

Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook

Annual Town Meeting

MINUTES of the Annual Town Meeting of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook held at The Council Chamber, Sayesbury Manor, Bell Street, Sawbridgeworth, Herts at 7.30 p.m. on Monday 3rd April 2023.

Present: Cllr Greg Rattey (Town Mayor) Chairman;
15 Local Government Electors for the Parish of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook, (including 10 other Town Councillors).
Town Clerk Christopher Hunt, Events Manager Joanne Sargent, Finance Manager Lisa Dale.

The Town Clerk welcomed those present to the Sawbridgeworth Annual Town meeting, following this, it was explained that this was not a meeting of the Town Council but of the people of Sawbridgeworth and Spellbrook. An explanation was made regarding the pre-election period of sensitivity and the meeting is to show the achievements of the local groups in our town and pass factual information regarding ongoing events.

23/01 Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting

Resolved – that the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 3rd April 2022 be confirmed as a correct record.

[prop Cllr Ruth Buckmaster sec'd Cllr Furnace]

23/02 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising from those minutes.

23/03 Report by the Mayor on Town Council Activities in 2022/23

The Mayor, Cllr Greg Rattey referred to the national events such as the Platinum Jubilee and the passing of Her Majesty the Queen, the Kings proclamation and the civic events held locally to mark these events.

He referred to the events held in the town and the success these have had, with many people attending Fun on the Field, Travel Challenge, Community Connections and the Christmas lights switch on.

23/04 Report by the Town Clerk

The Town Clerk, Christopher Hunt, reported on the Council's Accounts to 31 March 2023.

23/05 The Mayor invited Trustee Reports from Town Charities:

Cllr Angela Alder, Chair of the **Hailey Centre** report was attached to the agenda and no questions were raised.

Cllr Ruth Buckmaster, Chair of the **Sawbridgeworth Young Peoples Recreational Centre** report was attached to the agenda and no questions were raised.

23/06 The Mayor invited the Clerk to read out highlights from local bodies

The following reports were received and copies made available for attendees to the meeting.

309 Squadron ATC, Bowls Club, Cricket Club, Central Surgery Patients Group, Eco-Audit Working Group, Friends of Pishiobury Park, Girlguiding Sawbridgeworth and High Wych District, Great St Mary's Church, Homes for Ukraine Support Group, Local History Society, Memorial Hall, Police, Reedings Junior School, RHSO, Rotary, SECC, 1st Sawbridgeworth Scouts Group, Sports Association, Sustainable Sawbridgeworth, Tennis Club, The WI, Town Twinning Association, Travel Challenge.

Two members of the public raised matters;

- The Central Surgery Patients Group leaflet "When the clocks go back" and AGM on the 11th May at 7pm if people want to attend to have their say.
- The Tennis Club, are now playing Pickle Ball, a game that has spread from America and is ideal for younger and older community members to play. Membership to the club is encouraged for both this game and for tennis.

**19/07 Report on the Town Action Plan 2022-2023
Appendix I**

The Town Clerk reported that the Town Action Plan 2020/24 had lost its aims due to covid and the development of the new housing and its community. The plan also did not run in line with the councillors elected period and as such a fresh consultation and action plan will be completed after the elections this May.

An area that was highlighted from the previous action plan was the requirement for a town centre focal point and the progression of the Jubilee Gardens had taken a leap forward due to extra funding received from the UK Prosperity Fund. £50,000 had been awarded and adding to the project earmarked reserves, made the total money available to £80,000.

19/08 Resolutions for which written notice had been received.

None received.

19/09 Open Forum

The following questions were raised by members of the public.

Q. The concerns were raised regarding the Wrenbridge development and the request to change conditions to allow HGV's to travel through Sawbridgeworth. Are the Council doing anything

regarding this.

A. The Clerk stated that the Council is aware and this had been debated at a recent meeting and objections to this change in planning had been taken on by individual town councillors. Cllr Furnace's objection had been reported on in the Bishops Stortford Independent.

