



GILLINGHAM TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Hall, School Road, Gillingham, Dorset SP8 4QR

ANNUAL TOWN ASSEMBLY

Minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on 21st April 2021

The Annual Town Assembly was held remotely using appropriate technology in accordance with The Local Authorities Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 ("the 2020 Regulations") which came in to force on 4th April 2020.

Present:

Cllr Barry von Clemens, Mayor
Cllr Paul Harris, Deputy Mayor
Cllr Alison von Clemens
Cllr Fiona Cullen
Cllr Sharon Cullingford
Cllr Rupert Evill
Cllr Alan Frith
Cllr Mike Gould

Cllr Dennis Griffin
Cllr Mick Hill
Cllr Graham Poulter
Cllr Val Potheary
Cllr John Robinson
Cllr Donna Toye
Cllr Keith Wareham
Cllr Roger Weeks

In attendance:

Town Clerk, Julie Hawkins
Office Manager, Jill Ezzard
Project Administrator, Serena Burgess

Works Manager, Simon Dobie
Responsible Financial Officer, Debra Edwards

Press and Public:

Michael Streeter, Gillingham and Shaftesbury News
There were 16 members of the public present

The Mayor, Cllr Barry von Clemens, welcomed everyone to the Annual Town Assembly and presided over the meeting.

1. To receive and accept apologies for absence.

Apologies were received from the Deputy Town Clerk.

2. To approve the minutes of the previous meeting held on Wednesday 13th March 2019.

It was agreed and **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Annual Town Assembly held on Wednesday, 13th March 2019 were a correct record of that meeting.
Please note that there was no meeting in 2020 due to the pandemic.

3. To receive reports from Chairmen.

The following reports had been circulated prior to the meeting:

- Mayor's Report – Please refer to [Appendix A](#)
- Report from Chairman of the General Purposes Committee – Please refer to [Appendix B](#)
- Report from the Chairman of the Planning Committee – Please refer to [Appendix C](#)
- Report from the Chairman of the Finance Committee – Please refer to [Appendix D](#)

The Mayor explained that the Annual Town Assembly is an opportunity for the electorate to learn about the activities of the town council over the past civic year and for local groups and organisations to tell the town about their achievements.

The Mayor gave a PowerPoint presentation on the Town Council's activities over the past year and summarised the reports submitted by the committee chairmen.

4. Presentations from local organisations.

The following organisations gave a PowerPoint presentation:

a) Gillingham Youth Club

Tony Nye, Gillingham Lead Youth Worker, gave a short presentation on the work of Gillingham Youth Club. Young people who attend Gillingham Youth Club presented a video explaining the benefits of the Club and how it is helping young people in Gillingham.

b) Gillingham Community Kindness

Liz Rose gave a presentation on her role as Social Prescriber for Gillingham Medical Practice and the development of Gillingham Community Kindness. Liz explained that her job is about connecting people, looking at people in a holistic way and giving them the time, space and opportunity to find out what matters most to them.

Liz outlined the achievements of Gillingham Community Kindness and explained the future aims of the group. Further information is available from Liz via email Lizrose@dorsetgp.nhs.uk or by telephoning 01747 859202.

c) Dementia Friendly Gillingham

Annie Kings gave a presentation about Dementia Friendly Gillingham and her role as a Dementia Friends Champion. Annie outlined some of the work that the group had been doing during the past year, including their work with Dorset Police and The Malthouse to provide a Safe Haven for anyone with dementia who gets lost.

Annie informed the meeting that thanks to local fundraising and donations, Dementia Friendly Gillingham have been able to provide robotic companion pets for people living with dementia. The pet companion project was such a success that the story reached all parts of the UK and has put Gillingham firmly on the map.

