

## **ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

At the Annual Meeting of the Town of Sprowston held at Sprowston Diamond Centre, School Lane, Sprowston on 20 May 2015, the following were present:-

Mr K Lashley - Chairman of the Council  
Mrs J Hunt - Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer  
Mrs E Elliot - Committee Officer

18 Local Government Electors of the Town  
1 Member of the Press

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### **15/01. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 23 April 2014, having been circulated to all residents present, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman of the Council.

### **15/02. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SPROWSTON TOWN COUNCIL**

The Chairman of the Sprowston Parish Council, Mr K Lashley presented the Annual Report of the Council for the year ended 31 March 2015.

As a council, our chief aim and abiding concern is to continue to provide our residents with the service they have come to expect. However, as we are all well aware, the current financial climate has meant that we have to be extremely careful over the management of our affairs. We continuously scrutinise our expenditure, and examine very closely how and where we spend the money - your money, in effect.

In November and December, the Budget for the next financial year is considered by the Council and once approved the precept requirement is notified to the District Council who collect it on our behalf. Despite marked increases in utility, maintenance and repair costs the 2015-16 Parish precept will be £106.59 per annum for a band D property, an increase of £1.98 for the year. This 1.89% increase amounts to just over 0.04pence per week for a band D property and will enable current service levels to be maintained.

Income to maintain our facilities is also generated from allotment rent, sale of burial plots and memorials and room and sports hire fees. To meet the Councils funding requirement for 2015/16 cemetery, memorial and sports hire fees (except casual bowls) were increased by 1.3%. Casual bowls remained unchanged. As to facility hire fees the Delves room was increased by £2.00 per hour and the Diamond Field hire fee was agreed at £15.00 per hour weekdays and £17.00 weekends and bank holidays. Allotment rent increased by £1.00 and water by 50 pence.

Each year the Council receives a number of requests for financial assistance. Applications from societies, groups and voluntary organisations offering

facilities and services to the local community are welcomed, but all have to be considered in relation to the resources available. In response to requests received during the financial year 2014-2015 the following grants were made:

East Anglia's Children's Hospices - £150  
Norfolk Accidents Rescue - £ 200  
Royal British Legion - £200  
Age UK Norfolk - £250  
Magpas Helimedix - £250  
Norfolk Citizens Advice Bureau - £250

Moving on to our parks and open spaces the Council has taken over responsibility for the enclosed children's play area and surrounding open space at Hall Wood Road, off Blue Boar Lane. However, the water course that runs adjacent to the site remains the responsibility of Broadland District Council.

If we are successful in obtaining a grant, work to refurbish the changing rooms at Sprowston Pavilion will start as soon as contractors can be appointed and will incorporate the addition of a small extension to the north of the building. Improvements will include a dedicated changing facility for match officials, a requirement of the Football Association, enlargement and refurbishment of existing shower rooms to cater for opposing teams to change separately and provision of a disabled facility. Materials have been carefully chosen to ensure the exterior is in keeping with the existing building and does not detract from its charm. Hire of the Pavilion has been very popular for children's birthday parties but will be unavailable during re-development.

To ensure our all-weather tennis courts remain safe for use they were cleaned to remove all moss and debris from the surface, a treatment applied to reduce regrowth and then sprayed with 2 tonne of green acrylic paint with white playing lines in preparation for the new season.

Heavy rain storms caused such extensive erosion to the cycle track at the Recreation Ground that the Council took the decision to close this facility during last summer for safety reasons. However, it has now been resurfaced with an alternative material which should be more durable.

Following comments from residents, and in view of its condition, the barbed wire topping the front fence and gate to Recreation Ground Road and adjacent footpath to the School was replaced with galvanised line wire.

An area of land at Sparhawk Park, to the rear of the school, has been leased for a number of years from Norfolk County Council. However, to accommodate growth in numbers at the infant school the County Council has advised us that they are terminating the lease and reincorporating the leased playing field into the school site. This will not affect the two play areas.

As to Sprowston Diamond Centre we have a diverse range of activities available to residents including Insanity Team Sweat Fitness, Karate, Street

Dancing, Metafit and the monthly Cinema. Room hire for private and corporate events have increased and usage of the community centre is continually growing. We have recently held a health fayre to highlight information available to our residents and hope to hold more such events.

In March the Council welcomed Sprowston Heritage Archive who has relocated from the High School. Meetings are held Thursday evenings 7.00pm to 8.30pm but residents wishing to view the archives are welcome to visit during office opening hours.

I am also pleased to report that the planning application for phase 3 developments was approved in December 2014. Proposals include a community sports hall with associated changing facilities, entrance area, ICT suite and nursery extension. We are now actively seeking match funding in the form of grants to pay for this new facility.

On other matters the Council has been fortunate to receive two defibrillators from East of England Ambulance Service and following the purchase and installation of secure cabinets they will be placed at Sprowston Diamond Centre and the Recreation Ground, available for emergency use.

Policies in the Sprowston Neighbourhood Plan to create a woodland activity park at Harrison's and Breck plantation have been brought forward as a result of the development of 1233 dwellings at Blue Boar Lane. A management plan to identify immediate priorities to make the woodland safe and set out requirements for future management and maintenance has already been undertaken. Issues to be addressed will include access, perimeter barriers particularly adjacent to roadways, parking, wildlife areas and types of usage. The next step is to transfer this area from private ownership to Broadland District Council and ultimately onto this Council.

As to the new development the Council has suggested the following road names to reflect local people.

Blaxter - A prominent professor at Newcastle University who received a knighthood in 1977 and was born in Sprowston

Goodson - a local Poacher in 1912

Dungar and Lurkins - Local family Names

Everett - a local farmer

Conroy - a Midwife in the 1960's & 70's

Future themes to include: names from Bolton and Paul, the shoe industry and local wild fowl.

In respect of the cemetery the Council were pleased with the results of the redevelopment of the old storage unit into a visitor centre and erection of memorial wall. This year has also seen the introduction of strewing of ashes giving families a wider choice in the types of interments available in Sprowston. Several concrete pads have been laid around the wall in preparation for the purchase of memorial benches by relatives.

Work has commenced at the cemetery extension to level and re-profile this 5.93 acre site and plant perimeter hedging and specimen trees. The next phase will be to develop half of the site and create nine separate zones dedicated to burial, cremation and children's areas. This will provide sufficient burial space for approximately 30 years. The rest of the site will become managed amenity grassland until additional burial space is required.

With regard to staffing the Council has changed its working practices to improve efficiency and create more of a presence across its facilities in Sprowston. The post of park supervisor has been deleted from the Council's portfolio and a new position of Caretaker/Cleaner created. A team of four people will be responsible for a range of tasks including locking/unlocking parks and buildings, litter picking, minor maintenance, cleaning and facilitating room and sports hire. As part of this restructure, and to promote healthy living use of the tennis courts is now free.

Earlier this year the Council made the decision to discontinue their recycling facilities across Sprowston following the successful expansion of the kerbside collection. The reduction in tonnage of glass collected at the Council's bottle banks together with the increasing cost of cleansing the sites of fly tipping made them no longer financially viable.

Finally I should like to thank staff and the outgoing Council particularly in the manner it conducted itself during the term of office.

### **15/03. RESIDENTS QUESTIONS**

There were no residents' questions.

**27 April 2016**

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**Chairman**