an

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intermediate care hospital. Christopher's view, which many of us share, is that the PCT Board also acknowledges that the proposals they have put forward do not fully address their objective of offering appropriate intermediate care in the West of the County, but they seem stuck for a site. Christopher and I believe we should seize this opportunity, and offer the PCT some ideas on how we might move forward, so that Swaffham continues as the base for intermediate care in this part of Norfolk. I am therefore proposing tonight that we, the Town Council, start to look at a package of alternatives to put to the PCT Board. We do not know exactly what they require, but my understanding is that the current hospital site is not big enough to allow a further extension that would make it viable. We must therefore look at the wider picture. It seems to me that there is a very compelling case for the Town Council to offer part of the allotment site as suitable opportunity for a new build. We would of course need to look very carefully at the terms of such an offer, but I believe that such a proposal would meet with massive support in the town. There may be a case for considering a site by the EcoTech centre, near the new Plowright Medical Centre. Whilst not in our ownership, the support of this Council for such a proposal could be instrumental in moving forward. At this stage, I think we should be open-minded about the possibilities so that we rule nothing out until we know in more details what the PCT might require. I would however like to get things moving without delay, before the consultation period ends next month. I propose on behalf of the Town Conservative Group that this Council approaches Norfolk PCT along the lines set out, to emphasise that we want them to commit to continued intermediate care in Swaffham, in the best interests of the people of the town and the wider community of West Norfolk."

Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Jennison seconded that Swaffham Town Council formally writes to the PCT Chairman – Mrs Sheila Childerhouse to offer part of the allotment site as suitable opportunity for a new build Community Hospital, and that we look at ways in which we might work with Norfolk PCT to find a long-term solution to maintain intermediate care in the town.

There followed a debate on this issue. Cllr Wickerson declared that they had not had the advantage of seeing any documents before this evening. Cllr Wickerson proposed and Cllr Gunner seconded an amendment to send the letter to the PCT but remove all mention of a specific site in Swaffham.

There were 4 votes for and 6 against with 1 abstention for the amendment to send a letter to the PCT offering a piece of land for a new build community hospital but remove all mention of a specific site in Swaffham.

It was agreed with 7 votes for and 4 abstentions to send a letter to the PCT to offer part of the allotment site for a new build community hospital and to work with the PCT for a long term solution to maintain intermediate care in the town.

b) To debate the possible use of funds to be received in the event of the proposed sale of surplus allotment land and discuss a draft consultation report by the Town Clerk. The draft consultation document was discussed at the April meeting, it has been amended to take account of issues raised collectively and individually by Councillors past and present.

It was agreed for members of the Council to send comments on the questionnaire to the Town Clerk by week Friday and for the questionnaire to be sent out as soon as possible.

Cllr Matthews proposed to suspend standing orders to allow Christine Wright to address the Council.

It was agreed to suspend Standing Orders to allow Christine Wright of SCALGA to address the Council.

Mrs Christine Wright Secretary of Swaffham Community Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' Association (SCALGA) gave the apologies of the Chairman of SCALGA as he had a prior commitment.

On behalf of the SCALGA committee and all our members we wish to thank The Mayor Shirley Matthews and Mr Bishop for notification of the change in date of our request for the council to revisit their decision and also to the five councillors who requested that this item be brought forward to the May meeting. We are appreciative of the opportunity to present our case this evening.

In numerical order, Mrs Wright requested the Council to consider our proposals in conjunction with the information supplied. (See Appendix 3 for full report)

The proposals are: -

1) That the full Council reconsider its decision to sell off the two allotment sites of Day's Field and the Shoulder of Mutton. SCALGA is aware that the Town Council is not proposing that allotment keeping in Swaffham becomes a thing of the past. The benefits of growing your own fruit and vegetables are well known. Fresh produce is an essential part of a healthy diet and life style and if you grow your own food you can significantly reduce exposure to pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Peace of mind can also be a beneficial side effect of allotment holding and it is well know that horticulture has long been used as therapy for both physical and mental well being hence the popularity of gardening in general. It used to be said that Britain is a nation of shop keepers. Perhaps it should be changed to a nation of gardeners judging by the millions of pounds we spend at garden centres and other outlets.

