

**SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting on Wednesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2006 at 7.00p.m. in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

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

Councillors: - Mrs C. Baker, Mr D. Butters, Mrs P. Buxton,  
Mr D. Cannon, Mrs A. Greaves, Mrs T. Jennison,  
Mrs Lister, Mrs S. Matthews, Mr F. Sharpe,  
Mr I. Sherwood, Mr J. Stockdale, Mr L. Wise.

Clerk:- Mr R. Bishop.  
Deputy Clerk:- Mrs M. Meyrick  
Internal Auditor:- Mr B. Clements  
Swaffham Museum: - Mr J. Clarke

Public: - 3

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.**

1.1. Cllr F. Mann.

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

2.1. Cllr Lister, Cllr Baker and Cllr Butters declared a prejudicial interest on item 5, item 7 (R2) and item 7 (R10).

2.2. Cllr Jennison and Cllr Stockdale declared a personal interest on item - Allotments.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING**

3.1. The minutes of the Finance and General Purposes Committee of the 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006 were agreed and signed as a true record by Mayor.

**4. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT**

4.1. A copy of the Responsible Finance Officer's report was given to Councillors for consideration.

4.2. Accounts to date Receipts & Payments 2006/07 were circulated to Councillors.

4.3. Internal Auditor's Report.

The internal auditors report was circulated in the papers to Councillors.

**5. Application for short-term interim continuation funding from SWAFFHAM MUSEUM LTD.**

**Cllr Butters, Cllr Baker and Cllr Lister left the meeting at 7.03p.m during the presentation and discussion of this item.**

Mr John Clarke, Deputy Chairman Swaffham Museum Ltd read out a letter sent to the Town Council for consideration.

**Continuation funding for Museum Manager and Education Officer**

*The work is almost complete on the finishing touches to the Town Hall, and adapting the rooms for display and other activities. Most of the later work has been done by volunteers, members of the Friends of Swaffham Museum and others. A bonus has been the acquisition of counters from the Library, as well as 135 square metres of carpet tiles which will be used for floor covering the work and store rooms. The collection has been brought back out of store and soon the Carter Room will be fully equipped and operational.*

*The grant funding for the project has almost come to an end, and it included salaries for the Museum Curator/manager and the Education Officer. The original plan involved opening the museum around the middle of 2005, giving us the change to develop the marketing strategy and raise awareness of the Museum to a wider catchment area. However, external matters meant that this plan had to be postponed, and in the event, work on the refurbishment was delayed until early this year. As the grant-period ceases at the end of 2006, this means that there are no funds for the Manager and Education Officer to be kept in post.*

*Swaffham Museum Ltd is applying for Charitable status, and we have sourced granters who can help us with the continuation funding for a significant period of time, but we can only access that when we are a Charity. Other funds which are available mean that the Officers can be employed up to the end of February, but we wish to seek help for the interim from the Town Council, in the form of a loan. We estimate that the amount needed will be in the order of £8,500.*

- This is a stop gap measure – not long term.*
- The delay in our ability to apply for external funding is beyond our control – we have to achieve charitable status before we can do this.*
- After major refurbishment we need to ensure continuance of professional staff to confirm our position as a properly run Museum.*
- We are grateful to Town Council for support so far – utilities, insurance etc.*
- If it were not for Museum the overall restoration work on the Town Hall would not have been funded.*
- We have already exhausted all other avenues of possible funding – Friends of Swaffham Museum (FoSM), Icení, Museum Ltd funds.*
- Aside from the historic importance of the Museum to the Town, there is great additional value in having a vibrant, professionally run Museum, capable of attracting a strong Tourist element.*
- There is great value to local schools of having a full time Education Officer especially since ancient Egyptian history is now an important part of the National Curriculum.*
- The contribution already made by FoSM volunteers has an assignable value and this constitutes a major part of the added value brought to the town by the Museum.*

There followed a lengthy discussion. Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Cannon seconded for the Town Council to apply for a Public Works loan on behalf of the Museum.

**It was agreed with 6 votes for the Town Council to apply for a Public Works Loan on behalf of the Swaffham Museum Ltd. Swaffham Museum is to be responsible for re-paying the loan plus the interest.**

**Cllr Butters, Cllr Baker and Cllr Lister returned to the meeting at 7.22p.m.**

**PLANNING APPLICATIONS**

<p>3PL/2006/1509/A – Nationwide Building Society, a Market Place – Externally illuminated sign. <b>NO OBJECTION</b></p>	<p>3PL/2006/1560/F – Amendment – Ms L. Dahl, 40 King Street – Two storey side extension, porch and conservatory, detached games room and garage. <b>NO OBJECTION</b></p>
<p>3PL/2006/1650/F – Mr S. Garrod &amp; Ms L. Merrit, 8 Nelson Crescent – Extension to dwelling <b>NO OBJECTION</b></p>	

**6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1. The Town Clerk gave a budget presentation to Councillors for the year 2007/08. (Appendix 1)

5.2. A budget report was circulated to Councillors. (Appendix 2)

5.3. Budget Decisions for 2007/08.

**7) CAPITAL PROJECTS**

**R1) TOWN HALL**

The 2.5% retention of £8,300 for the Town Hall extension will be expended before the end of this financial year. A sum of £25,000 remains from the £50,000 contingency set in the budget last year for two purposes.

