



Saxmundham Town Council

Chairman's Annual Report

May 2023

It has been a huge honour for me to be the Chair of Saxmundham Town Council over the past year; a year of historical importance for the country and the Town. It commenced with the joy of celebrating the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II, only to be mourning her death some three months later upon which it was my duty and privilege to attend Suffolk's Proclamation of HM King Charles III at Ipswich Town Hall. This was followed by a public proclamation on the steps of our Market Hall, and of course most recently celebrating his Coronation.

My thanks to all the Councillors for their support and also to the staff team at the Town House, without whom the Council's plans would not come to fruition.



SATURDAY MARKETS

A new initiative to hold a market on the second Saturday of the month has proved to be very successful, attracting good quality vendors and more people into the Town. My thanks to Michael Light and Jess Palmer for their work in organising and establishing these markets, which are set to continue throughout 2023.



750TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN'S MARKET CHARTER

On a hot summer's day in July, Saxmundham celebrated the 750th anniversary of the granting of its Market Charter by King Henry III in 1272. It was lovely to see so many people out enjoying the sunshine and seeing Fromus Green being

used for the first time as an event venue. To build on the success of this, the Town Council, in association with The Art Station, is putting on an Arts Festival on Saturday 10th June 2023 which aims to bring music and the arts to the community with many different activities taking place at a number of venues around the Town.



MEMORIAL FIELD

Later in the year we opened the new Memorial Garden, with its splendid new gates, on the 100th anniversary of the creation of the Memorial Field to honour those who fell in World War I. My thanks to Cllr Tim Lock and his team for the work they put into this project and to Amy Rayner, our Environment Coordinator, and her team of volunteers for the hours of planting, weeding, mulching and watering which continues to be undertaken.



COMMUNITY COHESION

My year as Chair culminated in the Coronation of HM King Charles III and I was very fortunate to be drawn out of the hat by the Suffolk Association of Local Councils to attend the Coronation Garden Party at Buckingham Palace on 3rd May. It certainly brought the year to a fabulous close. It was a lovely day accompanied by good weather and Bryony Peall, Operations Manager of the IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme, who I invited as my guest and as a thank you for all the work that she has done in the community since the start of the Covid-19 pandemic and continues to do.

On 8th May, the Monday of the Coronation weekend, the Market Hall was full of volunteers enjoying a cream tea kindly donated by local businesses, the WI and individuals, to thank them for the time they give to making Saxmundham a better place to live. 50 residents in the Town also received a cream tea delivered to their door. It is people who create a community and community cohesion is a key objective of this Council.

Under my chairmanship, I hope to continue our program of community events which everyone in the Town can enjoy and to support those community groups, clubs and charities who do so much to ensure that no one in this Town is left isolated or alone.

Cllr Diana Eastman, Chair, Saxmundham Town Council



AMENITIES AND SERVICES COMMITTEE

MEMORIAL FIELD

After consulting with the community about improvements to the Memorial Field, much work has been done to this area over the course of the year and the project is near completion. The Memorial Field was initially created after World War I, and its founding beliefs of remembrance and peace are as important as ever.

The Memorial Field has been developed in line with the Town Council's Strategic Plan, creating a Memorial Garden. The area includes new gates, seating, and heritage signage. Further improvements are proposed for the upcoming year including work on the football pitch.

Following this year's RoSPA report we are actioning a number of necessary maintenance improvements to the current play areas and as part of our Strategic Plan we are planning to improve access to the Memorial Field.

Our thanks go to local company, DS Memorials, who have donated the new memorial, located in the Memorial Garden, free of charge and also to the group of volunteers who have installed the new Memorial Trail commemorating the men who died in World War I.



OPEN SPACES

A big thank you goes to Amy Rayner our Environment Coordinator. She continues to work tirelessly with Councillors and community volunteers to implement environmental improvements in Saxmundham.

We also wish to thank the volunteer Green Team, which continues to grow, for their hard work out in all weathers gardening and litter picking.

Last year they achieved the following projects:

- Since June 2022, the Green Team Volunteers have clocked up 293.5+ hours of volunteered time on Saxmundham Green Space and various projects.
- Projects include: the Memorial Garden, bulb planting, tree planting, arisings removal, pots/planters in Town, litter picking, pop up seed and plant swap market stall, making bird boxes, weeding, watering, planting, and laying irrigation.
- Collaborations include: The Mens Shed, the Primary School, Greater Anglia.
- In terms of biodiversity, the Green Team continue to assist in meadow management at the Memorial Field, supporting the no mow/mow schedule, nurturing the Community Orchard, assisting at the Station Wildlife Garden and they have built a new 'estate' of bird boxes.