Annie also explained that the group had set up a knitting group to produce 'twiddle' blankets and muffs. Further information regarding Dementia Friendly Gillingham is available from Annie by telephoning 01747 837908.

d) Gillingham, Mere and Shaftesbury Lions Club

Brian Anderson, President of Gillingham, Mere and Shaftesbury Lions Club, gave a presentation on the work of the club. Brian outlined the fundraising activities and explained how fundraising benefits many different causes, from the Brain Tumour Charity to providing swimming lessons for disadvantaged children. Brian explained the many ways in which the club supports the community, including providing volunteer support for events, helping at vaccination centres, planting bulbs and supporting litter picks. Further information is available via <http://gmslions.org.uk>

5. To receive questions.

There were no questions.

6. The Mayor's Charity

The Mayor made a virtual cheque presentation to Green Gang, to the value of £605.00. Green Gang is a group working together to regain their mental health while improving the environment. Mr Bob Messer accepted the cheque on behalf of Green Gang and informed the meeting of the work currently being undertaken by the group which includes work at Withy Woods and various public open spaces in Gillingham. Mr Messer explained that the money will be used to fund safety boots and hi-viz water-proof clothing for volunteers.

The meeting closed at 8.40pm

**Mayor's Report to Annual Town Assembly
21 April 2021
Author: Cllr Barry von Clemens**

The civic year 2020-21 has been a busy and productive year. Gillingham Town Council successfully managed to continue all council business and meetings via Microsoft teams during the COVID-19 pandemic.

I wish to thank the councilors and chairmen of the council's committees, the council's grounds team, the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk, the Responsible Finance Officer, and the office staff for their hard work and commitment during the past year.

Over the past year Gillingham Town Council has been fully involved in the management of the COVID-19 pandemic in our community. Following a meeting between the Mayor, the Town Clerk and the town's community and church leaders, the Town Council set up a volunteer group to help our community through the lockdown period and beyond.

The town came together to give an amazing response with over 120 volunteers delivering help and support to vulnerable members of our community who were shielding in their homes. At the end of the first lockdown the Town Council's volunteer scheme was disbanded and Gillingham Community Kindness took over, with many volunteers continuing their vital work in the town.

This great achievement was acknowledged by the High Sheriff of Dorset, who following a visit to the town, awarded Gillingham the High Sheriffs Community Award. A great honour for our fabulous town and its wonderful community.



Some of the Gillingham Volunteers



High Sheriff Award

I would like to add my thanks to everyone who worked so hard to get our town through the COVID-19 pandemic and who continue to work hard to keep us safe.

As well as dealing with the response to the COVID pandemic, the council quickly adapted to new ways of working and we were able to continue with business as usual. As part of the work to make our town council a greener organisation and reduce our carbon footprint, the council changed its energy supplier to a green energy supplier. The Greener Gillingham sub-committee carried out a green audit and made a number of recommendations to the council, which have been adopted. I would like to thank its lead member Cllr Fiona Cullen and its members for their continued hard work.

As part of the council's ongoing programme of maintaining and developing the areas of play that we provide to our community, 2020 saw the refurbishment of the Marlott Road Play Area. This project consisted of the installation of new drainage to help reduce the standing water that this site has suffered in the past. New play equipment has been installed and new fencing will be installed shortly.



New play equipment, Marlott Road



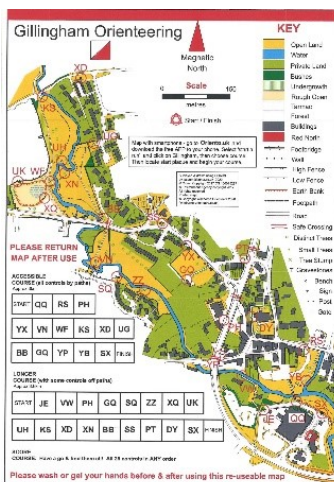
Green Flag site, Upper Lodden Meadow

Once again, Green Flags were awarded to Gillingham Town Council's public open spaces. We are extremely proud to be awarded the Green Flag, in recognition of continually working to ensure that our community has access to professionally managed and developed open spaces. These areas, which all have extensive management plans, are regularly reviewed by the grounds team and the Estates Management sub-committee. The town council has a commitment to ensure a good balance is maintained for use of the areas by the public and local wildlife. We pride ourselves on the good working relationship we have built over the years with Gillingham Action for Nature (GANG) and Dorset Wildlife Trust.