- 1. To underwrite the Museum project to allow this to be completed and to ensure that the Grant funding secured for the Museum project was not lost.**
- 2. To use as match funding in order to secure grant funding to achieve further access improvements to the Town Hall.**

The first of these objectives has been achieved and the second will be formulated from discussions with the Disability Rights Commission Arbitration Service.

**(R1) It was agreed for the sum of £25,000 to remain as earmarked to use as match funding to secure grant funding from various sources for access improvements within the Town Hall including upgrading of the current lifting platform in consultation with the Access Group.**

**R2) MUSEUM ENHANCEMENT**

The Town Council have bank rolled this project for the Museum and should be proud that they chose to take responsibility for seeing it through to the end. The grand re-opening will be early in the new-year. The Museum has been

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closed since September 2004. The enthusiasm of the volunteers is evident as they are working every day now, painting, laying carpet tiles, putting up shelving and mounting displays. The main contractors Evergreen Builders from Necton have been very accommodating, with regular meetings throughout the duration of the contract. It is possible for the Museum to join forces with the Town Council in order to gain grant funding, providing that the Council's main objective of access improvement remains as part of the project. There is currently a problem with continuation funding for both the Museum Curator and Education Officer, there are grant applications pending and whilst these are still outstanding there is still hope. With regard to the main contract the 2.5% retention is all that remains within the Council accounts.

**(R2) It was agreed with 3 abstentions to keep hold of the 2.5% retention of £4,457 for a period of 12 months. This will be paid to the main contractor after any defects/snagging is completed at the end of this period.**

### **R3) CEMETERY IMPROVEMENTS & CHAPEL RESTORATION**

The Cemetery Improvements and Chapel Restoration was one of the projects put on temporary hold whilst the full implications of the unforeseen expense to the Town Clock was realised, this is again considered in 2007/08. In last years budget report the need was outlined to employ the services of a quantity surveyor to look specifically at the restoration work of the chapel and conversion of a garage into a workshop, inclusive of gaining water supply and electricity (or using a generator). This cost is earmarked to come out of the general maintenance in the current financial year for the Cemetery. There is also the costing out of a wall and gates at the entrance to the Cemetery to consider. A preliminary meeting with the Development Officer from the Heritage Lottery Fund was promising; in order to do the necessary groundwork for the grant application, it would be sensible to target the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter of the financial year. Projected Income and expenditure have been removed this year as these will be subject to full Council approval at a later date. All that remains is the net capital commitment which is brought forward from this year.

**(R3) It was agreed that the net figure of £10,000 is carried forward from the current financial year. The Council will have to approve the final detail including costings.**

### **R4) SKATEPARK PROJECT**

There have been some repairs carried out following some vandalism earlier in the summer to various items of equipment. The 2.5% retention has also been paid to the main contractor. The amount budgeted is surplus money carried forward from the grant monies received from Sport England for this project. It is therefore a straightforward recommendation to retain this contingency within the accounts.

**(R4) It was agreed to retain the sum of £4,000 in the accounts for the Skatepark maintenance.**

### **R5) THE SHAMBLES**

The first consultation event took place on 'The Shambles' on 2<sup>nd</sup> November. Early in the new-year a report will be published, highlighting all the issues

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raised during the consultation. From this it is hoped that an action plan will follow and the three local authorities can work with the property owners in the area to achieve a sustainable management plan. This would aim towards a lasting improvement of an area of the town that lives up to its name. It will need to be established whether this will be moved forward by the Town Group or the Open Spaces Committee. A target could be for the first quarter of the financial year to be in a position to approach the Town Council for funding from their 'Match Funding Budget'. There are no costs available at present, but it is clear that in principle there will be a need for some local funding in order to obtain grants from our principal authorities and from elsewhere.

**(R5) It was agreed in principle with 1 against that 'The Shambles' project could apply for funds from the 'Match Funding' budget in 2007/08 in order to obtain grant funding from elsewhere.**

## **R6) SALE OF ASSETS & CAPITAL EXPENDITURE**

With the commitment to Icen Partnership complete and the Swimming Pool land purchase imminent, neither feature in the 2007/08 budget. The latter would only be carried forward in the event of unforeseen delays. The current review of surplus allotment sites will result in land being offered for sale, re-organising of some allotment sites consolidating areas where allotment holders can cultivate them. There is a general downturn in allotment holders nationally and this is certainly reflected in Swaffham. The capital sum that could be realised would be larger with planning consent, but development uplift clauses can protect the Towns interests in the future, should the land ever become more valuable. There could be a long wish list of possible uses that Councillors would need to agree but these may need to include the following:-

- **Adding to the match funding budget to secure grant funding for a variety of projects**
- **Building up the Reserves to a more acceptable level**
- **Funding projects that do not or cannot attract grant funding**

**(R6) It was agreed to proceed with the review, to include taking the advice of the district valuer and obtaining necessary permissions from the Secretary of State. To work with the Town Council and the Finance Committee, making appropriate adjustments to the budget as the sale of surplus allotment land is realised. A notional figure of £85,000 is therefore included for 2007/08.**

## **R7) NORTHWELL POOL ENHANCEMENT**

A successful consultation day was held on 25<sup>th</sup> July in the Town Hall for Northwell Pool. An issues report was presented to the Open Spaces Committee on 20<sup>th</sup> September – ducks, trees, weeds, litter, dumping, seats, bins, dog fouling, closing off the road, fishing and pollution are just some of the issues. The next stage is to discuss the issues raised with the various authorities concerned i.e. Anglian Water, Norfolk County Council, Breckland Council and the Police. The project has the same notional figures carried forward into 2007/08 from the current year, as this was another project delayed because of expenditure to the Town Clock. There are a small number of residents who live in the vicinity who are interested in serving on a

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committee to establish a sustainable management plan for the future. This area of Swaffham has great potential and with the will of all parties concerned a lasting improvement could be made. The Income and Expenditure for this project is not contained within the budget this year, these details will need to be approved by full Council at a later date. All that remains is the Council's commitment of £5,000 which is brought forward from this year.

