

## TOWN MAYOR'S REPORT: CLLR CLIFFORD THOMAS

The Council Term is at an end, and the last four years reflects an outstanding contribution made by an admirable body of voluntary councillors and dedicated staff. It has been an honour to work with them all, and I acknowledge and thank everyone for their unwavering support throughout.

Starting in 2018 with the opening of the refurbished Queen Elizabeth School project, we have progressed through a new Judith's Field Pavilion, the provision of adult exercise facilities and a wide range of additional amenities for our children, to the emergence of the findings of a comprehensive Transport Study. Full details follow in the Portfolio Group Reports. I look at all this and see how much more our Town offers now than when my own family was nurtured here. I believe we are all so fortunate to live in Godmanchester. Chartered in 1212, it has both a remarkable history and a demonstrable ability to move with the times and offer a vibrant, modern environment. Our community spirit and organisations and associations are remarkable. Crime rates are low, and the town has few drug related problems. So, happily our major recurring concerns are currently centred on parking and traffic issues, and let's hope the Transport Study will enable many of these to be addressed.

It has been an honour and a privilege to serve as your Mayor. I followed in the footsteps of a long line of citizens offered this unique opportunity and was guided throughout by serving councillors who had held the respected position beforehand. But, with the elections comes change and the opportunity to refresh our ranks. Several of our current council are not able to offer themselves for re-election. Cllrs Philip Round and Graham Wilson in particular, gave us respectively the perspective of youthful wisdom and 24-years of experience in local issues and administration, and will be sorely missed, I am sure they will continue to do much for the community in other capacities. I thank all who are leaving Council, both personally and on your behalf, for all they have contributed. I will continue as Mayor until the new Council appoints my replacement. After that I am taking a sabbatical to recharge the battery and celebrate a personal family milestone event. I wish those of the current team that will form the new Council and the newcomers who will join them, every good fortune, and look forward to an exciting future under their guidance.

## Business Portfolio Report

The Business Portfolio continues in its role of providing recommendations to the Council on many issues ranging from the Community Nursery, grant allocations, project development and acquisition, internal processes, Youth Council involvement and Council events such as the Christmas Market. It also reviews budget and spend based on the needs of the Council via the Budget Advisory Panel. The budgets proposed are then voted on and agreed by the Town Council.

We have continued to support local groups and organisations through our grants programme and welcome new applicants in the coming year.

Godmanchester came together to enjoy this year's Christmas Market at School Hill. This year's event had a strong community focus, celebrating local businesses and fundraising groups.

After an extended period of closure due to COVID-19, the Queen Elizabeth School and Judith's Field Pavilion reopened and welcomed back individuals and businesses.

Work is now nearing completion on the new look Mill Steps. The Town Council contributed towards the cost of this project we are looking forward to the completion of the project. It looks certain to become one of the town's major attractions.

After more than a year of remote, virtual meetings the Town Council resumed face to face meetings. 'You're on mute!' forever etched in our minds.

## Godmanchester Plant Nursery

We are delighted that the long-awaited new buildings for the nursery are now installed. We are completing ground works to tidy up the site and are looking forward to welcoming you over the summer months. This work has been funded through a substantial grant we secured from Cambridge Community Foundation and additional Community Infrastructure Funding from Huntingdonshire District Council.

There have been lots of other changes as we have moved ahead to renew and refresh the planting schemes. The volunteers and staff have been busy in the greenhouse and poly tunnels sowing seeds so that we will have plenty of fresh produce, plants, and flowers to sell over the summer. Do pop along and see us. We hope by then to also have the new café open for tea and cake.

## Youth Council

We are celebrating almost eight years of having a Youth Council for our 11 to 23 year olds. This is where they help Council to hear and understand the concerns of our younger

residents. They have been meeting via Zoom over the last year and have given us their thoughts to feed into the transport survey, ideas about how we might develop the play areas in our town and how we could support young people to return to some normality after the lockdowns. They have also represented the Town at civic events. As some of our youth councillors headed off to university, we have been busy recruiting new members and welcomed four new youth councillors during the year. We still have spaces – to find out more please contact the Town Clerk, Vicky Pryce, [townclerk@gmccouncil.com](mailto:townclerk@gmccouncil.com)

## Environment Portfolio Report

The Environment Portfolio group of the Town Council is responsible for the maintenance and improvement of Godmanchester's external environment. This includes open areas such as the Recreation Ground; Judith's Field (incorporating the children's play areas where we undertake quarterly safety inspections); the Cemetery and closed churchyard; street furniture such as benches, half the rubbish bins (the remainder are serviced by HDC) and hanging baskets (but not the planters kindly provided by Godmanchester in Bloom). A large part of our annual budget is spent on regular grass cutting, tree pruning and watering etc; which took some £40,000 of our budget in 2021/22.

In the past 12 months we have seen Willow Walk installed on the recreation ground. This is a footpath branching from the main riverside path to provide wheelchair / walking access to some of the views of Portholme Meadow and the start of the pollarded willows.