STREET SCENE AND HANGING BASKETS

Additional picnic benches and benches have been installed on the Memorial Field.

The face of the Market Hall notice board has been replaced and a new Jubilee Clock has been installed at the front of the Market Hall funded by a generous donation from our County Councillor Richard Smith MVO from his Locality Budget.

The Town was decorated with Union Jack bunting and flags to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee of HM Queen Elizabeth II. Bunting and banners made by IP17 volunteers with material donated by local residents brightened up the 750th Anniversary of Saxmundham being a Market Town, and we used them again at Christmas. The Committee has arranged the hanging baskets for the Town Centre since 2021 and again this year.

I would like to say a final thanks to the Councillors on the Committee for their continued support and work throughout the course of the year.

Cllr Tim Lock, Chair, Amenities and Services Committee



PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT CONTROL COMMITTEE

The 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 our residents as we believe this will improve our decision making.

The Planning Committee aims to preserve the general amenity and character of the parish 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 twenty-eight applications during the year.

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. Included in the applications was the redevelopment of 32 High Street which had been derelict for some years, as well as an outline planning application for the redevelopment of the former site of the Fromus Centre which is of strategic importance.

The Committee has had five members this year: Cllr John Fisher, Cllr Nigel Hiley, Cllr Tim Lock, Cllr Benjamin Gulliford, and Cllr Marianne Kiff.

I would particularly like to thank Cllr Hiley as he is leaving the Council. We will miss his expertise and enthusiasm for green issues.

Cllr John Fisher Chair, Planning and Development Control Committee

EVENTS AND COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

Events have become a fundamental part of the DNA of Saxmundham, an opportunity to bring all parts of the community together. Over the course of this year we have both celebrated and mourned, seeing a diverse range of people sharing food and drink at the parties in the streets for the Platinum Jubilee followed by the signing of the Book of Condolences in The Market Hall marking the death of HM Queen Elizabeth II.

Saxmundham celebrated 750 years of its Market Charter in the summer. The event permeated throughout the Town using both the High Street and Fromus Green for activities, reenactments, music and processions.

As the winter nights drew in, preparation began apace for the Christmas Fayre. Dancers, musicians, fire performers and choirs entertained the crowds on the High Street making the evening one of the 'go to' events in the county.

These events could not happen without our team of volunteers and local community groups, who work selflessly to make them successful. We would like to

thank them for everything that they do. Any and all help is most welcome, if you are interested in volunteering, please contact the Town Clerk. It is a great way to get involved in the community and meet people.

One of our main aims over the course of the coming year is to improve communication and to also promote Saxmundham on a wider scale encouraging visitors to the Town. We would encourage you to follow us on Facebook where events are promoted and information shared. We also submit a monthly contribution to Saxmundham Magazine highlighting what is happening.

This coming year we look forward to the first Arts Festival and numerous music and market events, we hope that you will be able to join us.

Cllr James Sandbach, Chair, Events and Communications Committee

THE GANNON INSTITUTE TRUST

At the request of the former Trustees, the Town Council agreed in 2021 to take over responsibility for the Gannon Institute and it is now the Sole Charitable Trustee. The Councillors are responsible for decision making and the ongoing management is delegated to a Management Committee of Councillors.

The Gannon Rooms, the sole building of the Institute, are located in Station Approach, and many long-term residents of the Town have fond memories of community events there. Before committing to take over responsibility for the Trust, the Council conducted a community survey to gauge support for the continued provision of the Gannon Rooms as a community facility. Results showed that 78% of respondents had used the facility personally and 87% supported the Town Council becoming Trustee and keeping the facility open as a community asset.

However, as was made clear when the Town Council agreed to take on this new responsibility, the Gannon Rooms required considerable work to repair and bring them up to the required standard for future community use. So this was the year we 'bit the bullet' to get underway with all the building works and repairs needed to make the Gannon Rooms safe and warm for our new licensee and future hirers. To date this work has included replacing the boiler, installing a fire detection system, fire doors and emergency lighting, repairing the oven, gas and electrical safety checks and repairs, levelling and repairing the floor in the main hall, disposing of old and broken furniture and fittings, and external decorations. The Trust has received grant support from the Town Council to enable these urgent building works to take place, as the 'inherited'

Trust resources were very modest.

Alde and Blyth Community Radio are preparing to move from their old home in the Market Hall to a new space at the front of the Gannon Rooms. They have been working for the last few months to transform the front offices and old front kitchen into a spacious and airy new office and recording studio and we are grateful for all their hard work and input.

