

Godmanchester Town Council

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NEWSLETTER August 2022



THE MAYOR'S MESSAGE



This is the first Newsletter since the Godmanchester Town Council was elected in May 2022 for a new four-year session. We have lost a number of long-standing and hard-working councillors, and we thank them for their contribution over the past session. Conversely we welcome four new councillors – Mike Grice, Karen Pauley, Susan Simpson, and Emma Saunders – to bring fresh blood and

dynamism to our ranks, and we look forward to working with them. I congratulate Karen Pauley and Susan Simpson who have been elected as Chairpersons to the Planning and Business Portfolios, respectively; and to Alan Hooker and Miriam Radford who continue to carry the burdens of Environment and Property.

The individual portfolio reports will clarify the achievement of the past few months, but I would like to emphasise that the Council has kept busy providing improvements to the town. On the widest scale, the completion of the A14, and the opening of the A1307 (ex-A14) links into Huntingdon has cleared the way for us to proceed to implement traffic and transport management ideas helped by the recent Atkins Report. You will hear much more about this in the future – and see tangible progress in concert with the relevant highway authorities.

Within the town, the Community Nursery has opened significant new facilities, and has produced a most

ambitious future plan to achieve a commercial break-even within a relatively short time, thanks in part to grants from the County Council. You have even less need to go any further afield to find first-rate plants for your garden! In the historical centre, the new Fish Pass has opened, largely funded by HDC and the Environment Agency, but also with a considerable contribution in both financial and design terms from our town. Those of you who have gone a little further and visited the Rec will have seen the new Skyworld structure, which is proving a hit with children of all ages. Meanwhile at Judith's Field older children enjoy the new Multi-Wheel Fun Track, while their younger siblings have a refurbished playground to occupy them – I'm sure that many of them will have taken the train to some exotic, imaginary destination.

We helped to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee, and had a couple of successful film shows – only slightly blighted by the cold weather. By comparison, the Gala Weekend, organised by the Community Association and supported financially by the Town Council, took place in beautiful summer weather, and was a joy bringing so many together in a post-Covid environment. I would also like to thank the many volunteer organisations throughout the town that also make such a positive contribution to our way of life.

I thank my fellow councillors and our dedicated staff for all that they have already delivered, and I can also assure you that this spirit of improvement and innovation will continue unabated into the future.

Cllr. Dick Taplin

PLANNING AND TRANSPORT GROUP NEWS



Three of the main concerns from the Atkins report that the Transport Study Working Group are working on are heavy goods vehicles, inconsiderate parking and speeding. Above the M-VAS (Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign) in Earning Street. We aim to move it to several locations around the Town in the coming months.

Following receipt of the Atkins Transport Plan for Godmanchester, the Town Council has set up a Transport Study Working Group (TSWG) to review the report, consult further with residents and to push forward practical plans to improve the traffic and travel issues in the town. The TSWG comprises Cllrs Hyams, Irving, Grice, Mickelburgh, Pauley and Taplin.

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PLANNING AND TRANSPORT GROUP NEWS

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Here are some updates of what we have been doing...

- The Atkins Transport Plan was made available for members of the public to view, and comment on, via the Town Council website and Godmanchester Living. An article also appeared in The Hunts Post.
- The TSWG also asked for comments on local issues with traffic pinch-points, rat-runs and individual street issues. The response was fantastic, and the comments received were used to draw up a map of the most mentioned locations and issues. Each comment/suggestion has been reviewed and used to guide the TSWG towards making real changes to traffic flow, parking and speeding issues.
- The TSWG has undertaken a review of street signage and road markings on our main roads with a view to getting these updated and renewed/repainted where necessary. Our findings have been passed to Cambridgeshire County Council.
- Speedwatch – the TSWG has asked the local Speedwatch Group to start up again. Issues around speeding in the town are regular comments we receive. Speedwatch will help to raise awareness of speeding and provide us with real-time data regarding speeding on our roads. Permits are currently in place for Cambridge Road and Post Street. New permits are being requested for London Road, West Street and Earning Street.
- The M-VAS, Mobile Vehicle Activated Sign, has been out and about collecting speeding data from various streets in the town. Its first location was Earning Street as the TSWG was aware of comments from residents there of speeding issues. The M-VAS is relocated every two weeks and data will be collected over an ongoing period to obtain consistent information, both during the holidays and term time.