2) To rescind the decision to serve notices to quit to the tenants of these fields. The serving of notices to quit then be served only and if the Council obtains Section 8 consent for the change of use of these statutory allotment sites.

There is general agreement that with hindsight the issue of proposed sale of allotment land, the timing of the notices to quit and how plot holders were informed could have been handled better. As previously stated until the decision is made regarding the section 8 application SCALGA feels that a rescinding of these notices to quit would show the council in a good light and willing to listen to strength of feeling shown concerning this dilemma that the tenants find themselves in. It is sad that many of the plot holders are dispirited and feeling let down, not valued by the Council. A rescinding of the notices to quit would be a step to restoring faith in their Council. It would also solve the problem of plot holders unable to harvest their winter crops. If the Town Council is successful in being granted the section 8 then the serving of notices to quit from that later time would allow for harvesting to take place.

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4) That the Council considers a period of time, not less than two years, for SCALGA to work with the Council to promote, improve, and maintain the Swaffham sites. By then hopefully there would be an increase in the uptake of allotments which the council would take into account before considering any future sale of allotment land.

TO SUM UP

There is no doubt that our world is changing very fast and in 10 or 20 years time who knows what will be the issues that a town council such as that of Swaffham will be facing. When historians and people look back upon the decisions that Swaffham Town Council took in 2007 (and the decisions taken now may well have serious implications for the future) please let the Council be known, not as the council who only looked at the short term financial gain from their most valuable asset, but as a council who had had the courage to look to the future, assess what was likely to be needed with regard to open spaces for the community and leave the heritage and legacy of allotment land well preserved and protected for future generations.

Standing Orders were resumed.

(1) That the full Council reconsider its decision to sell off the two allotment sites of Day's Field and the Shoulder of Mutton.

It was agreed that there be no change to current policy

(2) To rescind the decision to serve notices to quit to the tenants of these fields.

It was agreed not to rescind the decision to serve notices to quit

(3) The serving of the notices to quit then be served only and if the Council obtains Section 8 consent for the change of use of these statutory allotment sites.

It was agreed to note this request

(4) That the Council considers a period of time, not less than two years, for SCALGA to work with the Council to promote, improve, and maintain the Swaffham sites. By then hopefully there would be an increase in the uptake of allotments which the council would take into account before considering any future disposal of allotment land.

It was agreed to note this request

It was agreed with 5 votes for, 2 against and 1 abstention to agree items 1 to 4 as noted above.

(c) Correspondence with Mrs. H. Wood has been received and circulated to Councillors regarding an allotment at 33 Shouldham Lane. The letter to Mrs. Wood is a report of a late payment of allotment rent received after vacant possession had been taken.

d) E-mailed correspondence with Mr. T. Cotton has been received and circulated to Councillors relating to the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the District Valuer's report relating to allotment sites. The correspondence with Mr Cotton is regarding the District Valuer's report considered by the Finance Committee on 6th December 2006 and full Council on 13th December 2006. Whilst this information was presented to the Council

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as a confidential report, clearly most of the information has subsequently been made public. It is not information that the Council are obligated to hand out to the public under

the Freedom of Information Act. This is an on-going matter being dealt with by the Town Council.

e) A late e-mail and the reply from Mr. Sadler has been received and circulated to Councillors. This is related to the erection of fencing at the allotments. The fencing contractor will be on site shortly and this will be the last major expense in respect of the allotments.

f) Report from the Town Clerk on annual insurance policy. This item on the agenda is incorrectly numbered. It is not related to the allotments. The only issue to consider at present is the principle of how the Town Council insures the two buildings leased to Icen Partnership. Under the terms of the lease it clearly states that the Council should insure them and the cost to be reimbursed to the Council by Icen. This particular detail was put into the lease when the future of Icen Partnership was uncertain, but now there seems to be more financial stability that is this something that the Council would like to amend. Icen could have this put on to their own insurance policy and then issue a copy of the insurance certificate to the Council. They would also deal with claims directly instead of having to come through the office at the Town Hall. The policy is up for renewal on 1st June and we are currently looking at three alternative companies Zurich, AON and Ecclesiastical.

