

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 7.30PM ON 19th OCTOBER 2016**

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

Dominic Davey, Gail Ellisdon, Paul Gadd, Patrick Hawke-Smith, Chris Hingston, Anne Hughes, Richard Hughes, Lynn Ivory, Barbara Light, John Parker, Jacqui Portway, Jane Ready, John Ready, Peter Riding, Judith Rowland, Simon Sharp, Gordon Smith, Michael Swindlehurst, Job Tissot, Barbara Wilcox, Janice Wrigley

Apologies for absence were received from the following Members:

Lorraine Chitson, Pat Gregory, Ros Hyde, Chris Knight, Gillian Mulley, Brian Porter, Jill Porter, Donna Sharp, Sue Ullstein, Cindy Whife, Sue Wiseman,

Peter Riding was in the Chair and a quorum was present

1. Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 27th October 2015

On the proposal of Gordon Smith and seconded by John Ready it was unanimously agreed that:

The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting of the Company held on 27th October 2015 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 since the last AGM and the other Directors were Patrick Hawke-Smith, Chris Hingston, Chris Knight, John Ready, Cindy Whife and Barbara Wilcox. We have been very lucky to have Sue Wiseman as the Membership Secretary and Cindy Whife has also been the Treasurer.

Saffron Walden Initiative is registered as a Company Limited by Guarantee which means that we are a Company with no shares and so can be regarded as a non-profit making organisation. The Board is elected by the Members. There are currently 195 registered Members - well up from 164 last year.

Events organised for Members only in the past 12 months were: a visit to Faircroft House Arts & Media Centre in Saffron Walden, a visit to the Welding Institute in Great Abington, a tour of the Palace of Westminster with Sir Alan Haselhurst, a talk by the new Town Clerk, Lisa Courtney, a visit to the Saffron Walden Tesco store, a guided tour of the West Wood Nature Reserve near Thaxted, a visit to Ashdon Village Museum, a Saffron Walden "Look Up" Tour with the Blue Badge Guide Sarah Kirkpatrick and a visit to the local Water Recycling Centre near Swan Meadow.

After running the free monthly business *Saffron Start Up* sessions for over six years, Chris Hingston has decided to wind these down and concentrate on the monthly *Saffron Business Friends* networking meetings in the King's Arms. There is now no charge for these meetings as the room rent is paid for by Santander Bank.

Events which the Initiative organised for the wider community in the past 12 months included the charity stalls for the Late Night Christmas Shopping last December, a Social Quiz in the King's Arms in January, the annual Dance in the Square on August Bank Holiday Saturday and the Societies Showcase in September. However, the two biggest projects in the past 12 months were the third Saffron Walden Maze Festival and the new permanent Maze at Swan Meadow.

Saffron Walden Maze Festival 2016 - Report by Barbara Wilcox

The third maze festival organised by the Initiative took place on 20th to 21st August. The festival was larger than previously, with the programme listing 49 items. This included 5 exhibitions, 12 art and craft workshops, 6 theatre/comedy performances, 3 guided tours, and 12 temporary mazes on the Common.

Apart from the opening of Walden's fourth permanent maze [see below] features of this festival included:

- Partnership with Saffron Walden Arts Trust, who organised and funded arts workshops and music.

- A stronger musical element, with performances at the Common, Hedge Maze and Jubilee Gardens, facilitated by SWAT and Fairycroft House, and a performance of music for the festival at St Mary's organised by Saffron Hall. This added strongly to the atmosphere and was greatly appreciated by visitors.
- A strong focus on the Common on Sunday, with mazes created by local charities, organisations and individuals, a range of local food and drink stalls, a play and races on the turf maze, maze themed sideshows designed and built for the festival, music and fire juggling.

It was disappointing that few businesses took part, and that despite dedicated work by one organiser, only two schools produced work for display during the festival.

The budget for the festival was £7,200, which was lower than the last festival. Major funders were Uttlesford District Council (£1,900 via individual Councillor community funding), Essex County Council Arts in Essex (£1,800), Croucher Needham (£500) and Saffron Walden Town Council (£300). Just under £900 was raised from commissions from food stalls and donations, and we also received support from Waitrose and NFU Mutual. The Initiative contributed £1,200 from its own funds. In addition the Town Council gave us use of the Town Hall and Common, worth £875, and SWAT paid for arts and music activities. Fundraising was harder than in previous years when significant funding from the National Lottery enabled organisers to focus on programming at an earlier stage.

There was a significant in kind contribution in terms of expertise and loan of equipment, and major support from Saffron Walden Camera Club whose members covered the entire festival. The most significant contribution to the festival came from volunteers. We estimate that at least 2,000 volunteer hours went into the festival, which can be valued at approaching £15,000. Those most closely involved are of the view that organising a festival of this scale is at the limit of what is achievable through voluntary effort, and that any similar future festival will need paid staff, particularly for administrative and technical tasks.

Feedback from those attending the festival was overwhelmingly positive. We had visitors from all over the country. We know that around 1,000 people visited the Bridge End Garden maze, and numbers were up at the Fry Gallery. Those who delivered or organised events for the festival were all pleased, and many have offered support for future festivals.