The TSWG had a very constructive meeting with Transport Officers from Cambridgeshire County Council in July. We will be working very closely with CCC as they will guide, support and assist with funding for any major changes we want to make. For example; changing the alignment of a junction, locating a pedestrian crossing or developing a new cycle lane.

The TSWG is also working closely with other partner authorities, public interest and accessibility groups.

LHI (LOCAL HIGHWAYS IMPROVEMENT)

These are a once-a-year bid that the Town Council can make to CCC for funding towards small scale highways schemes.

The Town Council is currently reviewing two ongoing LHI bids; one for 20mph speeds through the town and another for double yellow lines on London Road.

We are currently working with CCC on the feasibility and timescales for the 20mph scheme and hope to be able to provide further updates soon.

The London Road double yellow lines scheme is to be reviewed by the Planning and Transport Portfolio in the light of recent objections.

ENVIRONMENT GROUP NEWS

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 and Judith's Field – incorporating children's play areas where we undertake quarterly safety inspections – but also the Cemetery and closed churchyard. Street furniture – 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; this took some £40,000 of our budget in 2021/22.

After the Easter break, we were finally able to install our latest addition on the Recreation Ground, Skyworld. As expected, this has proved very popular, giving a futuristic looking experience that exercises every muscle and helps develop agility, coordination, and balance, along with problem-solving skills needed to navigate the intricate web. This new area provides a safe place for children to explore and be socially active with friends and family.



At Judith's Field our expansion of the toddler play area at the end of last year proved so popular we have had to install protective rubber crumb flooring linking the new equipment together to prevent the high footfall in wet weather from causing mud to be a problem. Another addition has been two new benches to provide adult comfort whilst watching the children at play. Also at Judith's Field we will be starting our modest car park expansion scheme on the 15th of August enabling a more organized parking experience when using the facilities on site.

In the future we will be updating the Queen's Walk toddler play area and are currently in the design consultation stage for this. It is intended to include an exciting new feature for use by smaller children.





During the pandemic, the Council were unable to offer any indoor public spaces for meetings, organised group gatherings such as yoga or art classes, mums and tots, weddings or parties. Thankfully, those dark days are behind us and, as families are socialising more, it is worth remembering that Godmanchester Town Council have venues for hire - they are on your doorstep!

The Queen Elizabeth School in the centre of Godmanchester by the Chinese Bridge has two halls for hire. One is larger than the other but there are interconnecting doors so the rooms can be used together. Judith's Field Pavilion, which is situated on the field opposite to Romans' Edge, has one reasonably large hall and a small room. The Atrium in the Pavilion has been enlarged which makes the entrance light, airy and welcoming. The path at the rear of the Pavilion is to be widened which will make it a much better space. Both venues have kitchens which are available for use. Please contact admin@gmccouncil.com for hire charges and further details.

Both the large halls in the Queen Elizabeth School and at Judith's Field are soon to be installed with hearing loops. This means that the Town Council will be compliant with the 2010 Disability Act by providing assistance for people with hearing loss. An announcement will be posted on the Town Council website when the work has been completed. It is hoped that once the hearing loops are installed, these venues will become popular meeting places.

The Town Hall is badly in need of refurbishment. It is important that the interior is sympathetically restored in such a manner that the legacy of the building is protected but provides sufficient modern and workable accommodation for our Town Council employees.

The outside of the building will also have a 'facelift' and there are hopes for spotlights to be installed at ground level to illuminate the Town Hall and the Queen Elizabeth School. Quotes

have been received from three specialist architects who deal with historical listed buildings to provide drawings and specifications which will be scrutinised before any decision is made about the nature of the work to be carried out. The cost of this project will be funded by CIL money. This is going to be 'work in progress' for some time.

The Skatepark and Multi-Wheel Fun Track continue to be extremely popular, not only with the young people of Godmanchester, but also by residents from outlying towns. The Skatepark was a favourite destination during the pandemic, the MWFT was only opened in November 2021 but is widely acknowledged to be the best track in the area – hence its popularity.

We installed a public toilet at Judith's Field in July 2021 in response to many requests from parents. Sadly, since it has been opened, there have been numerous incidents of serious damage, both inside and outside of the building and occurrences of anti-social behaviour. As a result, the decision has been taken to restrict the opening hours of the toilet. In addition to this, extra CCTV cameras are to be installed around the area of the toilet building, the Skatepark and the MWFT. This is to provide extra safety to those who use these facilities and to protect Council property.