It was agreed for the lease of the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre to the Icen Partnership be amended to state that the Icen Partnership take out their own insurance for both buildings but a copy of the insurance documents be given to the Town Council on a yearly basis. This is to take effect as of the 1st June 2007.

1166.3. Internal Auditor's report for the period October 2006 – March 2007.

The internal auditor Brian Clements is still waiting for information relating to the Museum, this has to be ready for external auditors next week. He will also be looking at the PAYE end of year which has a deadline of the end of this week. It is hoped that both of these will then be able to be included in the report for the Finance Committee in July.

1166.4. Proposal and quotation for Web Development, Hosting Services & SEO and Marketing Swaffham Town Website from Cortina Web Solutions.

This report is self explanatory and there is currently no budget for a community web site of this type. This may be something the Council would like to consider later in the year when it comes to setting a budget for 2008/09. The Town Clerk and Cllr Sharp have yet to explore ways in which web sites could generate an income; this was something that will be done prior to the budget later this year. It is recommended not to proceed with this at the present time, but give consideration to different options relating to a community web site in addition to or annexed to any improvements made to the Town Council site.

It was agreed not to proceed with the proposal for a community website but give consideration to different options relating to a community website in addition to or annexed to any improvements made to the Town Council website.

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1166.5. Details of Norfolk Planning Conference to be held on Thursday 14th June 10am – 3.30pm at the Assembly Rooms, Swaffham. This is the second year for this event which was well attended last year at the Assembly Rooms. The cost is £20 per person,

there is a budget for events of this type. Councillors should let the Town Clerk know by the end of this week so that places can be booked.

1166.6. Request for match funding for Town Plan health check. The Project Officer David Bek is applying to Breckland Council for an appraisal grant of £1,000 to cover the cost of doing the necessary health check with the Town Group for the proposed Town Plan.

It was agreed that the Town Council use £1000 from the match funding budget to apply for a grant of £1000 from Breckland Council. This will give a total budget of £2000 to help carry out the Swaffham Health Check with the Town Group.

1167. GENERAL CORRESPONDENCE:

1167.1. a) Correspondence with MP Christopher Fraser has been received and circulated to Councillors regarding his constituent Mrs. Adams relating to the new bus shelter. Mrs. Adams concern was mainly regarding lack of comfort for the perched seating and having to take a pragmatic approach to designing out crime, rather than taking proper measures to control vandalism.

b) Correspondence with Kathryn Simmonds has been received and circulated to Councillors regarding wind turbines in Swaffham.

It was agreed that the issue of a Wind Turbine policy be placed on a future agenda for a full debate.

c) Correspondence with SCALGA has been received and circulated to Councillors detailing issues dealt with at the last meeting. There is a further letter pending which will be circulated next month.

1167.2. Correspondence has been received and circulated to Councillors from the British Humanist Association regarding the chapel at Swaffham Cemetery being out of use for public ceremonies. This letter highlights the general poor condition of the Cemetery Chapel. It is an issue that has been budgeted for in terms of match funding. A project needs to be developed and the Open Spaces Committee has previously identified areas of concern that could benefit from an enhancement programme for the Cemetery and refurbishment for the Chapel. The Project Officer will be directed to this in due course, he currently has three priorities which he is addressing. This with allotment regeneration will be priorities 4 and 5.

1167.3. Correspondence with Norfolk Primary Care Trust has been received and circulated to Councillors.

1167.4. Details from the Norfolk Training Partnership for free Introductory Sessions aimed at new Councillors on Tuesday 12th June 2007, 7 for 7.30pm has been received and circulated to Councillors. The Town Clerk will be one of the trainers working with the Training Officer Sue Lake on this evening of training at the Town Hall. There will be other Councillors from the area in attendance. Councillors are to let the Town Clerk know soon as possible if they wish to attend.

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1167.5 Notification has been received from the East of England Regional Assembly (EERA) regarding Regional Gypsy and Traveller Public Engagement Event (Norfolk – County Hall, Norwich 22nd May 2007 at 2.00pm) consultation on an issues and option document published on 8th May.

It was agreed for the Town Clerk to attend this event and to invite Mr Lakey to come and speak to the Town Council.

