

HUNTINGDON TOWN COUNCIL

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that the ANNUAL TOWN MEETING will be held in Huntingdon Town Hall on **Thursday 3rd March 2022 at 7.00pm.**

AGENDA

1. Welcome and introduction.
2. Apologies.
3. To receive and note the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on Thursday 4th March 2021
4. To receive the Mayor's Annual Report for the year 2021/22.
5. To receive reports from the Chairmen of the Finance Committee, the Leisure and Community Services Committee, the Planning Committee, the Strategy and Corporate Plan Committee and the Environment Sub Committee for the year 2020/21.
6. To receive comments and deal with questions from those electors within the Town of Huntingdon on any matter in relation to which the Council has powers or duties or which affect the town.

Town Hall
Market Hill
HUNTINGDON
PE29 3PJ

17th February 2022

Karl Webb

Councillor K Webb
Mayor of Huntingdon

HUNTINGDON TOWN
ANNUAL TOWN MEETING

The Annual Town Meeting of Huntingdon Town was held in the Town Hall, Market Hill, Huntingdon, on Thursday 4th March 2021 at 7.00pm via Zoom Video Conference Call.

In attendance; Councillors M Baker; A Beevor; A Blackwell; J Cole; C Doyle; S Gifford; V Hufford; P Kadewere; P Kennington; B Luckham; A McAdam; S McAdam; P Pearce; T Sanderson; T Shrapnel; S Sweek and K Webb (Mayor).

Mayor's Chaplain, Reverend J Randall; S Orme, Cromwell Museum Curator; District Councillor J Morris; County Councillors M Shellens and G Wilson; C Doody, Office for National Statistics and three members of the public.

1. **MAYOR'S WELCOME**

The Mayor, Councillor Karl Webb, welcomed everyone present to the 2021 Annual Town Meeting. Before the meeting proceeded, the Mayor advised the meeting that although Political Purdah had not yet commenced for the elections on 6th May 2021, political positioning, electioneering, and campaigning would not be allowed or tolerated at the meeting.

2. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies tendered to the Town Clerk included Councillors P Brown and A Diaz.

3. **MINUTES**

Members had before them copies of the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 5th March 2020 (M1). It was proposed, seconded and

RESOLVED to approve and adopt these minutes and they would be duly signed by the Mayor at a later date.

Clerk's Note: Under usual circumstances, the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting would have been approved at a subsequent Town Council meeting and would be available to review and note at the following Annual Town Meeting. In light of Covid-19, the meeting schedule of the Council had changed, and the minutes of the 2020 Annual Town Meeting hadn't been presented for approval.

4. **ANNUAL REPORT OF THE MAYOR 2020-21**

The Mayor's report on the Council's activities during the year was presented by the Mayor, a copy of which is attached to these minutes.

5. **COMMITTEE REPORTS 2020-21**

- i) The Mayor invited the Chairman of the Finance Committee to give his report. Councillor Phil Pearce gave a brief overview of financial activities of the last 12 months. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.
- ii) The Mayor next invited the Chairman of the Leisure and Community Services Committee to provide his report. Councillor Tom Sanderson delivered a brief overview of the committee's activities of the last 12 months. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes
- iii) The Mayor then invited the Chairman of the Planning Committee to provide his report. Councillor Chris Doyle delivered a brief overview of planning activities of the last 12 months. A copy of this report is attached to these minutes.
- iv) Finally, the Mayor invited the Chairman of the Environment Sub Committee to give his report. Councillor Samuel Sweek gave a brief overview of financial activities of the last 12 months. A copy of the report is attached to these minutes.

6. **PRESENTATION FROM EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS**

- i. Office for National Statistics – Census 2021

Christine Doody thanked Members for inviting her to the meeting. Christine gave a presentation to help raise awareness, and to equip Members to give residents help and support when completing their Census 2021.

Christine told Members that the date for Census was 21st March 2021 and that she had been working in conjunction with the Census team, holding weekly meetings with Huntingdonshire District Council since October 2020 in order to make sure that Huntingdonshire was best equipped to complete the Census.

Members were told that there had been initial debate as to whether the Census 2021 should take place due to Covid-19, but that the House of Commons permitted it to go ahead in a safe and secure way, to ensure that the Country's Census data was accurate.

