

Swaffham Town Council

Minutes of the Virtual **Full Town Council** meeting held on **Wednesday 13th May 2020** at **4pm** via link <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85931030270?pwd=N1RpMTRHNElyMGIMSTlaa2NlVU1BUT09>

Present: Mayor Cllr J Skinner (in the Chair)

Councillors: Mrs J Anscombe, Mrs L Beech, Mr S Bell, Mrs W Bensley, Mr P Darby, Mr G Edwards, Mr B Holmes, Mrs S Matthews, Mr I Pilcher, Mr K Sandle, Mr L Scott

Town Clerk: Mr R Bishop
Minute Taker: Mrs C Smith

Norfolk County &
Breckland District Cllr: Mr E Colman
Breckland District Cllr: Mr D Wickerson

Public: 3
Press: 2

Prayers were led by the Mayor.

1. Apologies and reason for absence

- 1.1 Cllr I Sherwood – work commitments
- 1.2 PC Jo Higgins – work commitments

2. Declarations of Interest – for items included on the Agenda.

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

There was no adjournment for public participation.

3. Mayor's Report

3.1 Civic Events

BBC Look East Saturday 2nd May - Food Market
BBC Radio Norfolk – Thursday 7th May (Food Market related)
VE Day – laying of a wreath – Friday 8th May

3.2 Mayor's Announcements

There were no announcements to report.

3.3 Urgent reports, correspondence or information at the Mayor's discretion

Market Committee

It was proposed that Cllr W Bensley was nominated to sit on the Market and Events committee.

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Town Centre Flags

Cllrs debated when flags should be put up in the town centre. It was proposed that 5 NHS and keyworker flags were purchased and placed around the town centre. These would be left up until the end of the current situation. Other flags put up to mark events would be taken down in the week after the event.

Initials: _____

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4. Reports: local charity, police, principal authority etc

4.1 Police report –

PC Higgins' report was given by the Town Clerk. She reported that there were no issues with the market, all was well organised. Although there had been a slight increase in rural crime there were no big issues for Swaffham. Cllrs expressed their thanks to PC Higgins for helping to judge the VE Day displays and attending the Market.

4.2 County Councillor -

Cllr E Colman previously circulated a briefing to Cllrs. He reported that the Norfolk Resilience forum was driving the response to Covid-19. Recycling services - Not all centres, including Ashill, could be open as there were staffing issues so the centres that were open were spread across the county to give best access for all residents. Significant shortfalls in funding caused by Covid-19 were expected with loss of income and extra spending supporting core services. NCC were developing a strong collaborative response to the challenges and urging Government to clarify the position.

Cllr Pilcher expressed his appreciation for NCC response and supporting the Merle Boddy.

Cllr Colman reported that the Market Town Initiative Strategy were due to hold a meeting. Although no business case or funding had been identified for a relief road, the issue had been identified locally and would be discussed.

Cllr Colman reported that if any local care provider was having difficulty obtaining PPE, NCC have emergency supplies to share.

4.3 Breckland Councillor -

Cllr D Wickerson reported that BDC had been responsible for distributing grants to local businesses, £23 Million had been distributed so far and addition funding had become available for local authorities, more guidance on the criteria for further grants was awaited. Cllr Pilcher thanked Cllr Wickerson and endorsed Breckland help for businesses and asked why these grants could not be applied to the Merle Boddy service. Merle Boddy were losing income and paid rates in the same way as any other business. Cllr Wickerson agreed to look into the matter.

Cllr Wickerson reported that all known rough sleepers had somewhere to stay and BDC were working to help other people at risk of being homeless. Food parcels were being distributed from the district hub at Dereham. A role of honour thanking individuals and organisations had been published and featured the team at the White Hart. It was acknowledged that Swaffham had shown good community spirit in the current crisis.

Planning decisions and meeting arrangements were confirmed, and Town Councillors were able to attend virtual planning meetings. BDC cabinet were meeting regularly on a virtual basis with all other Cllrs kept informed.