1167.6 Correspondence with R.S. Ross regarding police and environmental health issues in Whitsands Road has been received and circulated to Councillors. Looking back at the correspondence an early exchange of letters took place back in July of last year. Both letters were circulated in the Council meeting pack for the July meeting. There is a copy of a letter dated March which was not received in the office, then a further letter in April which again was replied to. The issues raised are police and environmental health related. It does demonstrate though how the Town Council can be held up in a bad light for little or no reason at all. It is therefore recommended to take no further action.

It was agreed to take no further action on this issue.

1167.7 A request has been received and circulated to Councillors from Mr Dearman to keep chickens on allotment site 86 Shouldham Lane. It is recommended to grant this request for chickens on this particular allotment site.

It was agreed to allow Mr Dearman to keep chickens on his allotment but no cockerels and they are to be placed at the far end of the houses. The Town Clerk to stipulate the number he can keep.

1167.8 Notification (and possible attendance) of forthcoming meetings regarding Norwich Unitary Status NCAPTC has been received and circulated to Councillors. There are two events being organised by NCAPTC (Norfolk County Association of Parish & Town Councils) the first – a presentation by Norwich City Council about the advantages of unitary status for Norwich and Norfolk Wed 23rd May 7pm at Wensum Valley Golf Club, Taverham. The second – a presentation by Norfolk County Council and the District Council about the advantages of retaining the status quo for Norwich and Norfolk Thurs 31st May 7pm at South Norfolk House, Long Stratton. Councillors need to indicate whether they wish to attend either or both of these events, as RSVP is required by 21st May.

Cllr Sherwood gave his apologies and left the meeting at 9.30pm.

1168. To receive progress reports from COMMITTEES

1168.1 Finance & General Purposes – next meeting 25th July 2007. It is aimed to complete the internal audit on the Museum project by the next Finance Committee meeting

1168.2 Open Spaces & Amenities – next meeting 6th June 2007. The Project Officer David Bek will be giving a report to the Open Spaces Committee relating to both the Northwell Pool and Shambles projects

1168.3 Planning – no meetings scheduled. Nothing to report

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1168.4 Recreation Ground - next meeting 6th June 2007 – to receive and discuss proposals for the friends of the recreation ground.

It was agreed for the Town Council to fully endorse the Friends of the Recreation Ground to raise funds to help with the project of the Recreation Ground.

1168.5 Town Group – next meeting 21st May 2007. The meeting on 21st May has been postponed until 18th June at 7.30pm in the Community Centre.

1168.6 Personnel – next meeting 19th September 2007. The next scheduled meeting is not until the Town Clerk has carried out the staff appraisals. The Personnel Committee then discuss the findings with the Town Clerk before carrying out his staff appraisal. The Personnel Committee are usually called together as and when needed.

1169. REPORTS BY REPRESENTATIVES OF OUTSIDE BODIES.

1169.1. Tourism Association by Mrs Pam Buxton

a) A meeting of the Swaffham and District Tourism Association met at Strattons Hotel on April 18th. It was agreed to keep the membership fee at £35 for the time being. There are 52 members at present. The 2007 Swaffham Visitor Guide continues to be distributed and has been well received. Both Vanessa Scott and Martin Hickey reported public concern that the TIC had not opened at Easter. Martin has been in negotiations with Breckland for the Association to open the TIC on a monthly licence until decisions are made by the Town Council to take over. Cool Cabs have expressed interest and could see the building open and staffed from 8am to 8pm. It is hoped that progress will enable the TIC to open very soon. Tourism in Norfolk is thriving and Stephen Fry's new series "Kingdom" and the refurbished Museum should bring new visitors to Swaffham. It was noted that events could be promoted on the Brecks website.