The town council continues with its commitment to address the tree deficit within the town, once again working closely with GANG who have planted two community orchards on town council land. The town council will continue with its tree planting programme over the coming year, budgeting for further tree planting and maintenance in the 2021-22 budget.

I would like to thank the Estates Management sub-committee who look after our public open spaces and play areas, and especially our Deputy Town Clerk, the Works Manager and the Grounds Team who play a key role in the design and overseeing of our projects. I would also like to thank GANG, as by working together we have been able to have ongoing success with the Green Flag awards.

Over the past year Gillingham Town Council has worked with Public Health Dorset and Wessex Orienteering as part of the well-being program to develop and bring online an urban orienteering course on our public open spaces, from the Library through to Wavering Lane. This is a great achievement for Gillingham as we are one of the first to achieve this type of course. The town council looks forward to the future when we hope to develop this idea further.



Gillingham Orienteering Course



Ham Roundabout, Gillingham

The town council is committed, wherever we can, to promote and encourage the use of alternative transport, such as cycling, public transport and walking. To facilitate this, a covered bus shelter was been installed at the Kingmead/Aldi bus stop.

Gillingham Town Council continues to engage and work with several agencies to promote, and help wherever it can, businesses and visitors to the town. As part of this work the town council has invested some of the £70K grant it received from North Dorset District Council for town enhancement, to landscape the roundabouts at Ham and Peacemarsh. This included the installation of stag and doe sculptures on these roundabouts.

I would like to thank Cllr Mike Gould, Lead Member of the Town Gateways Task and Finish Group, and the members of the group, for all their hard work in bringing this project forward.

The High Street also benefited from a grant from the Dorset Local Enterprise Partnership this year to refurbish the footpath, roads and the railing at the town bridge. This project was managed by Dorset Council in consultation with Gillingham Town Council.

Gillingham Town Council has purchased a new workshop site, formerly known as Roman Business Centre, now Roman Court, in the centre of town. This has enabled the council to plan for the continued growth of the works department and its commitments in the town in the future with the southern extension.

I would like to thank Cllr Paul Harris, Lead Member of the Task and Finish Group and the members of the group, who have worked hard to complete this project. Also, all the town council staff who have been involved in working on this project and bringing it to completion.



Town Council Workshops, Roman Court, Gillingham

The town council is very proud to have played its part in achieving Gillingham's Dementia Friendly status for another year. This is a great accolade for our town with business and community groups working with Dementia Friendly Gillingham.

I would like to thank the Dementia Friendly Gillingham Committee of which I am Chairman, and our wonderful Dementia Champions Anne Kings, Hilary Drake and Julie Hawkins.

Over the past year the 3 standing committees and 26 sub-committees and task and finish groups of the council have been working extremely hard for Gillingham. I would like to thank the Chairman of the Planning Committee, Cllr Val Potheary, the Chairman of General Purposes, Cllr Mick Hill and the Chairman of the Finance Committee, Cllr Sharon Cullingford, and all their committee members. Each of these Chairmen has written a report on their committee's activities over the civic year 2020-21 and these reports will be available with the minutes of the Annual Town Assembly meeting.

As the town council moves into the new civic year it continues to work hard for the good of our town and its continued wellbeing in many different areas.

The Herbetum project will continue to develop over the coming civic year, with further Herbetums being placed around the town. This decision has been taken after positive public support shown for this project at the first site at King Edmund Court. We will continue to look at projects like this one, that are seen as offering a positive to the town.

Gillingham Town Council will be reviewing its Neighbourhood Plan over the coming civic year and beyond. This is to ensure that this vital document remains relevant and to assess how it is used and its weight during the planning application process with future applications.

I would like to thank Cllr Graham Poulter and his group for the work they are committed to on the Neighbourhood plan review.

