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Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held in the Assembly Rooms, Swaffham at 7.00pm on Wednesday 26th April 2006.

Present: Mayor Cllr J. Stockdale (in the chair)

Councillors:- Mrs C. Baker, Mr D. Butters, Mrs P. Buxton,
Mr B. Emmerson, Mrs A. Greaves, Mrs S. Lister,
Mrs S. Matthews, Mr I. Sherwood, Mr L. Wise.

Clerk:- Mr R. Bishop.
Deputy Clerk:- Mrs M. Meyrick
Police Constable: - P.C. Andy Partridge
Iceni Partnership:- Mr T. Dickens

Public:- 35

1. Mayor's welcome and opening remarks.

1.1. The Mayor welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Assembly in the newly refurbished Assembly Rooms.

2. Apologies for absence.

2.1. Cllr Cannon (work commitments), Cllr Mann (work commitments).

3. Declarations of Interest (in items on the Agenda).

3.1. Cllr Butters declared an interest on item 5b as he is a Museum Director.

4. Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday April 27th 2005.

4.1. The minutes of the Annual Town Assembly April 27th 2005 were agreed and signed as a true record by the Mayor.

4.2. On page 147 of the 2005 minutes, the Clerk's report - The Access Audit - the architect had answered all queries to the satisfaction of the Town Council but Cllr Buxton wanted it to be noted that this was not to the satisfaction of the Access Group.

5. Reports of Councillors and Officers on the work of the Town Council during 2005/06.

a) Recreation Ground Committee a report by the Deputy Town Clerk.

The recreation project has come along way since its first consultation back in 2004. There have been numerous amounts of research carried out as well as 3 more consultations. In March of this year the committee submitted a grant application to the Heritage Lottery but unfortunately this is just the 1st phase of a 2 phase process. We will know if we have passed the 1st phase by September. Planning permission still needs to be applied for. Plans are in the process of being drawn up. It is planned that when this is ready committee members will be knocking on residents doors surrounding the recreation ground with details of the project and asking for views. A survey

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will be conducted at the 'rec', possibly in the summer months, to find out for example who uses the rec, for what reason, how often etc.

There is still a lot of work to be done and a long wait to find out if we have been successful with the application. I would like to thank all the committee which is made up of councillors and non councillors. Without their commitment we would not have a fantastic project for Swaffham.

b) Town Hall & Museum Enhancement a report by the Town Clerk.

The Town Council have made good use of the new Council Chamber this past year. The road has been a long one for the Museum and there is a long way to go yet, but we remain hopeful of an autumn re-opening sometime in October this year. The issue of access has dominated any debates surrounding the finishing off of the Town Hall extension. The Town Council continue to take advice on issues relating to the lift which meets the minimum requirements with regards to Building Regulations. There is conflicting advice relating to the Disability Discrimination Act although the Town Council believe that they meet the requirements of the act, this continues to be disputed. It has recently been decided to seek the assistance from the Disability Rights Commission to seek conciliation assistance and an independent assessment. If this fails then possibly the only way to resolve this would be for individual claims relating to discrimination to be made through the courts. It is hoped that it will not come to this, as the Town Hall extension is a tremendous improvement on the facilities previously available to the staff and other organisations such as Breckland Council, the Registrar, Citizens Advice and Age Concern as well as the Museum office.

The contractors Evergreen Builders from Necton began work back on the 6th March; we are now 8 weeks into the main contract. They are about a third of the way through the renovation work which is due for completion in the middle of August. Part of the building will be handed over in July; the work begins with volunteers trying to put together the new displays to bring the Museum back to life. There will be some painting and finishing off needed, as this was the only way that the budget could be met. The Museum will be housed in the old part of the Town Hall taking over the offices previously occupied by the Town Council. It is hard to describe the sorry state of the building after everything had been taken out. It is fair to say that the building was in a far worse state than was first thought. I must pay tribute to the help and advice I have received from retired Quantity Surveyor Jim Mullenger an Icen Director, who I know did a similar job for the Assembly Rooms and the Community Centre. He is able to see things in a building contract that we as laymen would not see. He has become an invaluable member of the team and is doing all of this work as a volunteer.

c) Market & Farmers Market a report by Cllr B. Emmerson.