b) Health Forum by Mrs Pam Buxton

at a meeting on April 23rd Cathy Clark, the Swaffham Manager Job Centre Plus covering also Dereham and Wymondham, reported no decision has yet been made on the potential closure of the Job Centre in Swaffham. She mentioned that their register is under 200 and that the 6 week consultation ended on March 9th. The decision is now with the ministers. Dennis Tallon and Don Saunders presented proposals for a Healthy Living Event in October similar to the one organised a few years back by a committee from the Health Forum. It will be under the Icen Lifelong Learning Group banner and will this time be a full week from the 1st to the 6th. They presented the proposed structure of four areas: food (healthy eating), leisure (sports, walking, cycling, dance etc), monitoring (screening, smoking, drugs, alcohol, weight) and promotions (newspapers, posters, radio, tv, Breckland). In particular the EDP was mentioned in connection with publicising a booklet giving healthy menus and exercises. A committee is being set up and more detailed information will be given at a later date. As usual there was time for networking and up-dates were given by, amongst others WellFamily, Mind, the Children's Centre, and the Garden Science Trust who now have a plot at the EcoTech Centre. Members were encouraged to complete an independent survey on intermediate care produced by the Norfolk Patient and Public Involvement Forum so that views can be given before the PCT consultation finishes on June 5th.

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I have been your representative on the Health Forum since its beginning and have seen it grow and provide a really valuable opportunity for meeting and exchanging information. I do hope the Town Council will continue to take part and keep up-to-date with the ever changing work of the various agencies and voluntary organisations who do so much for the well-being of Swaffham.

1170. BRECKLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL.

1170.1. Record election results for Breckland and Town Council.

The election results are displayed on the Town Council notice board, there was a problem with the electronic count which delayed the count until the Tuesday 8th May well after the 3rd May election date. There was a turnout of 36%.

1170.2. Breckland Community News. A copy of the newsletter Breckland Community News from the Community Development team at Breckland Council has been received.

1171. NORFOLK COUNTY COUNCIL.

1171.1. Notification has been received and circulated to Councillors from Mott MacDonald regarding A1065 Station Street/Castleacre Road – Surfacing Scheme to commence on 14th May for approximately eight weeks, with a road closure in Station Street required for up to two weeks from 4th June 2007.

1171.2. Information regarding an update of the Norfolk County Council Recycling Centres. This circular informs the Council of new arrangements at the local recycling centres. In order to reach as many people as possible this information will be circulated in the newsletter

1171.3. Late County Council correspondence has been received and circulated to Councillors. A letter from Mott MacDonald has been circulated to Councillors at the meeting relating to 1171.1. It advises that due to some local concerns, works have been reprogrammed to the original start date commencing 4th June for a duration of 8 weeks. The road closure of Station Street from North of Tower Meadow to Mangate Street junction will commence on or around 18th June for approximately one and a half weeks

1171.4. Details of possible changes to local government in Norfolk: Government Consultation on Norwich City unitary has been received and circulated to Councillors. The circular letter asks whether the Town Council wish to form a view on the Norwich bid for unitary status.

<p>It was agreed for the Town Council to object to the proposal of Norwich City obtaining Unitary status.</p>
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1172. To notify of the DATES and changes of forthcoming meetings & receive any items to include on the AGENDA OF THE FOLLOWING MEETING:-

1172.1. Monday 21st May 2007 – **Town Group** (N.B. postponed until Monday 18th June 2007). This postponement was as a result of a recent meeting between the Town Clerk Dennis Tallon and the Project Officer David Bek. It is necessary to do more preparatory work prior to a presentation relating to the Town Plan, the postponement allows this to happen.

1172.2 Wednesday 6th June 2007 – **Recreation Ground Committee** at 6.30pm (in the Assembly Rooms)

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1172.3. Wednesday 6th June 2007 – **Open Spaces & Amenities Committee** at 7.30pm (in the Assembly Rooms)

1172.4. Wednesday 13th June 2007 – **Meeting Full Council** at 6.45pm (*in the Assembly Rooms*).

1173. ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT (PUBLIC BODIES) 1960 – following the exclusion of the public and press:

1173.1. A confidential discussion took place relating to the Museum.

The meeting closed at 10.00p.m.

Chairman.....

APPENDIX 1

Mr David Stephenson – He thanked the Town Clerk in the assistance involved in the postponement of Station Street resurfacing works which was due to start on the 4th June and last for around 8 weeks. It may have been useful to have had a consultation with the businesses before a decision of works is made. The best time for any future works in the town of this nature would be January – March.

Will this Town Council be endorsing the new Town Group Business Forum?

Town Clerk – The Town Group is a committee of the Town Council.

