



# SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

**Annual Town Meeting  
Monday 8th April 2024, 7.30pm  
The Town Hall Saffron Walden**

Saffron Walden Electors  
& members of press are welcome to attend

The Town Hall  
Market Place  
Saffron Walden  
CB10 1HZ

Tel: 01799 516501



## **Notice of Public Meeting – Annual Town Meeting**

The Annual Town Meeting for Saffron Walden and hosted by Saffron Walden Town Council will be held in The Town Hall, Saffron Walden on:

**Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 commencing at 7.30pm**

**Saffron Walden Electors  
& members of press are welcome to attend.**

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### **Facilities for people with disabilities**

The Council Offices has facilities for wheelchair users, including lifts and toilets.

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### **For information about this meeting please contact the Town Council:**

Telephone: 01799 516501 / Email: [enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk)

General Enquiries – Saffron Walden Town Council Offices, The Town Hall, Market Place, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HZ | Website: [www.saffronwalden.gov.uk](http://www.saffronwalden.gov.uk)

### **Recording of meetings**

Meetings will be recorded where possible and practicable to do so.

### **General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018:**

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Councillor Heather Asker, Town Mayor  
26 March 2024

1	<b>Apologies for absence</b> - To receive apologies for absence
2	<b>Minutes</b> - To verify the minutes of the previous Town Meeting held on 14 <sup>th</sup> March 2023.
3	<b>Mayor's Annual Report</b> Report to be received and presented.
4	<b>Annual Reports by Chairs of Committee's</b> Reports to be received and presented, these being: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Assets &amp; Services – Cllr Hawke-Smith</li> <li>b) Finance &amp; Establishment – Cllr de Vries</li> <li>c) Planning &amp; Transport – Cllr Hawke-Smith</li> </ul>
5	<b>Community Reports</b> To receive presentations from Community Groups who have received grant funding or support from Saffron Walden Town Council in 2023/24, to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Citizens Advice</li> <li>b) Uttlesford Community Travel</li> <li>c) Mayor's Charities Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project</li> <li>d) Royal British Legion</li> <li>e) Uttlesford Food Bank</li> <li>f) Round Table Fireworks</li> <li>g) Saffron Walden Initiative</li> <li>h) *Elmo Miniatures</li> <li>i) *Musical Theatre</li> </ul> <p>*(these groups send their apologies for attendance but provided written reports attached)</p>
6	<b>Questions from Electors</b> Electors who have questions or proposals for discussion at the meeting are requested to submit them in writing to the offices of Saffron Walden Town Council, The Town Hall Market Street, Saffron Walden, CB10 1HZ or via email to <a href="mailto:enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk">enquiries@saffronwalden.gov.uk</a>  Questions from Saffron Walden electors may still be taken from the floor at the meeting and a response to those may be supplied at a later date, allowing the Council opportunity to provide an informed response.
7	<b>Closing from the Mayor</b> On conclusion of the Annual Town Meeting, attendees are invited to join the Mayor and Councillors for light refreshments.

## SAFFRON WALDEN TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES of the SAFFRON WALDEN ANNUAL TOWN MEETING held in the TOWN HALL,  
SAFFRON WALDEN on **Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023** at 7.30pm

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**Date of meeting:** Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> March 2023 at 7.30pm in the Town Hall, Saffron Walden

**Present:** The Mayor Cllr de Vries (Chair);

SWTC Councillors: Eke, Fairhurst, Gadd, Light, Millward and Roberts;

SWTC Officers: Town Clerk, Committee Clerk and Operations Supervisor Carl Foster  
and approximately 30 members of the public including representatives of the community groups.

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1	<p><b>Apologies for absence</b></p> <p>Apologies were accepted from: Saffron Walden Library, Uttlesford Community Travel, Thaxted Carver Scouts, The Diamonds and Cllrs Asker, Coote, Freeman, Frost, Gregory, Hawke-Smith, McLellan, Porch and Toy.</p>
2	<p><b>Minutes</b></p> <p>The minutes of the previous Town Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> April 2022 were approved and signed by the Mayor.</p>
3	<p><b>Mayor's Annual Report</b></p> <p>The Mayor, Cllr de Vries spoke further to his written report (attached to the agenda) noting it has been an exciting and busy year for Saffron Walden including; lockdown and covid restrictions easing, adoption of the neighbourhood plan, installation of 20mph in the town centre and several significant civic events with the Platinum Jubilee, the death of Queen Elizabeth II, the proclamation of King Charles III and the upcoming coronation. The Mayor noted it has been an honour and pleasure to be the Mayor and attend several events.</p>
4	<p><b>Annual Reports by Chairs of Committee's</b></p> <p>The following reports were presented:</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a) Assets &amp; Services</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">Cllr Gadd spoke further to the Cllr McLellan's written report (attached to the agenda) in his absence. It was noted SWTC has purchased Natwest Bank and is carrying out a significant refurbishment; the new play equipment at Anglo-American Playing Fields</p>