**(R7) It was agreed with 1 against to retain the Northwell Pool project in 2007/08 bringing forward the town council contribution of £5,000 towards enhancing and managing this area in partnership with Norfolk County Council, Anglian Water and residents living in that area of town.**

## **R8) RECREATION GROUND PROJECT**

The Recreation Ground Project has evolved through four successful public consultation events, confirming early wish lists first established in the general town survey 'Have your say'. A draft business plan was approved by the Town Council last year and substantial work went into preparation of a grant application for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund in March 2006. Whilst this application failed simply on heritage grounds, it also delayed matters due to the lengthy assessment period of six months. It served the purpose of a sharp learning curve and has also set the standard for smaller applications which can succeed with slightly different criteria more suited to the Recreation Ground. The Recreation Ground Committee and the Deputy Town Clerk are working towards the first of many submissions of these applications in the last quarter of the current financial year. The aims and objectives have remained consistent for the past two and a half years. The final expenditure for this project will be determined by the level of grant funding that is forthcoming to deliver the outputs and see the Haspalls Road Recreation Ground as a fully regenerated, diverse open space with facilities for all age groups. It is therefore essential that the Town Council maintain their commitment of £50,000 in their budget for the delivery of this project during the course of the financial year 2007/08.

**(R8) It was agreed for the Town Council to retain the match funding contribution of £50,000 as agreed in October 2004 and the principle details as outlined in the business plan agreed in November 2005. This is retained in the 2007/08 budget as the principles of the project remain the same.**

## **R9) MATCH FUNDING BUDGET**

The match funding budget has been reduced by £12,500. This figure was used to fund the restoration of the Town Clock, thus using all of the money from the sale of the painting formerly situated in the Assembly Rooms. A further £13,000 is used to fund a 'Project Grant Support Officer', details listed at R12. £1,000 each allocated to the Buttercross/Pedlars Sign R32, Youth Council R43 and Tourist Information Centre R44. It is essential in future years to rebuild this budget, as demands will be forthcoming from various future projects. This could be achieved from the proceeds of the sale of surplus allotment land or from Section 106 agreements through a negotiated planning gain.

**(R9) It was agreed that a match funding budget of £17,000 is retained for 2007/08. To also add further funds to this budget heading as appropriate after consideration is given to replenishing Reserves, from Section 106 or Sale of Assets capital receipts.**

#### **R10) PUBLIC WORKS LOAN**

The Council decided to borrow £125,000 in their budget last year; to date £120,000 has been borrowed, leaving £5,000 as an option to borrow for the Northwell Pool project. This has been carried forward into the 2007/08 budget.

**(R10) It was agreed with 1 against for a public works loan of £5,000 be applied for early into 2007/08 paid over 25 years to fund the Northwell Pool project as agreed in last years budget.**

**Decision from Item 5** - Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Cannon seconded for the Town Council to apply for a Public Works loan on behalf of the Museum.

**It was agreed with 6 votes for the Town Council to apply for a Public Works Loan of £8,500 on behalf of the Swaffham Museum Ltd. Swaffham Museum is to be responsible for re-paying the loan plus the interest.**

#### **R11) SECTION 106 PLANNING GAIN**

There is a heading in the accounts for 2007/08 for 'Section 106 Planning Gain'. It is hoped that when and where there are larger developments in the town; that the opportunity will be taken to negotiate directly with the developer at the planning stage. Under the Local Development Framework Town Council's will be asked to fulfil this role. There is one application which was turned down by Breckland, but it going to appeal that could yield an income for town amenities. It is for the Town Council to decide where this money should be spent.

**(R11) It was agreed to establish a 'Section 106 planning gain' as a heading in the accounts and adjust the budget accordingly, if and when funds become available.**

### **2) ADMINISTRATION & MISCELLANEOUS**

#### **R12) SALARIES NET PRECEPT/PENSION CONTRIBUTIONS & TRAVEL EXPENSES**

The net salary figure for the Precept is calculated after the total salaries are allocated to other cost centres, such as the Market, Cemetery, Floral Display, Agency & Amenity etc. There is one additional member of part-time staff requested for 2007/08 in the form of a Project Grant Support Officer at a cost to the Council of £13,000 on a salary pro-rata £18,500 per year, in the first year this is funded by the match funding budget. This person would be dedicated to exploring grant funding opportunities under the guidance of the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk. Part of their remit will be to maximise all income possibilities, in addition to grants, this would include fundraising, sponsorship and any potential project income. This post is initially for 12 months, under review at the budget meeting in December 2007. The ultimate

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aim of this post is to be self funding, as sufficient officer time needs to feature in every project grant application. This post is not management calibre and is specifically targeted as a Support Officer. The post would only be continued if income is produced to support the expense.