It is not a good report this year as we have lost up to 15 stalls for one reason or another. We will have heard that the re-generation of the market place has been a major factor; I agree it has not helped but it is certainly not the main factor. We have lost traders through illness, retirement and some who are not

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able to make a profit anymore. People using the market like other markets do not seem to be coming; it is a case of use it or lose it. We have some very good traders but they have to make a living.

The Farmers Market is held on the first Wednesday of each month. We have good traders but they have to make a living, once again it is the case of use or lose it. I would like to thank our Market Superintendent for his work in keeping order at both the markets, for the way he treats the many complaints which one has to endure in that job. He like the Town Council has tried to find replacement stalls and is still trying. As you may have seen in the Watton and Swaffham newspaper we had a good report with photos covering both markets and asking for your support. The Lynn News has also reported on our market with good write ups but without the support of the people, our market will not survive.

d) Planning Matters a report by Cllr David Butters.

First of all I will say your planning department on the Town Council is not wholly responsible for the road works in the centre of town, so please do not castigate me on that one. It has caused some disruption to traders, both in shops and on the market on Saturdays. There have been complaints of course, but generally, the Market Place is gradually being improved. As for the new mini roundabout, I must be honest and admit it has been a great help to me as I cycle to the Town Hall, having to go down Cley Road from the Assembly Rooms direction.

One alteration that does not seem to have had a great deal of effect is the realignment of the parking bays outside Boots. It seems just as many drivers turn into the bays and reverse out, as before. I think it is still a case of "there is a parking space, let's grab it before someone else does". It is just that the angle favours those coming from a different direction.

As for planning applications, we have considered 82, but this includes dual applications such as Listed Building consent and Full planning applications.

e) Swimming Pool Association a report by Cllr David Cannon given by Cllr Buxton.

The AGM was held earlier this week and I'll ask the Town Clerk to up-date you in a minute about the land purchase. Once we have this in place we will need your support to move things forward. There are two events planned. On Friday, May 12th, 7 o'clock in the Assembly Rooms, there will be a quiz for teams of 4, £2 per person, with the option of a fish and chip supper which can be ordered on the night. Then on Friday, October 27th, in Lydney House there will be the annual Cheese & Wine evening. Do try to support these events.

Town Clerk – With regards to the land purchase the planning application had to be resubmitted as we are looking at a different site bit in the same area. It is a 2 acre site, the price and terms have been agreed. Breckland District Council owns a piece of land by the entrance and the owners of the site retain

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part of the access; this had to be tied into a section 106 agreement. Once this is in place this can move on.

f) Civic Exchange a report by Cllr B. Emmerson.

The bi-annual Civic Exchange will take place in Couhe Verac, France from the 30th June to the 3rd July this year. The Mayor, Town Clerk and Councillors will attend along with representatives from town organisations including the Swaffham Twinning Association. Up to 30 will be going and for your information those who go pay for their own fares. Accommodation will be with the host in Couhe Verac and I can assure them that they will be well looked after by the hosts in their homes. Next year it will be forty years since Swaffham and Couhe Verac twinned. Since the last Town Assembly 10 people from Swaffham have joined in celebrations of the 750th Anniversary of the village of Warstade that was the German village which we twinned with 38 years ago. The village now forms the heart of the town of Hemmoor. I am very pleased to hear and to inform you that the school exchanges have started once again with parties from Hemmoor coming here on 3 occasions over the past year. A party from Swaffham has just returned back from Hemmoor. The report from those I have talked to say what a wonderful time that they have had.