	<p>will be opened in April; and thanks was passed to all the SWTC staff for providing various free or reduced costs events for families which are always well received.</p> <p>b) Finance &amp; Establishment Cllr Millward spoke further to her written report (attached to the agenda) noting the finance committee has re-launched its grant funding scheme and encouraged community groups to read the guidance to see if SWTC can provide support. Thanks was passed to the SWTC officers for their support.</p> <p>c) Planning &amp; Transport Cllr Gadd spoke further to Cllr Hawke-Smith’s written report (attached to the agenda) in his absence. It was noted the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan was adopted in 2022 which has been hugely beneficial already in responding to planning applications in Saffron Walden and thanks was passed to the Committee Clerk for her support.</p>
5	<p><b>Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan</b></p> <p>The Mayor passed on his thanks to the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan Working Group volunteers for their tremendous efforts in preparing the plan which was formally adopted in 2022. The Mayor also thanked the Chair of the group Mike Hibbs for integral support and presented him with a glass engraved paper weight on behalf of Saffron Walden Town Council.</p> <p>Attendees gave a round of applause for the group.</p>
6	<p><b>Saffron Walden Warm Hub</b></p> <p>The Mayor passed on his thanks to Churches Together Saffron Walden volunteers, who have been running the successful free warm welcome hub in collaboration with Saffron Walden Town Council. It was noted attendance has been increasing weekly and John Capper was thanked for arranging the rota.</p>
7	<p><b>Community Reports</b></p> <p>Representatives of the below Community Groups presented further to their written reports.</p> <p>a) Royal British Legion Michael Birnie thanked all involved in the annual Remembrance Day parade, noting more fundraising is being organised to provide the band.</p> <p>b) Saffron Walden Initiative Jacqui Portway and Peter Riding noted SWI has been running for 20 years and is very grateful for the continued support, particularly for the annual dance in the square and late-night shopping.</p> <p>c) Heritage Development Group</p>

Judith Rodden noted the successful Saffron Day event that took place last October and installation of the interpretation board alongside the Town Hall.

d) Essex Police

Tammy Blest explained since joining the fraud team she has been raising safety awareness with residents via events and with local banks.

e) The Diamonds

Claire Neale passed her apologies but thanked the Town Council for the awarded grant monies which allowed the Diamonds to host a fundraising event.

f) Walden Wombles

Chris Dodge explained the volunteer group began during lockdown and meet monthly to carry out litter picks in the town and the group is looking at ways to assign areas to smaller groups of people.

g) Saffron Walden Museum

Carolyn Wingfield noted the museum is looking at new events and is grateful for the collaborative approach for town events with the Town Council and business in development group.

h) Saffron Walden Choral Society

Stephanie Emberson and Christine Hall explained the choral group has been running for 140 years and is grateful for the Town Council's support.

i) Accuro

Alison McKeown thanked the Mayor for choosing Accuro as one of his chosen charities, the monies will support families of all ages.

j) Saffron Hall

Graham King thanked the Town Council for its support during the summer for its performances and activities for the production of Alice and Wonderland.

k) Saffron Walden Library

Stephanie Pemberton passed on apologies but passed on thanks from the library for the collaborative support with the Town Council.

l) Support for Sight

Masuma Ali and Sharon Schaffer thanked the Mayor for choosing Support for Sight as one of his chosen charities noting the funding will support its services.

m) Uttlesford Community Travel

Passed on their apologies but thanked the Town Council for their ongoing support noting membership has increased.

n) Thaxted Carver Scouts

Passed on their apologies but thanked the Town Council for the recently awarded grant.

The Mayor noted an additional report was provided by Saffron Walden Musical Theatre Company which thanked the Town Council for its recently awarded grant.

Citizen's Advice also attended and volunteer Barbra Wilcox thanked the Mayor for choosing Citizen's Advice as his third charity noting the demand on the service is always increasing.

### Questions from Electors

Mr Simon Trimnell attended the meeting and submitted a question prior to the meeting, the following question was read out by the Town Clerk:

*Fully accessible Changing Places Toilets are essential for more than a quarter of a million people across the UK. They are different from standard accessible toilets as they provide extra equipment (a bench and a hoist) and space to allow disabled people to use the toilet in safety and comfort.*

*Currently we have none of these facilities in the town*

*This makes it very difficult to enjoy a day out in saffron Walden especially for events like the carnival etc, it means a lot of families with disabled adults or children have to go home for changing. I know a lot of local families that also face this issue regularly, and I know it would be very well used. Currently there are no Changing Places facilities in the Uttlesford District, and with the purchase by Saffron Walden town council of there new property in the market square maybe we could now find some space for this well needed facility.*

The Town Clerk thanked Mr Trimnell for submitting the question prior because research can be carried out prior and answered the question noting:

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- There are no publicly accessibly changing places toilets (CPT) in the district, however there are CPT's available at Lord Butler and Great Dunmow Leisure Centres, but these are unfortunately not publicly accessible.
- Currently the minimum building regulations of 2010 requirements do not include CPT, a CPT include hoists and adjustable basins, benches, rails and/or toilets. The Government however is looking at changing the building regulation standards to make CPT a compulsory requirement.
- Government recently carried out a public consultation regarding CPT regulations and usages and the findings suggested CPT cannot typically be used when the venue is closed, therefor, a publicly accessible CPT would be a better option. The existing public toilets at Hill Street would therefore prove a better location (rather than the former Natwest Bank).
- The equipment costs (excluding connection / refurbishment works) are roughly £12,000 - £17,000. These costs are not currently available in the 2023/24 budget however it could be considered in the future by Council. The monies could also be sought via S106 funding via the District Council.

Mr Trimnell thanked the Town Clerk for her response.  
No other questions from the public were raised.