Our commitment to offer an outreach youth service in the town is a project that has grown and developed over the past years working with the Rendezvous Gillingham who provide this service on our behalf.

I would like to thank the Rendezvous team for all their hard work and for the development of the other projects that have grown from this original service.

As several housing developments are now starting to come forward, Gillingham Town Council continues to work with Dorset Council as the local planning authority and with the developers to ensure that Gillingham views are heard at all stages of the process. This includes areas such as public open spaces and play areas, many of which will come under town council control once the developers hand them over. We are committed to ensure that these areas are compliant to the current standard that the council has developed and maintained for its play areas and public open spaces.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involvement in these areas but especially the Town Clerk, the Deputy Town Clerk and their teams.



Proposed Southern Extension



Development at Barnaby Mead

As Dorset has moved from a County Council to a unitary council, Gillingham Town Council has continued to develop a particularly good working relationship with both council officers and elected members. I would like to publicly acknowledge and thank all those we work with, also, our 3 Dorset Council Councillors, Cllr Val Potheary, Cllr Belinda Ridout and Cllr David Walsh who continue to work hard for Gillingham and the surrounding areas within the Gillingham Ward.

It's has been a joy and a privilege to have been able to represent Gillingham as Mayor. This is the most amazing town and community. I hope that I have been able to help as many people and groups as I could possibly do during the pandemic and start us on the road to recovery. I will continue in my role as town councillor to help and promote our wonderful town wherever and whenever I can. Thank you Gillingham for your fabulous support and help during my term as Mayor.

Cllr Barry von Clemens
Mayor of Gillingham - April 2021

Annual Town Assembly – 21st April 2021

Minute no. 3b

**General Purposes Committee
Report to Annual Town Assembly 21st April 2021
Author: Cllr Mick Hill, Chairman**

Wow! What a year 2020. The country in the grip of a global pandemic. Tough times for our NHS, key workers and frontline police and fire officers. Tough times for ourselves, possibly separated from family and friends. But even in the face of uncertainty and restrictions, the world still turns and so does the Town Council. From the Estate Management Team to the Town Clerk and her team, the day to day running of the Town continues. To this end so does the General Purposes (GP) Committee. As has been said many times, the ‘Workhorse’ of the council.

Despite the difficulties, the meetings carried on, and many projects completed. I could spend the night listing them all, but that would put you all to sleep! I don’t want that. I want you all to be interested in what your town council does for the town. So here are a few moments that I think stand out, not in any particular order of size or importance. Just some of the “stuff”.



As Chairman of the General Purposes Committee, I would love to take the credit for all this and more, but that would be unfair. The real “Heroes” of GP are the Task and Finish Groups and Sub-Committees, and the people behind the scenes in the Clerk’s Office that make sure all is “ship shape and Bristol fashion”. For this reason, I would like to thank the Task and Finish Groups and Sub-Committees.

I would also like to thank the grounds team, Julie, Clare and Jill. Thank you for making me look good. Finally, I would like to thank you the town. It may seem that the GP committee and the Town Council is full of stuffy old wind bags, but without the positive feedback from the town, the work we do here would not feel worthwhile. Onwards and upwards.

Cllr Mick Hill
General Purposes Chairman

I may not have been the best chair of GP, but I would like to hope that even during heated debate, I may have brought a smile and a little realism to the table.

Planning Committee
Report to Annual Town Assembly 21st April 2021
Author: Cllr Val Potheary, Chairman

It has been a busy year, with the Planning Committee meeting twice monthly to discuss new planning applications and make our recommendations to Dorset Council.

A total of 72 applications have been considered by the committee. Many of these were minor applications involving the erection of porches or extensions to existing buildings, but we have also considered a good percentage of major developments – some of which were very contentious.

12 members of the Council have received planning training over this period, which ensures that we are fully conversant with both the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan and the Local Plan policies.