Over 20 communities in Norfolk are involved in Twinning. Civic exchanges between our towns have been the means of many good friends being made. Why not try it, come and talk to people like myself who has been a member for over 30 years. Speak to some of the newer members who will tell you of the friends they have made in the short time they have been members. The Twinning Association holds functions most months including French, German and English evenings, a barbecue in July and a dinner dance in March. We raise money to help in entertaining our guests when it is our turn to host. If anyone is interested please see me after this meeting.

At this point I am sorry to inform you that this will be the last report I will be giving as a Town Councillor. Through the health of my wife and myself I have resigned from the Town Council as from the 30th April 2006. I publicly thank all those who have supported me over the past 15 years. A special thanks to my colleagues on the Council and the Town Council staff that are always there with help and assistance as and when required. I wish them well for the future of the Town.

The Mayor stated that one of the main reasons to come on the council was to work with you and I will be very sorry to see you go, thank you for all your hard work, you will be sadly missed.

f) Swaffham Museum Ltd a report by Cllr David Butters.

This has been a year of upheaval and problems. I said that last year and this year has brought more problems. At least the Town Hall extension is finished, over time and over budget. We can now begin on the museum refurbishment and repairs to the building. The repairs have been underway for some weeks now and the good news is the building is in a fairly good condition. Although

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the museum has been closed for over a year now, the Manager and Education Officer have held activity days. Most notable of these were the W.W. II recreation in the Drill Hall and the recent Easter days for young children in the Council Chamber, with painting, making models and colouring.

The Education Officer did a very good job of running the museum and organising things while the new Manager was trying to learn as much as possible as quickly as possible. They made a great team, but unfortunately for us, others have recognised the Education Officer's abilities and as we have not managed to get continuation funding to keep paying the wages beyond December, she is joining the Wisbech and Fenland Museums Service as Education Officers for five museums.

As we do not expect to open our doors to the public before the autumn, we are looking for various sources of money. Not just the local councils, but also charities and trusts etc. The more the museum restoration has been delayed, for whatever reason, the more problems the delay has caused. Some have been serious, such as the very real possibility of losing some of our grant money because of continual delays. In addition to the original grant figure, the Manager and Education Officer have been successful in adding some £75,000 to our funds. A very hand figure and used for purchase of display cabinets, museum functions such as the W.W. II weekend we held in the Drill Hall. The recent Easter fun days in the Council Chamber and a forthcoming event, the Time Trail enacted by costume interpreters. They will go around the town using the artefacts in the town and the architecture to bring the history of the town to light. There will also be an audio and DVD guide available in the TIC, library and the museum. A qualified storyteller going into nursery schools and local organisations. There will also be sessions for the drama and media studies students in the Sixth Form Centre, which will teach them about video productions and living history.

The local schools and organisations have agreed to get involved, so this is a good opportunity for the schools to learn about the town's history and their heritage. The museum has booked a qualified digital photography tutor to teach local residents basic skills in digital photography. This will culminate in an exhibition, showcasing the talents of Swaffham people. 12 of the photographs will be chosen to make a calendar for 2007. all these will be paid for out of grants.

g) Finance a report by the Town Clerk.

The budget meeting last December was certainly the most detailed discussion that has taken place relating to finance in the five years since I have been Town Clerk. The financial procedures we have to work to are part and parcel of how we have to operate as a Quality Council. The final accounts for the year ending 31st March in the form of Income and Expenditure, Statement of Accounts and Balance Sheet should be ready for the June Town Council meeting. There was a debate in December regarding the necessity to take out a loan in this financial year for £125,000. The Council had to consider whether to move ahead with various projects already in the pipeline. The

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other options would be to put some projects on hold or to cancel some altogether. Only minor changes were made to the budget as presented and the loan was agreed. This enabled the Council to re-organise its finances by spreading the cost over a longer period, whilst being able to deliver the services and projects without any major cuts being made.