9	<p><b>Closing from the Mayor</b></p> <p>The Mayor thanked everyone for their time and the Town Clerk and Town Council staff for their ongoing efforts.</p> <p>The Mayor invited attendees for refreshments and closed the meeting.</p>
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**Meeting Closed 8.30pm**





## **Annual Parish Meeting – 8 April 2024 Mayor's Report Cllr Heather Asker**

It has been my privilege to be made Mayor of our fine Town for an unusual third term and I am honored to have had the support of a diligent and thoughtful team of dedicated Councillors and Officers.

The Town Council continues to strive to provide an excellent range of services to our residents whilst operating against adverse weather conditions, such as the recent heavy rains, and rising costs of materials and external services. Our appreciation goes to our Operations Team for their hard work in maintaining our wonderful gardens and assets.

We debate and consider our options of best practice to be efficient and encompassing to the needs of our Town.

Our remit of responsibilities covers various open spaces, the Cemetery, Public Conveniences, Bridge End Gardens, the Town Hall, Golden Acre Community Centre, the Market - amongst other things. We thank our dedicated Tourist Information Centre team for their continued excellent public service.

The Council has recently agreed to take over the running of the Jubilee Hub in Jubilee Gardens from UDC and is working closely with Enterprise East and UCAN to provide a range of services and activities to the local community throughout the week. Our Town Clerk, Lisa Courtney, has led on this and other projects which support the Council's priorities.

Whilst running her day-to-day activities, I would like to congratulate Lisa on completion of her Community Governance Degree, helping Saffron Walden Town Council achieve Quality Gold Status, a rare and prized award, be in the final 5 of Best Town Clerk of the year and looking forward to her invitation to visit Buckingham Palace Garden Party

Saffron Walden Town Council is committed to supporting those locally who provide support and services to those most in need, this includes Citizens Advice and the Foodbank.

Our Operations Manager, Terry Frostick, has worked tirelessly overseeing the transition and works to the old Nat West Bank and we look forward to seeing new tenants moving in very soon. This has been a major project and once again, the Officers and Councillors have worked together to create a new resource to benefit the Town for the future.

With the support of Claire Haddock and Colette Kerr we have started a range of trial markets to support independent craftsmen and traders and prospective young entrepreneurs to market their products and services. So far these have been met with great success and we look forward to encouraging the next generation of business start-ups. We were able to provide a range of free or low-cost community events have been enjoyed by residents and visitors, including the manmade Beach on the Common!

Our Town Hall and Bridge End Gardens continue to be popular for weddings and public events, offering beautiful surroundings to celebrate or be entertained.

The Mayoral role comes with many opportunities to welcome visitors and last August we hosted a welcome return for the Burgermeister of Bad Wildungen, Ralf Gutheil and some of his colleagues. I am happy to announce Ralf has been re-elected for another term, somewhat longer than our 1 year in office!

I have enjoyed meeting lots of new and old residents from our glorious town at numerous events. The Christmas lights switch on was stunning, despite a brief hiccup with the meter! Maud, the Mayoral Spaniel, has rolled over for belly rubs for the children and accompanied me on the Christmas day visits to the Hospital and care homes to the delight of patients and residents and thoroughly enjoyed the Lighting of the Christmas tree at St Mary's Church.

I am proud to have supported our Remembrance Day Parade, events at Saffron Hall in aid of Dementia and various concerts by SWCHS and take part in supporting the launch of new business GR8 Tool Hire and the re-launch of Specsavers expanding business.

My charitable support this year is for Fairycroft House and the Youth Outreach Project which celebrates it's 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. I have been moved by funds raised to date, but there's always room for more. Before my tenure ends, I am organising two more events at the Town Hall and Fairycroft and I look forward to seeing many of you there to help me support these two very worthwhile and amazing charities! Thanks for a third time from me to the mayoral secretary Elaine Baynes for her support in the organizing of these events.



**Annual Parish Meeting – 8 April 2024**  
**Assets & Services Committee**  
**from Cllr Patrick Hawke-Smith (Deputy Chair)**

The Assets & Services (A&S) Committee meets monthly to oversee and support the Town Council's officers in managing the properties and other assets of the Council and delivering services to the town's residents and visitors.

### **Assets**

The Council's assets include some key buildings, notably the Town Hall and the adjoining 3-5 Market Place (the former NatWest bank), and now the Jubilee Hub (the former Garden Rooms); also the Golden Acre community centre. We also maintain some important public open spaces: the Common, Bridge End Garden and Jubilee Garden, the Cemetery, the Anglo-American playing fields and the Battle ditches, as well as playing fields like those at Herbert's farm, Crabtrees and Little Walden, and some of the town's allotments.

Not least among our assets is the market place at the heart of Saffron Walden, with its thriving twice-weekly market, which is one of the jewels in the crown of our community and brings in crowds from across the town and far and wide. With thanks to Claire Haddock, the bookings officer, who supports traders in booking pitches. More recently she has successfully arranged additional pop up markets, working alongside schools and Uttlesford District Council in supporting new traders, this project has utilised awarded UK Shared Prosperity Funding.