Christine informed Members that for Census 2021, 90% of the population would receive a code to complete the Census online, as opposed to only 17% of the population completing it digitally back in 2011. The questionnaire was available in over 200 languages and was an accessible document for those requiring additional support to complete their Census. Hard copy versions of the questionnaire could be requested if preferred.

Members were advised that there was a call centre available for any queries, and that there would be a field team sending help to people's doors who hadn't completed their Census by 21st March. Everyone across the nation would be able to complete their Census questionnaires during the months of March, April and May 2021.

Christine explained to Members that it was imperative for residents to complete their Census questionnaire to ensure national data was up to date, so that it could allow funding to be allocated correctly, based on what the Census data identified.

Christine suggested that Members could be emailed a copy of the presentation slides to equip them in promoting and helping with the completion of the Census 2021.

The Mayor thanked Christine for her presentation and thanked Members for their questions and discussion.

Clerk's Note: A copy of the presentation slides was emailed to Members after the meeting had taken place.

7. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Mayor invited questions and comments from those electors of the town of Huntingdon on any matter in relation to which the Council had powers or duties or which affected the town.

A resident asked whether Huntingdon Town Council had submitted an official objection to the recent planning application for a gambling venue to open on Huntingdon's High Street. Councillor Doyle, Chairman of the Planning Committee confirmed the objections voiced by the Town Council and advised that the objection had been formally submitted to Huntingdonshire District Council that week.

The resident moved on to ask the Council's opinion on a recent presentation on Parklets for Huntingdon's town centre. The Town Clerk advised that this concept was being presented at a forthcoming meeting of the Strategy & Corporate Plan Committee on 11th March 2021.

Finally, the resident queried the ownership of the brook running alongside Bloomfield Park, within the park railings. The resident reported that the brook was often full of litter, including shopping trolleys, causing it to become flooded. It was also suggested that tree roots were causing problems. The Town Clerk advised that the brook and the banks either side fell under the responsibility of Cambridgeshire County Council and that the issues of litter should be reported to them. One Member suggested that the Alconbury Drainage Board was responsible for the water course and that he could report the issues as a Member of the board.

A Member asked the meeting if there were concerns that Huntingdon no longer had a manned Police Station. The Member suggested that the intercom system was ineffective and rarely manned, and thought it was concerning to encourage residents to report incidents online, when this might not be an option for some people.

The same Member also queried public conveniences in the town and expressed concern at the lack of facilities for residents and visitors to Huntingdon. A resident advised that the Business Improvement District (BID) team had agreed with the landlords of the former Waitrose unit to open their public conveniences for use, and that there was a disabled toilet at the Bus Station and public toilets in Sainsbury's. The Town Clerk told Members that there were ongoing Market Town Initiative meetings taking place and that public conveniences were on the agenda, in particular the facilities at Riverside Park, but confirmed that they would not fall under the responsibility of Huntingdon Town Council. A Member advised that there were also facilities available to the public in the Library when it was open. Another Member raised their concerns about an increase in rough sleepers in Huntingdon and the impact it would have on the town not having public conveniences for those who need them.

Finally, a Member queried whether anything could be done to introduce clearer shop numbering along the High Street, and if this was something BID could look into. The Member explained that the numbering system along the High Street was confusing to those who weren't aware of the set up, and that barely any shops actually displayed their shop numbers.

With no further questions, the Mayor gave thanks to those in attendance.

MAYOR

Annual Report of the Mayor of Huntingdon, Councillor Karl Webb, to the Annual Town Meeting on 4th March 2021

Good evening everyone, welcome to our Annual Town Meeting. The purpose of this meeting is to update you on what we, as your Town Council, have been up to in the past 12 months, it also gives you an opportunity to ask questions about the services we provide, or to raise any other matters that fall within the Town Council's authority.

It is now my pleasure to present the Annual Report on the activities of Huntingdon Town Council for the Local Government Year 2020/21.

Introduction

The past 12 months have presented many challenges for all Town and Parish Councils due to the Coronavirus outbreak and lockdown back in March 2020. Huntingdon Town Council is fortunate to have a dedicated team of Councillors and staff working together to fulfil our obligations to the town and community, but of course, the pandemic did mean we had to look at new ways of conducting our business.

