

Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook

Annual Town Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Town Meeting of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook held at Church House, Church Street, Sawbridgeworth, Herts at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 16 April 2012.

Present: Cllr Derek Filler (Town Mayor) Chairman; 18 Local Government Electors for the ward of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook, (including 8 Town Councillors). County Cllr Roger Beeching MBE, PC Ray Larcombe Herts Police, Eleanor Patmore H&E Observer, Town Clerk Richard Bowran, Admin Officers Joanne Kenny, Gill Abbott and Sue Adams.

The Chairman welcomed those present to the Sawbridgeworth Annual Town meeting and explained that this was not a meeting of the Town Council but of the people of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook.

12/01 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 11 April 2011 be confirmed as a correct record.

12/02 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from those minutes

12/03 Report by the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor, Cllr Derek Filler, reported on the Activities of the Council in 2011/12

My duty is to give a report on the activities of the Council during this past year which has been one of significant change in our working practices and areas of responsibility.

- Purchase of The Cottage – we have completed the purchase of The Cottage at Sayesbury Manor and will shortly be awarding the contract for its repair, refurbishment and extension to create a new civic centre. Our plans for this are on display in the foyer.
- Lease of the Hailey Centre – we have signed a 999 year lease on the Hailey Centre which will secure its current use for the foreseeable future.
- Christmas Lights 2011 – which last year were better than ever with additional attractions for all the young people who attended
- Farmers Market – we have managed six Farmers Markets throughout the year. They continue to be popular and bring people into the town on market days.
- Sawbobus – made over 2,000 passenger journeys during the year. The routes changed slightly to reflect passenger demand. Thanks to all our sponsors. We are working with Bishops Stortford Town Council but any further expansion of the service will depend on whether we can attract more funding.

- Community Bus – we have continued to operate the small community bus for hire by local registered groups. This has been used mainly last year by the Hailey Centre, the Evergreen Club and the Football Club. It has also filled in when Sawbobus has been off the road.
- Vantorts Play Area – we agree to share the cost of refreshing and enhancing the Vantorts play area with the District Council. Despite some reservations it has proved to be a great success and has received many favourable comments. The Town Council's contribution will be 40,000 using funds from the sale of the Millfields land.
- West Road Play Area – we planned for and executed the complete refurbishment of this park at a cost of £30,000 again using funds from the sale of the Millfields land. It is already proving a tremendous success and an asset to the community.
- Bell Street car park – we are working with the District Council to change the charging structure in Bell Street car park to allow for the first hour's parking to be free. This is an experiment for six months from August to see if it encourages more people to visit and stay in the town centre.
- Business Association - we initiated a new version of the Business Association, but in this format this has not really taken off.
- Planning – we have given an opinion on 75 planning applications this year taking into account both the East Herts Adopted Local Plan and the Town Action Plan.
- Memorial Hall – we have agreed to support the repair and refurbishment of the Memorial Hall using funds from the sale of the Millfields land.
- Allotments water – we have completed the renewal of all the water supplies to the allotments and added a water supply to the Bellmead site.
- Cemetery development – the new extension has been grass seeded, rolled and is being prepared for future use. We have opened up a new area for use by families who prefer kerbed memorials. During the last year we hosted 52 interments at our Cemetery which is regarded as one of the best kept in the area.
- Mayors visits – during the year I attended **XX** functions of various types. The highlights were:
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TOWN ACTION PLAN – THE SIX KEY ISSUES

Elsewhere there is a review of progress against the Town Action Plan that was created in 2009. The successor to this will be a

Neighbourhood Plan which is called for under the Localism Bill to complement the District Plan, formerly known as the Local Development Plan.

The Town Action Plan identified six key issues:

- Roads and Transport -
- Plan Housing Sensibly -
- Car Park Charges -
- Support for the Voluntary Sector -
- Support for Local Businesses -
- Replacement Scout Hut -

The report of the Town Council was accepted.

12/04 Report by the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk, Richard Bowran, reported on the Council's Accounts to 31 March 2012. *Attached as Appendix 1.*

The Tabled Report of the Town Clerk was accepted

12/05 The Mayor invited Reports from Town Charities:

Cllr Angela Alder, Chairman of the **Hailey Day Centre** reported that the annual report and audited accounts had been tabled.
Attached as Appendix 2

Cllr Angela Alder, Vice Chairman of the **Sawbridgeworth Young Peoples Recreational Centre** reported that the annual report had been tabled.
Attached as Appendix 3

12/06 The Mayor invited other reports:

County Councillor Roger Beeching – congratulated the Town on all its achievements over the past year.

PC Ray Larcombe – reported that there were now 3 PCs and 1 PCSO allocated to Sawbridgeworth.
Crime levels were down from last year, right across the spectrum from criminal damage, burglaries and violent crime.
There is some doubt about the future of the police station in the town.

Cllr Brian Rochester, (Hon. Footpaths Officer) gave a very full report covering the work that had been carried out on the Town's Public Rights of Way and tabled his report on the maintenance of the town's footpaths.