However, there is still a fair way to go to transform the Gannon Rooms into a wonderful facility fit for our community and restore the Institute's role in the town's community life. Further works are required to improve the reception area and WC facilities, including an accessible WC, and to undertake necessary repairs to the roof cupolas and flashing. The Town Council cannot finance this capital expenditure from its current resources so it will have to borrow money. The Town Council proposes to borrow £20,000 from the government's Public Works Loan Board. At present, for a loan of this amount over a 10-year term, the interest rate per year is 4.71%, with repayments of £2,847 per year. The loan repayments will be met from the Institute's current resources, licensee and hire fees and will ultimately be guaranteed by the Town Council's reserves. The Town Council's existing PWLB loan to fund the purchase of the Town House will be repaid in full in less than three years, therefore our ongoing financial commitments will not increase in consequence.

Cllr Jeremy Smith, Chair, Gannon Institute Management Committee

Cllr Di Eastman, Chair, The Gannon Institute Trust

THE MARKET HALL TRUST



This was another busy year for the Market Hall and covered a period of rebuilding public confidence in social activities after two years of lockdowns and uncertainty. This year our Saturday markets took off, with the Market Hall acting as a venue with tables for makers and crafters,

while stall holders with gazebos set up in the Market Place and Fromus Square. IP17 Good Neighbour Scheme used the Hall for a range of community activities aimed at promoting well-being and social interaction, including Funky Fridays for children in the school holidays, Gather and Grow for mums and toddlers, and Line Dancing. Our Keep Fit teachers gradually resumed classes, Britten Pears Arts resumed their community music sessions, and Saxmundham Bowls Club and the Judo Club returned. New instructors started belly dance classes, burlesque, and Zumba. We also obtained a weddings' licence, and the Hall is booked for three weddings in the coming year.

We have hosted a range of community social events, including Quiz Night 'benefits' for local organisations, and an evening to mark the 750th anniversary of

Saxmundham's first Market Charter, with residents bringing along some great mementoes of our Town's past. Sax Jazz are also planning some wonderful music nights in the year ahead to keep our toes tapping – we were delighted to welcome a full house in April for the Swing Machine band! And the Alde and Blyth Community Radio has continued to broadcast out of the Webster Room, pending their move to the renovated Gannon Rooms.

In June, the Market Hall was a venue for celebrating the late HM Queen Elizabeth's Platinum Jubilee with a well attended community lunch party, and also, upon her death in September, the Hall was opened for residents to sign the Book of Condolences.

Events and bookings included:

- NHS drop-in vaccination clinics
- Alde and Blyth Community Radio
- Sax Jazz
- East Suffolk Council Elections
- Saxmundham Town Council Meetings
- East Suffolk Travel Association
- Active Adults
- IP17 Good Neighbours Scheme
- Keep Fit
- Saxmundham Carpet Bowls Club
- East Suffolk Liberal Democrats
- Suffolk Coastal Conservative Association
- Mid Wales Geology Club
- The Art Station
- Reed in Partnership – Driving Theory Tests
- Snape Maltings
- Saxmundham Library
- Creative Core Movement
- Saxmundham Judo Club
- Saxmundham Museum
- East Suffolk Council
- Private Parties
- 750th Anniversary of the Market Charter
- Remembrance Sunday Event
- Christmas Event

The Town Council is the sole charitable trustee of the Market Hall charity, and councillors meet separately in their capacity as Trustee. The ongoing management of the Hall is delegated to a Management Committee, of councillors and community volunteers. The Trust receives an annual grant from the Town Council, which helps to cover maintenance and repairs as well as day to day running costs.

Cllr Jeremy Smith, Chair, Market Hall Management Committee

Cllr Di Eastman, Chair, The Market Hall Trust

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN STEERING GROUP

The Neighbourhood Plan is in essence a planning policy document for Saxmundham, setting out local policies that guide how future development takes place in the Town. Our local Sax policies add local specifics to the planning policies set at both national and East Suffolk-wide levels. This Plan has been developed by Saxmundham Town councillors and local volunteers, after consultation with local people at each stage, and including a major household survey with 1,000 responses to our detailed questionnaire. We are now in the final stages of the development of the Neighbourhood Plan.

This year we submitted our Draft Plan to East Suffolk Council with a final consultation taking place from 8th July 22 until 2nd September 2022.