Significant progress has been made over the course of the year in numerous areas. Some outstanding examples follow:

- Building works at 3-5 Market Place are nearing completion. These will convert the former bank into new offices for Town Council staff, flats to be let to local residents at reasonable rents, and a much-anticipated ground-floor retail outlet. We look forward to this landmark building being brought fully back to life and creating benefit for the Council and the town.
- Further improvement has been made to the Town Hall by the installation of a new lift to assist with mobility.
- The refurbishment of the playpark at the Anglo-American fields, to provide new equipment suitable for all ages, has been completed and is being enjoyed by children and families. With thanks to the Operations Manager and Deputy Town Clerk for progressing this project with the working group.
- With thanks to the assistance of District Councillor Chloe Fiddy, the public open space at Well Green Close has been adopted by the Town Council and will remain available for the use of local residents.

- An extended lease has been obtained for the Jubilee Hub, reviving this valuable community asset. The Town Council has moved quickly to improve its services by developing a partnership with other community bodies and enact a full schedule of activities in the Hub. With huge thanks to the Town Clerk for progressing this project and liaising with Uttlesford District Council in obtaining and extending the lease.

## Services

In the middle ground between its Assets and Services functions, the Town Council puts a great deal of work into maintaining its properties, especially public open spaces, in order to keep them as attractive and available venues for events and activities. It then plays an active role in drawing members of the public into these venues by helping put on a programme of engaging and accessible events.

Let us pay tribute to the Council's Operations team, led by Terry Frostick, for all the work they do, often unseen and unsung, to keep our buildings and facilities spick and span, and our parks and gardens green and flourishing.

Then we should recognise the contribution of Colette Kerr, the Events and Activities Officer, in helping organise a wide range of events and securing financial support for them to keep them affordable for all residents and disadvantaged groups in particular. She and her colleagues have established a regular programme of events to make the most of our facilities like the Common, the market place and the Jubilee Garden: these include school holiday and half-term activities like the summertime beach, Christmas festivities such as the magical lantern parade and lights switch-on, and free concerts in the bandstand to suit all musical tastes. On behalf of the Town Council, Colette is highly dedicated to our work with other partners to run a strong Youth Club in Saffron Walden.

Special events over the past year have included:

- Celebrations to mark the King's Coronation in May;
- A successful town twinning visit from our opposite numbers in Bad Wildungen, Germany;
- A well-observed memorial for HMS Lapwing, the Royal Navy ship supported by Saffron Walden during the Second World War.

Finally, I would like to pay a personal tribute to one of Saffron Walden Town Council's key services – the Tourist Information Centre. During what has been a challenging year, amidst change and uncertainty, the TIC team have continued to provide their usual warm welcome and excellent service to all visitors.



**Annual Parish Meeting – 8 April 2024  
Finance and Establishment Committee  
from Cllr James de Vries (Committee Chair)**

The Finance and Establishment Committee oversees the management of the Town Council's finance, and the "Establishment" element covers staffing and resourcing matters.

**Finance**

The committee approved the 2024/25 budget with a 6% increase in November 2023 which was subsequently approved by Full Council.

The budget includes a carried forward figure from 2023/24 of circa £44,000.00. This money largely arising from increased revenue in 2023/24 following a fantastic year of bookings, activities and events for which we are very grateful to the continuous and committed efforts of our Town Councill officers and staff.

The budget also assumes receipt of bank interest of £55,000.00 following an amendment to the Town Council Investment Policy.

The committee has also overseen the purchase and refurbishment of Nos 3 and 5 Market Place. Town Council officers and staff have now moved into the upstairs offices which are connected to the Town Hall and a long term tenant is now preparing to occupy the ground floor of both units.

**Small Grants & Hall Hire:** The Town Council have awarded a number of grants and free of charge Town Hall hire to a variety of local community groups. As well as granting free use of The Common and Bridge End Gardens to community and charitable groups.

**TIC:** the income from the TIC has maintained its rise and has again this year exceeded expectations with a notable rise in both shop sales and tickets sales. This year also saw the introduction of the Food Tours events, which after only running for a few short months has already brought in £2,159.00 in additional income to the TIC.

**Establishment**

F&E have reviewed a number of policies and procedures in 2023/2024 including the Access to Information Policy, Privacy Policy, Reserves Policy, Menopause Guidelines and the Investment Policy (allowing the RFO to invest up to One Million Pounds).

Following the substantial increase in income relating to bookings and events, the Town Council has this year employed a small number of casual staff to support the running of the extensive series of events which have been put on this year.

The Town Council also received for the third year in a row 'Gold Status' for its HR management and systems, leadership and administration of employment matters.

Lisa Courtney, Town Clerk of Saffron Walden Town Council was nominated top five clerks of the year by the National Association Local Councils and the ceremony was held in the House of Lords. Lisa has also been invited to the Buckingham Palace Garden Party 2024.

## **Summary**

It has been an extraordinary privilege to Chair the F&E Committee for the past year, and I would like to formally thank the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Responsible Finance Officer as well as all Town Council officers and staff for their monumental efforts towards our lovely town.



**Annual Parish Meeting – 8 April 2024**  
**Planning & Transport Committee**  
**Chair's Report – from Cllr Patrick Hawke-Smith**

The Planning and Transport (P&T) Committee meets twice a month as standard and sometimes once, depending on level of business. It has met nineteen times since the last Annual Parish Meeting in March 2023. In that time, it has reviewed 195 planning applications, an average of ten per meeting. As well as planning applications, which provide much of our work, we consider other planning matters affecting Saffron Walden, especially major new developments and policy changes, and transport issues, such as highway maintenance, traffic management and balancing the needs of different transport-users.