Cllr Scott reported that the financial help for businesses affected by Covid-19 extended to out of town supermarkets Tesco and Waitrose. It was reported that Tesco used their rebate to pay shareholders a dividend.

5. Minutes

- 5.1** Cllr Scott was added to the attendees and the minutes of the 11th March were agreed as a true and accurate account.

Initials: _____

6. Report from the Town Hall by the Deputy Town Clerk

A report was circulated to Cllrs ahead of the meeting and would be forwarded to the press.

- 6.1 **Consensus Decisions** - The global Pandemic Covid-19 had been declared on 11th March; government guidance was updated on 16th March resulting in our office staff 'working from home' since 19th March. In the 8 weeks since then Councillors have participated in thirty-six consensus decisions by e-mail decisions, ratified at an extraordinary meeting held 'virtually' last Wednesday 6th May, with a 'Virtual' HR Committee meeting taking place on Tuesday 5th May.

Events and Meetings - It has not been an easy period, as meetings and event have been cancelled or postponed, the challenge of working remotely have had to be fine-tuned. There was a virus infection that shut down the Council's server for three days, the server is now secure, and we still await a report from ICO our IT company.

Service Closure - Some services have been closed such as Public Toilets, Play Areas, MUGA and Skatepark, with outside staff initially being sent home; in the past couple of weeks they have returned to work as government guidance identified keeping 'parks' open as a priority, so grass cutting was back on the agenda, they are working safely on other tasks around the Town.

Vandalism and Upgrading of Toilets - over the VE Day evening and into the early hours of Saturday 9th May the Ladies toilet door was vandalised beyond repair. The doorway had been secured and we are currently in dialogue with the Contractor to bring forward the planned refurbishment/upgrade as soon as possible. A 1st June start is now not possible because of the materials supply line being delayed, it is hoped that once our contractor can establish delivery dates, then he can finalise a programme which will be circulated ASAP.

Food Market - The Market was initially closed for five Saturday's, a Food Market has been open for the past two weeks, with social distancing measures in place. The decision to open a Food Market was ratified by the Council last Wednesday, by a majority vote.

Covid-19 Law - The Covid-19 Bill was rushed through parliament and became law on 6th April, with national guidance on how to apply the law coming through in week commencing 20th April. The legality of 'Virtual' meetings was the greatest advantage to the Town Council, as this temporary law is in place until May next year. The staff trialled Zoom meetings and then we progressed to 'Virtual' Council and Committee meetings last week.

Statutory Deadlines - The Council are still having to work to statutory deadlines for things like end of year accounts and VAT returns. Internal and external audit have to be prepared as usual.

Committees - In the coming weeks we will establish all of the Committees, as we move through and out the other side of this 'lockdown' period. We have given support to the Community Response Centre at the White Hart, lending the use of our two trucks, and applying for grants.

Website - We have begun the process of looking at the possible upgrading of the Town Council website. This past eight weeks has established that our 'free' website is very basic and has its limitations. It is intended to carry out some initial work and discuss a 'budget' with the Finance Committee at their meeting on 3rd June, with a view of bringing details to the Council meeting in July for consideration. Councillors could assist in this process, putting forward ideas and examples from elsewhere of features that they would like to see in a possible upgraded website.

6.3 Councillor's questions relating to ongoing business

Cllr Edwards asked for the names of the Cllrs who voted against decision CV33. His recollection was that only 6 Cllrs had voted for the opening, 7 Cllrs supported the opening with conditions. At the time of the vote safeguards and information were not presented to the Council. Cllr Edwards also asked when he would get a written answer to his questions raised by email on April 30th. The Town Clerk responded that the information regarding the vote had already been shared, with the consensus vote being ratified on 6th May last week. A response to questions would be forwarded when time allowed. The meeting deteriorated at that point.

The mayor called the meeting to order.