APPENDIX 3

PRESENTATION TO TOWN COUNCIL 16TH MAY 2007

Give apologies from Ian Robinson our chairman.

INTRODUCTION

For those of you who do not know me I am Christine Wright, a resident of Swaffham since 1970. I have been an allotment tenant for the last 23 years and currently the Secretary of Swaffham Community Allotments and Leisure Gardeners' Association. Our title is shortened to the acronym of SCALGA.

SCALGA is a bona-fides association affiliated to the National Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners.

Since our formation earlier this year membership has grown to 112 and consists of , as our title implies, allotment holders, leisure gardeners and people who perhaps do not garden themselves but strongly support our aims and objectives. Every one of our members is individually affiliated to the National Society and can access all its benefits. You may be interested to know that currently, as a nation, there are over a quarter of a million plot holders.

On behalf of the SCALGA committee and all our members we wish to thank The Mayor Shirley Matthews and Mr Bishop for notification of the change in date of our request for the council to revisit their decision and also to the five councillors who requested that this item be brought forward to the May meeting. We are appreciative of the opportunity to present our case this evening.

In our letter to the town council dated 27th March, which I am sure all the councillors have a copy or are aware of the contents, SCALGA formally requested the Council to revisit several decisions it has made concerning the two allotment sites of Day's Field and Shoulder of Mutton.

Before coming to our proposals mentioned at the beginning of our letter and in order to be certain that all councillors, whether experienced or newly elected to the position of town councillor it is important for us all understand the following and I apologise to those of you who are well aware of what I am about to say.

All the allotment sites in Swaffham come under the category of Statutory Allotments.

'Statutory allotments are defined as parcels of land acquired or appropriated by the local authority specifically for use as allotments. These sites cannot be sold without the consent of the Secretary of State for Transport, Local Government and the Regions.'

If an allotment authority, like Swaffham Town Council, wishes to sell a statutory allotment site then consent to change the use of the land must be granted first and this is done by filing a Section 8 of the 1925 Allotment Act. In the first place all of this is undertaken by Government Office based in Cambridge and again this is shortened to GO-EAST (Government Office for the East of England.) It is only when consent for the Section 8 application is granted can the land be put up for sale.

At this moment I am not aware that permission to grant the section 8 has been achieved. The ministerial officers in Cambridge are still deliberating on their decision based on the evidence in favour of disposal, presented by the Town Council and the evidence against, the disposal of land made by SCALGA, members of the public and the National Society of Allotment & Leisure Gardeners.

In numerical order, as listed in our letter, I ask you to consider our proposals in conjunction with the information I am about to give.

The first proposal is

1) That the full Council reconsider its decision to sell off the two allotment sites of Day's Field and the Shoulder of Mutton.

SCALGA is aware that the Town Council is not proposing that allotment keeping in Swaffham becomes a thing of the past. The benefits of growing your own fruit and vegetables are well known. Fresh produce is an essential part of a healthy diet and life style and if you grow your own food you can significantly reduce exposure to pesticides, herbicides and fungicides. Peace of mind can also be a beneficial side effect of allotment holding and it is well known that horticulture has long been used as therapy for both physical and mental well being hence the popularity of gardening in general. It used to be said that Britain is a nation of shop keepers. Perhaps it should be changed to a nation of gardeners judging by the millions of pounds we spend at garden centres and other outlets.

Open space is becoming increasingly important within our communities as the intensity of development increases. Swaffham's population is increasing and this makes obvious demands on all the amenities and infrastructure. As councillors you are aware of the increase in housing both as part of an estate and the individual houses often built on infill land. Large gardens are a thing of the past. Many of the new houses only have a very small garden or even no garden at all. Contrary to the view that allotment keeping is nationally decreasing SCALGA and the National Society believe in the very near future that this downward trend will stop and people will be looking increasingly to the open spaces for their leisure activities. Thus the pressure on local councils to provide open spaces will increase. You are the custodians of this very valuable resource. Please do not sell the family silver for short term gain.