## **Planning**

As the Town Council is a statutory consultee, the Planning and Transport Committee has the opportunity to comment on all planning applications within our parish area. Some applications are for major new developments and produce hundreds of documents with thousands of pages; most are more modest and might only involve plans for a new house porch. Planning applications are ultimately determined by Uttlesford District Council (UDC) as the local planning authority, or in some cases by Government-appointed Planning Inspectors. However, SWTC's comments are given due weight in the decision-making process, especially since the Saffron Walden Neighbourhood Plan (SWNP) was adopted in 2022.

For example, at the North Shire Hill site, developers Redrow have been obliged to change the location of the play areas, away from the main road and closer to the new houses and green spaces, to comply with our Neighbourhood Plan policies.

The Town Council often takes responsibility for public open spaces and other amenities or benefits associated with new developments. So, we seek appropriate 'Section 106' contributions from the developers and maintain a list of initiatives that we want to pursue with such support. We work closely with UDC and its enforcement officers to oversee the progress of construction works and make sure conditions are met and contributions paid on time. Monthly meetings are held between P&T Committee members, Town Council staff and UDC officers, to discuss significant applications affecting Saffron Walden.

We are presently seeking to maintain access for local residents and others to the development site south of the town and west of Thaxted Road, next to the 'Green Mile'. SWTC has submitted a request for this access to be recognised by a Public Right of Way (PROW) order.

As a final example of the work of the P&T Committee this year, we have clarified our policy on street-naming, agreeing that new names should recognise historic local features or previous field names, or past notable individuals associated with Saffron Walden. We have been keen to encourage more diverse recognition and so were

pleased that Kitty Wilson Court has been adopted, as well as Bawden Crescent, Erskine Place and Lucas Mews.

## **Transport**

Saffron Walden Town Council has a policy of promoting sustainable transport and in particular encouraging people to walk and cycle in and around our town. As Essex County Council (ECC) is the ultimate highways agency, the P&T Committee and SWTC work closely with ECC, and UDC as the planning authority, to improve our local sustainable transport infrastructure and make a practical difference to residents traveling around the town by different means. We have benefited from the commitment and leadership of Councillor Paul Gadd as a P&T member, SWTC Leader and of course our County Councillor.

Our policy has helped create a 20mph zone in the town centre to control traffic, improve safety and encourage cycling especially. We are also currently witnessing the permanent extension of the pavements along George Street to accommodate pedestrians. We continue to press ECC to maintain the roads, create new crossing points near schools and in other sensitive locations, and implement their own policies on encouraging cycling through better infrastructure.

We welcome the much enhanced bus services in Saffron Walden and across Uttlesford, with expanded timetables, new vehicles and even real-time information displays, and will monitor the situation to ensure these are maintained.

Finally, SWTC was delighted to help promote Uttlesford's Summer of Cycling by hosting a World Bicycle Day and 'learn to ride' event. This followed on from the start of the Ride London cycle race in Saffron Walden on 26 May 2023, as the world's top female riders were flagged away by our Town Mayor, Councillor Heather Asker.



## Citizens Advice - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024

### Uttlesford Citizens Advice

March 2024



Uttlesford Citizens Advice is a local charity that aims to empower residents, helping them to solve problems and find a way forward. Our service is free, confidential and independent. Our support helps people to:

- understand their rights and responsibilities;
- overcome digital barriers;
- budget;
- talk - we often advocate for them with 3rd parties;
- take practical steps to improve their situations

We provide general advice in housing, benefits, immigration, community care, relationship and consumer law. Our volunteer advisers support homeless clients and people who need our help following violence, abuse or discrimination. In addition, we have teams of specialists who cover the following areas:

- Debt
- Disability Benefits
- Energy efficiency and fuel poverty
- Welfare support for cancer patients and their families, funded by Macmillan Cancer Support

#### **In 2023:**

- We helped 708 unique clients from Saffron Walden: 314 resident in Shire Ward, 206 in Castle Ward and 188 from Audley Ward. Many used our service more than once for help to deal with 3,105 separate issues.
- 1,235 of these issues related to benefits; this reflects the lack of a job centre in Uttlesford.
- 341 issues related to utilities – clients worried about being able to afford their utility bills and looking for ways to become more energy efficient.
- 371 issues related to debt. Fuel debts were the most common issue, followed by council tax arrears, 'other' debts and credit card debts. 81 issues related to financial capability, where we help a client with budgeting, or income maximisation.

- We helped Saffron Walden residents with 238 housing issues; 24 were actual homelessness issues and 14 were people threatened with homelessness. (Homelessness in Uttlesford is largely 'hidden'. We are less likely to see people sleeping in the streets; instead we know people are sofa surfing, taking shelter in churches or barns and sleeping in cars or vans.)
- 54% of Saffron Walden clients described themselves as having a disability or long-term health condition (472 elected to answer this question). 58 clients had a mental health condition or learning difficulty.
- 85 clients were under the age of 30; 179 were over the age of 60.
- Our specialist team of disability benefits experts helped 149 residents to apply for Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance, bringing an additional £451,292 income into the town. Residents generally use this extra money to cover utility bills, pay for help around the home, to buy mobility aids or pay for transport to appointments. 18 residents received highly specialised support to appeal a poor decision by DWP.
- Our Energy Specialists provided casework support to 76 residents who were struggling with high fuel bills, poor energy efficiency or cold and damp homes., achieving almost £25,305 in extra benefits, emergency fuel payments and grants for energy efficient improvements to their homes.
- Our Macmillan welfare benefits team supported 13 residents newly diagnosed with cancer, helping them with benefit applications and signposting them to a range of other local support services.
- We continued to work extensively with Uttlesford Foodbank, clothing and baby banks and local trusts and funds and helped 132 Saffron Walden residents access food parcels, gas and electricity top ups and emergency funds to enable them to heat their homes, travel to essential appointments, pay for prescriptions and medical supplies and access grants for essential household items.
- We took part in several social media campaigns, promoting action around consumer awareness, migration from legacy benefits to Universal Credit, scam awareness, hate crime, mental health awareness, carers' week, energy saving, volunteers week and the cost of living crisis. We participated in the town's late night shopping event, joined UCAN's volunteer showcase, held an open afternoon for 'Big Help Out Day' and invited other local services to join us for a thought provoking presentation from Dr John Ford on building more equitable communities.

