

The last Town Council meeting of the year was held on Thursday 8 December 2022; one member of the public was present. I was happy to advise that the Christmas Market, held the previous Friday, had raised over £240 towards the Mayor's Charity, the Godmanchester Foodbank. A further £420 had been raised a week earlier at the Civic Supper, attended by many local celebrities and mayors from other local towns. The 800 Club Draw was then performed by Cllr Hooker – including two additional Christmas prizes. Lucky winners have already been listed on Facebook.

The regular agenda items followed:

- We were grateful for a donation from the Godmanchester Freemen towards the Town's Christmas Tree, as listed in the correspondence list.
- County Councillor Graham Wilson gave a brief report on CCC projects, including that the Godmanchester-wide blanket 20 mph limit had been accepted, and would be implemented in the new year. He also briefed us on the proposal for a Cambridge Congestion Charge (£5/day), and urged all to respond via <https://consultcambs.uk.engagementhq.com/making-connections-2022>.
- District Councillor Debbie Mickelburgh gave an update on HDC policies, highlighting improvements in planning response times, the Huntingdonshire Futures initiative, moves to mitigate surface flooding, and Warm Spaces. **Please note that Godmanchester has two such locations, at the Baptist Church and the Community Nursery – please pass this information on to anyone you know who would benefit from such help.**
- The Council agreed to a grant to CAMSAR to purchase a Dry Suit to be used in River Search and Rescue operations (particularly relevant in the light of the recent tragedy in Solihull). There were also reports on future Newsletter production and on support to the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association.
- The Council considered four planning applications. Three were accepted, but we strongly objected to the Dexter's Farm developer's proposals to defer installing a pelican crossing from their new estate across the A1198 near Romans' Edge; we feel that road safety should be a priority for new residents from the very start of occupation.
- There was an update on progress with the Transport Study Working Group, looking to improve road safety within the town, and following on from the earlier Atkins Report.
- The Environment Portfolio report highlighted improvements made in the previous month – the removal of LogWorld, repairs to Judith's Field equipment, the planting of the QEII Commemorative Oak, and additional planting at the Cemetery. The major initiative for the coming year will be a major refurbishment of the Queen's Walk Playground to provide 'accessible' play equipment catering for co-operative play.
- Finally, as reported at last month's meeting, Town Hall staff would work from home on Mondays and Fridays at present; the Town Hall will be open normally between Tuesday and Thursday during the current cold weather and fuel crisis. The new extended patio has now been installed at Judith's Field Pavilion, adding to the utility of that building.

The other major discussion was over the 2023/24 Budget. All portfolios had stringently reviewed their anticipated future expenditure and, despite the current inflation and fuel crises, had limited increases to under 6%. While the local precept is only 5.3% of the annual Council Tax bill, it was agreed to avoid impacting our residents, and so we recommended an increase of only 2%. With anticipated increases from other Council Tax elements, this will mean that the local percentage will reduce.

Finally, on behalf of the Town Councillors and staff, may I wish you all a Merry Christmas and a Happy and Healthy New Year – and don't forget to publicise our Warm Spaces.

Dick Taplin, Mayor