



Saxmundham Town Council

Chairman's Annual Report *May 2022*

It has been a privilege to have served the residents and businesses of Saxmundham as Chair of the Town Council over the last 3 years. Since 9th May, the baton has passed to the new Chair, my colleague Diana Eastman. It has been a challenging period for all of us, seeking to respond to the Covid pandemic as well as to East Suffolk Council's plans for a big expansion of the town. I thank our residents for their support and understanding. I also thank my colleague town councillors for all their work and contribution to our community – and let's recall that the role of councillor is wholly unpaid!

THE FUTURE OF OUR TOWN

PROMOTING THE TOWN'S BUSINESS AND MARKET ACTIVITY

Thanks to an 18 month grant from East Suffolk Council's economic development team and a generous donation from Businesses of Saxmundham (BOS), we have engaged two part-time 'town centre coordinators' to help promote our businesses, attract more visitors, and to develop the town's markets. Michael Light and Jess Palmer have worked hard, with colleagues, to make the first two new monthly Saturday markets a success, using Fromus Square as well as the Market Place and Market Hall for stalls.



NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

As I write, we are about to submit our Saxmundham Neighbourhood Plan (NP) to East Suffolk Council. The Plan sets out our planning policies for the town over the next 15 years. It has proved a long and complex process. The NP Steering Group of councillors and community volunteers has worked tirelessly, helped greatly by our planning consultants, paid for by a government grant. We published the first draft in late October 2021 and organized a wide public consultation, including a Friday / Saturday open event at the Market Hall, which around 150 people came to. We then had around 1000 written responses, each of which was carefully considered, and we have completed the second draft, with some important changes to take account of points raised.

The Plan covers a wide range of issues, including the

local economy, design, protecting our heritage assets and environment. It also focuses on a few specific areas including the Station area, town centre, Fromus Square, and of course the proposed new Garden Neighbourhood to the south of the town. We are not allowed to challenge the overall policy for the development of this new Neighbourhood (which has been set by East Suffolk Council), and are aiming now to make it as successful as we can, both for the existing town, and for new residents.

The next step will be for the District Council to appoint an independent 'examiner' who checks the Plan and may suggest some further changes. Finally, there will be a local referendum. If a majority of those voting are in favour, it comes into effect. Once the NP is approved, the town also receives a higher percentage (25% instead of 15%) of the Community Infrastructure Levy paid by developers.

CHANGING SAXMUNDHAM'S PARISH BOUNDARY

The proposed new Garden Neighbourhood covers a large site which is currently partly within Saxmundham, but partly also in Benhall parish. The Town Council believes that for good planning, administration and community identity purposes, it is far better that the whole new development lie within a single parish. We have co-ordinated our approach with Benhall Parish Council, who do not seek to 'host' the new development, and we've reached full agreement on new boundaries. The decision lies with East Suffolk Council, who have set up what is called a Community Governance Review, and we hope that this will lead to agreement on our joint proposals.

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY (CIL)

The Town Council receives a share of CIL paid by developers to the District Council in respect of new housing developments. The Council may spend CIL income on new bits of infrastructure or anything that helps the town meet the impact of new development. We currently

hold around £75,000 CIL funds. After consultation on the purposes we should seek to meet, the Council has identified priorities including: improving access from new housing areas to town centre for pedestrians and cyclists; developing sports and recreational facilities, including for children and young people; improving the town centre environment; improving community, entertainment and cultural facilities; facilities for non-fossil-fuel transport; improving our green/open spaces such as the Memorial Field. We will now work on specific projects for implementation.

750TH ANNIVERSARY OF OUR MARKET CHARTER

Saxmundham's first Market Charter was granted by King Henry III in 1272 – exactly 750 years ago. We think it important that our "historic market town" celebrates this milestone with some fun, pride and some good self-promotion of Sax's business, community and heritage assets! The main celebration will be at the weekend of 9th July; we held a heritage evening in April in partnership with the Museum, with around 50 residents sharing memories and interesting historic items together. Our new Saturday market also aims to preserve and strengthen our "market" tradition and designation.

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY

RESPONDING TO COVID, PROMOTING COMMUNITY COHESION

The Town Council has continued to support the community-support work of the IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme (IP17GNS) via an annual grant of £13,000. We also provided office accommodation for the Scheme at the Town House, opposite the Station. The IP17GNS provided invaluable support to residents in need during the worst of the pandemic, and also offers help to individuals across a range of needs; it also organizes and supports community activities and events. We also provide a portacabin on the Memorial Field for the CYDS youth project, and a hut there for the Scouts. The Council also paid several small grants totaling around £9000 to organisations providing important services in the Town.

IMPROVING OUR LOCAL ENVIRONMENT

Since June 2021, Amy Rayner has been our Environmental Coordinator (part-time), who has worked tirelessly with councillors and community volunteers to develop and implement environmental improvements.