## **Client Feedback**

A quarterly client satisfaction survey is undertaken by the national body of Citizens Advice on our behalf. The Results and analysis are reported to the Council on a quarterly basis and to our Trustee Board with recommendations,

where appropriate, which are incorporated into the Business and Development Plan.

Of the 312 clients surveyed over the last year, 92% said that our advisers helped them to find a way forward with their issue; 95% said that they were able to access our service without difficulty; 82% said that we had resolved their problem and 92% would recommend our service to family or friends. 70% of clients reported feeling less stressed, depressed or anxious after seeking advice from us and 92% said they could not have resolved their problem without our help.

Please find below a selection of the comments made by clients taking part in the latest survey:

*"Everyone I have had contact with has been wonderful, my last visit was with Sarah who spent time with me and patiently waiting on the phone to the tax man ! She explained to me the result perfectly. I was so glad I went to Citizens Advice, without Sarah and Citizens Advice I would have sat stressing and worrying. All was resolved on my visit."*

*"From the beginning, the advice given was excellent, perfectly explained in terms I recognised and was advised fairly and helped and supported where needed. The same person kept regular and appropriate contact throughout and responded to any queries I had. Without them I'm not sure I would have been able to understand or complete the forms I needed to. Case still in progress but the help from CAB has been invaluable - thank you for all you do, every person that is involved in CAB should be incredibly proud of themselves and I recommended them to several people in my situation."*

*"Citizens Advice has been a great help to me over the years. I appreciate all the hard work and compassion they have towards helping people. They helped me get through some very tough times in my life and they are always on board to give a solution."*

*"If I had not and continued to have support from CAB, I honestly don't think I would be here. That's how much the help, support and advice I've been given means to me and my family."*

## **Looking forward**

As the economic situation continues to impact on our clients' ability to afford essential household expenditure, demand for budgeting help, income maximisation and emergency support is increasing. Data for 5 key advice issues specifically linked to the cost-of-living crisis (energy debts, council tax arrears, food banks and charitable support, energy issues and issues relating to Personal

Independence Payment), shows a 35% increase in our workload around this area (comparing Dec to Nov year on year).

Demand for our service is at its highest ever level, however additional funding that was available through covid and in 23-24 related to the cost of living crisis has been withdrawn. Whilst we continually look at ways of reducing barriers to our service whilst remaining cost-effective and our staff and volunteers work tirelessly to meet demand, lower income and inflating costs are already placing constraints on our ability to meet the local need for advice. Unless we can increase our income for the forthcoming year, we will need to cut back on the level of staffing that supports the work we do.

As the only local charity providing a holistic support service for residents affected by the cost of living crisis, we are therefore asking the council to consider increasing our funding allocation to £15,000 for the financial year 2024-25.

## **Uttlesford Community Travel - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

### **Brief Overview**

We would like to thank Saffron Walden Town Council for their continued support during 2023/24, UCT's 27<sup>th</sup> year of providing a service to the community.

Over time it has become more evident just how much reliance has been placed on UCT to support with the transport needs of the residents of Saffron Walden and to help commerce of Saffron Walden by transporting members into local shopping facilities, our service also gives confidence and reassurance to those who otherwise would not be able to travel or attend local functions enabling them to get out and about and help Prevent social isolation.

All services, Book-a-Ride, Group and Hospital Car have seen an increase in growth due to the lack of commercial transport support within the district.

Membership both Individuals and groups have increased, Membership numbers are recorded for individuals at 974, with groups at 87.

We aim to end and finalise 2023/24 by having carried out 34,800 passenger journeys covering 93,229 miles.

To enable UCT to function we also have a team of volunteers, both drivers and office staff who give freely of their time, when equated at a commercial rate will work out to the value of £150,568 for 2023/24.

UCT has two fully accessible minibuses located permanently in Saffron Walden, allocated with two drivers and nine volunteer hospital car drivers who help with medical related appointments.

With demand and the increase in new developments moving forward to 2024/25 more flexibility and different working practices must be investigated, along with increased funding and longer-term agreements to secure the future of UCT for another 25 years.

**Mayor's Charity - Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

Prepared by Michael Hibbs, Chairman, the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project

The Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project is a Registered Charity, set up in 1994 to provide services to the young people of Saffron Walden. The Charity has done many things over the years – some may remember the Drop In centre in the High Street. Currently the Charity provides a Youth Club on Wednesday and Friday evenings, in partnership with Essex County Council and Saffron Walden Town Council.

