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Gillingham Town Council

Summer 2020 Newsletter Issue No. 27

Gillingham Town Council

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Mayor: Cllr Barry Von Clemens

Deputy Mayor: Cllr Paul Harris

Town Clerk: Julie Hawkins

Deputy Clerk: Clare Ratcliffe

Mayor's Executive Assistant: Jill Ezzard

Responsible Financial Officer: Debra Edwards

Project Administrator : Serena Burgess

Works Manager: Simon Dobie

Deputy Works Manager: Martin Down

Meetings

General Purposes: 1st Monday of the month

Planning Committee: 2nd Monday of the month

Finance Committee: 3rd Monday of the month

Full Council: 4th Monday of the month

On 4th April 2020 regulations came into effect which allow local councils to hold remote meetings (including by video and telephone conferencing) for a specified period until May 2021. Gillingham Town Council is currently holding meetings via Microsoft Teams.

The press and public may join the meeting via MS Teams, please contact the Town Council (prior to the meeting during working hours) to request joining instructions.

All attendees should try to join the meeting at least 5 minutes prior to the start of the meeting to allow for any connection problems.

Gillingham Volunteers

Our volunteer network is working hard to support vulnerable residents. However, as lockdown measures are now starting to ease, we expect the demands on them to start to reduce. The easing of lockdown also means our volunteers are starting to go back to work.

We would ask, therefore, that residents who are now able to go out and shop or have family that can do it for them, do so. Our volunteers will continue to support those who are shielded or self-isolating and have no-one else to help.

The centralised prescription delivery service is still operating for residents who are vulnerable or self-isolating and have no-one else able to collect their prescriptions. The deliveries are now made on Tuesdays and Fridays only so if you ring the Town Council before 3.00 pm on Monday or Thursday, your prescription will be delivered after 3.00 pm on Tuesday or Friday.

Controlled drugs and prescriptions for shielded residents (ie those who had a letter from the NHS advising them to stay at home for 12 weeks) are now being delivered directly by the pharmacies. If you are shielded, you will need to let your pharmacy know.

The Town Council's grounds team have been busy planting the town's flower beds. This year we are celebrating the NHS, Key workers and our community volunteers. The long bed in the High Street contains over 100 small hearts one for each volunteer.



NEW TOWN COUNCIL WORKSHOPS

Gillingham Town Council is responsible for many assets, the Town Hall, Community Office, Public Conveniences, Town Bridge Office, Chapel, former Mortuary building, many public open spaces and play areas, Hardings Park, Cemetery, Garden of Remembrance, allotments, Wesley Gardens as well as many floral displays throughout the town. Full details can be viewed on the Council's website

Gillingham currently has a population of just over 12,000 and with this number increasing significantly in the coming years particularly with the advent of the Southern Extension to the town, adding at least another 1,800 homes. Along with this increase in population, included developments will add further open spaces, play areas and community assets which may become the management responsibility of the Council.

This continuing development of Gillingham will increase demands on the services provided by the Council and there may be a need to expand the workforce and additional equipment will be required. The existing workshops and storage areas are spread over many different sites and these have become impractical, unmanageable, unviable and more expensive to manage.

The Council currently rents two workshops and has a number of storage sites situated throughout Gillingham. The workshops are already proving too small and the storage sites are inappropriate for the equipment which needs to be stored. Further space is already required regardless of the forthcoming expansion of the town.

The Council has an opportunity to acquire freehold premises which would be large enough to cater for all of the Council's current and future needs. The advantages of new premises are numerous and are typically:

- Ability to provide an increased secure location for all equipment
- Centralised storage of all equipment
- An increase in workshop size to accommodate the growing workload
- Capability to provide expansion of facilities
- Minimising cost and greater efficiency due to centralisation

Given the need to acquire further space, acquisition of the freehold premises makes logistical and economic sense. In order to purchase the freehold property, the Council would utilise part of its reserved funds and raise the balance with the assistance of a Public Works Loan. The aim of the Council is to make financial arrangements so that the loan repayments would be the same or less than the cost of the rent payable on the existing premises. The outgoings on the new premises will be higher than on the existing premises due to the building and site being larger. However if the proposed purchase does not proceed the council would need to rent further premises with the attendant additional cost of rent and outgoings which will exceed the outgoings for the new premises. The proposed purchase will therefore represent a saving in the long run for the residents of Gillingham.