**(R12) It was agreed that the salaries and pension contributions are increased in line with the RPI and as agreed by the NALC/SLCC. To use £13,000 from the match funding budget and engage the services of a 'Project Grant Support Officer' from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2006.**

### **R13) INSURANCE**

There is a need to compare year on year under best value principles. As part of the lease arrangement for both the Community Centre and the Assembly Rooms, the Town Council as owners will insure both buildings and seek reimbursement from Icen Partnership. It was agreed in the current budget to have the Town Hall and Buttercross valued by the district valuer for insurance purposes, similarly Icen Partnership will need the Community Centre and Assembly Rooms valued. This is scheduled in the final quarter of this financial year.

**(R13) It was agreed for a budget of £14,000 which covers all the requirements, with reimbursement of £4,650 coming from Icen Partnership. The Town Clerk to continue with the policy of obtaining best value for our insurance policy year on year.**

### **R14) STAFF TRAINING**

The staff training is covered by a Council policy and continuous professional development is an important part. Staff training has been vital to moving forward as a team, as an effective unit. There will be a number of events to attend related to the recently published white paper.

**(R14) It was agreed with 2 abstentions for the Town Clerk to have delegated authority to manage the staff training budget and for the budget for staff training to increase by £75 to £2,875 in 2007/08.**

### **R15) COUNCILLOR TRAINING**

A small budget is necessary to cover training costs for Councillors who wish to attend training events on their particular interests. This in the past has been underused, but training is an essential part of being a Quality Council therefore all Councillors are encouraged to undertake at least one training event in each year. It is envisaged that this could be the annual event in May organised by the Town Clerk and the Deputy Town Clerk, to brief Councillors and bring them up to date with any particular subject identified by them for training purposes.

**(R15) It was agreed for a budget of £300 to cover Councillor training costs, this is an increase of £50.**

### **R16) By ELECTION/PARISH POLL**

The Council had a shared expense with Breckland Council for a By-election earlier this year. However, with Local Council Elections being funded by Breckland Council in May of 2007 the risk of a By-election is greatly reduced

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in the next financial year. The sum of £2,665 could therefore be deferred until the following financial year 2008/09. In the event of a Parish Poll being called for one year only could be met from Reserves on the proviso that Reserves would be replenished.

**(R16) It was agreed to increase the By Election/Parish Poll budget by £65 making a total sum of £2,665, but to defer replacing this contingency until 2008/09.**

## **R17) AUDIT**

The recommended budget for 2007/08 allocated is for one years audit and internal audit. There is an inflationary increase of £50 on last year.

**(R17) It was agreed for a sum of £1,550 is set aside to cover audit costs in the year 2006/07.**

## **R18) RBS ACCOUNTING SYSTEM**

A new accounting system was demonstrated to the Town Clerk prior to last year's budget. The software is superior to the system currently in place, which has let us down prior to two out of the four Finance Committee meetings this past year. A great deal of staff time has been spent trying to redeem the situation and the software support has been very slow at times. The initial cost is fairly high at £3,000 but this includes on site and on line training as a back up to getting the software established. Unlike the Scribe system, this is a one-off cost. There will only be upgrades or additional software that can feature in future budgets.

**(R18) It was unanimously agreed to install the RBS accounting system for the year 2007/08 at a cost of £3,000.**

## **R19) COUNCILLOR ALLOWANCE & TRAVEL EXPENSES**

This was a budget item decided by the Council over three years ago, as it was felt that the current Council could not make a decision to pay themselves an allowance of £100 each. A principle could be established establish for the incoming Council in 2007/08.

**(R19) It was agreed to take out the Councillor Allowance from the budget. It was also agreed for the Clerk to look at an expenses policy with the finance committee.**

## **R20) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The other income in this cost centre in projected interest on the general account. The other expenditure includes Legal/Professional fees, Membership/Subscriptions, Stationery/Books, Postage Stamps, Bank charges, Newsletter including annual report, Admin & Miscellaneous and Scribe/Computer Software, the latter will diminish over time as the RBS system is established. All are detailed within the draft budget and contain inflationary increases to cover estimated costs this next year.

**(R20) It was agreed that all other income & expenditure in the Administration & Miscellaneous cost centre is increased in line with inflation as detailed in the draft budget.**

### **3) EQUIPMENT**

#### **R21) TRUCK LEASE & MAINT/FUEL/INSURANCE**

The truck is used mainly by the Town Gardener with his watering equipment and whilst the budget for the lease remains static, the lease itself is completed in 2008. There is also the need to be a sensible budget to cover maintenance, fuel and insurance.

**(R21) It was agreed that a budget of £1,322 is set for the truck lease and a budget of £1,650 for the Maintenance/Fuel & Insurance costs for the year 2007/08.**

#### **R22) OUTSIDE EQUIPMENT REPAIRS & REPLACEMENTS**

The outside equipment needs to be managed and maintained. Decisions need to be taken throughout the course of the year and it is the total of these headings together that should not be exceeded.