At Judith's Field the toddler play area extension is now completed and has proved so popular that additional rubber crumb surfacing has now been added to reduce the risk of muddy little hands and feet after an exciting adventure. Two new benches are also about to be installed for the benefit of onlooking parents.

This year has also seen our 'Triennial tree report' a process of assessment of our stock of trees on Town Council land which identified 40 trees in need of attention to avoid problems in the three years to come, this work has now been completed. Recently six new trees have been planted at various locations to ensure a healthy long term tree stock, we shall also be planting a new Oak tree on Queens Walk in the Autumn to commemorate this year's Queen's Jubilee.

The adult gym on Queens Walk has been proving a cost-effective way of keeping fit for many and now includes a 'height board'. This has been required to be installed to warn children and parents of the legal age/height limit for usage of these installations, the equipment can be dangerous if used incorrectly by minors and can lead to injury.

Finally, after two years in the planning Skyworld, the climbing installation on the Recreation ground, has received its planning permission, albeit too late for installation due to bad weather. This is now booked for installation commencement on April 28th 2022.

## Property Portfolio Report

We were very pleased to welcome back residents, clubs and organisations into our halls, buildings and facilities when the Covid 19 restrictions were eased in April 2022. The Property Group had maintained the upkeep of the Queen Elizabeth School and Judith's Field Pavilion throughout the duration of the pandemic.

Since the installation of the very successful skatepark, the Council had received many requests regarding the need for a public toilet at Judith's Field. Accordingly, a single sex toilet, complete with baby changing facilities and adjoining storage for essential maintenance equipment, was installed and officially opened by the Mayor in July 2021.

In our 2021 report we announced our intention to build a MultiWheel Fun Track which would be constructed next to the skatepark at Judith's Field. The contract was signed in June 2021 with the world-renowned Clark & Kent who built the 2012 Olympic BMX track, however, because of the delays caused by the pandemic, construction work did not start until October 2021. There was much excitement whilst construction was underway but finally in November 2021, the MWFT was officially opened for all to use by the Mayor on a cold and windy Saturday. It is a very successful and well-used BMX track, not only by Godmanchester residents, but also BMXers from neighbouring towns.

Work has been carried out on the rear entrance to the Judith's Field pavilion so that the door is now in line with the rest of the building. The atrium is now a much larger, airier and welcoming area. The path at the rear of the building is to be paved and widened which will make it a more amenable and useable space.

The Property Group is investigating the fitting of hearing loops in the Queen Elizabeth Halls and the Judith's Field Pavilion. This is in line with the 2010 Equality Act and will be installed in due course.

There have been instances of anti-social behaviour and damage to Council property at Judith's Field. As a result, the enhancement of the CCTV capability is deemed necessary; quotes are being sought and the system will be upgraded shortly.

Rubbish is still a widespread problem especially around the areas where there are sporting facilities. Volunteer litter pickers try to keep the areas clear; users of the parks and open spaces especially are urged to dispose of all litter responsibly.

The Town Hall needs refurbishment. It is hoped that this major work can be carried out soon, but as the Town Hall is a Grade 2 listed building, specialist architects are required to advise how the work can be done.

## Planning and Transport Portfolio

The Town Council is consulted by the District Council and County Council on planning matters that will affect Godmanchester and the surrounding areas. During these consultations we ensure that requests are in line with both Godmanchester residents' aspirations for the town and our Neighbourhood Plan.

We have responded to several draft consultations this year including the CCC Cycling and Walking Strategy and The Huntingdonshire Landscape and Townscape Supplementary planning document.

During 2021/22, the Town Council has continued to respond to planning applications and subsequent revisions.

The most significant application received was the further detail for 59 homes and soft landscaping of Dexter's Farm. While we recommended refusal on this development based on our concerns about over-development, road safety on the A1198 and the proposed layout enabling access for future housing developments, HDC gave permission, and the project is proceeding. To optimise the outcome further correspondence was engaged and HDC Development Control Committee, the developers and CCC have agreed that implementation of traffic calming measures and speed reduction would improve residents' safety along the A1198. A toucan crossing and new pavement along the A1198 is also being provided to enable pedestrian and cycle links between the two parts of town.

We have consulted with HDC and the developers about the height of some of the new buildings on the strip north of A1198 where the care home and some houses are being built as we are very concerned neighbouring houses could be overlooked. HDC say the development is in accordance with the approved plans, to which we objected.

We continue to liaise with HDC and David Wilson Homes on the Romans' Edge development to improve the bin collections and to maintain the area. Nearly 900 homes are being built on the development, more than the 753 originally planned.

## Update of our Neighbourhood Plan

In December 2017, our Neighbourhood Plan was approved by the District Council. The document describes the aspirations for Godmanchester and contains policies to help us influence development. To ensure Godmanchester's Neighbourhood Plan is in line with the new Huntingdonshire Local Plan the group have met with HDC and are updating our 2017 Plan ready for Public Consultation to begin later this year.