The Youth Club is held in the modern County Council building behind Faircroft House, and shares premises with other youth groups in the town. Facilities include a snooker table, air hockey, table tennis and board games.

The project employs three trained youth workers, and also benefits from a number of dedicated volunteers who bring their own skills, including arranging pizza nights.

In addition to the Youth Club, the charity has provided a very popular course on self defence for young people, and has carried out a number of outreach activities.

The Charity gratefully acknowledges the financial contribution made by Saffron Walden Town Council, via a Service Level Agreement, and also the support of Essex County Council who also provide the premises for the Youth Club, and Uttlesford District Council.

Finally I should like to thank Cllr Asker, for making us one of her Mayoral Charities. Her continuing support over the years has been invaluable, and is particularly appreciated because the Youth Outreach Project was originally set up as a result of a Mayoral Appeal.

Michael Hibbs  
6<sup>th</sup> March 2024

## **Royal British Legion - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

The Royal British Legion, is a charity that provides financial, social and emotional support to members and veterans of the British Armed Forces, their families and dependants. At Branch level we are able to guide people to the Veterans Gateway which is there as a first point of contact and will assist people to get the type of support they need.

The Saffron Walden Branch focuses on the Annual Poppy Appeal which raises the funds required to allow the Legion to carry out this support. We also support the Town Council in the Organisation and Completion of the annual Remembrance Day Parade.

We are always ready to take the Branch Standard to the funerals of ex serviceman who pass away in the local area as a mark of respect and the Branch secures the services of a Band for the Remembrance Parade which improves an already fantastic spectacle.

The Grant from the Council went towards the Transport costs for the ATC Band which comes from Woolwich.

Thank you  
Michael Birnie

## Uttlesford Food Bank - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024



### Context:

Saffron Walden Town Council awarded Uttlesford Foodbank a grant of £500 to support the provision of fresh food vouchers to people in the Saffron Walden area who were suffering hardship during the Christmas period 2023.

### Organisation and Service:

Uttlesford Foodbank provides parcels of ambient (i.e. able to be stored without the need for refrigeration) food, essential toiletries and household items to residents of Uttlesford who find themselves in crisis and unable to feed themselves or their family. A parcel can consist of between 6 and 12 bags, dependent on the sized of the household, and is designed to last for between 5 and 7 days.

We also aim to provide all our clients with a voucher for a local shop or supermarket in addition to the parcel that we provide. This is to allow them to purchase essential items which we are unable to supply, such as:

- Fresh food and drinks, e.g. bread, milk, eggs etc.
- Baby products such as formula or nappies
- Restricted diet products such as gluten or dairy free, or excluding allergens

N.B. vouchers can only be used in store and are not valid for the purchase of tobacco or alcohol.

### Support Provided with Grant:

Recently we had to take the decision at trustee level to temporarily suspend the provision of vouchers alongside parcels in all but exceptional circumstances, this was due to ongoing financial sustainability concerns. The Town Council's generous grant of £500 allowed us to delay that decision and thus maintain the provision of vouchers to residents in the Saffron Walden area over the Christmas period when demands on people's finances are at a high, particularly within households that include children.

We supported 60 unique households in the Saffron Walden area during December 2023, providing over £900 worth of vouchers, which was substantially funded by your grant. Those 60 households were made up of 208 individuals (114 adults & 94 children).

### Impact Summary:

Without the grant from Saffron Walden Town Council, the foodbank would have most likely had to make the decision to temporarily suspend voucher support for their clients during the Christmas period, thus impacting the level of support provided and therefore the quality of life during the festive season.



## Round Table Fireworks - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Saffron Walden Round Table Update – prepared for SWTC Saffron Walden Round Table (SWRT) is a social group of 18 to 45 year old males. We are one of 284 clubs covering Great Britain and Ireland, organised into regional and local areas and clubs. Our club consists of 21 active members that meet twice monthly and partake in social gatherings, with the aims of furthering friendship, knowledge and to engage in activities to develop our understanding of self, others and our environment. At the heart of Round Table is the raising of funds that are released back into local communities. Each year SWT puts on 3 events, Fireworks Display, Santa Sleigh and an Easter Egg Hunt. These events are open to all and rely on donations from the local public to raise funds and cover expenses. So far this year SWRT has raised Circa £11,000 for Good local causes with an Easter Egg Hunt due to happen on the 31<sup>st</sup> of March. Every 3 years SWRT put on the “8 Day Weekend” or “Carnival” as it sometimes referred to and is due to take place again in the summer of 2025. The last 8-day weekend raised in the region of £30,000 towards good causes and local groups. In the year starting April 2023 SWRT has donated over £25,000 towards the local community. We can only do this due to the help of volunteers, ex Tablers and others donating time, resources and sponsorship. SWRT works in a way that each Table member is liable for any losses an event may incur. This would mean that without the support of SWTC waving costs for venues and supporting us with energy and water requirements. We would start many events in a deeper loss position and this may mean that we either choose to not to an event or scale it back. This mechanism has happened in recent years with Tablers having to personally support the “Big Day Out” which due to extra COVID restrictions ending up making a loss. The support of SWTC has been a symbiotic relationship with Table taking on the running of fireworks from the Town Council. We are grateful for the support we receive of not only the council but the clerks and others who guide us through unfamiliar processes and give up their time to open and close venues for us as well as much more. With the continued support of SWTC, Round Table will continue to put on free and inclusive events for the local community in and around Saffron Walden



## **Saffron Walden Initiative - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

*Proud of the Past - Excited about the Future*

### **TOWN MEETING REPORT March 2024**

The Town Council and UDC have supported the Saffron Walden Initiative in a number of different ways during the past 12 months which has been needed and much appreciated.