7. **Finance:**

7.1 Accounts for payment for May 2020 - see Appendix 1.

An updated list of payments was circulated for Council approval and after discussion the accounts were agreed.

It was agreed to accept the accounts for payment for May 2020.

It was clarified that the repair for the mower was not the new walking mower but an older ride on.

It was reported that the rotary had taken on the responsibility to water the new trees and hedge on the Rec in the first year.

Zoom upgrade – Cllrs were asked to approve an upgrade of £48 to the Zoom subscription to allow others to host meetings. It was suggested that other services including Webex should be looked at as this was free. Cllrs considered that the services were similar, and it was proposed to stay with Zoom as this was already working and upgrade the subscription.

It was agreed by a majority to upgrade the Zoom subscription for £48.

7.2 Market Trader Licence fees and electric charges

Cllrs considered a proposal from Cllr Pilcher that as and when a trader is able to return to the market, the return visit will be free of pitch charges and will be followed with a free site for each of the next three markets. Thereafter fees revert to the trader's normal terms for the remainder of the 20/21 licence year. This would give traders a period of transition to re-establish their business.

It was agreed by a majority decision that as and when a trader is able to return to the market, the return visit will be free of pitch charges and will be followed with a free site for each of the next three markets. Thereafter fees revert to the trader's normal terms for the remainder of the 20/21 licence year.

Councillors considered the direct costs of electricity hook up and gazebo rental. These costs would continue to be charged in the usual way.

It was agreed that electricity costs and gazebo rental would be charged in the usual way.

The issue of a trader being in breach of their licence would be considered in a closed meeting.

7.3 Town Council Plans to support businesses and residents after the lockdown. A plan of action to help businesses adapt to a new way of working and re-establish Swaffham Town Centre.

Initials: _____

Councillor Anscombe proposed that a short questionnaire be sent to businesses to establish what support they might need and ideas they may have regarding their re-establishment, and how the Town Council might be able to help. Councillors debated the extent of the survey and role of the Town Council in supporting business. It was established that initially the survey would be limited to businesses with Town Centre premises. The local retail group chairman had been consulted and agreed that collecting the information was a good idea. The survey would be advertised on social media.

It was agreed by a majority decision to go ahead with the survey for Town Centre businesses with premises.

8. Correspondence & Information received

8.1 General

- a) Annual TIC report from Swaffham Heritage
Further information requested regarding the report would be circulated to Cllrs.
- b) Revised Meeting programme calendar of meetings
Cllrs received the revised schedule of meetings, start time would be 4pm unless a problem was identified by a committee member, timings would then be reviewed and could be put back to 6.30pm.
- c) New normal way of working discussion document.
Cllrs discussed the previously circulated document, it set out provision dates and ideas of how staff could return to office working. Target dates had been taken from Government guidance. It was agreed to refer the decisions on working practices to the HR Committee.

It was agreed the document would be referred to the HR committee to oversee the return to office working schedule.

- d) Communication Policy
A draft communications policy was circulated. Cllrs debated whether all recipients of a copy should be identified separately at the top of an email. It was clarified that this information was already available in the send box and blind copies were not included when a reply or forwarded document was sent. The policy included a standard disclaimer on the bottom of emails. The Town Clerk would check to see if this was a legal requirement.

It was agreed to adopt the policy as drafted subject to the disclaimer being a legal requirement, if it is not, then it would be omitted.

8.2 Breckland Council

Request for Market Trader contact information

It was suggested that any information that needed to be sent to traders could be forwarded to the Town Council. Office staff would then forward this to the traders.

It was agreed not to share the Traders contact information but offer to disseminate any information from Breckland to Traders.

8.3 Norfolk County Council

- a) Street Lighting for phases 4 and 5 Abel Homes Swans Nest site.
Councillors noted that previous schemes for phases 1-3 had been agreed and taken on by the Town Council. A debate followed that if the Town Council agreed to act as a lighting authority for the next phases, the burden of maintenance would fall on the Town Council.