**(R22) It was agreed that the budget for Outside equipment repairs is set at £800 and replacements at £900 in the year 2007/08.**

#### **R23) OFFICE EQUIPMENT MAINTENANCE & RENEWALS**

The office equipment maintenance and renewals centres mainly around photocopying or printing equipment in the office. An additional copier has replaced four individual printers; all the copiers are subject to lease arrangements. There is a net saving in the longer term. The current budget is increased in line with increases to copy costs, which is the way that companies work out their maintenance agreements.

**(R23) It was agreed that the budget is increased to £3,150 taking into account of increases in costs from our current maintenance agreement.**

#### **R24) TOWN HALL OFFICE FURNITURE and EQUIPMENT RENEWALS**

The budget for office furniture within the town hall has been necessary over the period when the Town Hall extension was being equipped. Both budgets have been reduced for the year 2007/08, as the facilities are nearing completion. Fireproof cabinets to store personnel records and minute books are now in place. The final details are nearly complete as the Museum begins to migrate back into the old building. The Sampson Room will now revert to store our archives and serve as a reading room. It is recommended that the Council consider in future years to build a contingency for the eventual replacement of the ageing Council Chamber Furniture. This was purchased for the Queen's Coronation back in 1953.

**(R24) It was agreed that a budget is set at £1,200 in 2007/08 for office furniture renewals and for office equipment renewals.**

#### **R25) TOWN HALL SOUND SYSTEM**

The recent visit to Couhe in France highlighted the professional outlook that is generated by a good sound system in the Council Chamber. The current microphones and speakers are on loan to the Council. The equipment is available to The Mayor, the Town Clerk and Cllr Butters for his planning report. All other Councillors are not clearly audible in the Chamber. This is not an ideal situation and can be addressed as part of an upgrade to the

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facilities. No budget is available for this purpose but this could be a scheme for the new Council to consider if grant funding is forthcoming.

**(R25) It was agreed that a professional sound system is part of a scheme to upgrade the Council Chamber into a facility that can provide conference facilities. This scheme can be presented to the Council at a future date for part-funding from the match funding budget and part from grant funding.**

**R26) TOWN HALL PHONE SYSTEM**

The only remaining item in this cost centre is the capital cost of the telephone system in the Town Hall. This is funded over a three year period, this is the third and final year.

**(R26) It was agreed that a budget of £1357 is set for the Phone system lease for 2007/08.**

**4) TOWN HALL**

**R27) OFFICE AND CHAMBER RENTS**

The Office and Council Chamber rents were revised and reduced in July last year. This has produced some bookings for the Chamber. The offices are used each day apart from Wednesday. Many of the uses for the Council Chamber do not generate income, for example all meetings for the Town Council and their Committees.

**(R27) It was agreed that there be no change for the Town Hall pricing structure for the Offices and Chamber Rents for 2007/08, but from 2008/09 increases in line with the RPI come into force each April.**

**R28) RATES**

The rates for the Town Hall were re-assessed last year to take account of the extension. There is currently rate relief on the un-occupied part of the Town Hall; this will change when the Museum opens to the public. The rateable value of the building has increased to £35,000 up from £20,750. The rates will eventually be £14,770 but there will be transitional relief in over three years. In the current year the amount due will be £7,500 in 2007/08. The amount could reduce dramatically if the Museum achieves charitable status, as the old part of the building would be due for rate relief.

**(R28) The was agreed for the budget for rates on the Town Hall be set at £7,500 for 2007/08.**

**R29) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The other expenditure is for cleaning materials, telephone, repairs/replacements, alarm/cctv maintenance, electricity and gas, waste collection, water rates. As well as a calculation towards caretakers salary and sundry expenses.

**(R29) It was agreed that all other expenditure in the Town Hall cost centre is as detailed in the draft budget.**

## **5) OPEN SPACES**

### **R30) GROUNDS MAINTENANCE CONTRACT**

The Grounds Maintenance contract has been carried out by County Grounds Maintenance at a higher standard than in previous years. More cuts covering a larger area at a reduced cost has been achieved. The biggest improvement is in the Churchyard, as the Eastern side has now been brought into the same cutting regime. It has been levelled, re-seeded and cut regularly; this has given a much better end result. The cost saving came earlier than expected in the current year and as a result the cost is stabilised in 2007/08.

**(R30) It was agreed that the grounds maintenance contract is set at £14,500 in 2007/08 to include the same specification set at the higher standard last year.**

### **R31) STREET FURNITURE**

The street furniture budget is to maintain the various seats the council is responsible for around the town. The current budget will be used throughout the winter months, which is when this work is programmed. It is envisaged that the budget will need to be increased year on year as the stock of street furniture increases and some will need replacement.

**(R31) It was agreed that a budget of £1,450 is set to cover street furniture maintenance or replacement.**

### **R32) BUTTERCROSS/PEDLARS SIGN**

The contingency set aside for both of these distinctive landmarks in the town needs to be added to year on year. Last year due to budget restrictions no addition was made. This is an argument that could be used every year and will lead to the Council not having sufficient funds available when they need them. A minimum of £1,000 was recommended to increase the contingency in the budget for next year; this is transferred from the Match Funding budget. It was also recommended that the Council consider increasing this sum considerably should a sale of any assets produce a windfall for the town.

