Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook Annual Town Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Town Meeting of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook held at Church House, Vantorts Road, Sawbridgeworth, Herts at 7.30 p.m. on Tuesday 14 April 2009.

Present: Cllr Joyce Vincent (Town Mayor) Chairman; 24 Local Government Electors for the ward of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook, (including 9 Town Councillors). D Cllr N Clark, James Burton H&E Observer, Town Clerk Richard Bowran, Admin Officers 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.

09/01 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 14 April 2008 be confirmed as a correct record.

09/02 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from those minutes

09/03 Report by the Town Mayor

The Town Mayor, Cllr Joyce Vincent reported on the Activities of the Council in 2007/08

I recently met someone who used to live in Sawbridgeworth and she asked "Is Sawbridgeworth still the same, nothing happening except more houses being built in back gardens?" and it set me thinking about what has happened during my year in office.

Anyone coming into our town will notice that at last Bell St. has been resurfaced but unfortunately I can't say the same about some of our other roads but we have high hopes for these being done before too long. It is not for the want of your Council chasing for them to be done...

The Christmas decorations were entirely new this year and were very much admired and love it or hate it the banner across the entrance to Bell St definitely had our Town name up in lights. An added bonus was that all the bulbs were low energy causing a big saving on electricity consumed.

Also new this year is our Town Ranger, how many of you have seen him in his high visibility jacket and with the white van with Sawbridgeworth Town Council written on it. He does a very wide range of jobs from cutting back overhanging branches that have been reported to working in the cemetery doing anything from infilling graves to clearing away rubbish to testing stability of the gravestones and on one occasion even digging a grave when the regular gravedigger was unavailable. Bullfields Management Committee pay for him to clear rubbish from their play area and he also clears and cares for the West Road play area. He has been known to mend a broken desk in the council office and was the one who put out the barriers for the closing of Bell St for the turning on of the Christmas lights. He has been called on to repair fencing around some allotments as well as getting rid of overgrowing brambles. In other words he is a jack of all trades and an

invaluable help in keeping our Town as neat as we want it to be. If the task needs four hands then Councillor Rochester is there to give his help. Talking of Councillor Rochester he is the wonderful volunteer who does such sterling work on all the footpaths around the town. He clears the paths and puts up seats and generally does all he can to make the footpaths accessible Unfortunately all his hard work is not always appreciated and vandals destroy much of work that he has done. It is terrible that just a few can spoil things for the rest of us. The Council has now bought its own grass cutting machine for West Road and the cemetery thereby saving money by not having to use contractors.

You will shortly be seeing new floral decorations around the town and once again the Town Ranger will be the one to water and nurture them. The flower bed at the exit to the car park is being tended by members of the Stort Valley Project. All this will make our Town Centre a very attractive place to visit.

I am sure you know that your Council voted to buy the historical red telephone box on Cambridge Road for £1 from BT and it now has an information notice board inside, which incidentally was yet another job done by our Ranger. We hope that visitors as well as local people will use this as another way of seeing what is happening in our Town.

New signs are on their way for information to places in the town as well as new signs saying Sawbridgeworth. These, hopefully will encourage more people to come to our town and not just for the very popular and successful bi monthly Farmers Market.

The list of achievements goes on The Town Action Plan about which you will hear more shortly has been worked on by a group of dedicated local people and a copy of which will shortly be delivered to every household in the town.

The sale of surplus land at Millfields is going through which will provide the means for desperately needed facilities for the town.

There are talks between the Council and the Scouts Assoc ongoing to re-site their hut and there are hopes for a swift conclusion.

We must congratulate Mandeville School on achieving 100% in the recent primary schools examination and is now officially one of the top 200 primary schools in the Country. Very well done to all staff and pupils it is a wonderful achievement.

At the hub of our Council is of course our Town Clerk, Richard Bowran and his 2 Admin officers Gill Abbott and Sue Adams. Without them we would not be able to run this town. They have all been an enormous help to me this year and if anyone needs to know anything, if in the unlikely event of them not knowing the answer they definitely know someone who does. Richard has brought a lot of knowledge and expertise with him and he works hard to keep Sawbridgeworth the excellent place it is. Gill is the one who knows all about our beautiful cemetery, and I have heard many times how helpful and understanding she is in this side of her work. Our Cemetery has recently had new stone signs erected at the entrance, courtesy of a local undertaker, and with the excellent way it is all maintained it is no wonder that people from miles around are being buried here.