Initials: _____

Other options could be available, and it was proposed to meet with Abel Homes and discuss before responding to NCC.

It was agreed that the Town Clerk should arrange a meeting with Abel Homes for Councillors to discuss all of the issues listed.

9. Receipt of Correspondence or Information

A list of all other correspondence was circulated with the agenda.

10. Dates of forthcoming meeting

Market, Events & Tourism Committee	Mon	18 th	May	4pm	Virtual link
Recreation & Community Services Committee	Mon	27 th	May	4pm	Virtual Link
Planning & Built Environment Committee	Tues	26 th	May	4pm	Virtual Link
Human Resources & Governance Committee	Mon	1 st	Jun	12noon	Virtual Link
Transport, Access & environment Committee	Tues	2 nd	Jun	4pm	Virtual Link
Finance Committee	Wed	3 rd	Jun	4pm	Virtual Link
Full Council	Wed	10 th	Jun	4pm	Virtual Link
Estates	Wed	17	Jun	4pm	Virtual Link

11. ADMISSION TO MEETINGS ACT (PUBLIC BODIES) 1960:

CONFIDENTIAL BUSINESS following the exclusion of the public and press

12.1 Staff related issues from the HR & Governance Committee.

The minutes of the HR Committee would be circulated as soon as possible, staff were working through any issues raised.

Cllrs noted a section 8.5 of the communication policy 'Tone of comments should be respectful and informative and never condescending. Avoid personal attacks, online arguments, and hostile communications '. Comments and general behaviour at the meeting were discussed.

The meeting closed at 6.10pm

Mayor.....

Initials: _____

Swaffham Town Council - Accounts for MAY 2020						7.1
No	Payment	Name	Details	Price	VAT	Total
Paid - 1st -13th May 2020 Town Council meeting						
664	Card	Lloyds Bank	Monthly credit card fee	£ 3.00	£ -	£ 3.00
665	Card	DVLA	Annual Vehicle tax - AJ63 LXN	£ 267.50	£ -	£ 267.50
666	Card	Amazon	H&S PPE - chainsaw gloves	£ 18.04	£ 3.61	£ 21.65
667	Card	Amazon	H&S PPE - trousers	£ 36.65	£ 7.32	£ 43.97
668	Card	Amazon	Weedkiller - outside team	£ 67.47	£ 13.50	£ 80.97
669	Card	Amazon	H&S - hand sanitiser	£ 37.49	£ 7.50	£ 44.99
670	Card	Facebook	Advertising promotion boost	£ 10.00	£ -	£ 10.00
671	Card	Zoom	Subscription	£ 143.88	£ -	£ 143.88
672	Card	Vehicle Information	Membership	£ 0.50	£ -	£ 0.50
673	d/d	Hitachi	Truck Lease - May 20	£ 336.88	£ 67.37	£ 404.25
674	d/d	Public Works Loan Board	Account - 494979 - May 20 repayment	£ 1,219.28	£ -	£ 1,219.28
675	d/d	SSE Southern Electric	Cemetery Chapel - electricity - Mar 20	£ 45.57	£ 2.27	£ 47.84
676	d/d	SSE SWALEC	Buttercross - electricity - Mar 20	£ 104.48	£ 5.22	£ 109.70
677	d/d	SSE SWALEC	Rec Ground Toilets - electricity - Mar 20	£ 11.69	£ 2.33	£ 14.02
678	d/d	SSE Southern Electric	Public Toilets - electricity - Apr 20	£ 68.87	£ 3.44	£ 72.31
679	d/d	SSE Southern Electric	Cemetery Chapel - electricity - Apr 20	£ -	£ -	£ -
680	d/d	SSE SWALEC	Buttercross - electricity - Apr 20	£ -	£ -	£ -
681	d/d	SSE SWALEC	Rec Ground Toilets - electricity - Apr 20	£ -	£ -	£ -
682	d/d	SSE Southern Electric	Town Hall electricity - Q1 Jan-Apr 20	£ 1,201.95	£ 240.39	£ 1,442.34
683	d/d	Vodafone	Mobile Phone bills - Apr 20 - Sue	£ 25.39	£ 5.08	£ 55.68
			Mobile Phone bills - Apr 20 - Ruth	£ 21.01	£ 4.20	
684	d/d	Worldpay	Monthly payment charges - Apr 20	£ 18.62	£ 2.06	£ 20.68
Sub Total				£ 3,638.27	£ 364.29	£ 4,002.56