**(R32) It was agreed that the budget contingency for the Buttercross and the Pedlar Sign is added to by £1,000 in 2007/08 funded from the Match Funding budget with £5,000 b/fwd from last year making a total of £6,000.**

### **R33) TREE MAINTENANCE**

The tree pollarding carried out by local contractor David Machin needs to be continued. The ageing trees in the Churchyard, Campinglands and the Cemetery as well as the Recreation Ground are of some concern. There are also responsibilities for trees at Northwell Pool. To keep on top of the trees in these areas it was recommended to continue with the pollarding and maintenance programme.

**(R33) It was agreed that a budget of £2,500 is set for tree maintenance.**

### **R34) TOWN CENTRE FLORAL DISPLAYS**

The Floral display budget has been increased by £50 to continue with the replacement of a large number of tubs that are rotten and falling to pieces. A

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number are being replaced over the winter and the budget for next year will complete the process. This should allow a decrease in the budget in year 2008/09.

**(R34) It was agreed that the budget for floral displays is increased by £50 to £1,900 to allow the replacement of the remaining tubs in the year 2007/08.**

### **R35) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The other expenditure are Recreation Ground repairs, Play Equipment repairs, Town Clock maintenance, War Memorial electricity, Pest control, Buttercross electricity and Open Spaces sundry. There is also a calculation for salaries towards the floral displays also in this cost centre.

**(R35) It was agreed that all other income and expenditure in the Open Spaces cost centre is as detailed in the draft budget for 2007/08.**

## **6) AMENITIES & AGENCY**

### **R36) MUSEUM ANNUAL GRANT**

The Museum Grant should be increased in line with the commitment to the Museum under their current Enhancement Project.

**(R36) It was agreed that the Museum Grant is increased by £100 to £3,300 as stated in the projected figures for the enhancement project.**

### **R37) CHRISTMAS LIGHTS**

The Council provide Christmas lights on the Town Hall. The Assembly Rooms is under the management of Icen Partnership and the electricity supply and Christmas Lights at the Buttercross is also being funded by Icen Partnership. The budget for Christmas lights is therefore reduced by 50% in 2007/08. Cllr Sherwood proposed a budget of £700 is set. Cllr Greaves proposed and Cllr Baker seconded for an amendment of a £1200 budget.

**(R37) It was agreed with 1 against for a budget of £1200 is set for Christmas lights in 2007/08.**

### **R38) TWINNING BURSARY**

The Civic Visit in September 2006 to Couhe in France was a great success; £600 has been carried forward from the Twinning Bursary from last year. It was recommended to top up the Bursary to £1,000 in 2007/08. Cllr Sherwood proposed to increase the budget to £1000. Cllr Lister proposed an amendment and Cllr Baker seconded for the budget to be set at £600

**(R38) It was agreed with 6 votes for, 4 against and 1 abstention for a budget of £600 is set for a Twinning Bursary for 2007/08.**

### **R39) WEBSITE**

The website is a great success and is constantly being up-dated with minutes, agendas, reports, information and links. The budget should therefore be maintained in 2007/08 with the normal website management fee paid quarterly.

**(R39) It was agreed that a budget for 2007/08 is set at £750 for the town council web-site.**

**R40) BEST KEPT GARDEN COMPETITION**

The prize money for the Best Kept Garden Competition remained the same for over a decade until last year when the competition was withdrawn. A request from the Horticultural Society was put to the Council in November to match their £250

**(R40) It was agreed that the budget for the Best Kept Garden Competition for the year 2007/08 is £250 matching that of the Horticultural Society.**

**R41) SECTION 137 GRANTS**

The Section 137 Grant requests usually exceed the budget available each year. It was recommended to increase the budget by £100 for the year 2007/08.

**(R41) It was agreed to set the Section 137 grants budget to £1,100 to take account of the number of applications received from Community Groups.**

**R42) MAYORS ALLOWANCE, RECEPTION, CIVIC SERVICE & MAYORAL CHAIN REPAIRS**

The budgets for the Mayors Allowance, Mayors Reception and Mayors Civic Service all need inflationary increases to keep up with rising costs. The Mayoral Chain repairs budget has been removed, as the Chain is in good repair, if there is any unforeseen repairs needed this could come from the Amenity & Agency Sundry budget.

**(R42) It was agreed that all Mayoral expenses are increased in line with the draft budget for 2007/08 and the Mayoral Chain repairs budget removed.**

**R43) YOUTH COUNCIL**

The Youth Council is in its infancy, with the necessary research, development, encouragement and expertise being invested in our young people. The aim is for the steering group to work on their terms of reference and constitution and establish elections in 2007. It is envisaged that the small budget set aside to establish the Youth Council will be expended in the current financial year. It is important that the Town Council set a realistic budget for 2007/08 to enable the Youth Council to become active under the guidance of the Deputy Town Clerk as lead officer. The Town Council would also work in partnership with Sally Palmer Local Youth Worker from the Norfolk Youth Service.

