

Swaffham: 20 years of caring

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ABOUT 76 people attended the annual meeting and 20th anniversary celebrations of Swaffham and Litcham Home Hospice Support at the town's EcoTech Centre last week.

A wide range of people who had been associated with or had helped the hospice over those years were invited to the reception, where retiring chairman Simon Broke cut a special 20th birthday cake, made by the Wellbread bakery in Swaffham.

Co-ordinator Debbie Harfield told guests the organisation had grown from just a few volunteer carers visiting patients and supporting them at home in 1988 to the current team of 32 volunteers still doing home visits but providing many more services as well.

"Recently, a carers' support group has been formed to give the chance for family carers to get together for mutual support, advice and to talk through their worries and concerns," she said.

"We continue to liaise with GPs, district nurses, the Macmillan team, local hospitals and organisations and most of our referrals come from these, along with referrals from patients themselves.

"Our motto has always been that small is beautiful, and however much the organisation grows we endeavour to keep that personal touch where we respond to people's needs and give them the service that they want."

Mrs Harfield thanked Mr Broke for all his help and support over the last four years as chairman, and especially his help in the hospice group's move to its new offices on the EcoTech Business Park from Ash Close in Swaffham.

Mr Broke said he was "signing off" in the knowledge that the hospice was in good hands and sound financial health. "We can safely look forward to another 20 years of good and essential work in our community knowing we have very strong local support," he said.

New chairman Peter Wrighton said the future would be challenging as the Government had embarked on another reorganisation of health care – the fifth major one in nine years.

But he assured guests the hospice was well set up and ready for these challenges and would continue to provide "the essential services to those patients who need palliative care and support at the end of their lives".

During the reception, one of the founders and past chairman Dr Roger Atkins reflected on how the hospice was formed, and a presentation of comfort equipment for patients was made by Wayland Agricultural Society.