

**SWAFFHAM TOWN COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Finance and General Purposes meeting held on Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2006 at 7.00p.m. in the Council Chamber, Town Hall, Swaffham.

Present: Mayor Cllr S Matthews (in the chair)

Cllr. C Baker, Cllr. D Butters, Cllr. P Buxton, Cllr. A Greaves,  
Cllr. S Lister, Cllr. F Sharpe.

Town Clerk: - Mr R Bishop  
Assistant Town Clerk: - Mrs R Noble

Public: 3

**1. APOLOGIES & REASONS FOR ABSENCE.**

1.1. Cllr. I Sherwood, Work commitments.

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

2.1. There were no Declarations of Interest.

**3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING – WEDNESDAY 26<sup>th</sup> JULY 2006**

3.1. The minutes were agreed and signed as a true record by the Chairman.

**4. QUARTERLY FINANCIAL REPORT from the Responsible Finance Officer**

4.1. The Accounts to date (Receipts & Payments 2006/07) was circulated to Councillors prior to the meeting, so it was a week out of date. The updated information for this six month period from April to September will be used as a benchmark in the budget report. The Responsible Finance Officer reported he is able to look at the six months ahead from now until the end of March and look at what there is in the pipeline, what is likely to be spent and predict a little more accurately on where the Council will be at the year end at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2007.

4.2. The Responsible Finance Officer stated that during the budget he will update Councillors as to where the council is with the various capital projects. The most notable activity is happening in the Museum Project which will be coming to an end at the very latest by 31<sup>st</sup> March, leaving one outstanding claim for the remaining grant money. Without looking closely at this year and last year, he stated he is unable to give an explanation as to why the Town Hall is showing over budget by nearly £6,000 although everything else is self explanatory.

4.3. It was reported the Internal Auditor is away on holiday at present, but the Responsible Finance Officer informed the meeting that Mr Clements has started to look very closely at the Museum project. The Clerk and Deputy Clerk have spent a great deal of time in answering various queries, a designated file separate to the ordinary accounts has been devised and this has been a worthwhile exercise.

**5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1. It was reported there is a lot happening behind the scenes with the church clock, as the Diocese Advisory Committee meet tomorrow evening to decide whether another faculty is necessary for the work to be carried out on the mullions. The council are currently awaiting the detailed estimates for this work also the new clock fixings.

The architect Colin Staff of Purcell, Miller, Tritton has inspected the mullions with the Structural Engineer Greg Scott of Clancy Consulting Co. Detailed drawings have been prepared and a specification for the repair. There are two options, one that will last 15 years and the other for much longer.

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A lengthy discussion took place relating to the town clock, there was concern regarding the extra cost for the repair to the clock as it had been reported at the Full Town Council meeting that the cost would be in the region of £10,500. The Responsible Finance Officer stated the extra £13,000 was to make the clock work properly again. A further discussion took place regarding the breakdown of how the costs had been arrived at. The RFO was instructed to clarify the figures with the architect tomorrow.

**It was agreed that the RFO clarifies the figures with the architect.**

It was also suggested that some of the money needed should come from the church and also to see when the Town Estate have their next meeting and to request a grant. The RFO was instructed to meet with the Rev. John Smith to discuss possible funding from the church to help with the costs.

**It was agreed that the RFO meets with the Rev. John Smith to discuss possible funding from the church to help with the costs.**

**It was agreed the RFO see when the Town Estate have their next meeting and to request for a grant towards the Town Clock.**

5.2. The Responsible Finance Officer reported on the TIC/Toilets building from Breckland Council. It was stated this matter is on-going and Swaffham is hosting a five towns meeting to discuss matters further with colleagues in Attleborough, Dereham, Thetford and Watton. This is where the Town Clerk and the Mayor meet with the other towns, and the host town have previously also had their respective Deputies and in some cases Chairmen of committees present. The meeting is planned for 31<sup>st</sup> October.

The RFO reported he has had a meeting with Mark Stanton, James Taylor and Sharon Alderson from Breckland Council, plus meetings with Martin Hickey and Vanessa Scott from the Tourism Association. Councillors been given copies of correspondence regarding the continuation of the TIC. The RFO reported he has also had a meeting with a local Taxi firm exploring the possibility of them taking space within the TIC building in order to generate an income to help support the TIC. Councillors have been given a draft document which sets out the money side of things. In taking on the TIC in this year and next year there are reduced contributions from the Town Council, in the third year it will then increase should the service continue. There is an application for a one-off match funding grant of £7,000 in order to sustain the service for a period of two years, this would be on the proviso that the Town Council commit to the third year without any outside assistance.

The RFO recommended at this stage is that the council continue with their negotiations with Breckland Council for the building. But apply to Breckland Council for this match funding for the TIC, as this will take time to come through. This will at least give an option for the Council to take on the TIC should negotiations for the building prove to be successful. It is proposed that there is a subtle name change to Town Information Centre.

**It was agreed for the Clerk/RFO to continue negotiations with Breckland Council and apply for a match funding grant for the TIC.**

5.3. A report was given on the early budget amendments April – Sept in this current year 2006/07. This will depend on the final expenditure of the Town Clock. We have also just received an electricity bill for the Town Hall, our first for over a year, so the estimated figures are now looking a bit odd.

5.4. A report was given on early budget considerations for 2007/08.

- The future of Icen Partnership – the steering group that met to resolve the new structure are due to meet next Monday evening at 7pm here at the Town Hall. This is to look at Plan B – which would be a contingency plan should Icen's bid for continuation funding fail. Plan A centres around the discussion paper circulated at the last meeting, this has been presented to Breckland and has been considered by the executive. The future of partnerships though is still uncertain.

- The Town Clock issue will be resolved prior to the budget. The RFO will need to take account of this expense and any contribution from the Town Estate and adjust our figures accordingly. The funding for the clock has come from three sources, one a saving on our grounds maintenance, two a budget for a Cemetery project involving restoration of the chapel and three the contribution from the Town Estate.
- The RFO is looking at the possibility of employing our own Community Development Officer. But will discuss this with the Personnel Committee prior to making any recommendations.
- There could be recommendations included to sell off surplus allotment land.
- In general as always it will be making sure that we have sufficient funds to deliver the services that are expected in the town. To move forward all council policies and projects.

5.5. Details of the budget timetable were circulated to all Councillors. The RFO reported he is working on estimates, comparisons and supporting information for the budget.

- Any final suggestions or observations for the budget from councillors will be needed by Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> November
- The RFO will be looking to carry out preliminary discussions with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor and two councillors individually in week commencing 13<sup>th</sup> November
- The draft budget and papers will be available in week commencing 20<sup>th</sup> November
- The budget meeting will be on December 6<sup>th</sup>
- The Precept has to be approved by full Council on December 13<sup>th</sup>

5.4. The RFO requested that all Councillors meet with him on a one to one basis for about 1 hour to discuss the budget.

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

6.1. Guidance was requested from and given by the Finance Committee regarding the commuted sums before the five towns meet.

6.2. The RFO reported he has had discussions with the applicant for the development at the rear of the Conservative Club. He wishes to increase his contribution towards loss of amenities i.e. play areas etc. He is taking the application to appeal and would like to know what the Council feel is appropriate. A sum has been suggested to the applicant for consideration. This matter would be discussed by the full council at their meeting next month.

The meeting closed at 8.47 p.m.

Chairman .....