12/07 Resolutions for which written notice had been received

None had been received

12/08 Open Forum

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed: _____

Dated: _____

Appendix 1

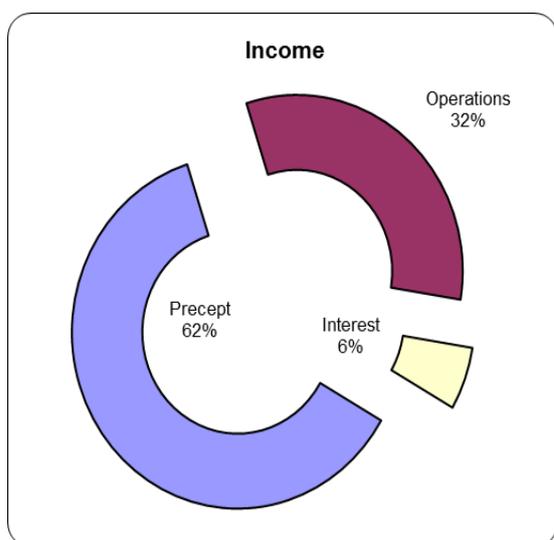
CLERK'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 16 APRIL 2012

At the Annual Town Meeting the role of the Clerk is to report on the finances of the Council for the year just ended.

In the year 2011/12 the Town Council's Precept was £181,029, this was 62% of the Council's total income.

The Council derives other income from its operations in the town, such as the Town Cemetery, the four Allotment Gardens and the Community Bus services. Income relating to these other activities amounted to £95,336; and so the Council's total income for the year was £293,226.

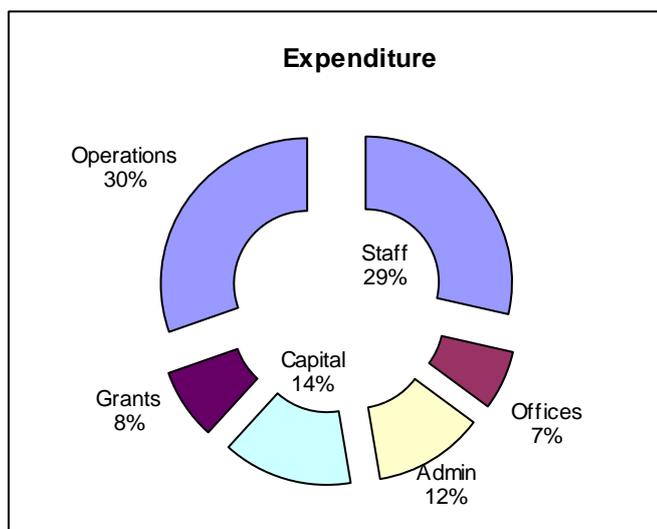
The Council also held in reserve the net proceeds of the sale of a parcel of land east of Millfields which amounted to £977,184. These monies are ring fenced for capital projects in 2012/13 for the benefit of the community



Our ordinary income is shown in the diagram on the left. The Council is aiming to continue to develop Operations Income to minimise the need to raise the Precept.

We have used the available resources in the way shown in the diagram on the right. We spent a total of £328,012 this year. This included £47,297 from our capital reserves on preparation works for the Sayesbury Manor Cottage site.

Staff costs amounted to 29% of this; we have one full time employee, three part time administration officers and two part time bus drivers. All other services are carried out by contractors.



Our operations costs were 30% of our spend, and included management of the Town Cemetery, the Allotment Gardens, the Community minibus, the Sawbobus Community transport service, recreation areas, footpaths, the Town Ranger, provision and maintenance of Floral Displays and the Christmas Lights.

Our administration costs at 12% of the total included our responsibilities as a Statutory Consultee on planning applications and matters relating to the town, monitoring and action against the Town Action Plan, Town Council Newsletters, Civic Events, Community Transport, Floral Decorations, Promoting the Town, subscriptions, insurances and other matters including meetings, committees and representation on outside bodies including liaison with the County and District Councils.

Our office costs, 7% of the total, relate to our use of 49 Bell Street. These will be reduced once we are able to give up that temporary tenancy.

During the year, the Council expanded the operation of Sawbobus, which was financed by commercial sponsorship. It continues to manage the Farmers Market and the Community Minibus, both of these activities are self-financing although take up significant administration time. The Town Council continues to step in to preserve services to the community when other organisations are unable to continue.

The Council made grants totalling £20,000 to seven different local organisations during the year, these were the Citizens Advice Service, the Mann Memorial Cottages, the Football Club, Herts Air Ambulance, the United Services Club, 309 Squadron ATC and the Friends of Pishiobury Park. In addition they made donations totalling £6,000 to support the activities of the Town Twinning Association, the Hailey Centre and the Young Peoples Recreation Centre.

For this coming year the precept has been reduced marginally to £181,000. Extra income from other operations will continue to be around £100,000, this keeping the precept to parishioners at the lowest level of any town in East Hertfordshire.

In preparing the budget members identified significant savings by negotiating better arrangements for Christmas Lights and Floral Displays; by cutting down on the Rangers hours, office costs and contingencies. Against this Members decided to budget an increase in funds to enhance the community bus services, areas where funding support from other sources is drying up; to provide for repairs to playgrounds, and help with promoting tourism and trade in the town centre; and to meet the costs of elections, audits and power supplies which are imposed upon us.

The main capital projects for the year will be the conversion and extension of Sayesbury Manor Cottage into a new centre for the community and a permanent home for the council. We also plan assistance for the repair and development of the Memorial Hall, the West Road play area, contributing to the development of the Vantorts Park play area, Youth Projects and improving the fencing and security arrangements at our Allotment Garden sites.

Appendix 3