The budget meeting is one of the most important meetings your Council has each year. This is where they set the amount that is required for the Precept which this year has gone up by £10,000 to £147,500 meaning it will cost each council tax payer £61.56 at Band D. Swaffham compares favourably with Towns of a similar size in terms of population and services delivery by their Town Council. The Council is extremely grateful to their internal auditor Brian Clements who continues to monitor everything we do from a financial point of view, whether it is VAT, budget, end of year accounts, PAYE, market income or procedures. Brian is always giving us an independent view and looking to make improvements wherever it is possible. Thank you Brian for all you do on a voluntary basis.

Finance always provokes healthy debate and as Town Clerk it is my duty as Responsible Finance Officer to ensure that our financial affairs are conducted within the law. However, it does not mean that Councillors always see things the way that the Town Clerk has recommended. It certainly doesn't mean that we as officers always agree with decisions that are taken but that is democracy. If anyone wishes to see a copy of the final accounts when they are published they will be available from the Town Hall after they have been agreed by the Town Council.

6. Other Reports:-

a) Icen Partnership by the Chairman Tony Dickens.

2006 is the third and final year of the £3.85 million Regeneration Project that the Icen Partnership was responsible for delivering. The most obvious achievements since last year's Town Assembly have been the opening of the new Swaffham Community Centre and of these beautifully restored Assembly Rooms.

The Community Centre is being very well used by a wide variety of community and charity groups and fairly buzzes with activity. The crèche is now an established feature and the community café provides a welcome space for informal meetings and as well as refreshment breaks for the user groups.

Advance bookings for the Assembly Rooms are developing well with Fridays and Saturdays almost fully booked for some time ahead. We are currently developing a marketing programme specifically to promote the Assembly Rooms and get more midweek and Sunday usage. The publicity material will be targeted at a range of potential new clients including the business sector for training activities, but also for exhibitions, craft and antique fairs, music and dance events, weddings and special occasion dinners. (The building is now licensed for wedding ceremonies.) We are working with the Town

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Council and others to extend the marketing programme to promote the whole Swaffham area under the theme of 'Traditional Values – Modern Outlook'.

The environmental improvements in the Market place are in the final phase which is scheduled for completion in July. Hopefully we'll then see an end to heavy plant and machinery all over the place and be able to fully enjoy the benefits of all that work.

The Partnership has continued to give support to a wide range of community groups and events over the past year. We provide office space and support for WNCVS and training support for Home Start. We have continued to gain funding for the young people's 'Hassled Group'. Considerable staff time has been devoted to helping Holme Hale and North Pickenham with their village appraisals. Events that have been supported by the Partnership include:

- A Funding Fair at the Community Centre
- Rotary Club Fashion Show
- Volunteers Day at Ecotech organised by Rotary
- Lions 'Children in Need' coffee morning
- Children's Christmas Party – organised by Well Family, Home Start & Lions
- The Fireworks at the Nelson Trafalgar Day Celebration

Finally we have set up and published a monthly 'Events Listings' booklet which, as well as providing publicity, is proving to be invaluable in helping organisations to plan their events without clashing with others.

Most of this has been made possible through the Regeneration Package Funding which will finish at the end of this year. But I also want to emphasise that none of it would have happened without the Iceni Partnership and by that I mean the combined efforts of the Iceni officers, who have obviously been in the front line of the delivery, but also officers of the Town Council and Breckland Council, and very importantly the wide range of volunteers that make up the working parties and board of directors. All have made important contributions to the success of the project, which has been a terrific achievement for the Town.

However, there is at present no funding in place to sustain the Partnership beyond 2006 so this is a critical time and decisions have to be made about whether the Partnership should continue and, if so, what it will look like.

Since January we have been consulting about this with our partners and on 3rd April we held a public meeting to look at these issues and gauge the opinion of local people. This proved to be a very successful meeting with about ninety people in attendance who enthusiastically took part in round table discussions about what their priorities would be for the Town and villages over the next ten years. Many ideas emerged most of which you will be familiar with and will soon be able to read about in our next Newsletter but,

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as one person put it, 'It was interesting that we all seemed to want the same things'.