The Council has also agreed a Climate Action Plan, and there is a working group chaired by Councillor Nigel Hiley to take forward actions.

GANNON INSTITUTE

The Gannon Rooms on Station Approach have for well over 100 years provided a meeting place for local community organisations and events. The Rooms are managed by the Gannon Institute Charity. The trustees of the charity approached the Town Council in the course of 2021 to ask us to take over responsibility for the charity and the Rooms. Following public consultation, in which most respondents agreed to the Council taking over as charity trustee, the Town Council agreed to do so, while noting that the buildings will need some significant investment over time. The Charity Commission have now agreed to the Town Council itself being the sole charitable trustee, which it therefore holds on a basis similar to that for the Market Hall.

COMMUNITY EVENTS

The Town Council co-organised and co-financed our much-praised Saxmundham Victorian Christmas event on Friday 3rd December, which included stalls and activities in the High Street, Market Place, Fromus Square and Sax'cess House garden. We thank our key partners IP17 GNS, the Art Station and Access Community Trust, for their time and input, and East Suffolk Council for financial support. The event was indeed a great boost for the town as we sought to emerge from the cloud of Covid!

MARKET HALL ENTERTAINMENT AND ACTIVITIES

In autumn 2021, the Market Hall hosted a number of jazz, ska and swing concerts under the 'SaxJazz' umbrella, plus an evening of light operatics. The Hall is now being widely used by community groups, for example children's judo. Following redecoration of the Hall, essential kitchen works have been carried out. It is also being used for some Saturday markets.

COMMUNICATIONS

The Council has sought to steadily improve our communications and consultations with residents and businesses. We have a relatively new website which gives a lot of information about the town as well as about the town council and its meetings and activities. You can check it out at www.saxmundham.org. We are also using the Town Council Facebook page for more information on activities, and doing hand-delivered newsletters to 2,000 homes three times a year. You are all welcome to attend our monthly Council meetings!

THANK YOU TO OUR STAFF

Our Town Clerk, Roz Barnett, leaves us very soon to become Clerk at Bungay. We wish her well in her new role. I would also wish to take this chance to thank Jen Morcom, our Assistant Town Clerk, and the rest of the team for their work for the Council and town.



750th anniversary of Market Charter launch, Market Hall, 23 April 2022 – 13th century coins for trading



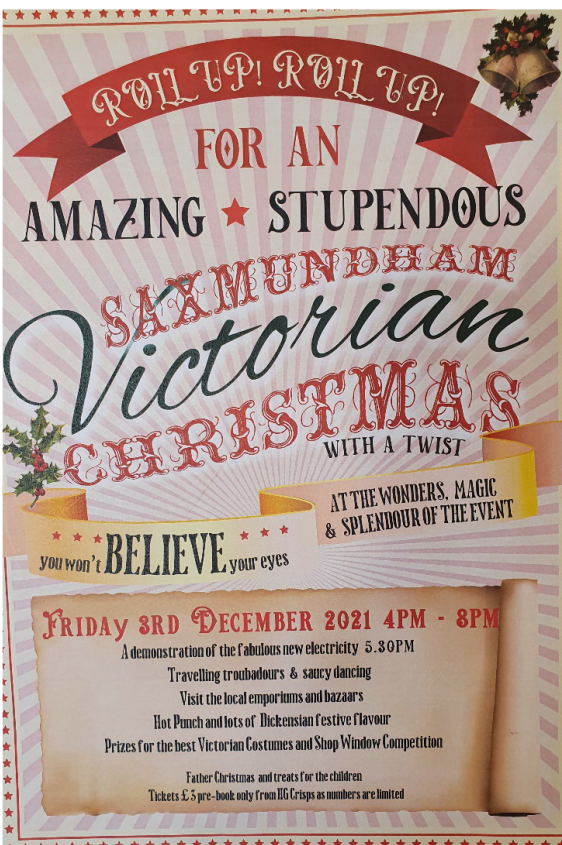
Litter-picking volunteers with Environmental Co-ordinator Amy Rayner



SaxJazz event, Market Hall, 18 Sept 2021



SaxJazz event, Market Hall, 4th December



Setting up the Neighbourhood Plan consultation



Christmas event, December 2021

REPORT FROM AMENITIES COMMITTEE

In the past year the Amenities Committee has had a 5 strong team of members actively working on improving and maintaining our local amenities.

MEMORIAL FIELD

2022 sees the 100th anniversary of the Memorial Field, on Rendham Road. It was created after World War I, and its founding beliefs of remembrance and peace are as important as ever. After consulting with the public about improvements to the field, the Town Council has commissioned award-winning Chelsea designer Frederick White to redesign the entrance. The area will include new gates, seating, and heritage signage. It is hoped that the first phase of the project will be completed by November.