It is a very basic human desire to grow and provide food for ones family. For many people this desire is very strong. Increasingly knowing how your food is produced, what has been done to it and how far it has travelled is leading more and more people to question the ethics of food production. We believe that as the world's resources diminish and as our climate changes, people will have to turn to home production of food even more. Allotment keeping and its associated food production may well be the method of supplementing farming in this country. Swaffham, along with all the other villages, towns and cities in the Britain will need their allotment land. Please consider the long term global issues that will affect us all. Be at the fore front of this. Conserve it now for tomorrow and all the tomorrows that inevitably will follow. By doing so will help to reduce carbon foot prints.

Allotment keeping is the sort of activity that lends itself to co-operation and contact between people and different sections of the community. There are many foreign nationals working in our community. We have Polish, Lithuanians, Estonian and Portuguese. There may be others too that I am not aware of. In their home country growing vegetables and fruit is common practice and it seems a natural progression for them to be interested in becoming allotment holders. The new buzz word, I understand, is social inclusion. It can only be, of benefit, to our community if this helps to integrate people into our society and just as importantly allow us to get to know them. You may be interested that the British film industry has recognised this social issue and has produced a feature film called 'The Allotment'. It addresses this very issue of social inclusion and the allotment is the vehicle for this to happen. To invest in such a project can only mean that it is a very important and topical subject. Swaffham could well benefit the understanding of different cultures by the meeting of allotment tenants from different nationalities.

Point 2 and 3 can be dealt with together –

- 1)To rescind the decision to serve notices to quit to the tenants of these fields.
- 2)The serving of notices to quit then be served only and if the Council obtains Section 8 consent for the change of use of these statutory allotment sites.

There is general agreement that with hindsight the issue of proposed sale of allotment land, the timing of the notices to quit and how plot holders were informed could have been handled better.

As previous stated until the decision is made regarding the section 8 application SCALGA feels that a rescinding of these notices to quit would show the council in a good light and willing to listen to strength of feeling shown concerning this dilemma that the tenants find themselves in. It is sad that many of the plot holders are dispirited and feeling let down, not valued by the Council A rescinding of the notices to quit would be a step to restoring faith in their Council. It would also solve the problem of plot holders unable to harvesting their winter crops. If the Town Council is successful in being granted the section 8 then the serving of notices to quit from that later time would allow for harvesting to take place.

The fourth and last request

That the Council considers a period of time, not less than two years, for SCALGA to work with the Council to promote, improve, and maintain the Swaffham sites. By then hopefully there would be an increase in the uptake of allotments which the council would take into account before considering any future sale of allotment land.

SCALGA is well aware that there are many vacant plots. Since the formation of the Association, the high profile in the media, the developing links with The Horticultural Society and the work undertaken so far to attract potential allotment holders there has been a revival of interest in allotment keeping. We know of several new plot holders including members of the Portuguese community becoming tenants. The first positive signs are there. To some, to fill all the current vacant plots with tenants may seem daunting. However, if you take into account the points already raised, the fact that there is a strong Association with a hard working committee, that we can apply to the Allotment Regeneration Initiative for assistance and funds to facilitate projects the future may well be more promising than initially thought.

An increase in the number of tenants will mean an increase in revenue for the council. Of course the rents from allotments will never equal the quoted six and a half million gained from the proposed sale of the two allotment fields. However, the increase in revenue should lessen the burden on the tax payer. Eventually, it may even mean that the allotments can be self financing.

As an association and as individual plot holders we are so pleased to see the work carried out on improvements to the allotments undertaken by the Town Council over the last few weeks. The removal of rubbish, the clearing and preparation of plots does make the allotment sites more attractive to would be allotment holders. We do have ideas to promote allotment keeping and in conjunction with the town Council we sincerely hope that these can be put into action.

TO SUM UP

There is no doubt that our world is changing very fast and in 10 or 20 years time who knows what will be the issues that a town council such as that of Swaffham will be facing. When historians and people look back upon the decisions that Swaffham Town Council took in 2007 (and the decisions taken now may well have serious implications for the future) please be known, not as the council who only looked at the short term financial gain from their most valuable asset, but as a council who had had the courage to look to the future, assess what was likely to be needed with regard to open spaces for the community and leave the heritage and legacy of allotment land well preserved and protected for future generations..

Thank you very much for allowing me the time to put forward these views.