After the consultation period, our Plan was submitted for public examination to a qualified Examiner, with a public hearing held by him in January 2023. The Examiner proposed a number of important changes (notably to remove our draft policies which sought to influence the District Council's proposals for a 'Garden Neighbourhood' to the south of the Town – these are now not included

in the Neighbourhood Plan), but recommended that the Plan go ahead, with these changes.

The next stage will be a Local Referendum – organised by East Suffolk Council - when all Saxmundham residents on the electoral register will be able to vote on whether they approve the Plan. If a majority of those voting vote Yes, the Plan will be adopted (in formal terms, by East Suffolk Council). The Referendum is due to be held on 29th June 2023.

So we are now on the home stretch and would like to take this opportunity to thank all the Councillors, volunteers and residents who have put so much time and energy into shaping our Neighbourhood Plan.

Given some misleading recent press coverage, we wish to underline that the Neighbourhood Plan does not propose or include the policy for the 'Garden Neighbourhood', which is a proposal of East Suffolk Council in its Local Plan (approved by ESC in 2020) for the Suffolk Coastal area.

Cllr, Jeremy Smith, Chair, The Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

TOWN COUNCILLORS

At a non-contested election held in May 2023, the following Councillors were elected to serve for a four year term on the Town Council: Elizabeth Clark, Diana Eastman, John Findlay, John Fisher, Benjamin Gulliford, Marianne Kiff, Charlotte Hawkins, Tim Lock, James Sandbach, Jeremy Smith.

The Council recorded a vote of thanks to Cllr Nigel Hiley, who stepped down this year, for all his work for

the Town Council over the last four years, especially on environmental projects.

Two vacancies have arisen for Councillors as there were insufficient candidates nominated at the election. The Council invites eligible residents to come forward if they wish to be considered for co-option to the Council. Please contact the Town Clerk for further information.



CLLR BENJAMIN GULLIFORD



CLLR JOHN FISHER



CLLR TIM LOCK



CLLR ELIZABETH CLARK



CLLR MARIANNE KIFF



CLLR JEREMY SMITH



CLLR JAMES SANDBACH



CLLR DI EASTMAN



CLLR CHARLOTTE HAWKINS



CLLR JOHN FINDLAY

OFFICE HOLDERS

The following were elected by the members of the Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2022 for a one-year term:

Chair of the Town Council: Cllr Diana Eastman

Vice-Chair of the Town Council: Cllr John Findlay

Chair of the Resources Committee: Cllr John Findlay

Chair of the Market Hall Management Committee: Cllr Jeremy Smith

Chair of the Gannon Institute Management Committee: Cllr Jeremy Smith

Chair of the Planning and Development Control Committee: Cllr John Fisher

Chair of the Amenities and Services Committee: Cllr Tim Lock

Chair of the Events and Communications Committee: Cllr James Sandbach

Chair of the Staffing Sub-Committee: Cllr John Fisher

COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The following were elected to Committees by the members of the Council at its Annual Meeting in May 2022 for a one-year term:

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

Amenities and Services Committee: Cllrs Tim Lock, Elizabeth Clark, Diana Eastman, Charlotte Hawkins, James Sandbach

Planning and Development Control Committee: Cllrs John Fisher, Nigel Hiley, Marianne Kiff, Tim Lock

Communications and Events Committee: Cllrs James Sandbach, Diana Eastman, Benjamin Gulliford, Marianne Kiff

Market Hall Management Committee: Jeremy Smith, Diana Eastman, Charlotte Hawkins, Tim Lock, plus non-Councillor members Carol Cecil and Rosie Hoare

Gannon Rooms Management Committee: Jeremy Smith, Diana Eastman, Charlotte Hawkins, Tim Lock

TOWN COUNCIL STAFF



During the year, a new Town Clerk, Katy Bailey, was appointed to lead the team of seven staff now working for the Town Council. Grateful thanks are given to Karen Forster who stepped in to manage the Council's administration and staff during the intervening period between Town Clerks.



Our Assistant Town Clerk, Jen Morcom, is celebrating 5 years of continuous service with the Town Council this year.



Sharon Smith completed her first year with the Town Council as its Responsible Financial Officer.



Amy Rayner continued as Environment Coordinator leading the Green Team volunteers.



Jess Palmer and Michael Light remain as our Town Centre Coordinators.



Our new Caretaker, Colin Hathway, joined the team this year.

TOWN COUNCIL'S FINANCES

Council Tax Element 2023-2024

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 and is collected by East Suffolk Council. This year we have had to raise our element by 4.9% to meet

our expected levels of expenditure which have increased due to rising inflation. Our element of Council Tax for a Band D property will therefore be £150.30 a year, just £2.89 a week, which represents an increase of 13p a week compared with last year.