Having to organize a local bus service was not something we envisaged this time last year but talk and plans are well ahead to have a service in place around the town when Hertfordshire County Council withdraws funding for the 3 local bus

routes SW1 2 and 3. This is a big job that our Town Clerk has taken on board and spent many hours trying to find a solution. We wont be duplicating what we have had for a number of years, but we will do our best to make life easier for those who rely on or want to use public transport

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Another small group of people who make our town special is our police officers. A new innovation from them this year is the Mobile Police Station around the town. They visit Bell Street car park and Bullfields and are there for anyone to drop in and to find out what is happening. The only problem is that while they do such a good job keeping Sawbridgeworth a low crime area that they are often promoted and moved away and we have to get to know new faces. But we do say thank you to them all for a job well done.

The Clerk and some Councillors have tried very hard to start up a Youth Council in Sawbridgeworth but at the moment the young people are not very enthusiastic so it is a project that is on the back burner at the moment.

I could go on but I won't but I do want to make one last point. Sawbridgeworth has had some bad press and verbal comments about local shops and businesses closing down, this if course is in line with towns and cities around the whole of England and beyond, but what I want to hear is praise for the excellent shops and businesses that we DO HAVE here in our town. I know that people come from miles around to shop here. It is not unusual to have shoppers coming from as far afield as South London, Surrey, Bedfordshire, Cambridge, Norfolk etc who have seen advertisements and web-sites and come especially to Sawbridgeworth. It is up to all of us to broadcast all the good things we do have so that even more people will come to visit our lovely town.

Thank you to Richard Sue and Gill for organizing this meeting and the refreshments.

The report of the Town Council was accepted.

Mr Fiddes asked whether planning applications could be seen by members of the public. It was confirmed that they were available at the office of the Town Council.

Mrs Alder commented on the fact that the County and District Councils had, between them, removed funding for the SW1,2,3 services.

Mr Fiddes asked whether Cllr Alder should sit on any committee where the location of the Scouts was discussed in view of her comments in the past about location. It was confirmed that she would declare a prejudicial interest.

Mr Rider asked whether the developer should be included in ant discussion about the Scouts location. It was confirmed that the Scouts had decided not to include him.

09/04 Report by the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk, Richard Bowran, reported on the Council's Accounts to 31 March 2008. *Attached as Appendix1*.

The Tabled Report of the Town Clerk was accepted

Mr Reed asked if any of the Council's funds had been invested in Icelandic banks. It was confirmed that they had not been.

Mr Manion asked about development plans for the land east of Millfields. It was confirmed that several bids had been made and a process of due diligence was being pursued.

Mr Fiddes asked why the Town Council did not provide a grass cutting service for the town with the machine they had purchased. It was confirmed that verges and common areas were maintained by the County Council Highways department and by East Herts District Council in the main. The Town Council cut areas of grass on land that they owned.

Mr Beeching said that the Town Council's equipment was not of sufficient size to cut large areas of grass.

Mr Fiddes asked what had been done with the surplus on operating the town cemetery. It was confirmed that it was being put to use to reduce possible increases in the town Precept.

08/05 The Mayor invited Reports from Town Charities:

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

The objectives of the centre are to improve the quality of life for older people. The Board met five times in the year. There is a need to fund raise to keep many of the services running.

Liz Ironside has been appointed as the new centre manager. Quiz Nights, Silver Surfer days, a newsletter and lunch days are all part of the programme The four staff are all CRB checked. Over the year 3000 lunches have been served and 700 passenger seats have been provided for shopping trips.

Cllr Steve Butler, Chairman of the Sawbridgeworth Young Peoples Recreational Centre reported that the unaudited accounts had been tabled and a full report submitted. Attached as Appendix 3

The objectives of the centre are to help the development of young people. Future plans include an extension to the front of the building and a new hall facilty.