## Future Development in Godmanchester

Over the next few years, we will see more new homes completed in Godmanchester, including at RGE Engineering and hopefully at Tyrell's Marina. We will receive money from the developers that will allow improvements in the town.

## Transport Matters

The new A14 bypass around Godmanchester has been open for over a year. The old A14, now reclassified as the A1307, allows access into Huntingdon and is gradually changing the pattern of traffic flow through town. In June the Mill Common Road will hopefully be open and it is anticipated that this too will reduce traffic volume through Godmanchester.

In September we engaged Atkins Traffic Consultants to undertake a full transport study to independently establish where we have problems in the town, for example on congestion and parking. After a successful data capture campaign from residents, using questionnaires and social media, Atkins have produced a Transport Plan that outlines problem areas in the town. We have spoken with HDC and CCC and we will be able to use the Transport Plan to guide and influence the needs of Godmanchester within the new the new CCC Transport Strategy for Huntingdonshire.

Throughout the year we have been working on two Local Highway Initiative bids to improve road safety and reduce speeding within Godmanchester. On behalf of CCC we have engaged in a public consultation with residents on the installation of yellow lines along London Road while CCC are currently considering our bid for a town wide 20mph speed limit.

## GODMANCHESTER TOWN COUNCIL SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTS

(NB the information supplied for the year ending 31.3.22 is from unaudited accounts)

### RECEIPTS

Year ending 31.3.21		Year Ending 31.3.22	Budget 2022-23
-£ 63	QES	£8,622	£ 25,000
£ 941	JF	£10,206	£ 20,000
£ 556	Interest	£454.69	£ 500
£ 3,508	Other	£6,453	£ 500
£ 1,350	Allotments	£1,395	£ 950
£ 284,646	Precept	£296,749	£ 321,402
£ 5,480	Grants received	£177,087	£ 45,000
£ 12,576	Cemetery	£12,709	£ 13,000
£ 3,060	CIL income	£101,590	£ 107,817
£ 11,804	Nursery Sales	£21,353	£ 47,000.00
£ 1,612	Nursery Contributions	£5,865	£ 6,000
£ 353,234	<b>TOTAL RECEIPTS</b>	£ 642,484	£ 587,169

### PAYMENTS

Year Ending 31.3.21			Budget 2022-23
£ 117,191	Town Office Admin	£109,563	£ 133,304
£ 3,234	Business Admin	£2,524	£ 10,584
£ 4,246	Insurance	£4,541	£ 6,000
£ 206	Civic Costs	£3,937	£ 15,000
£ 7,492	Communication & Tourism	£4,693	£ 7,200
£ 4,039	Grants Awarded	£7,096	£ 13,750
£ 8,991	Contribs to outside bodies	£54,100	£ 1,000
£ -	Town Hall	£2,960	£ 5,265
£ 11,161	QES	£10,091	£ 24,297
£ 18,320	Judith's Field	£47,425	£ 21,537
£ 5,793	Other Property		£ 3,600
£ 15,472	Environment	£10,933	£ 22,400
£ 14,436	Recreation areas/facilities	£5,179	£ 17,680
£ 900	Allotments	£930	£ 950
£ 29,986	Grounds Maintenance	£39,331	£ 42,020
£ 3,601	Churchyard & Cemetery	£5,394	£ 8,550
£ 37,263	Community Nursery	£59,309	£ 102,487
	Community Nursery Project	£248,742	
£ -	Capital Projects (CIL)	£177,670	£ 382,000
£ 310,095.00	<b>TOTAL PAYMENTS</b>	£ 794,418	£ 822,624.00

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**Godmanchester Town Council**

**Supporting Reserves Reconciliation for ANNUAL RETURN 31 March 2022**

Explains the difference between boxes 7 & 8 on the Annual Return

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<u>Code</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Last Year £</u>	<u>This Year £</u>
	<b>Total Reserves</b>	<b><u>1,065,991.95</u></b>	<b><u>914,055.36</u></b>
100	Debtors	0.00	180,868.23
105	VAT Control Account	10,097.46	52,023.56
	<b>Less Total Debtors</b>	<b><u>10,097.46</u></b>	<b><u>232,891.79</u></b>
100	Debtors	65.00	0.00
510	Accruals	2,200.00	0.00
565	Damage Deposits	0.00	1,850.00
	<b>Plus Total Creditors</b>	<b><u>2,265.00</u></b>	<b><u>1,850.00</u></b>
	<b>Equals Total Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	<b><u>1,058,159.49</u></b>	<b><u>683,013.57</u></b>
200	Unity Trust Current Account	24,458.89	40,292.49
210	Unity Trust Money Manager	1,033,697.68	642,718.16
250	Petty Cash	2.92	2.92
	<b>Total Cash and Bank Accounts</b>	<b><u>1,058,159.49</u></b>	<b><u>683,013.57</u></b>