Local company DS Memorials cleaned and restored the war memorial in Fromus Square and have now offered a new memorial free of charge to be located at the Memorial Field.

The Committee is also supporting a small group of volunteers to develop a new memorial trail which will commemorate the men who died in World War I.

In the last year, the Youth Booth was painted and the CYDS youth project installed a flower bed for the young people to develop their green fingers.

OPEN SPACES

A big thank you goes to Amy Rayner, our new Environmental Coordinator (8 hours a week). Since her appointment in August she has worked tirelessly with councillors and community volunteers to implement environmental improvements.

Amy launched the volunteer Green Team in August and since then the an intrepid, hardy volunteer team have been out in all weathers gardening and litter picking. Last year they achieved the following projects:

- Applied for 'free trees' and planted over 120, which will go towards the 750 trees that the Town is aiming to plant for the Queen's Jubilee canopy.

- Planted over 700 bulbs around the town.
- Helped with community litter picks.
- Tidied up Fromus Square and the entrances to the town.
- Working in partnership with the station adopters to keep improving the station floral display.
- Secured grants from East Suffolk Council to boost the Town Council's coffers to pay for equipment, trees and plants.

STREET FURNITURE & HANGING BASKETS

A new town map and two new finger posts have been installed to help guide visitors to the many attractions of Saxmundham. The Town Noticeboards were renovated, and a policy introduced to ensure Saxmundham activities have priority. The Committee also reacted to requests from the public and have replaced and provided some additional waste bins in the town. The Committee arranged the hanging baskets for the town centre in 2021 and again for this year.

COMMUNITY IMPROVEMENT PROJECTS

Designs are being commissioned to improve the gateway entrance the town in order to reduce traffic speed.

Following a request from one of our residents, a new walking trail was established around the town - details are published on the Town website.

I would like to say a final thanks to all the Councillors on the Committee and especially to Councillor Hedley Lewis who has recently stepped down from role as councillor. He helped the committee enormously using his professional skills in undertaking lots of preparation work for projects including the Memorial Field.

Councillor Tim Lock, Chair

REPORT FROM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

Report from Saxmundham Town Council Planning & Development Control Committee:

Saxmundham Town Council is a statutory consultee for planning applications for development within the parish. The Planning Committee comments on each application received and discusses other planning related issues. All our meetings are open to the public and we welcome input from Saxmundham residents as we believe this will improve our decision making.

The Planning Committee aims to preserve the general amenity and character of Saxmundham without unduly hindering residents' wishes to improve and modernise their homes. We also collaborate closely with the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group to help develop Saxmundham's Neighbourhood Plan which is now nearing completion. Once adopted, the Neighbourhood Plan will give us more influence over planning decisions.

The Committee met roughly every two weeks and considered

forty-one applications during the year ending March 2022. Meetings were face-to-face whenever possible, but we used Zoom during lock downs.

Most of the applications received were for improvements to existing properties and outbuildings, with one or two property conversions and small infill sites, as well as works to trees. No major sites were considered in 2021-22, although the whole Town Council commented on proposals for the expansion of the Carlton Park Industrial Estate in nearby Kelsale.

The Committee began the year with four members: Cllr John Fisher, Cllr Charlotte Hawkins, Cllr Nigel Hiley and Cllr Roger Hedley-Lewis. Cllr Hawkins stepped down during the year and Cllr Tim Lock joined the Committee.

I would like to thank the Committee members for their dedication and thanks to Jen Morcom, Assistant Town Clerk, for clerking the committee.

John Fisher Chair of the Planning Committee

YOUR COUNCILLOR TEAM



Benjamin Alexander Gulliford



James Sandbach



Nigel Hiley



Charlotte Hawkins



John Fisher



Tim Lock



John Findlay



Jeremy Smith



Di Eastman

OFFICE-HOLDERS

The following were elected by fellow councillors at the Annual General Meetings of the Town Council held in May 2021 and) in May 2022:

2021-2022

Chair of Town Council: Jeremy Smith

Vice-Chair: Diana Eastman

Chair of Resources Committee: John Findlay

Chair of Planning & Development Control Committee: John Fisher

Chair of Market Hall Management Committee: Jeremy Smith

Chair of Amenities and Services Committee: Tim Lock

2022-2023

Chair of the Town Council: Diana Eastman

Vice-Chair: John Findlay

Chair of Resources Committee: John Findlay

Chair of Market Hall Management Committee: Jeremy Smith

Chair of Planning & Development Control Committee: John Fisher

Chair of Amenities and Services Committee: Tim Lock

CURRENT COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

Resources Committee: Cllrs John Findlay, Diana Eastman, John Fisher, Nigel Hiley, James Sandbach, Jeremy Smith