As a committee, and with the help of Julie Hawkins, our planning clerk, we always make sure that our comments are reported to Dorset Council with clear planning reasons for our decisions. In fact we have received several compliments from planning officers in this regard.

Throughout these past months of Covid, all meetings have taken place virtually, and I would like to give my personal thanks to Julie Hawkins, Jill Ezzard and Clare Ratcliffe for their professionalism in preparing councillors for our meetings and ensuring the IT system operates in a satisfactory manner.

A Task and Finish Group, led by Cllr Sharon Cullingford, was set up to compose a formal Gillingham Town Council response to Dorset Council's Local Plan consultation. This involved many hours of intense study, and numerous meetings, to comply with the response timeframe. To assist the group a public meeting was held online to obtain the views of our residents, to which 86 attended. My grateful thanks go to Cllr Cullingford, all members of the Group, and our officers, for their timely completion of this important work.

Planning is a complex business, and much time needs to be spent reading and researching the background to applications received – before our meetings begin. Let alone the many hours spent in discussion. So lastly, I would like to sincerely thank all members of the committee for their hard work, diligence, and commitment to the community we serve.

Cllr Val Potheary

09/04/2021.

Finance Committee
Report to Annual Town Assembly 21st April 2021
Author: Cllr Sharon Cullingford, Chairman

The Finance Committee monitors the council's budgets and banking arrangements, authorises monthly payments, oversees quarterly income and expenditure and management accounts, deals with insurance and administers the council's grant scheme. However, all decisions made by the Finance Committee must be ratified by Full Council. Financial Regulations must be observed in conjunction with the council's Standing Orders and any regulations relating to contracts.

The financial accounting year runs from April 1st to March 31st, this is in line with the government and other public authorities' financial year.

Monthly meetings over the past year have included the following:

June 2020

- The Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for 2019/20 for Gillingham Town Council was signed at Full Council on 22nd June 2020 and submitted for external audit within the original time limits.

The Notice of Public Rights and Publication of unaudited Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the year ended 31st March 2020 was presented on the website and on town notice boards for the period 26th June 2020 to 6th August 2020.

- The town council agreed and resolved that payments may be made by internet banking transfer, of which the payments are approved in accordance with the Financial Regulations. This saves the staff time writing out individual cheques and ensures suppliers are paid in a timely manner.
- In line with the council's commitment to reduce the effects of climate change, Gillingham Town Council appointed a new energy provider to supply green gas and electricity on a 36-month contract.
- On Thursday 25th June an Extra-Ordinary meeting of Full Council was held. At the meeting the council resolved to purchase the site formerly known as Roman Business Centre, to be used as council workshops, for the sum of £385,000. It was also resolved to seek the approval of the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to apply for a Public Works Loan Board (PWLb) loan of £345,000 over the borrowing term of 23 years for the purpose of purchasing Roman Business Centre.

The council agreed the annual loan repayments of around £19,211 which could be made without an increase to the council tax precept. It was also resolved to release the £180,000 earmarked in the town council's financial reserves for the purposes laid out in the workshop purchasing budget. The Responsible Financial Officer was tasked to make the Public Works Loan Board (PWLB) application on behalf of the town council. An extensive and detailed application was submitted on 29th June 2020.

- The council resolved to purchase play equipment for the play area at Marlott Road for the sum of £52,330 ex VAT. Funding was made from monies earmarked specifically for this project.
- The town council was successful with an application to the Dorset Coronavirus Community Fund and was awarded £2,425 to help offset some of the additional expenses incurred while setting up a community volunteer network.

July 2020

- The town council's insurance policies were reviewed and a comprehensive report from the Deputy Town Clerk was considered. The council's insurance premium for 2020/21 Combined Commercial Insurance premium was reduced from £18,986.00 to £15,799.41, the vehicle insurance premium was reduced from £4,538.00 to £3,796.04 and public liability cover was increased from £10 million to £15 million.