Christmas Lights will be installed again this year along the Causeway and possibly on School Hill. The date of the lights switch-on and the Christmas Market will be announced in due course.



BUSINESS GROUP NEWS

We are perhaps the least public facing members of the Town Council working in the background to help keep things organised and running smoothly. We are currently working on a review of Town Council policies and looking at refreshing the Town Council website.

We are responsible for grants to community groups and organisations in our town. In the latest grants round we approved a grant for the Godmanchester Litter Pickers to enable them to purchase essential equipment. This will help them carry on with their excellent work helping to keep our town clean and tidy. Further details relating to grants and how to apply for one can be found on the Town Council website.

We have also recently facilitated the move of the Senior Citizens Group from the Town Hall to the Queen Elizabeth School Hall to enable the refurbishment of the Town Hall to be carried out. The group will soon be celebrating their 40th Anniversary!



They meet on Saturday mornings (10 – 12) and serve teas and coffees. They also meet on Tuesday afternoons for games of Bingo and Hoi. New members are most welcome, if you would like further details, please contact Anne Mair on 01480 459 276.

GODMANCHESTER PLANT NURSERY

If anyone has been to the community plant nursery this year, no doubt you will have noticed some changes! Grant funding has allowed several large improvement projects across the site. Alongside this, hard work by our volunteer team weeding, pruning and generally tidying the nursery grounds has helped enhance the general aesthetics of the site.

We are so pleased with our new classroom/meeting room; it has space for thirty people and has been designed to let in maximum light. The patio doors open onto our extended patio, and you can look across to the vegetable garden and down to the orchard. The space is extremely efficient and is heated by air source heat pumps, which keep it cool even on the hottest summer days. This will be the perfect space for us to hold courses in the future but is also available to hire going forward.

Last month, we hosted our first evening event at The Community Plant Nursery for the Huntingdonshire Lib Dems, who held a BBQ in the grounds and enjoyed cooking pizzas in our stone pizza oven. The weather was great and it couldn't have gone any better! If you would like to hire either the classroom or outside space, please book directly through the town hall on 01480 388870 or email caroline@gmccouncil.com for more info.

Our new kitchen area hosts the Muddy Trowel Café, offering snacks, hot and cold drinks, and locally produced cakes when available. This has also become the place for our volunteer's morning meetings. The Muddy Trowel Café is fully staffed by volunteers; if you would like to get involved, please email nursery@gmccouncil.com or pop in and speak to Nathan.

We are so proud of our community nursery and the 5 acres of grounds it is nestled within. This wouldn't be possible without our team of hardworking volunteers who give up their time to help out. We are currently recruiting volunteers for next spring and summer (specifically weekends) to help in the nursery shop, watering, assisting customers, weeding and merchandising. If this is something you feel you would be interested in, please email nursery@gmccouncil.com or pop in and speak to Nathan.



THE YOUTH COUNCIL

We're recruiting new Youth Councillors!

If you are a young person who lives in Godmanchester between the ages of 12 (year 7) and 23, you could join our Youth Council.

We meet monthly in term time, online on a Friday 5 – 5:30pm. As Youth Councillors you help the Town Council to stay connected to younger residents, hearing from and understanding the needs of our children and young people.

In the last year we have looked at transport and planning issues, discussed play spaces, worried about antisocial behaviour and litter, and met with the Mayor, Councillors and the Police and Crime Commissioner.

We even presented our work to the High Sheriff! We're planning activities which includes a visit to police HQ and bike marking.

Our Youth Councillors join us at civic events, are invited to support the Mayor's fundraising events and help represent our Town.

Anyone who is a resident can apply to join us: drop our Clerk, Vicky, an email to tell us you would like to find out more: townclerk@gmccouncil.com Those who are younger, please talk to your schools as they have their own school councils and you can have your say through them.

VANDALISM - CALL 111

Unfortunately, residents can't help but be aware of a spate of vandalism and some anti-social behaviour in our town.

We would encourage you to call 111 to contact the Police to report matters as and when they occur. You can also contact Crimestoppers to report a crime anonymously.

They will pass the information about the crime to the Police.

Telephone 0800 555 111 or, scan the QR code below with a mobile.

