



<b>Committee</b>	Full Council
<b>Month</b>	February 2024
<b>Report Title</b>	Update report to Councillors
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**Agenda item: 11**

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## 1. Summary

Communication is key to any organisation, SWTC is no different.

Regular updates on key activities and priorities are provided to Council and Committee through verbal or written reports and it is acknowledged this is a good means of communicating project updates. It is further recognised that Council would benefit from a broader update on Council activities more generally, not just those focused on specific projects and activities.

This report seeks to provide a general update to Council on activities and events since May 2023, following the formation of the current Council. Moving forward, it is proposed that a general update report is provided to Council on a regular basis, either bi-monthly or quarterly.

This first report is therefore intentionally longer than future reports, as it seeks to summarise activity since May 2023 although it does seek to offer a succinct summary on numerous activities.

## 2. Activity Updates

### 2.1 Nat West Bank

Work is progressing well at the site and all works are due for completion April 2024. The repair and refurbishment works have been complex and time consuming; proving especially challenging given the current economic climate where the cost of materials has risen exponentially. Regular update meetings are held with the WG as a means of monitoring and auditing the process and financial management. The project will come within budget and thanks must be given to Terry Frostick, Operations Manager for his oversight and primary management of this project.

The following matters are noteworthy:

- (a) Officers are to relocate from the Town Hall to the first-floor offices in March 2024;
- (b) The tenancy agreement with a 3<sup>rd</sup> party is progressing well and anticipated they will occupy the premises in April 2024 to start fitting out in preparation for opening in May 2024;
- (c) Works to the 2<sup>nd</sup>/3<sup>rd</sup> floor flats are progressing well and anticipated may be occupied by April 2024;
- (d) Arrangements are in hand with agents regarding letting of the flats, including oversight of a 24-hour management contract.

### 2.2 Splash Park

At the December Full Council meeting, Council determined the core priorities which it wished to progress with the splash park being the second priority, with the completion of the former Nat West Bank building being the top priority. The WG is yet to meet, pending a mutually agreeable date/time to convene. Progression is proposed as:

- (a) WG to meet February/March 2024 (subject to Cllr availability) to review and understand work to date. Notably significant work and research was undertaken in summer 2023 and subsequently postponed, pending confirmation of Council priorities. In the first instance the WG is to review this work and determine any preference.

Material and information researched to date will be shared with WG members prior to the first meeting. This work includes a SWOT analysis of the different types of splash parks and indicative costs for each.

- (b) Terms of reference for the Working Group are being prepared by Officers and will be presented to Council for consideration and adoption in March 2024. The Terms of Reference will provide clear objectives and direction for the WG and will be based upon recommendations of the WG from its first meeting, as per (a) above.

### 2.3 Environmental Initiatives

SWTC adopted a climate change action plan in May 2022 and considerable progress has been made in progressing the Town Council's plan, including:

- (a) Emergency Plan – new process/policy adopted at the January FC meeting which identifies key assets, resources and contacts in the event of an emergency. The emergency plan is a key part of the revised biodiversity legislation/duty and is a primary step forward in the Council's environmental duty.
- (b) Biodiversity duty – a new policy will be presented to the March FC meeting for Councillor consideration. The biodiversity duty places a responsibility upon SWTC to consider its position and actions in supporting biodiversity and open spaces. It is a legal requirement to adopt a policy which outlines Council's intent and support of biodiversity measures. Adoption of this further enables development of the existing plan.
- (c) Climate Change Education – working with UDC as part of the DEFRA funded 'Clean Air' project for Saffron Walden, SWTC has been a key enabler and supporter of local activities, including learn to ride activities, smoothie bikes, Eco activity days and markets, World cycling day.
- (d) Protection of public open space (POS) - as demonstrated through the transfer of land at Wells Green. The POS working group will further identify POS not owned by a local authority and present information to a future Council meeting. This is a lengthy process as evidence must be gained of use of the land, requiring support and input from local users/residents.
- (e) New bird/bat boxes installed in Town Council owned POS.