Mr Fiddes commented that not many people knew of the existence of these facilities for young people

Mr. Peter Reed reported on the **Sawbridgeworth Memorial Hall** saying that the Hall had successfully continued to serve the needs of the Sawbridgeworth community for a further year. He listed the many and varied users of the hall noting the full licence that has enabled it to host dinners receptions and similar events.

Over the past 8 years the management group have raised over £120,000 and invested it in the restoration and development of the Hall. The Hall management are all volunteers and continue to need the assistance of the community to continue their services He hoped that the Town Action Plan will lead to improvement in support for the voluntary groups in the town.

08/06 The Mayor invited other reports:

Mr Joseph Fitzgerald, Chairman of the Sawbridgeworth Town Partnership gave a report on the year's activities, this is: Attached as Appendix 4

The aim of the STP is to improve the vitality of the town.

CIIr 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.

Clir Roger Beeching reported on progress towards a **Town Action Plan**. This had been started in November 2007 with the establishment of a Steering Group. The group has consolidated previous work and reports - sent out questionnaires – and held participatory workshops.

It had already established that the town's highest priorities were work on Roads and Transport, Planning Housing, Car Park Charges, Support for the Volunteer Sector, Support for Local Businesses and the need for a new Scout Hut.

The current aim is to publish the STAP in late summer 2009. It will be a working document feeding into the East Herts District Council's Local Development Framework (LDF) and will be a prime indication of what the people of Sawbridgeworth want in their town.

Mr John Rider reported on the activities of the **Allotment Association**. The association is now 105 years old. He talked about the four sites and 500 hours of volunteer work put in during the year. He reported on the reintroduction of the Horticultural Show and upon proposals to introduce polytunnels and livestock onto the gardens.

7/08 Resolutions for which written notice had been received None had been received

Mr Reed sought support for the recognition of the contribution of volunteer groups in the town. He advocated the establishment of an "umbrella" organisation i.e. by redefining the role of the Sawbridgeworth and District Council for Voluntary Service which seems to have the appropriate objectives.

Mr Fiddes commented that costs must be kept down

Mr Rider asked if CVS was being too exclusive and was unsure of what they did. The Mayor responded that appeals for interest in joining the CVS had met with no response.

Mrs Willetts asked if town centre signage could be improved. It was confirmed that a joint project to do this was under way with Herts Highways.

Mr Manion commented that he had travelled on the SW1,2,3 bus routes and had 98 responses to a questionnaire about usage that could be used by the Town Council in planning the substitute service.

Mr Rider said the sign at the entrance to the Bell Street car park must be

made bigger to have any effect.

Mr Fitzgerald wanted to comment on the excellent work done by Terry the street cleaner throughout the central area of the town.

The Mayor then announced a small exhibition of themes for the Sawbridgeworth Town Action Plan and encouraged all those present to visit it and register interest in the project.

The Meeting closed at 9.15pm

Signed:	 	
Dated:		

Appendix 1

TOWN CLERK'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL TOWN MEETING TUESDAY 14 APRIL 2009

The Clerk's Report covers the administration and finances of the Town Council

Administration

The Council's Finance Officer retired in April last year and we took the opportunity of reviewing how we provided our services. The Council's staff has been reduced by one head this year and the finance role is now shared between Sue Adams and me. Sue also looks after allotment and office administration. Gill Abbott manages our cemetery function and is the Council's planning officer

We provide accommodation and a payroll service for Jennifer Rolph, the project manager of the Sawbridgeworth Town Partnership.

Town Ranger

With the money that we have saved we have been able to pay for a Town Ranger, Richard Jenkins, and equip him with tools and the white van you will have seen around the town. Richard is doing a great job and we are now able to deal rapidly with minor works and issues that arise without having to wait for the county or the district to respond. This is a better service to the town.

Groundsman

We have also lost Richard Newman, who has worked as a contractor to the Council for 9 years. He is concentrating on arboriculture work, but still does occasional jobs for us when needed. In his place Gary Woods is maintaining the grounds in the Cemetery and West Road play area, he is also doing a first class job. We have purchased a road going grass cutter, and the arrangement has proved to be very cost effective.