Overwhelmingly those present wanted to see the Partnership continue.

What also seems clear is that the nature and structure of the Partnership will need to change. New people with different skills and experiences will be needed to take a leading role in moving the Partnership forward. In particular, involvement of the retail and business sector and property owners would be most welcome and would greatly enhance the Partnership's credibility.

The public meeting has produced a set of common ambitions for our community that, in a way, has laid down a challenge. It's a challenge that, I believe, can only be met by the joint effort of all those who have the future well-being of the Swaffham area at heart. (The stakeholders) So our intention is to continue to meet together over the coming months, to draw in more people and aim by the end of the year to be able to launch a restructured and refreshed Partnership that local people feel ownership of and able to put their energies into working together for the future benefit of this lovely area.

b) Police Report by Community Policeman P.C. Andy Partridge.

This week the EDP reported the comparison of figure of crime stood at 716 but unfortunately this was misquoted as they had used last years figure given to the Town Assembly. This year the figure is 612 for the same period.

There are small problems that still exist with regards to the auction which is now in the middle of the highway. PC Partridge pointed out that it is not the police authority that wants the auction to be moved but it is as a result of a technicality unfortunately there is no dispensation to block a road.

The market area regeneration is going along nicely; the vast majority of parking spaces are no legal. From august 2006 this will go to Breckland under new laws. There have been no staff changes at Swaffham police station. There is still 1 Traffic Officer, 1 Community Support Officer, 1 Beat Officer and 8 Patrol Officers; there are no reductions in staff.

PC Partridge made the Council aware that at their next meeting he will be putting forward an idea to have byelaw similar to that in Dereham which prohibits the consumption of alcohol in the market place.

He also gave his kindest regards to Cllr Emmerson who has been enormously helpful to him and the Norfolk Constabulary.

c) Breckland Council report by Cllr Ian Sherwood.

I am pleased as one of your Breckland Councillors to give the report to the Town Assembly and would like to thank both Cllr Matthews and Paul Darby who have both worked with me during the last year for Swaffham at Breckland. As people will know Paul has recently stood down from Council but I would like to thank him for his work with us for the town

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The Icen Partnership, which has received funding from Europe, EEDA, NCC, Swaffham Town Council and Breckland Council, this has achieved the new Community Centre, refurbishment of the Assembly Rooms and the Town Centre Enhancement. This has been a great benefit to the town and has shown what can be achieved, a fantastic investment in the town from all levels including Breckland.

Over 90% of the businesses in Breckland are small to medium sized. There is a significant amount of assistance offered and brokered by Breckland Council aimed at helping these businesses to expand and create more jobs. They can help in a variety of ways including assistance in looking for grants to develop business. The EcoTech business park with 2-3 acres of industrial land left and the business units are practically 99% let. Breckland has also continued to support the EcoTech centre itself, and are working together with EEDA on the redevelopment of Castle Acre Road site.

The Council has a statutory duty to work in partnership with the Police, Norfolk County Council, Fire Service, Primary Care Trust and other agencies to reduce crime and disorder at a local level. The Anti Social Behaviour Act has placed responsibilities on the partnership to address this level of crime. For young people there is SNAP (Say No and Phone) Dances are multi-agency events run in partnership with Crimestoppers. The idea is to raise awareness of 14-17 year olds to the danger of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. The Breckland Community Development team held a successful funding fair at the end of March in the Community Centre. Over 70 delegates attended the event with over 50 people attending the workshop on "What makes a good project". Breckland has many departments that look after: -

- Planning & Development Control – information on applications, advice, enforcement, appeals, planning register and land charge searches.
- Environmental Health – emergency planning, food safety, health & safety, licensing, noise, pest control and pollution.
- Street Scene – waste & recycling and street cleaning.
- Tourism – promotion of tourism for Breckland.
- HERs Scheme – Grants totalling £161,000 given half by English Nature and half by Breckland Council. These grants were for the repair and refurbishment of listed properties. In Swaffham there were 11 around the Market Place that were successful.