- (f) Planting of new trees / whips throughout the year (approx. a total of 3000 in total), most recently in December 2023 with kind support from Councillors at Mortimers Gate, SW. Note these trees were provided free of charge using a grant from UDC (applied for by Officers).
- (g) Active reduction of single use packaging at and in Town Council events
- (h) Working in conjunction with SW Community Energy, SWTC has actively progressed the potential of the installation of solar panels at Golden Acre Community Centre; the outcome of this grant application is awaited.
- (i) In summer 2023, SWTC applied to UDC for funding towards a Climate Change Officer post, but this was not successful; climate change progress is therefore being undertaken using existing resources. Notably the UDC funding was not awarded to SWTC as UDC advise they will address many of the initiatives raised by SWTC as part of the DEFRA funded project. SWTC Officers liaise frequently with UDC on this matter and work closely in delivering shared objectives.
- (j) Funding applied for the installation of energy efficient lighting at Crabtrees MUGA (applied to UDC Sports Grant); outcome awaited.
- (k) Reviewed the grass cutting regime and actively working with external organisations such as Essex Wildlife Trust and Centre for Sustainable Energy.
- (l) Terms of reference for the Working Group are being prepared by Officers and will be presented to Council for consideration and adoption in March 2024. The Terms of Reference will provide clear objectives and direction for the WG and will be based upon the existing climate change action plan.

#### 2.4 Jubilee Hub

The lease for occupation was received from UDC in March 2023 and since that date, several 'soft' activities have been initiated and launched.

Key partners include UCAN and Enterprise East. UCAN (Uttlesford Community Action Network) is a local charity whose primary remit is to improve the quality of lives for residents of Uttlesford. UCAN occupy a small office space at the back of the Jubilee Hub and in 'rental' payment oversee and manage the day-to-day activities at the Hub. This includes supporting users with set up, queries and overseeing the activities and site generally. This support negates the need for SWTC to employ a site caretaker/administrator. Enterprise East is a local CiC whose primary remit is to tackle social isolation and employment barriers; their flagship community café is based at Cornell Court.

Regular updates have been provided to the A & S Committee in the past year regarding the projects and activities at Jubilee Hub. There is a full timetable offering a wrap-around, all-inclusive offer to Saffron Walden residents and the community. The offer focuses on care, wellbeing and support for the family with a particular focus on children and young people.

Enterprise East have secured funding for new kitchen equipment and the current equipment is being repaired/replaced as needed. In progressing the kitchen refurbishment, Enterprise East will provide community services, focusing on affordable food provision (note the Jubilee Hub will not become a community café, the service offered is to teach, train and upskill local residents in cooking skills). Enterprise East has successfully gained funding for community cooking activities, and these are fully funded at no cost to SWTC or to the end-user.

Repair works are also underway at Jubilee Hub, some of which are being carried out by UDC (as the landlord) and others by SWTC – this is a partnership approach to ensure that best value is achieved.

In January 2024, the original lease agreement was amended from a 10-year lease to 16 years, expiring 2039. The extension expands opportunities of external grants, including the Community Ownership Fund. SWTC may use and occupy the property for community activity services, fundraising and recreational purposes - and for commercial letting of the house attached to the community area, subject to letting for holiday letting only and specifically excluding long term residential lettings.

With the new lease, potential funding and core SWTC budget funding, work can also now commence on repairing and refurbishing the house which fronts Hill Street. The intention here is to let the property on short-term lets and Officers are progressing this opportunity. Plans have been drawn up and planning permission is awaited. Discussions are also underway with letting agencies who could oversee the lettings on the Council's behalf.

The partnership (SWTC, UCAN and Enterprise East) has applied to the National Lottery Fund for significant funding and have successfully passed the first round of funding (approximately 90% of applications fail this first round). Work is in hand to complete the application to round two, it is anticipated this will be completed by spring 2024.

## 2.5 Events and Activities, including Civic Events

A number of events and activities have been led by SWTC since May 2023, the following is not an exhaustive list but seeks to summarise the key offering:

- (a) School Easter / Summer and holiday activities, including beach on the Common
- (b) Christmas lights switch on, lantern parade and associated activities
- (c) Mental Health awareness campaigns
- (d) Themed markets
- (e) Music on the bandstand, a regular weekly offering during the summer months

- (f) Summer Community Day on the Common, providing the opportunity for local groups/clubs to promote their activities and fund raise (the hosting of this event arose from the successful Community Day in 2022)
- (g) Numerous Mayoral events in the Town Hall
- (h) Support for the Lapwing Memorial Service (March 2023)
- (i) Remembrance Day – SWTC plays the lead role in preparing and managing this event, including significant liaison with the police and security.

Significantly, external funding was sought and secured for many of the activities, including local sponsorship, reducing the reliance and impact on the precept/budget.

## 2.6 Youth Provision

It was agreed at February 2023 Finance meeting that SWTC will continue to support the Saffron Walden Youth Outreach Project (YOP) in the provision of an ongoing annual grant of £10k per annum. The funding is subject to key requirements as set out in the Service Level Agreement being met; namely that YOP has sound plans to provide youth clubs, outreach services and generic youth work for Saffron Walden Youth Provision, and that obligations and key performance indicators, reviewed quarterly are satisfactory. This review on the activities and work carried out each quarter is reported to Assets & Services committee. Officers meet regularly with YOP Trustees and most recently have launched the Youth Consultation 2024 on 5<sup>th</sup> February. The findings, when it closes in March will help to inform the service level agreement for 2024-25 and future direction of funding and of youth provision.