Cllr John Findlay, Chair, Resources Committee

BUDGET 2023-2024

INCOME

Council Tax	£241,975
Other income - Markets, Bank Interest, Leases	£ 3,450
TOTAL INCOME	£245,425

EXPENDITURE

Staff Salaries and Related Costs	£100,958
Councillor Development and Election Costs	£ 1,607
Office and Administration	£ 23,856
Community Contributions - Market Hall and IP17 GNS	£ 26,000
Community Grants and Events - Coronation, Christmas, Artists Week, Music Fest	£ 34,000
Loan Repayment - the Town House	£ 21,400
Communication and Promotions	£ 6,000
Neighbourhood Plan	£ 2,000
Maintenance - Play Areas, Grounds, Buildings, Street Furniture, Youth Booth	£ 12,000
Town Improvements – Speed Reduction, Memorial Field, Green Team, Environment/Climate	£ 15,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£242,821

COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE LEVY

The Community Infrastructure Levy, known generally as CIL, is a charge on developers administered by the District Council during the planning process in relation to new developments. The purpose of CIL is to pay for infrastructure necessitated by new development. A proportion of CIL goes to parish and town councils, this is normally 15%, but rises to 25% for those towns and parishes with an approved Neighbourhood Plan.

The Town Council currently holds £45,458 of CIL. Projects being considered for the expenditure of CIL this financial year include:

1. improving access from the new housing areas to the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists

2. enhancing children and young people's recreational facilities
3. developing a more attractive and successful town centre to meet the needs of a growing population
4. improving community, entertainment and cultural facilities in the town
5. improving facilities for non-fossil fuel transport modes including cycle storage and car charging points
6. developing new or improving existing open or green spaces for the community

FINANCIAL YEAR 2022-2023

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE FOR YEAR END 31 MARCH 2023

31/03/2022	<u>Income</u>	31/03/2023
£223,000	Precept	£227,328
£97	Bank Interest	£522
£290	Markets	£1,731
£1,135	Land and Property	£1,112
£21,211	Grants	£2,937
£9,926	Town Centre Coordinator Grant	£0
£255,659		£233,630

31/03/2022	<u>Expenditure</u>	31/03/2023
£71,460	Salaries and Staff Expenses	£105,367
£100	Councillors	£809
£23,763	Office and Administration Costs	£23,350
£21,377	PWLB Loan Repayment	£21,377
£4,091	Communications	£5,115
£52,792	Community Grants	£50,808
£19,322	Community Events	£27,954
£1,626	Youth Activities	£1,363
£11,436	Neighbourhood Plan	£709
£2,935	Green Team	£2,065
£1,301	Grounds Maintenance	£2,252
£0	Memorial Field*	£4,214
£0	Traffic Calming	£4,121
£474	Markets Support	£478
£17,470	Capital and Maintenance	£6,199
£228,147		£256,181

General Fund Analysis

£101,715	Opening Balance	£133,727
£255,659	Plus Income	£233,630
£228,147	Less Expenditure	£256,181
£4,500	Transfers from/to Reserves	£29,964
£133,727	Closing Balance	£81,212

* Actual expenditure on the Memorial Field was £44,214. £20,000 from Community Infrastructure Levy, £20,000 from General Reserves, and £4,214 from Precept, to fund improvements including landscaping, new gates, planting, seating and heritage signage.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31/03/2023

31/03/2022		31/03/2023
	Current Assets	
£122,862	Current Account	£9,426
£110,091	Savings Account	£160,613
£1,000	Prepayments	£3,457
£4,975	VAT Control	£3,198
£238,928		£176,694
	Current Liabilities	
£1,043	Creditors	£1,638
£1,800	Year End Creditors	£1,800
£3,317	Market Hall VAT Control	£600
£6,160		£4,038
£232,768	Total Assets Less Current Liabilities	£172,656
	Represented By	
£133,727	General Reserves	£81,213
£24,036	Capital Replacement Fund	£30,000
£13,040	Community Infrastructure Levy 2019/2020	£0
£30,656	Community Infrastructure Levy 2020/2021	£13,696
£31,309	Community Infrastructure Levy 2021/2022	£31,309
£0	Community Infrastructure Levy 2022/2023	£6,438
£0	Gannon Institute Refurbishment	£10,000
£232,768		£172,656

The above statements represent fairly the financial position of the Town Council as at 31/03/2023. The Town Council's accounts are audited annually and posted on the Town Council's website. The accounts and underlying records are available for inspection.