In the Town Hall in Swaffham Breckland has a Customer Service Centre. The office is open Monday 9.30am -4.00pm and Tuesday 9.30am – 2.30pm. They services they offer are: -

- Issuing of bus passes
- Validated documents for Benefit claims
- Assistance and collection of Housing Benefit & Council Tax
- Access point for information leaflets & forms
- Record transaction through Lagan
- Staff access Breckland website for information
- Internal post box for Breckland Council mail and cheques

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Breckland Council gained a Beacon award for excellence – the first in the country to be awarded to a partnership for their innovative revenue and benefits service for residents. All services have been provided with for the second year running, Breckland having taken the low cost honours with the annual charge for Band D property set at £59.14 – or just £1.14 per household per week.

My personal highlight for the year was with young people – the Political Speed Dating at which they were able to ask your views on a variety of subjects and the Take your Councillor to school day at Hamond's in October. Engaging the young people of Swaffham and hearing what they have to say. I would like to thank both Richard Bishop our Town Clerk and all the staff for their hard work to ensure Swaffham Town Council works with both Norfolk County Council and Breckland to ensure Swaffham is served well at all levels of local authority.

d) Norfolk County Council report by Cllr Shirley Matthews.

There have been complaints about the pavements being so wide but also that they are not wide enough. One of my objectives was to get a crossing on London Street; this was done with the help of a mum who used to be the Lolly Pop lady. There is a meeting next Tuesday in the community centre about the north south bypass as well as other traffic issues, do go along and give your opinions.

The County Council's 3 main and most obvious services are the children's services, the adult services and planning & transportation. I informed you last year of the amalgamation of the Education and Social Services departments which has split into the Children's and Adult services. This has been and still is an enormous job with everyone's job having to be evaluation plus consultation with the staff. This change should make a big difference to the welfare of children from their education to their overall health.

We shall soon see work at Hamond's school to allow entry of 11 year olds and it will encompass the 6th Form Centre on the same site. Norfolk's children achieved the best ever national test results for 11 year olds last year and the Schools Minister acknowledged Norfolk as one of the most improved places for this age group between 2002-05. This year was the best ever GCSE results which now means Norfolk is better than the national average with 91.2% of pupils achieving 5 or more GCSE's.

Swaffham shall have one of the 24 Children's Centres being provided possibly within the building of the 1st school. These places are being financed by the government with the idea of providing low cost care for children from birth to school age. This is to encourage and help mums get back to work as well as providing parenting classes. The County Council has built a much needed Respite Centre for children with special needs in King's Lynn. The Adult Services contain Social Services as well as educational workers. The Adult with Learning Difficulties section has advanced sufficiently to have attained a

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much sought-after Beacon status from the government. The heaviest work load is with the older folk. There are a lot of us, with numbers increasing, and we are living a lot longer. We have secured an extra £3.6million to develop and extend services to older people through our Social Workers and Health Centres.

Correspondence and questions from the floor.

1. A letter has been received from Mr. Ivan Bubbear requesting details of the full analysis of 'Have your say' consultation conducted by the Town Council and another letter regarding the financing of the land purchase for the proposed swimming pool.

The Town Clerk reported that these letters were not meant for the Town Assembly but were put on the agenda by mistake.

Mr Ivan Bubbear thanked Clerk for his quick response and comprehensive coverage of his reply on both counts.

2. A letter has been received from Mrs. Kate Gordon regarding a Relief Road for Swaffham. This letter was copied to all councillors and made available to members of the public present. Mrs Gordon was invited to speak.