Town Cemetery

We have been actively marketing and developing the facilities and are now attracting business from Harlow and the surrounding area. We managed 40 interments during the year. We have opened up a new section and plan to open a Green Burial area in the next six months. We will be extending the roadways during the year and preparing to bring some extra land in to use as the next extension to the facility.

Allotments

We now have 101 allotments in use and a decreasing waiting list which now numbers 27. We have worked closely with the Allotments Association and have supported their activities. Some improvement works are planned for the coming year. Bullfields Allotment has been greatly disturbed this year by adjacent building works and Southbrook Allotments have not been helped by total submersion in the recent flooding. Rents are not going up this year.

Planning

During the year as a Statutory Consultee we have dealt wit 99 planning applications and 8 planning appeals. This is slightly less than last year and is perhaps a reflection of the current economic climate. The District Council's on-line planning system is still not working although the Town Council is fully equipped to handle the new procedures.

Town Centre Enhancement

The Christmas Light display was completely revised and renewed last year and has met with universal approval. It was paid for entirely by the Town Council. Cost was kept to the same as the levels contracted in 2007. Several additions were made at the specific request of a number of retailers. We hope to further enhance the display this year.

Spring floral decorations will also be different this year and in some different places. We are somewhat restricted in what we do by our geography and by Highways restrictions, but we hope they will prove a success.

During next year many more pedestrian signs will be installed highlighting the way to the town centre.

Property

The Council has purchased the "K6" Telephone Box near the West Road roundabouts for the sum of £1. It is now in use as an Information Point.

The Council have been told that they will have to leave the offices in The Square within the next few months as the landlords are completely reworking the building to provide a children's centre. The Town Council has plans to acquire and create a civic centre for the town by the end of next year, but in the meantime we will be seeking to rent some offices in the town centre to continue with our functions.

The SW1,2 & 3 Bus Service

We were told in January of changes in funding arrangements that means the eventual demise of the town bus service as it exists at the moment. Regrettably the Town Council had already set its budget for the coming year before we were advised of this and so a solution has to be found without any financial cost to the town. The District Council is making us a grant of £24,000 this year to help fund a replacement and I have great hopes that we will be able to work with the Bishops Stortford Mini Bus Trust to provide some sort of service in the town. We are currently carrying out a passenger usage survey to plan the most efficient use of resource.

Sawbridgeworth Youth Council

We have attempted to start a Youth Council this year and have held a number of monthly meetings. At the present time they have ceased due to almost complete non attendance by young people. We have tried – maybe the SYPRC might be able to form some version along with the Youth Club.

Sawbridgeworth Town Action Plan

At this meeting last year we promised to create a Town Action Plan. This was to consolidate previous work, draw together the wishes of parishioners and to provide input to consultations from the District Council for the local development Framework. The Steering Group has met throughout the year and working parties have put together a number of relevant sections. The Draft Pan was shown at the Community Voice meeting last months and a workshop session was held at the beginning of this month. A near final draft is on display this evening. The Plan will be published and distributed to every household in Sawbridgeworth by the end of the summer. It is a working document and will be monitored throughout the year and a report will be made on progress at next year's Town Meeting.

Last Year:

Over three quarters of our income comes from the parish precept, the rest coming from investments and other earnings. The Council kept within its budget and should be able to put £10,000 into general reserves.

Extraordinary items of expenditure have included continuing subsidy of Sunday opening at the Leventhorpe pool, extra costs of the cross street banner erected for the Christmas lights display and preliminary costs associated with obtaining planning consent for the Millfields housing development.

We hope to recover the Christmas lights costs from a grant from East Herts DC and the development costs from the proceeds of the land sale at Millfields.

The Council made a surplus of £13,000 on operating the Town Cemetery.

