

ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

At the Annual Meeting of the Town of Sprowston held at Sprowston Diamond Centre, School Lane, Sprowston on 24 April 2013, 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

10 Local Government Electors of the Town

1. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Annual Parish Meeting held on 25 April 2012, having been circulated to all residents present, were confirmed and signed by the Chairman of the Council.

2. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SPROWSTON TOWN COUNCIL

As Chairman of Sprowston Town Council, I am pleased to welcome you to this Annual Town Meeting, which is held for the whole electorate in the parish. It is an opportunity not only to report on the work undertaken by the Town Council in the past year, but also for residents to ask questions and raise issues of local concern with Town Councillors.

Following the acquisition of Sprowston Diamond Centre the Council's vision to provide a multi-use sports and community centre with a variety of activities for local people is well under way with work commencing on the east wing and due for completion in June. Financing for this extension was helped by £100,000 of funding from Norfolk County Council Community Construction Fund. This work will facilitate the re-location of the Pre-School into accommodation designed for their use, thus enabling the Council to schedule refurbishment of the west wing and increase the facilities available to residents.

A pro-active marketing approach is building up usage of the centre, which is paying dividends with increasing lettings. Once stage 2 of building works has been completed we will be looking for additional long term hire agreements to be put in place.

The council handled 54 planning applications last year, excluding major development proposals, 44% down on the previous year - perhaps a sign of the recession or the changes in permitted development rules.

Work is also progressing at the cemetery following the Council agreeing plans to convert the existing cemetery building into a visitor centre with disabled access and washroom facilities. This will offer visitors somewhere dry to sit during inclement weather conditions.

A design has also been approved for a memorial garden and wall, which will enable memorial plaques to be displayed in remembrance of loved ones not laid to rest in the cemetery.

A new layout for sections 11 and 12 has also been decided, which will include burial and cremation plots, seating space and flower beds.

As to the future of Sprowston, Broadland District Council's Joint Core Strategy, has identified green fields in surrounding areas such as Sprowston for development. The area to the North East is known as part of the growth triangle. The Joint Core Strategy and the subsequent growth triangle, including land in Sprowston, are reliant on the Norwich Area Transportation Strategy, which includes the construction of the NDR. Broadland District Council is now producing an Area Action Plan for the growth triangle, which sets out guidance for development in the Sprowston area. This Council has been a consultee during this process.

Moving on to allotments, this year the Council has introduced, in liaison with the Allotment Holders Liaison Group and in full consultation with all allotment holders, a revised allotment holder's tenancy agreement. This was carried out following the introduction of poultry to the site and a number of queries which were not clarified by existing documentation.

Allotment gardening continues to be popular and our waiting list currently stands at 67 residents. All residents must be over 18 and registered on the electoral register to be eligible.

In other leisure activities our movie afternoon has proved a great success. Having been running since September, on the 1st Monday of each month, most viewings have been fully booked. This has been a wonderful opportunity for residents to see the latest films locally, and it has been good to see the initiative being so well supported. Listings for May to September are available on our website and noticeboards and will be listed in the next issue of Sprowston Matters, which will be delivered shortly.

Regarding our outdoor facilities the smaller children's play area at Wilks Farm Drive has been refurbished this year with all new equipment, safety surfacing, seating and is now gated. On-going maintenance of our other open spaces and play areas continues, as and when needed.

As mentioned at last year's Town Council meeting a steering group of Councillors was established in 2011 to oversee the development of a Neighbourhood Plan for Sprowston. The plan focusses on four main areas, called community hubs, including Barkers Lane playing field, Wroxham Road shopping precinct, Harrison's Plantation and School Lane. The consultation period, to gain residents and stakeholders views, will be 20 May 2013 to 28 June 2013.

In celebration of the Queen's Diamond Jubilee the 2012 Summer Fete was brought forward and held in June. Fortunately we were rewarded with lovely sunny weather and this together with the diverse range of activities and stalls on offer attracted a record number of people, with approximately 16,000 attending. All the firm favourites were there as well as new acts including children's entertainer Stevie Spud, bungee trampolines, quad bikes and Danny Marino balloon modeller. As the jubilee was such a special occasion admission to this event was free.

Staying with financial matters, Sprowston Town Council does not receive any funds from Central Government (only from the residents of the parish of

Sprowston), but has been indirectly affected by cuts. To cover the Council's revenue and capital expenditure for 2013/14 the cemetery and memorial fees for residents have increased by 2.5%, sports hire and facility hire fees remain unchanged and allotment rents will increase by £1.00 with water charges up by 50 pence. This together with some reallocation of existing budgets has made it possible to keep the Council Tax increase to our residents to a minimal 1.6% for a band D property.

Largely because of the Norfolk Homes development we received £37,000 from the Government's New Homes Bonus, which rewards communities who have taken development. This will be used towards the redevelopment of Sprowston Diamond Centre.

This Council has given £1,550 in grant aid to various organisations including Victim Support, Royal British Legion, Macmillan Cancer Care, Age UK Norfolk, Norfolk Accident Rescue Service, Sprowston Day Centre, Sprowston Cricket Club and the Citizens Advice Bureau. The council funds such donations from monies received from recycling.

Finally I should like to thank both Councillors and staff for their valuable contribution to the work of the Council.

3. RESIDENT'S QUESTIONS

There were no resident's questions.

23 April 2014

CHAIRMAN