Opportunities are further being explored for youth and/or homework activities at the Jubilee Hub.

## 2.7 Local Government Association (LGA) and NALC (National Association of Local Councils) Review

At the October FC meeting, it was agreed to proceed with the LGA Review.

The LGA and NALC offer the opportunity for large councils to be chosen for a corporate peer review. This is a free service for selected Councils and an update is given in the February FC agenda, noting the need to establish a scoping group amongst Officers and Councillors at SWTC.

## 2.8 Leases

Considerable work has been carried out in reviewing existing leases, along with changing some existing ones in accordance with Council direction. Notably new leases are now in place (and/or being finalised) for Crabtrees, Herberts Farm and the Catons Lane Football Club.

Further work is required in this field in maintaining the Council's responsibilities as landlord and ensuring all tenants comply with any T & C within their tenancy agreements. This is an ongoing piece of work.

## 2.9 Shared Prosperity Fund – new Markets at SW

Following a successful funding bid from UDC (using devolved monies from the Government's Levelling Up Fund), SWTC was awarded £82,000 over 2-years towards running additional markets. The money has been used to pay for both capital products (new gazebos) and resourcing (staffing costs in managing this new project). Two SPF markets have been held to date with a further scheduled for Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> February; this market focuses on providing market and business experience to young traders.

Officer work is not restricted to running/hosting new markets, it also involves working with potential traders, supporting them with business plan, risk assessments, insurance details and the like as well as practical support and advice. SWTC staff are working in partnership with UDC's Economic Development Team in promoting the event(s) to local businesses and students.

## 2.10 Expenditure of S106 Monies

Monies held and/or anticipated include:

£600,000 towards future management and upkeep of POS from Linden Homes

£220,000 towards community facilities from Linden Homes

£120,000 towards community facilities from Bellway Homes

£61,000 towards Contribution for Recreation

(monies awaited, Officers chase on a continuous, regular basis)

The utilisation of the S106 monies is therefore held in abeyance and could be used in delivery of the Council's core priorities, as established at the December FC meeting. This piece of work will form part of a future report and discussion at Committee and/or a Full Council meeting once all S106 variables are identified.

## 2.11 Martyn's Law

Martyn's Law is a new proposed law which will improve protective security and organisational preparedness across the UK by mandating, for the first time, those responsible for certain premises and events to consider the terrorist risk and how they would respond to an attack.

The law will apply to certain venues who will need to fulfil necessary but proportionate steps according to their capacity to mitigate the impact of a terrorist attack and reduce harm. The duties that premises will have will depend on the size of the venue. Premises and events with a capacity of 800 or above will be in the enhanced tier, while premises with a capacity of 100 to 799 will be in the standard tier. The Town Hall, the Common and potentially other facilities will therefore meet the threshold for compliance.

SWTC will be legally, and duty bound to comply with any new legislation and Officers are preparing for these new requirements.

## 2.12 Ordinary Business

This report only seeks to cover capital and/or major activities. It is not an exhaustive list and does not cover the ordinary day to day workings and planning of the Town Council. The day-to-day workings include matters such as:

- (a) Management and operation of the TIC
- (b) Town Council administration (agendas/minutes/actions etc)
- (c) Cemeteries / burials
- (d) Allotments
- (e) Parking / transport queries
- (f) Planning matters
- (g) Correspondence / dealing with the general public
- (h) Market management and operation
- (i) Relationships and communications with 3<sup>rd</sup> parties
- (j) Internal policy review and management
- (k) Legislation review and compliance
- (l) Grant applications
- (m) Financial and investment matters
- (n) Audit requirements (both financial and operational)
- (o) Press releases / social media updates / website management
- (p) Employee matters / management / HR matters
- (q) Staff recruitment
- (r) Staff appraisals
- (s) Health and safety
- (t) Operations work
- (u) Bookings of venues and associated administration
- (v) Asset management of buildings, POS, play areas
- (w) Bridge End Gardens management plan and implementation
- (x) Scheduling of works (Admin/management/operations)
- (y) CCTV
- (z) Consultations
- (aa) Unexpected incidents!

## 3. Recommendation

- (a) To receive and note the contents of this report;
- (b) To determine the frequency of any future reports (either bi-monthly or quarterly).