Cllr Eric Buckmaster stated he had been in touch with highways regarding the roadworks and some of the repairs could be linked to the closure of the M11 and the HGV increase use of the roads through the town had damaged the infrastructure.

Q. Will there be any dialogue between the council and Network Rail due to the plans to increase in the frequency of the Stansted express. Also why is the road surface so bad at the crossing and why don't Essex highways deal with the spring under the road prior to repair.

A. The Clerk stated he regularly reports the road condition to Essex Highways through the website and the more complaints they receive the more likely proper attention will be given to the issues there. The road has been re-laid in Spellbrook Lane East at the crossing and it may be that the Station Road crossing may be next.

***Action** – The Mayor to write to Essex Highways regarding the condition of the road at the rail crossing on Station Road.

***Update** 5/4/2023 Email sent to Peter Massey (Head of Highways, Essex County Council) by the Clerk and the Mayor Cllr Rattey copied in requesting a permanent road repair is made at this location.

Q. Is there monitoring equipment for pollution related to the high volume of traffic through the town.

A. The Clerk stated the council is aware and members are looking at an anti-idling campaign and handheld testing equipment is being delivered for use initially by schools. The readings can be collated and forwarded to the County Council to identify the issues and address them accordingly.

Q. What is happening to West Road as the current road is in an appalling condition.

A. Many complaints are received regarding this location and Councillors are addressing matters almost daily. Time has been spent to liaise with developers and Highways and local community members are encouraged to liaise with their councillors to raise concerns which they can take forward in their role. The A1184 and West Road junction will be upgraded at the conclusion of the development and it is hoped West Road would be also.

Q. Will any money be made available for local sports clubs from the developments in the town.

A. The money from the developments has been earmarked for different projects in the town and sports club representatives are

encouraged to liaise with councillors to ensure their voices are heard. Cllr Eric Buckmaster highlighted that there are issues with the money being received from developers as the costs of materials and labour

Q. How do we contact our councillors.

A. The Clerk stated that emails for individual councillors are on the website and messages can be forwarded from staff in the town council offices.

Members of the public can also attend town council meetings and ask questions which are recorded and actioned from these.

Q. With the development of the Gilston site will money be invested in health provision.

A. Cllr Eric Buckmaster raised that Ruth Buckmaster objected to the current development due to the low level of funding on health provision but the plans were passed.

Q. How has this meeting been promoted as I have lived in the town for years and wasn't aware of it.

A. The clerk stated that he sent out requests to more organisations this year, advertised on the council website and placed posters up. He hopes that people attending will also promote the meeting and over the next two years develop the meeting with the community speaking more about the successes in the town.

Q. I am concerned regarding the recent climate change weather conditions and how messages re flooding are promoted.

A. The Clerk explained the recent flooding was region wide and not just related to the Sawbridgeworth infrastructure.

Q. Do Councillors ask the drainage companies to maintain the infrastructure.

A. The Clerk stated that councillors do liaise with departments and companies. The Mayor and Clerk met with the local water provider following the burst main at the end of Bell Street. This has opened better communication lines so we are aware of the closures and reasons behind them. Cllr Buckmaster has liaised with contractors to the South of the Town and it is sometimes a capacity of the system that cannot cope or maintenance issues where drains will need clearing.

Q. Who is responsible for the paths as regularly they flood in West Road and mud has appeared in Station Road.

A. The Clerk responded that Highways are responsible for paths as well as roads and the Rangers did clear the mud the other week due to the danger it posed but regular complaints should be recorded on line with the highways department.

Q. What has happened to the bin at the exit to the Bell Street car

park

A. The Towns Project Manager stated a new one is waiting to get fitted as one was fitted but complaints were received due to its position. This has been discussed and the position agreed and contractors will complete the work soon.

There being no other questions the Mayor closed the meeting and thanked everyone for attending. This was met with a round of applause.

The Annual Town Meeting closed at 8:15pm