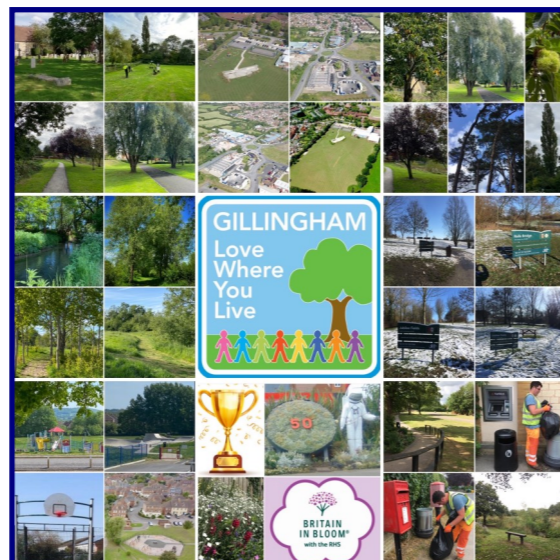
All surveys have been completed and we are now in a position to finalise the purchase terms with the Seller before proceeding with the usual pre-contract legalities and obtaining final approval from the Full Council.

Our surveys show that, in common with normal practice, the Council will need to conduct some work to suit our purposes prior to occupation. The cost of this work has already been budgeted for. Future maintenance liabilities for the site will be met by following the present practice of being built into the annual precept by way of accruals

We will achieve our key principle of funding the purchase by ensuring the annual repayment amount is less than the current annual rental costs of the existing units. This will be through a loan from the Public Works Loan Board – a lending facility operated by the UK Debt Management Office (DMO), on behalf of HM Treasury, providing loans to local authorities. This being the case, there is no longer a need for the Council to conduct a resident's survey as there will be no increase in the precept as a result of funding the loan. However, it remains the Council's stated wish from the outset of this project to fully engage with the residents of Gillingham throughout this process, taking all views into account before making its final decision on whether to proceed

The Council believes that this is an opportunity for Gillingham to ensure the services it delivers can be successfully, more efficiently and more economically delivered in the long term and for the benefit of its residents.

If you have any views or opinions you wish to feed in, please contact the town council direct.



Message from the Mayor

This summer will be very different from the previous years as we continue to live with restrictions placed upon us as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Regular events such as Gillingham in Gear, The Gillingham and Shaftesbury Show and the Gillingham Carnival have all announced that they will not be taking place this year. These events will be sadly missed, but I am sure that we will be welcoming them back next year.



The past few months has seen Gillingham's fabulous community spirit shining brightly. I felt immense pride as the community pulled together to ensure that we got through this terrible time. The work of the community volunteers has been amazing and I, along with so many others, would like to say a massive thank you for all that they have done.

Recently firefighters from Gillingham joined with other fire crews from the south-west to tackle the heath fire at Wareham Forest at the beginning of May. The fire was probably started as a result of a discarded barbecue. Always remember to make sure a barbecue is properly extinguished after use and that it is disposed of correctly or better still taken home. Our open spaces and the wildlife that these areas support is precious; please act responsibly so that everyone can enjoy countryside.

As we gradually see our shops and business re-open, it is up to all of us to support them as they try to rebuild their businesses under extraordinary circumstances. Without our support we will lose local businesses, which will be a major blow to our local economy as well as our community.

Finally, please continue to follow government advice on social distancing and I hope you all have an enjoyable summer.

Stay safe and stay well.

Cllr Barry von Clemens
Mayor of Gillingham.

News in Brief



New seating designed by art students at Gillingham School will be installed later this month near the Town Bridge opposite the Town Meadow. The design refers to the former Barnaby Mill and the Town Bridge painted by John Constable. We are grateful to Kington Metalcraft who have done a superb job of incorporating the original design into the back of the seat.

Gillingham Action for Nature Group (GANG) are planning to plant another community orchard this autumn on the public open space off King John Road. This project will involve local people in a similar way to the community orchard that was planted at Peacemarsh in 2018 and added to in 2019.

A much-needed **bus shelter** has been provided by Dorset Council at Shaftesbury Road near the Aldi supermarket. The design was agreed by the Town Council and includes seating



The Town Council was successful with an application to the **Dorset Coronavirus Community Fund** to help offset some of the additional expenses incurred while setting up a community volunteer network, which continues to enable people who need to stay safe to do so and has also helped to alleviate fear and anxiety associated with the current crisis. Residents have been very grateful for the support received and many have found new friends as a result. We are very proud of how our community has pulled together and over the past few months we have built a much stronger and more resilient community.

Dorset Council has submitted a prior notification application to Dorset Council planning department for the demolition of The Old Manse, New Road, Gillingham SP8 4JH at the junction of New Road and Newbury. This is part of the work for Highway improvements in Gillingham, in connection with the Southern extension of Gillingham.