The 20<sup>th</sup> free Dance in the Square on August Bank Holiday Saturday featured superb local musicians and was organised by Jacqui Portway and Cindy Whife, backed up by other Initiative volunteers, Tim Atkinson and the Fairycroft House and Town Council teams. District Councillors and the Town Council supported the Dance with grants and sponsorship. Photographs were taken by Martin Porter and Creative Walden made a memorable video.

The 6<sup>th</sup> Winstanley Christmas Shop & Business Windows competition was supported by the Town Council and won by Cole's of King Street. The event was sponsored by Saffron Hall and helped promote the town and what's on offer here. Dominic Davey took the photographs.

The 20<sup>th</sup> Winstanley Late Night Christmas Shopping charity stalls, musical entertainment and food stalls were organised for the Initiative by Jacqui Portway and Cindy Whife and supported and sponsored by Saffron Walden Town Council. The other sponsors were Saffron Hall, Saffron Building Society and Uttlesford District Council. The event was opened by the Mayoress, Cllr Heather Asker, and Town Council staff helped both before and during the evening. The focus of the event was to reignite the legacy of William Winstanley, help as many local charitable organisations as possible and assist the Fairycroft House Young Carers Holiday Fund. A good evening was achieved by all involved.

This year Saffron Walden Initiative organised a 'Write a Song for Christmas' competition. There were 25 entries in all and the standard was high. At the Late Night Shopping event the Mayoress presented Elliott Porter with the winner's certificate. His winning entry 'Christmas in my Heart' was then performed for everyone to enjoy. It became the BBC Cambridge song of the week and was played extensively. Elliot also released a video to accompany the song highlighting Saffron Walden.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Winstanley Christmas House & Gardens competition was a morale booster for the town, sponsored by Saffron Hall. Cindy Whife and Jacqui organised the competition and had much fun discovering people's efforts. Saffron Walden looked glorious all over town.

The Initiative arranged a number of Members only events including tours of Bridge End Garden, Fry Art Gallery, the Waste Water Recycling Centre and also a 20 years anniversary celebration event for Initiative Members.

The Initiative's main objective going forward is to address the needs of the town and promote it and is grateful for the support of the Town and District Councils. We are looking forward to seeing what we can do in 2024.

*Jacqui Portway (Chair)*

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### **Elmo Miniatures - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**

*Saffron Walden Town Council have very kindly lent their support to the Saffron Charity Slam, a wargaming (Warhammer 40,000) event raising money for the Felix Fund – a British Army Veterans charity focussing on soldiers who have had careers in Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) and Search work. Our town hosts the 33 & 35 Engineer Regiments at Carver Barracks. Both regiments have carried out tours of Iraq and Afghanistan.*

*This event is an opportunity to thank our veterans and current personnel for their service in the Armed Forces. There has always been a strong link between the wargaming and forces communities, and we are blessed to have several ex/serving members of the 33 & 35 regularly attending our events.*

*As of the beginning of March 2024, we have raised just over £1,000.00 for the Felix Fund, a really impressive total still almost six weeks out from the main event. We hope to see this total rise and rise over the coming weeks. By allowing us to use the Golden Acre Community Centre for free on the day of the event (14<sup>th</sup> April if anyone wants to come along and see what we're up to!), Saffron Walden Town Council have ensured our costs are kept to a minimum, thereby maximising our final donation. Thank you for the support.*

**Saffron Walden Musical Theatre Company - Report to Saffron Walden Town Council, Annual Meeting on Monday 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024**



**Re: £300 Grant – (Paid to us Dec 2023)**

For those who might be new to the area I would like to introduce us.

The Saffron Walden Musical Theatre Company was established in 1922 and barring a few years during WW2 and then in 2021, due to Covid, we have performed at least one musical theatre production or operetta each year. Back when we started, we were known by our previous name “Saffron Walden Amateur Operatic Society”. Our Youth Group was established in 1976.

We are a member of NODA (National Operatic and Dramatic Association), Region: East, District: 7. We have won many awards over the years, “Best Musical, Best Technical Production”, “Best Youth Production” & “Best Overall Production”. We are proud of our very high standards and we are very well respected locally.

Over the last 100 years, almost every performance has been held in the Town Hall, Our Theatre Company’s “home”.

We applied for a grant in 2022 for our March 2023 production of Sister Act, I believe to use against costumes.

You very kindly granted us £300. However, this was not actually paid until Dec 2023. We used this generous grant against our March production of “All Shook Up” and this year’s costume budget. We needed a lot of 50’s petticoats, leather jackets & blue suede shoes. We sourced the vast majority of these from charity shops, vinted & Ebay! “All Shook Up” ran from 5<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> March to an almost fully sold-out audience.

On behalf of our committee, please accept our sincere thanks for the grant & your support over the years.

Gemma Alexander  
Hon. Chair  
SWMTC  
20.03.2024

**Thank you for attending the 2024  
Annual Town Meeting of  
Saffron Walden Town Council**



**SAFFRON WALDEN  
TOWN COUNCIL**

**On conclusion of the meeting, we invite you to join  
the Mayor and Councillors for light refreshments**