To be authorised and paid - post 13th May 2020 Town Council meeting						
685	BACS	Net Salaries incl. staff travel expenses	Town Council salaries	£ -		£ -
686	BACS	Inland Revenue	Tax	£ -		£ -
			Employer National Insurance contribution	£ -		
			Employee National Insurance contribution	£ -		£ -
687	BACS	Norfolk Pension Service	Employer Contribution	£ -		
			Employee Contribution	£ -		
688	d/d	Breckland Council	Town Hall - Rates	£ 1,048.00	£ -	£ 1,971.00
			Market - Rates	£ 349.00	£ -	
			Cemetery - Rates	£ 190.00	£ -	
			Public Toilet - Rates	£ 384.00	£ -	
689	d/d	Immervox (Apr 20)	VoIP Set up costs - Apr 20	£ -	£ -	£ -
			VOIP router & line - 720014	£ -	£ -	
			Town Council - Fax & Broadband 720469	£ -	£ -	
			Swaffham Heritage - Telephone 721230	£ -	£ -	
			Town Council - Telephone 722922	£ -	£ -	
			Town Council - Alarm 724968	£ -	£ -	
			Town Wi-Fi - 336135	£ -	£ -	
690	BACS	Anglian Water / WAVE	Allotments SL1 - Apr 20	£ 40.38	£ -	£ 40.38
691	BACS	Anglian Water / WAVE	Allotments SL2 - Apr 20	£ 4.05	£ -	£ 4.05
692	BACS	Anglian Water / WAVE	Allotments TH - Apr 20	£ 30.60	£ -	£ 30.60
693	BACS	Anglian Water / WAVE	Public Toilets - Apr 20	£ 97.69	£ -	£ 97.69
694	BACS	Anglian Water / WAVE	Recreation Ground - Apr 20	£ 4.05	£ -	£ 4.05
695	BACS	Ben Burgess Beeston	Lawnmower repairs - ride on	£ 552.49	£ 110.49	£ 662.98
696	BACS	Ben Burgess Beeston	Strimmer cord	£ 68.34	£ 13.67	£ 82.01
697	BACS	Cooleraird	Town Hall - annual maintenance fee	£ 50.00	£ 10.00	£ 60.00
698	BACS	CGM	Grass cutting - Mar 20	£ 76.00	£ 15.20	£ 91.20
699	BACS	Environment Agency	Annual drainage charge - 2020/21	£ 33.70	£ -	£ 33.70
700	BACS	E-On	War Memorial - electricity - Jan - Mar 20	£ 11.89	£ 0.59	£ 12.48
701	BACS	ICO Systems	Monthly Anti virus subscription	£ 7.50	£ 1.50	£ 9.00
702	BACS	Swaffham Service Station	Fuel - outside machinery - Mar 20	£ 29.17	£ 5.83	£ 135.92
			Fuel - trucks - Mar 21	£ 84.10	£ 16.82	
703	BACS	Swaffham Service Station	Fuel - outside machinery - Apr 20	£ 55.96	£ 11.18	£ 152.34
			Fuel - trucks - Apr. 20	£ 71.00	£ 14.20	
704	BACS	T K Drakes	General supplies - light bulbs	£ 8.15	£ 1.40	£ 9.78
Sub Total				£ 6,834.34	£ 565.40	£ 7,399.74

Initials: