

SAFFRON WALDEN INITIATIVE LIMITED
A company limited by guarantee. Registered Number 03340325

**MINUTES OF THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE COMPANY
HELD AT THE TOWN HALL, SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX
AT 8PM ON 17TH NOVEMBER 2008**

The following Members present at the meeting signed the attendance sheet:

Richard Bray; David Corke; Pat Dale; John Ellis; Gail Ellisdon; Chris Hingston; Ros Hyde; Stephen Jones; Helen Larsen; Michael Plaister; John Ready; Peter Riding; Sue Rooney; Peter Sanders; David Sandys-Renton; Donna Sharp; Anthony Skipper; Gordon Smith; Michael Swindlehurst; Sue Ullstein; Nigel Weaver; Kenneth Wilson; Barry Wiseman; Susan Wiseman; Joan Withers; Janice Wrigley; Tony Woods

Apologies for absence were received from:

Pamela Bray, Jo Burch, Raymond Coleman, Francis Deutsch, Ginny Eley, Dot Free, Paul Gadd, Paul Garland, Beatrice Goldie, Charles Goldie, Janet Greenland, David Jarrold, Janet Jarrold, Christopher Knight, Clare Mulley, Ronnie Rip, Sarah Saward, Christina Simmons, Shelagh Skipper, Mark Starte, Job Tissot, Rebecca del Tufo, Joan Van Hees, Barbara Wilcox, Stephen Willoughby, Ian Wolter, George Wombwell, Maggie Wombwell

Peter Riding was in the Chair and a quorum was present

1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 15th November 2007

On the proposal of Richard Bray and seconded by Chris Hingston it was unanimously agreed that:

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 15th November 2007 were a correct record and approved for signature by the Chairman.

2. Matters arising from the Minutes

There were no matters arising

3. Chairman's Report

The Board met six times in the last 12 months. The other Directors were Ginny Eley, Catherine Flack (who was also the Vice Chair), Chris Hingston, Helen Lawsen, Stephen Jones, John Ready, Barbara Wilcox and George Wombwell. A year ago the membership stood at 168 individual members and 70 business forum members. We now have 169 individual members. The business forum is now a separate organisation with around 140 members. The year had been mainly one of consolidation. I reported last year that the Initiative had received a grant of £21,282 from the Local Heritage Initiative for the Town Trail car park maps, pavement plaques, trail leaflets, large print trail leaflets and a subsidised Pictorial Guide booklet. These projects have now all been completed. The Town Trail proved to be an excellent model of community partnership working.

Last year I also reported that the Initiative had received grants from Action for Market Towns, the ECC Market Towns Fund and Saffron Walden Museum totalling £36,800. These funds have been used to design, manufacture and install 8 fingerposts around the town centre - of which 6 are already in place; to purchase 6 seats which have been fitted in Market Place; 3 benches which have been fitted in Swan Meadow Coach Park and on Common Hill; a new Town Council notice board which is fitted to the side of the Town Hall; various bollards for future use in the town centre; cycle hoops for future use in the town centre; a new double map holder at the Common Car Park; a new sign for visitors on the gates of Rose & Crown Walk when it is closed; and a new road sign giving direction to Swan Meadow when the Common Car Park is full. The Initiative has also purchased recessed lighting for the fountain in the centre of Market Place. This still leaves around £5,000 to be spent on street furniture and we have offered to supply 3 new seats to be fitted outside Eaden Lilley if and when the pavement there is widened next year by Essex County Council.

A recent Mystery Shopper survey in Saffron Walden found a significant improvement in signage since the last survey in 2003 - a result which I think we can claim credit for.

Last year I reported that the new Town Council was not happy with the Initiative's Market Place plan - prepared by Initiative member and architect John Ready and approved by the previous administration - to pedestrianise part of the square by stopping circulating traffic. At the start of this year the Town Council carried out a public consultation and came to the conclusion that they should come up with an alternative scheme. This scheme includes re-surfacing the square and widening the pavement outside Eaden Lilley. It is hoped that work will start in the New Year - paid for by Essex County Council.