**R43) It was agreed that an increased budget of £2,000 is set aside for the Youth Council for 2007/08. This is £1,000 for normal activities and a further £1,000 transferred from the Match Funding budget to be used for projects.**

**R44) TOURIST (or TOWN) INFORMATION CENTRE**

The Town Council have agreed in principle to taking on the TIC building and to making a bid for short term grant funding from Breckland Council. The budgeted figures in this cost centre projected for the Tourist Information Centre is dependent on a small grant from Breckland Council of £4,000 and income from letting out part of the TIC building as commercial space and through sales and enquiries. The expenditure is for salaries, revenue and other running costs. The net cost to the Town Council is £1,000; this is from the Match Funding budget and is greatly reduced from the Town Council's contribution of £3,000 in each of the previous five years. A decision is not expected until January 2007 from Breckland Council, so a final decision could be taken at a later date, possibly the February 2007 full Council meeting if funding is not forthcoming. There are other options under consideration, as relocation of the TIC and letting out the current building entirely as commercial space has to be an option.

**R44) It was agreed to proceed on the basis that the TIC building is taken on subject to completing negotiations with Breckland Council. To agree in principle to a TIC service being provided in 2007, but a final decision on the precise future of the TIC can wait until the outcome of the grant application with Breckland Council in January 2007. The net cost of £1,000 funded from the Match Funding budget.**

**R45) PUBLIC TOILETS**

The Town Council have agreed in principle to taking on the responsibility for the public toilets in the town centre. The negotiations with Breckland Council are on-going for a commuted sum and refurbishment of the public toilets in Swaffham. Following this the responsibility would be transferred to the town for cleaning and maintenance of the toilets. There would be a need either to increase staffing levels, including recruitment and training or to use a suitable contractor. There could also be a combination of both.

**R45) It was agreed for the Town Clerk to negotiate an appropriate commuted sum with Breckland Council in collaboration with Attleborough, Dereham, Thetford and Watton Town Council's. To work with the Finance Committee in respect of an appropriate investment of the commuted sum, also researching the cleaning and maintenance regime. For the Personnel Committee to work with the Town Clerk as appropriate.**

**R46) ASSEMBLY ROOMS & COMMUNITY CENTRE**

The future of Icen Partnership is far from certain beyond 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007. The Town Council should therefore have a contingency plan to come into play should the two buildings currently leased to Icen suddenly need to be transferred back to the Town Council. Both have been refurbished and rebuilt respectively. There is also the chance of the Town Council bidding for the cleaning and caretaking contract even in the event that Icen can continue. A new partnership structure has been agreed and an Extraordinary General Meeting is now planned for January 2007. By this time the financial situation should be clearer and the final outcome will unfold. No figures are included in the 2007/08 budget even as notional value for income or expenditure, this is because in every case the income should support any expenditure incurred.

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The Council should be aware that staffing levels would need to rise, there would be a need for recruitment and training and a combination of using staff and specialist contractors.

**R46) It was agreed to continue to monitor the situation closely and make the necessary adjustments to both income and expenditure. For the Town Clerk to work with the Finance Committee in preparing a contingency plan for all eventualities in respect of both the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre. For the personnel committee to work with the Town Clerk as appropriate.**

### **R47) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The only other income in this cost centre comes from the Car Parking Agency agreement with Breckland Council and the Relief in Need Charity. These figures support the cost of the Council administration i.e. through salaries. The other expenditure is as listed with a percentage calculation for museum utilities, street lighting, street light maintenance and amenities & agency sundry. Most of these figures have been increased to cover the predicted additional expenditure in the course of the next financial year.

**(R47) It was agreed that all other income and expenditure in the cost centre for Amenities & Agency is as listed in the draft budget for 2007/08.**

## **7) ALLOTMENTS**

### **R48) ALLOTMENT PRICES**

The allotment rents have been increased considerably this past three years. This has brought our rents much closer to the rent of other allotment sites throughout the county. It is proposed to continue with the Council policy to increase the rents over and above the rate of inflation, but it is again suggested that proportionally the increase should not be as severe as the past three years. The expected downturn in allotments due to price increases has not been as large as the Council expected, although Swaffham is in line with the national trend of a slow downward demand for allotments in general. It would be sensible to slow down the rate of increase to consolidate the allotment holders that the Council have retained.

**(R48) It was agreed that allotment rents are increased from October 2006 by 7.5% across the board, rounded up or down by 0.25% for convenience of invoicing.**

### **R49) ALLOTMENTS REPAIRS/REPLACEMENTS & REVIEW**

The current policy is to invest all monies received in rents back into the allotments in order that the allotment sites are not a burden to the Council Tax payers. The allotments are now dealt with by the 'Open Spaces & Amenities Committee'. A review is in progress regarding surplus allotment land and the possibility of disposing of this land.

**(R49) It was agreed for the Town Clerk to manage the budget accordingly and prioritize maintenance, improvements and clearing up. To also complete the review on surplus allotment land.**

**R50) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The other expenses are Water Rates and Sundry Expenses, both of these added to R44 will not exceed the income from allotment rent.

**(R50) It was agreed that all other allotment expenditure is as in the draft budget.**

**8) CEMETERY**

**R51) CEMETERY PRICES**

The cemetery prices compare favourably with other burial authorities. There will be changes incorporated in the current financial year regarding charges for exclusive rights of burial and taking into account expenditure such as soil removal. These adjustments will be discussed with the Finance Committee prior to implementation. It was suggested that the Council continue to increase their prices over the rate of inflation.

**(R51) It was agreed to increase all charges by 5% across the board from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and to work with the finance committee to look at changes incorporated in the current financial year regarding charges for exclusive rights of burial and taking into account expenditure such as soil removal.**

**R52) CEMETERY MAINTENANCE**

The Cemetery maintenance remains at £1,600 to look after the Cemetery to a similar standard to last year. There is an enhancement scheme being looked at present, but until that is implemented there is still work to carry out.