Amenities & Services Committee: Cllrs Tim Lock, Diana Eastman, Charlotte Hawkins, James Sandbach

Planning & Development Control Committee: Cllrs John Fisher, Tim Lock, Nigel Hiley

Market Hall Management Committee: Jeremy Smith, John Findlay, Charlotte Hawkins, Diana Eastman Tim Lock, plus non-councillor members Carole Cecil, Rosie Hoare

OUR STAFF TEAM

This year we made a few new part-time appointments to the Council. Amy Rayner joined the council for 8 hours a week as Environment Coordinator. Jess Palmer and Michael Light joined the Town Council for 6 hours a week as Town Centre Coordinators.

Finally, Sharon Smith joined the Town Council as the Finance and Administration Officer for 10 hours a week.

In March, the current Town Clerk, Roz Barnett gave notice to take up a post closer to her home and the town are now seeking a replacement clerk.

Our Assistant Town Clerk, Jen Morcom, has remained with us throughout, and has helped greatly in ensuring continuity during this period of change.

THE TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCES

SAXMUNDHAM BUDGET 2022/2023

Each year, the Town Council works out a budget to support its policies for the town and our community. Most of our income comes from the Town Council element of Council Tax, collected by East Suffolk Council. This year we have been able to hold our element of Council Tax at last year's level, because our finances are in good shape and we fully appreciate the economic difficulties our community will be facing in the months ahead. Our element of Council Tax for a Band D property will therefore be £143.28 a year, just £2.76 a week.

Chair of the Resources Committee Cllr John Findlay



SAXMUNDHAM BUDGET SUMMARY

INCOME

	£
Including £227,328 from Council Tax	£229,528
Plus a transfer of £25,092 from our reserves.	
So the total we have to spend is:	£254,620.

PLANNED EXPENDITURE

	£
Staff salaries and related costs	85,350
Councillor development	2,550
Office and administration	24,820
Grants and events	68,000
<i>Including the Market Hall, the Christmas event, community, and youth events</i>	
Loan repayment (the Town House)	21,400
Communications	8,500
<i>Including newsletters, website, and town promotions</i>	
Neighbourhood Plan	1,000
Town improvement	22,500
<i>Including Sax in Bloom, market development, Fromus Square and walkways, town gateways and speed reduction, environmental improvement, and Memorial Field</i>	
Maintenance	20,500
<i>Including play areas, street furniture and the Youth Booth</i>	

TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£254,620
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The Town Council's accounts are audited annually; they may be inspected, and are posted on the Town Council's website.

END OF YEAR

The Town Council end of year figures for 2021-2022 are as follows -

Saxmundham Town Council

Income and expenditure Account for Year Ended 31st March 2022

31st March 2021		31st March 2022
	Operating Income	
238,148	Income	254,032
0	Grants	3,024
30,656	CIL	31,309
268,805	Total Income	288,365
	Running Costs	
70,463	Salaries & Staff Expenses	71,460
0	Councillors	100
19,780	Office & Admin Costs	25,159
21,377	Loan Repayment	21,377
4,140	External Comms	3,825
9,500	S137 Payments	254
62,295	Grants & Events not S137	73,486
1,489	Grants	2,507
0	Neighbourhood Plan	11,436
10,562	Town Improvements & Décor	6,478
23,358	Capital & Maintenance	13,463
18,000	CIL	0
240,965	Total Expenditure	229,544
	General Fund Analysis	
90,032	Opening Balance	101,715
268,805	Plus : Income for Year	288,365
358,837		390,080
240,965	Less : Expenditure for Year	229,544
117,871		160,536
16,156	Transfers TO / FROM Reserves	26,809
101,715	Closing Balance	133,727

Saxmundham Town Council Balance Sheet at at 31/03/2022

31st March 2021

31st March 2022

31st March 2021		31st March 2022	
Current Assets			
6,834	VAT Control A/c	4,974	
0	Prepayments	1,000	
114,716	Current Bank A/c	122,862	
60,025	Cambridge Building Society	110,091	
181,574		238,928	
181,574	Total Assets	238,928	
Current Liabilities			
3,373	Market Hall VAT Control A/c	3,317	
0	Creditors	1,043	
1,229	YE Creditors	1,800	
3,024	Receipts In Advance	0	
7,627		6,160	
173,947	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	232,768	
Represented By			
101,715	General Reserves	133,727	
24,536	EMR - Capital Replacement Fund	24,036	
17,040	EMR - CIL 19/20	13,040	
30,656	EMR - CIL 20/21	30,656	
0	EMR - CIL 21/22	31,309	
173,947		232,768	

The above statement represents fairly the financial position of the authority as at 31/03/2022 and reflects its Income and Expenditure during the year.