At the last AGM a member asked us to look into painting more metal lamp posts black. The Initiative has worked with District Councillor Alastair Walters on this and a number of lamp posts in the conservation area of the town have now been painted black by Essex County Council. If you find any which have not yet been painted, please let me know. Equally, we have been working with Alastair Walters to encourage Essex County Council to remove redundant signs and posts. A number have now been removed from the conservation area but please let me know of others which still need removing. Also working through Councillor Walters, we have arranged for all the patches of tarmac to be removed from the High Street pavements and for the trees to be pollarded. We have also been instrumental in having all the road signs to Swan Meadow improved.

The proposal to have a large bronze sculpture of a wave by Maggie Hambling erected in Dorset House Gardens close to St Mary's Church was turned down by the Town Council. Since then the Initiative has been working with the Saffron Walden Arts Trust to come up with a broader plan for public art in the town. Anyone interested in working on this should contact me. Meanwhile the Initiative has agreed to contribute £231 towards the cost of a new Galleries Trail Leaflet for the Tourist Information Centre.

I'll mention very briefly the events organised just for members in the past 12 months. There was a wine tasting held at the Youth Hostel in January; a talk on Discovering the History of Littlebury held in Littlebury in February; a talk on Healthcare in our area held at the Community Hospital in March; a Call My Bluff tour of the town centre in April; an evening walk in Shadwell Wood near Ashdon in May; a visit and talk at Prior's Hall Barn in Widdington in July; and a visit to Saffron Brewery in Henham in September.

Events which the Initiative has organised for the community in the last 12 months have been the Late Night Christmas Shopping last December, the Litter Pick in June, the Food Fairs in July and October and the Dance in the Square in August. The Late Night Christmas Shopping made a profit of £375, the Dance in the Square made a profit of £267 and the Food Fairs broke even. However, because of the credit crunch, next year it may be harder to obtain local business sponsorship for the Dance in the Square and we may have to subsidise it a little. The bigger problem will be the Food Fairs. These were started by the Initiative some three years ago at the request of the then Town Councillor Chris Bailey. Chris arranged for an expert on farmers' markets, Dennis Steed, to be the contact for booking the stall holders. Dennis has done this for four Fairs and has now decided to stand down. It will not be easy to organise Food Fairs in the future unless we can find a replacement for Dennis. On a different matter, we held our first Showcase in the Town Hall in September 2007 as an event to encourage the public to join local groups and societies. We then thought that it might work best if held every two years. So we have provisionally booked the Town Hall for Saturday 5 September next year. If you think that you might like to help with this, please contact me.

You will be hearing shortly from Catherine Flack on the work of the Partnership Board but I just want to put on record that the Initiative is contributing £5,000 towards the re-employment of a part-time Project Officer for Saffron Walden, Bruce Tice, as we consider this to be a key role for the town.

An acknowledgement of the role of the Initiative happened last week when I was asked to meet with a large delegation from Brentwood who came on a flying visit to the town because they had heard that good things were happening here.

And last, but certainly not least, I must record my thanks to our Auditors, Shipleys LLP of Market Walk who did our accounts for no charge; the Board of Directors whom I have already listed; our Company Secretary, Charles Goldie; and I particularly want to thank our Treasurer, Pam Collins, whom I have met with at least twice a week to ask her pay in a large number of cheques as well as signing a smaller number of cheques and keeping the accounts in good order.