**(R52) It was agreed that a budget of £1,600 is set for Cemetery maintenance.**

**R53) CEMETERY WASTE REMOVAL**

The waste removal includes the cost of removing soil on a regular basis from the skip resident in the Cemetery. This system has worked well and has tidied up a scruffy corner of the Cemetery.

**(R53) It was agreed that a budget of £900 is set aside for waste and soil removal for 2007/08. This is an increase of £100 on the current year.**

**R54) ALL OTHER INCOME & EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The income from the Cemetery contributes towards part of the staffing costs, the expenditure as last year is budgeted to match with the income coming in. Other expenditure includes rates, electricity, waste removal and sundry expenses.

**(R54) It was agreed that all other income and expenditure in the Cemetery cost centre is recommended as in the draft budget.**

**9) MARKET**

**R55) CASUAL TRADERS**

The casual trade has started to pick up again now that the Town Centre Regeneration has been completed. The disruption in the town centre has taken its toll on the Market and will take time to build. Casual traders are where most of the new licensed traders come from. There have been many licensed traders that have either moved on or retired in recent years. The incentive scheme to try and attract new traders to Swaffham has produced only a handful of new traders. The Market Committee are working hard now to build up the numbers once more, themed markets is one option being explored with the introduction of a French Market in October this year. It was agreed last year to have no increases to allow time for the Market to recover, the increase agreed in the budget last year now comes into effect.

**(R55) It was agreed to increase the casual site rental charge by £1 to £23 from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.**

**R56) LICENSED TRADERS**

The lifeblood of the Saturday Market is the licensed traders. Last year the Council rewarded them with a year without a further increase in fees. In 2007/08 the increases agreed in last years budget now come into effect.

**(R56) It was agreed to increase the Licensed Traders rent across the board by 5% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.**

**R57) FARMERS MARKET**

The Farmers Market continues to struggle on the first Wednesday each month and has not established enough regular trade to continue. This should cease at the end of 2006 and reinvent itself as an integral part of the Saturday Market, with a launch in 2007.

**(R57) It was agreed to increase the site rental by 5% from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007 and to look at integrating the Farmers Market with the Saturday Market in 2007, locating it every week on Pedlars Car Park.**

**R58) MARKET REFUSE**

The refuse contract has changed this past year and will need to be negotiated with Serco direct. The only other option is to have a self cleansing market. This might be difficult to manage as the Town Council could still be held responsible for clearing up any debris if traders do not clear up after themselves. Cllr Sherwood proposed and Cllr Buxton seconded for put £20,000 in the budget.

**(R58) It was agreed that the current refuse collection should continue until a new is contract negotiated. To budget of £20,000 is set for 2007/08.**

**R59) ALL OTHER EXPENDITURE in this cost centre**

The remaining expenditure is Rates, Farmers Market expenses. Market Salaries is a calculation including office administration. This is in addition to the Market Superintendent and outside staff in erecting stalls for the farmers market and finally a small amount for sundry expenses for the Saturday Market.

**(R59) It was agreed that the expenditure in this cost centre is as recommended in the draft budget.**

**10) PRECEPT**

**R60) RESERVES**

The level of Precept that the Councillors set will also determine the level of Reserves the Council deems to be appropriate for a Town Council of the size and stature of Swaffham. In real terms the Reserves held by Swaffham Town Council has diminished in each of the past five years. 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 reserves, which 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 amount of money held in Reserve is essential. A guide for Reserves is that they should as a minimum cover six months of expenditure. The Town Council are currently lower than the minimum recommendation and should be looking to build up their reserves during the life of the next Council to at least the minimum level.

**R60) It was agreed to add £20,000 to Reserves in 2007/08. If funds allow to set aside a further £30,000 if the Council receives money in excess of the notional budget allowed for the capital receipt proposed for surplus allotment land.**

**R61) PRECEPT**

The Precept figure is the all important one, as this is what the Town Council levy on all their Council Tax Payers for the course of the next financial year. Last year the Precept was increased by 7.27% to £147,500 to give a figure of £61.16 for a Band D household. In every one of my previous five budgets I have raised the issue of Reserves being low, of the need to have sufficient contingencies set aside to maintain our public buildings and deliver services locally. The next Town Council can be a key player in every part of the resurgence of this market town of Swaffham. They will have the chance to deliver more services locally, working in partnership to influence all areas of local government and retain the Quality Council status that this Town Council earned. There is a premium to pay and the council are deep into that transitional period, with many negotiations and opportunities coming the way of the Town Council to take on more responsibility. The figures as recommended to the Council this year would mean a rise of 8.25%. It is fair to say that without the notional figure included for the sale of surplus allotment land that the Council would have been facing a much more substantial percentage increase of 76%. The Town Council should now look to the future

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by putting things in good order with a maintenance programme and contingencies for looking after their land and property year on year. The Band D rate for a Precept of £156,300 is £65.19. This is an increase of £3.50 or 5.67% per house per year.

**(R61) It was unanimously agreed that the Precept for 2007/08 is set at £156,300 to give a Band D rate of £65.19**

The meeting closed at 9.15p.m.

Chairman\_\_\_\_\_