THE HAILEY DAY CENTRE Registered Charity No : 1030820

STATEMENT OF ACCOUNTS (Unaudited) 1 January to 31 December 2008

Income		Expenditure		
	2008 2007		2008	2007
1 Activities	£ 14,890.99 £ 5,927.74	1 Activities	£ 5.771.52	£ 2,377,08
3 Hire of rooms	£ 4,290.50 £ 3,738.50	2 Salaries & expenses	£ 19.219.30	£ 12,384,86
4 Fundraising	£ 3,193.56 £ 1,651.10		£ 1,523.90	£ 406.38
5 Office	£ 34.20 £ 302.50	5 Office	£ 1.764.90	£ 1,260,91
7 Public Telephone	£ 17.10 £ 8.75	6 Maintenance	£ 2.084.24	£ 1,505.78
8 Transport	£ 2,000.75 £ 1,418.35	8 Transport	£ 1,899.00	£ 1,123.55
14 Donations	£ 5,369.77 £ 5,167.61	9 Utilities	£ 2,708.52	£ 3,173.23
17 Outings	£ 4,003.00 £ 2,508.75	10 Insurance/Licences	£ 556.33	£ 588.81
18 Craft	£ 1,289.40 £ 985.09	11 Training	£ 408.42	£ 140.00
19 Grants	£ 15,707.10 £ 12,315.00	12 Equipment	£ 3,696,71	£ 11,032.01
21 Miscellaneous*	£ 15.78 £ 72.20		£ 72.73	£ 361.92
22 Lottery	£ 7,990.00 £ 1,411.00	17 Outings	£ 3,613.40	£ 2,661.50
Bank Interest	£ 501.34 £ 601.74	18 Craft	£ 30.00	_,
		21 Miscellaneous**	£ 15.35	
•		22 Lottery	£ 6,240.00	
Total Income	£ 59,303.49 £ 36,108.33	Total Expenditure	£ 49,604.32	£ 37,016.03
			2 10,004.02	2 07,010.00
Net Gain (Loss)	£9,699.17			

Updated 22/01/2009

BALANCE SHEET

Statement of Assets at 31 December 2008

Bank Accounts

High Interest Account	Balance at 1st Jan		2008		2007
Current Account Petty Cash Float Net (payment)receipts		£ £	20,840,53 1,562,19 38,08 9,699,17 32,139,97	£ £ -£	15,645.28 7,653.22 50.00 907.70 22,440.80
High Interest Account Current Account Petty Cash Float	Balance at 31st December	£ £	2008 29,341.87 2,698.10 100.00 32,139.97	£ £ £	2007 20,840.53 1,562.19 38.08 22,440.80

Appendix 3

Sawbridgeworth Young Persons Recreation Centre

Income and Expenditure Account 2008

Income		20	008	2007
moonic	Lottings (Posuler)	10.000.05		
	Lettings (Regular)	13,608.25	14,737.91	
	Letting (Occasional)	2,641.25	1,319.50	
	Rent Receivable	874.40	-	
	Grants Received	3,690.00	5,079.00	
	Interest receivable	70.32	48.42	
	*	20,884	.22	21,184.83
Expendit	ture	·		_ ,,
	Wages	1,536.50	1,282.25	
	Waste Disposal	3,450.71	· =	*
	Insurance	1,859.80	1,806.76	
	Light, Heat, etc	2,919.67	1,055.48	
	Cleaning	2,032.69	3,372.97	
	Reps & Maintnce	1,360.70	1,856.17	
	Service Charge	139.00	400.62	
	Printing Postage & Stationery	115.67	2.04	
	Telephone	99.40	102.90	
	Depreciation	1,044.00	1,044.00	
	Bank Charges	-	1,044.00	
	Equipment Purchased	6,336.98	1,069.62	•
	General Expenses	162.37	31.40	*
	Interest Payable	118.80	118.80	
		21,176.		12,143.01
	Net Surplus / (Deficit)	(292.0		9,041.82
			-	

Balance Sheet as at 31st December 2008

General I	Reserve					
	Brought I		281,663.78		272,621.96	
	-	lus / (Deficit)	(292.07)		9,041.82	
	Carried F	orward		281,371.71	=	281,663.78
Represen	ted By:-					
	Assets	Premises	260,655.00		260,655.00	
	*	Playground Equipment	14,304.55		14,598.55	
				274,959.55		275,253.55
Less	Long Terr	m Loan - STC		(2,833.24)		(4,833.16)
	Current A	ssets				
		Debtors			_	
		Deposit Account	2,858.32		2,788.00	
		Current Account	6,387.08		8,455.39	
		5	9,245.40		11,243.39	
	Less:			. –		
		Creditors				
			-			
				9,245.40		11,243.39
			-	281,371.71	-	281,663.78