MEMBER SUGGESTION

To try to attract Continental Markets should the Town Council decide not to continue to pursue this

4. Report by Catherine Flack, Chair of the Saffron Walden Partnership Board

The Saffron Walden Partnership Board, established in 2005, brings together people with the same aims - to improve and ensure the well being of Saffron Walden and the surrounding area, be it economic, social, cultural or environmental. The Board is made up of 2 representatives from each local authority (Town - Keith Eden and Bob Eastham; District - Heather Mason and Roger Harborough; County Council - Robert Chambers, and Philip Wilson) and 4 nominated by the Initiative, currently Catherine Flack, Stephen Jones, Howard Rolfe, and John Ready. The board achieves its aims by setting objectives, guided by the Healthcheck Action Plan, agreeing activities and projects to deliver on those objectives, and by steering the work of the Project Officer, Bruce Tice.

It has been a tough year, but one that has improved greatly since September. The Project Officer role this time last year was a four-day position split between Saffron Walden, Thaxted and Dunmow. Uttlesford District Council's troubles began at the end of last year and Bruce's time was then split between other roles at UDC, and in March 2008 the position was cut altogether. At the same time the Board itself went through an identity crisis, with a lack of commitment in some areas. Without a Project Officer, or do-er, the Board risked becoming a talking shop and its future was threatened. Inspiringly, the Initiative offered £5,000 in funding for the Project Officer role, a left over from a grant that we were allowed to move over. In August Essex County Council agreed to match the funding with another £5,000 and so we now have Bruce for 15 hours a week, for the next several months - great news. Essex CC has also offered £5,000 for projects, which we hope to receive shortly.

The Partnership Board has always been guided by the Healthcheck Action Plan, and through 2007 and into 2008 we updated the Action Plan and came out with a list of prioritised areas that we felt are most pressing to the town. Many of these are big things, such as housing and transport issues, and realistically with two days a week and no funding security, it is not viable for a Project Officer to tackle such long-term projects. We have decided to be more pragmatic and opportunistic and focus on initiatives that we can make happen in a reasonable timeframe, for which we have a chance of getting funding, and which ignite the interest of residents so we can pull together volunteers to make them happen. The Project Officer role is therefore to be the hub of information for funding and external relationships, such as the Market Town Network, and help deliver on projects by pulling people together around a project, attracting funding and project managing delivery. Projects that Bruce is embarking on include: Battle Ditches restoration, town entrance signs, tree and open space strategy, public art.

Thanks are due to Barbara Wilcox, who served as Chair of the Partnership Board from its start in 2005 to early 2008, and to Bruce Tice who kindly continued as secretary to the Board on a voluntary basis in the Project Officer funding gap.

5. Financial Statements and Directors' and Accountant' Reports for the year ended 31st March 2008

The meeting received and considered the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2008 and the Directors' and Accountants' reports on those Statements.

On the proposal of Gordon Smith and seconded by Nigel Weaver it was unanimously resolved:

That the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2008 and the Directors' and Accountants' reports thereon be adopted and approved.

6. Election of Directors

The following Directors elected at the Annual General Meeting in 2007 offered themselves as candidates for re-election:

Ginny Eley, Catherine Flack, Christopher Hingston, Stephen Jones, Helen Larsen, John Ready, Peter Riding and Barbara Wilcox

Other candidates for election were:

Donna Sharp

On the proposal of Tony Woods and seconded by Kenneth Wilson it was unanimously agreed:

(A) That the appointment of the candidates for re-election and election be decided by a single resolution, and

(B) That Ginny Eley, Catherine Flack, Christopher Hingston, Stephen Jones, Helen Larsen, John Ready, Peter Riding, Donna Sharp and Barbara Wilcox be elected Directors of the Company to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

7. Appointment of Accountants

On the proposal of Chris Hingston and seconded by Sue Ullstein it was unanimously agreed:

That Shipleys LLP be re-appointed accountants of the Company to hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting.

8. Any Other Business

John Ellis asked if the Initiative could do something about improving bus services in the evening. David Corke said that this was being pursued by the Sustainable Uttlesford group but that the Initiative might be able to help out with a town centre bus information board.

The Chairman was unanimously thanked for his work to date.

The meeting closed at 8.55pm