Mrs Gordon - We now have a refurbished town centre with narrow roads with efforts being made to slow the traffic. The result of this will be congested traffic and increased pollution. There are proposals in respect of a mini roundabout at Whitecross Road and London Street. We have arranged a meeting with the contractors next Tuesday in the Community Centre. Traffic calming and mini roundabouts are putting a sticking plaster on a major issue of the town, we need a road to take out the heavy traffic and this is causing damage to our town. The important thing is that we must make a start to make the town vibrant and not jammed with Lorries. We have let time past and I am very anxious that we pick up speed now.

Questions from the floor

Mrs Toni Groom – The Shambles is a disgrace to the town, there is so much mess for the visitors of the town to see, is this the town's problem?

Town Clerk – The Town Hall inform Breckland if things are needed to be cleared. There is land dispute and various areas that comes under the guise of the Lord of the Manor, parts that are owned by Breckland that will eventually be passed to the Town Council. Three years ago we started speaking to shop owners to try and resolve the regulating of the parking and the litter, this is a big problem.

Mr Brain Clements – Some years ago I was talking to 'truckers' south of Swaffham asking why they come through Swaffham. The reason they gave was that it is a faster road but if we slow the traffic down to 20mph and put in roundabouts etc this will slow traffic down and the 'truckers' themselves may choose to use the A10 instead.

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Mr Malton - Northwell Pool Road was a very narrow lane with huge trucks coming up there. Soil was removed to make it a larger road for 2 way traffic. I used to drive nearly a mile around instead of 60 yards why can't we go by the Catholic Church?

Mayor – Write a letter to the Town Council with your proposal.

Mrs Coe – I have a question about the mini roundabout that leads into Cley Road, which traffic has right away London Street or traffic going onto Cley Road? It is written there that the area must be kept clear.

Mayor – I believe that a yellow box should have been put there. He invited the Iceni Director Mr Tony Dickens to clarify.

Mr Dickens – Yes this is right. The traffic in London Street has the right of way.

Mr Ison – This is a super evening but I have one or two things that concern me. I am a past member of the Council starting in the Urban District Council days. Things have changed since 1972 with government reforms and Breckland Council came into being and took all our assets away. The Iceni Partnership has done a splendid job, once the brashness has gone off the market square but what concerns me is the wide pavements and the narrow road.

The police are saying we can't have the auction market; this makes the town what it is, the market failing because there are a lot of charity shops in the town. The toilets are a disgrace in this town; people that stop in the town find it a disgrace. I would like to see more people on the ground, we have people in the office but we also need people to sweep the streets, paint the benches etc.

Mayor – With Quality Council Status we will be able to take on more responsibilities. We will be able to negotiate with Breckland Council on specific tasks we will be willing to take on.

Mrs Thompson – I noted that it was mentioned earlier that a mini roundabout is to be put in on Whitecross Road, is there any chance for one at the bottom of Watton Road?

Cllr Matthews - That end of town is in the next phase of traffic which is part of Theatre Street, Haspalls road.

Mr Ivan Bubbear – Mr Ison raised the issue of the problems of the state of toilets and lack of toilets on Haspalls Road. I note from the Breckland Councillor report that tenders were being asked for the refurbishment of the toilets. I hope that Swaffham would be invited to take on these toilets with consultation with Swaffham.

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Cllr Sherwood – Consultation has already started. Breckland has met with councillors and officers of the Town Council. Those kinds of services can be dealt with very well at local level. Swaffham may well become a unitary again in the government re-shuffle.

Mr Day – The allotments rents have had a rise of 50% last year. Why is it at Dereham and Thetford the old age pensioners are given concessions? If they can do it in the next town why can't it be done here? It says in the minutes that the major expenditure is on the care of the ones that are not being used. These people on the council I have never seen anyone of them before. Our allotments are a disgrace. We can't have water both ends of our site, we have been asking for 8 years.

Cllr Sherwood – Breckland Council are not responsible for allotments in Swaffham, it is the Town Council.

Cllr Emmerson – Watton and Thetford do not have the amount of allotments that we have. We have 4 sites and some of them are very well kept but you do get some that are not worked.