Appendix 4

Sawbridgeworth Town Partnership

Report to the Annual Town Meeting 14th April 2009

Intro:

The Sawbridgeworth Town Partnership (STP) established in 2007 has as its key aims:

- To carry out improvements to the appearance, the attractions and increase the economic vitality and vibrancy of the town looking forward three to five years.
- ☼ It takes into account the needs of customers, employers, retailers, business interests, freeholders, the local community and local authority.
- ☼ It aims to reinforce the identity of Sawbridgeworth as a market town.

Structural changes:

Commencing April 2008 the STP, as a learning organisation, made some significant changes. The constitution was amended; the board of 13 members (many non attending) was reduced to 6. The large STP meetings, where opinions were freely delivered & few prepared to take any action, were abandoned. The organisation then set about raising funds to secure the role of an STP Project coordinator. This role is to bring together and drive forward the identified projects in the STP Business Plan and to identify and secure funding opportunities. Jennifer Rolph was appointed in Sept 2008 after a selection process run through the summer. The new STP Board and Jennifer set down to work in Oct 2008 and there has been a major positive shift in the functioning of the STP. We are grateful to the STC for the office accommodation provided which has helped us establish a base for the position.

Achievements:

- Consultation and securing of Town Centre signs on approach to and top of Bell St.
- Active campaigning for Bell St & The Square street surface improvements.
- ☼ Continued developments on the website with many new pages introduced.
- 🌣 New web based Directories and interactive calendars are very well received and utilised.
- 🌣 Provided direct support and free promotion for SBW based groups and their events.
- Development of the Farmers' Market to a high quality standard.
- 🌣 The only FM in Herts & Essex to have secured Seven National Award Winning Producers.
- ☼ Attracted over 16,000 people into the town on market days since start up.
- 🌣 Returned a Xmas Market day to the town with the very successful market in Dec 08.
- ☼ Financial support for charity groups in excess of £6000 from T & Coffee Stall.
- Arranged for local restaurant owners in SBW and BS to meet with local food producers.
- 🌣 Provided evidence based reports for consultations for public and non p sectors.
- 🜣 Established the brand, logos and identity for the STP which is now in circulation.
- 🜣 Developed a Marketing Plan to take STP identified projects through to completion.
- 🜣 Support to the STC and other organisations with Xmas lights events & Town Action Plan.
- 🜣 Developed a plan to get smaller community organisation represented on the web.
- 🜣 Secured funding grant from Community Foundation to carry out this and related work.
- ☼ Developed a Business Welcome Pack for new businesses wishing to locate to the area.

- ☼ Advanced plans to utilise empty shops in the town with support from landlords.
- 🌣 Promoted the town consistently through local media with regular articles and pictures
- Advanced preparation work for shop local/loyalty scheme with local media & others
- ☼ Finalised plans for a Sawbridgeworth wide environmental friendly shopping bag

Projects that have not materialised:

- The interactive media project with Leventhorpe School to promote Sawbridgeworth
- The reactivation of the Sawbridgeworth Business/Traders Association
- The More of the detailed proposals for signage have not moved forward
- ☼ Hidden Britain Project abandoned due to lack of volunteer resources

Funding from STC:

The STP is grateful for the grant of £2000 received from the Town Council in FY 2008/09

The breakdown of the spend is as follows:

Laptop and computer accessories telephone

Expenditure	Amounts
People:	
Website development work	£300
Tourism and Community	
Environment enhancement	£250
recycling Initiatives	
Consultation & Research of plans	£200
Empty Shops	
Business welcome pack	£300
Funding and Grant research & planning	
Preparation of Town marketing data	
Things:	
Elements of Logo development	£400

Services:	
Photocopying , stationery and ink	

Sundries:	
Tel calls	£400
IT Support	
Hard drives & memory	
Internet subscriptions	
Meetings and Hall Hire	

The STP continues to file report monthly reports to the STC through the nominated Council representatives on the Town Partnership

Joseph Fitzgerald Board Member

Marketing

£150