I would like to place on record thanks to Initiative members who did so much to support the festival. Also to our funders, Saffron Walden Town Council staff, and Saffron Walden Camera Club. The intention is that a further festival will be held in 2019.

Barbara Wilcox

Swan Meadow New Permanent Maze - Report by John Ready

As part of the 2013 Maze Festival, the Saffron Walden Initiative left a permanent legacy to the town by installing a paved labyrinth in the Jubilee Garden bandstand. This time, with the support of UDC funding, grants from UDC ward councillors, the Town Council and Stansted Airport Passenger Community Fund as well as help from Ridgeons and Stonemarket Paving, Saffron Walden Initiative Director, John Ready, created a strikingly original new maze for children and visitors at Jacob's Green, Swan Meadow. The maze was formally opened by world maze guru, Jeff Saward, on 20th August 2016.

Within a perimeter fence of woven willow, the layout of low box hedging and conservation paving announces on arrival that "Saffron Walden Amazes" and, as part of the child-friendly layout, a number of finger labyrinths and mazes are set into the top of pre-cast stone planters to encourage visitor interaction and illustrate how such designs have developed over the last 2,500 years. Pathways linking the two entry/exit points from the adjacent public footpath pass through a circular corner feature where a dramatic sculptural head overlooks the whole layout.

The overall cost was £19,500, of which SWI contributed £2,000 from its own funds. The planters with mini-mazes were funded through sponsorship by local companies and individuals and it is hoped to install three more to complete the design by the end of the year. We also intend establishing a small "friends" group who can assist with regular monthly weeding of the hedges and external ground cover planting as they develop over the next 4-5 years to maturity.

John Ready

Last November the Initiative paid £133 as a third share of the cost of the promotional video made for the Tourist Information Centre's website. In March the Initiative's website was re-designed for no fee by Donna Sharp so that it works better with social media and is easier to update. There was a cost of £50 for the design of an extended version of the colour logo.

We are grateful to the Town Council for a grant of £300 towards the Dance in the Square and another grant of £201 to cover our Public Liability Insurance. And Uttlesford District Council gave us a grant of £500 towards the Dance in the Square.

This year John Ready has continued to put together Welcome Packs for new residents to the area. To date we have distributed around 570 packs through Estate Agents and the Tourist Information Centre. We give them free to the TIC but charge Estate Agents £2.50 per pack to help cover our costs.

On a different project the Initiative worked closely with Essex Record Office to establish a Listening Bench in the museum grounds where you can hear oral history recordings about the Town Centre and Castle Street as they were around the middle of the last century. We know that it has proved to be popular because in the first three months the two buttons on the Listening Bench were pressed nearly 3,000 times, equating to around 500 visits per month.

Looking ahead to next year, we don't plan to take on any major new projects but hope to make progress on a second round of Blue Plaques. We would welcome suggestions for member events and community initiatives.

I would like to record our thanks to our Accountants, Croucher Needham (Essex) LLP of Market Walk in Saffron Walden who prepare our annual accounts for no charge which is much appreciated.

And finally I'd also like to give a vote of thanks to our excellent Board of Directors, Treasurer and Membership Secretary. In particular I would like to thank Barbara Wilcox who is stepping down as a Director because of her other commitments. Barbara has made an enormous contribution to the Initiative and to the town. She was the Chair of the Initiative in 2002-2004 when it moved to being a community organisation and has been Deputy Chair ever since; she was the Chair of the Saffron Walden Partnership Board which had representatives from the Initiative and Town, District and County Councils; she co-ordinated three amazing Maze Festivals and much else. Barbara will still be helping out from the side lines and, indeed, will be running, along with Ginny Eley, the Social Quiz in January. So very many special thanks to Barbara.

4. Financial Statements and Directors' and Accountant' Reports for the year ended 31st March 2016

The meeting received and considered the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2016 and the Directors' and Accountants' reports on those Statements.

On the proposal of Barbara Wilcox and seconded by Patrick Hawke-Smith it was unanimously resolved:

That the Financial Statements for the year ended 31st March 2016 and the Directors' and Accountants' reports thereon be adopted and approved.

5. Election of Directors

The following Directors elected at the Annual General Meeting in 2015 offered themselves as candidates for re-election: Patrick Hawke-Smith, Christopher Hingston, Chris Knight, John Ready, Peter Riding and Lucinda Whife

Jacqui Portway put herself forward as a candidate for election.

On the proposal of Gordon Smith and seconded by Janice Wrigley it was unanimously agreed:

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

That Patrick Hawke-Smith, Christopher Hingston, Chris Knight, Jacqui Portway, John Ready, Peter Riding, and Lucinda Whife be elected Directors of the Company to hold office until the next Annual General Meeting.

6. Appointment of Accountants

On the proposal of Jacqui Portway and seconded by Job Tissot it was unanimously agreed:

That Croucher Needham (Essex) LLP of Market Walk, Saffron Walden be re-appointed accountants of the Company to hold office until the conclusion of the next Annual General Meeting.

7. Any Other Business

In response to a question the Board reported that no new Initiative developments had taken place in the previous 12 months in connection with the Victorian fenced gardens outside The Close house in the High Street.

Michael Swindlehurst proposed that the Board be thanked for its hard work over the previous 12 months.

The meeting closed at 8.15pm