August 2020

- The town council considered grant applications from local groups and organisations. The town council has a commitment to encourage, support and promote voluntary and charitable associations within Gillingham for the benefit of Gillingham residents. The town council makes an annual budget provision for grants to help meet its aim. For the year ending 31st March 2021 the budget provision was £15,000.00. The town council advertise locally from the 1st of April requesting grant applications are returned by 31st July. All applicants must complete an application form, submit their annual accounts and provide a brief account of why a grant is required. Applications are read and considered by councilors before an award is made.

The following voluntary and charitable associations were awarded a grant in FY 2020/21:

Gillingham Carnival Committee
Gillingham Duke of Edinburgh
Award Scheme
Gillingham Ladies Netball Club
Dorset Mind

Hipp!!Bones
Mindful
North Dorset Rugby Club
N. Dorset Disability Information Service
Read Easy Gillingham and Shaftesbury

- Gillingham Town Council has discretionary powers to aid and assist voluntary organisations and charities that help and assist in the well-being of the town's residents. In 2020 the council resolved to continue to assist Bones Youth Club to cover the cost of a Youth Leader, £8,400.00; to assist the Citizens' Advice Central Dorset with funding of £10,000.00; to provide funding of £5,890.00 for youth resource services, and to provide funding of £10,000 for a service level agreement with RiversMeet.

In addition, the council received a request from RiversMeet for assistance to meet potential financial difficulties arising out of the Covid-19 pandemic. It was agreed that the council would make a discretionary grant up to the sum of £23,000 which would be earmarked in the General Reserves and released, subject to need and satisfactory evidence of its need being produced. To date, RiversMeet has not asked for the funding to be released.

September 2020

- Following submission of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) in June, the external audit was concluded successfully on 24th September 2020.
- In September, the following letting fees were agreed and approved

Room	Charge per session Commercial Rate	Charge Per Session Non-Profit Making
Civic Hall	£100.00	£100.00
Council Chamber	£50.00	£25.00
Town Hall Office 1	£10.00	£10.00
Chantry Community Office	£15.00	£10.00
Town Bridge Community Office	£15.00	£10.00

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic the town council received very little income from room hire and only 5 weddings were able to take place. This has resulted in a loss of income to the town council during the last financial year.

- Following a successful public works loan application, Gillingham Town Council completed the purchase of a new workshop at Roman Business Centre, Gillingham in September 2020. The buildings are currently being refurbished for occupation in April 2021 prior to termination of the lease for the workshops at the Old Market Centre. Thanks to the hard work and dedication the Works Manager and his team together with the Workshop Task and Finish Group, under the leadership of Cllr Harris, the project will be delivered on time.

November 2020

- The draft budget for 2021/22 was presented to the Finance committee for consideration and some tough choices had to be made.

January 2021

- The budget for 2021/22 received final approval at Full Council on 25th January 2021.

The Budget agreed for 2021/22 is £980,876 with a Precept of £943,000 - the difference being made up of income from other sources.

February 2021

- The town council submitted a grant application to the Neighbourhood Planning Programme, funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and was successfully awarded a grant of £1,001.00 to enable work to start on a review of the Gillingham Neighbourhood Plan.

Due to the COVID19 pandemic, it has been a challenging year with only virtual meetings permitted; however, the Finance Committee have met every month and business has continued without interruption.

I would like to extend my thanks to the Finance Committee, in particular to the support from our Deputy Chair, Cllr Donna Towe and all our hardworking committee members - Cllr Barry von Clemens, Cllr Paul Harris, Cllr John Kilcourse, Cllr Alan Frith, Cllr Mike Gould, Cllr Mick Hill, Cllr Graham Poulter, Cllr Fiona Cullen and Cllr Val Potheary (Cllr Potheary sadly left the committee in December 2020, due to taking the Chairmanship of Dorset Council). My sincere and grateful thanks must go to the Town Clerk, Deputy Town Clerk and Office Manager, for all their help, guidance and input throughout the year and a special thanks to our Responsible Financial Officer who has completed a tremendous task over the year moving over to internet banking which has made the whole finance process more streamlined.