Mrs Toni Groom – Do all the allotments have a water tap?

The Mayor - No

Mr Wickerson – I regularly visit the Town Council website, I read minutes avidly. The minutes quite often refer to items of correspondence and the responses are shown but it is not clear what the subject is about. Is that information available under the Freedom of Information Act?

Town Clerk – Yes unless it is to do with staffing issues or a below the line item.

Mrs Marion Clements – I am glad to see the improvements to the footpath by Filby Road and Greenhoe carried out by Norfolk County Council but the lighting is still not in place.

Cllr Matthews – The lighting is the responsibility of the Town Council not Norfolk County Council.

Town Clerk – Research is being carried out onto the costings of new lights which will be brought before the Town Council for consideration.

Mr Reg Dowden – I am glad to hear about Breckland council tax being the lowest in the country. But I am not so happy about the Breckland PFI agreement. Last year the deficit for running the leisure centre was about £600,000. The running costs are predicted to be £1.7 million, is this good value to tax payers?

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Cllr Sherwood – I am in receipt of a letter from Ivan Bubbear on that question and I will reply fully. The PFI deal struck by Breckland has brought 20 million pounds into the district on leisure. I will reply to Ivan Bubbear in detail and will gladly copy you into that letter.

Mr Wright – What is being done with the money from the sale of the Oaklands allotment site?

Mayor – That money sits in an account creating interest. The interest made is given out in charity money to Swaffham residents in the form of the Relief In Need Charity.

Mr Stan Sole – I am a resident of Filby Road and I endorse the comments of Marion Clements for street lighting. I am also concerned with traffic along that area. Is there any way the speed limit can be 30mph and can it be endorsed?

Mayor – This needs to be passed onto the police. We can write to them from Town Council but if you write as well then it gives weight to what we are saying.

Mr Candler – In Norwich outside every community centre and school the speed limit is 20mph. I personally like to see a 20mph from the school especially from the infant school in Whitecross Road. Lorries are constantly abusing the weight limit on that road to get onto the old A47 road. There are people parking on double yellow lines which restrict users of the road. The problems are around 7.30am and 8.30am with people speeding down that road and then the mothers start parking there from 8.30 and 9.15. The speeding happens again from 4pm it is another rat run with speeders, the pavement there is too narrow.

Cllr Greaves – There are several areas in Swaffham that have the same problem. Maybe this could be considered at a future council meeting, what people consider to be of concern in the town.

Mrs Ison – I understand the reasons for turning the Town Clock off but I am very sad to see it not working is there any chance the Iceni could help with this? Also there needs to be a mat on side entrance to the large room of Assembly Rooms.

Cllr Matthews – On the 15th June there is to be a meeting here in the Assembly Rooms with the Campaign to Protect Rural England. The day would cost £15 and a presentation will be given by Professor Tim O'Riordan. CPRE is a voluntary organisation they get no government funding.

Cllr Wise – The chances of Swaffham getting a bypass is virtually nil. Why do we not try and get a weight limit restriction for vehicles coming into the town?

Mrs Margaret Miles – There is a continuous problem with rubbish with the house on London road.

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Cllr Sherwood – When it is reported to Breckland it is cleared up. An officer is being employed to educate residents on their waste. But persistent offenders will be fined.

Mrs Toni Groom – Would it be possible to have a two weekly collection for problem areas of the town?

Cllr Sherwood – As soon as the contractors are told of any rubbish dumped they will send someone out to clear it. Inform the Town Hall or direct to me and it will be reported for you.

Mayor's closing remarks.

Thank you to all the councillors and the staff of Swaffham Town Council for all the hard work of the past year. Thank you to all the public that have come out tonight to attend the meeting, have a safe journey home.

Cllr Buxton thanked the Mayor Cllr Jerome Stockdale for all his hard work this year as Mayor.

Meeting closed at 9.20 p.m.

_____Chairman.