Under normal circumstances, the first meeting of the Local Government Year, is the Annual Meeting of the Council, Mayor Making, is to take place in May each year; but, with restrictions in force regarding public gatherings, the government introduced legislation to restrict face-to-face meetings throughout the country.

This meant that Councillor Steve McAdam would remain in office as Town Mayor, with me as his Deputy, until a time that the Annual Meeting of the Council could take place. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Councillor McAdam for remaining in office during such difficult and uncertain times.

Annual Meeting of Huntingdon Town Council

The main purpose of the Annual Meeting, and the first business of the council, is to elect a Chairman of the Council (the Town Mayor) and a Chairman of each of the four Standing Committees.

The legislation in response to the coronavirus pandemic, gave three options to councils regarding annual meetings and elections. In August 2020, Huntingdon Town Councillors were presented with a report detailing the options relevant to electing a new Mayor:

- Option one - a virtual meeting to be held in May 2020 to elect a new Mayor;
- Option two – the existing Town Mayor to remain in office until May 2021;
- Option three - delay the election until a suitable date could be found, with the term of office of the newly elected Town Mayor extended until May 2022¹.

Option three was recommended to the Members of Council, and subsequently, it was resolved to adopt the Mayor Making 2020 report and all recommendations therein.

Huntingdon Town Council's Annual Meeting eventually took place on Tuesday 6th October 2020; and although other Town and Parish Councils also held their Mayor Making events virtually, ours was the first Mayor Making -- that I know of -- to be a

¹ Minutes of the Recces Committee held Thursday 13th August 2020. Available from: <https://www.huntingdowntown.gov.uk/uploads/recess-minutes-2020.pdf>

hybrid meeting streamed online with the incoming Mayor and Deputy wearing full ceremonial robes.

At that Annual Meeting, I was honoured to be elected Mayor of Huntingdon for the ensuing municipal year. Councillor Padrica Kennington was appointed as Deputy Mayor.

Throughout the year, both Councillor Steve McAdam and myself were supported by the Reverend Jon Randall as the Mayor's Chaplain; Dennis Smith as Macebearer; and by Georgia Barker, Hayley Burns, and Teresa McLoughlin managing our appointments over the year; sadly, there were not as many events as we would expect during a mayoral term in office. I would like to thank each and every one of you for being there for us.

I would like to speak a little about each of our business areas, and the work that has been done during an unprecedented year.

Huntingdon Town Councillors

We will shortly hear the annual reports from our Standing Committees, so I won't go into detail here, but I will say that all meetings in the past 12 months have taken place virtually. This has been a new experience for most but has enabled us to continue with the decision-making process and to ensure that we continue to work for the good of the town.

In October, Mrs Audrey McAdam was co-opted onto Huntingdon Town Council to fill the South Ward vacancy; Members welcomed Councillor McAdam and expressed their thanks to former Councillor, Alice Sedgewick for her valued contribution to the town during this administration and her previous time with the Town Council.

Sadly, this year we heard of the passing of three former Town Councillors; Valerie Brooker, Jill Watkin Tavener, and Tanya Forster. Tanya was also our Deputy Mayor from May 2013 until May 2015. Councillors and Town Hall staff, past and present, expressed their thanks for the dedicated service of our former Councillors, with our deepest condolences being sent to the families of Val, Jill and Tanya.

Before I move on to the Town Council staff and our business activities, I would like to take this moment to offer my sincere condolences to everyone that has lost a loved one or friend. This year has been devastating for families especially with the additional restrictions on how we say our goodbyes to those lost through natural causes, accident, or illness, including covid-related deaths. My thoughts are with you all.

Huntingdon Town Council Staff and the Business of the Council

Town Hall

The Town Council's day-to-day business and services continued to be provided by our administrative staff, from the Town Hall when required, but also working from home whenever possible. The Town Hall and Community Centre have been closed to the public during this period.

There has been a change in personnel over the year, Kate Yerbury left the Town Hall to take on some new challenges, we wish her well in her new role. We welcomed

Teresa McLoughlin as our new Amenities Office, and in January, we welcomed our Assistant Town Clerk, Natasha Pierson, back from maternity leave.

A lot of thought has gone into the new ways of working, and has clearly proven successful, so thank you to our Town Clerk, Philip Peacock, and our Responsible Financial Officer, Helen Merrick – who has also been our acting Deputy Town Clerk throughout the pandemic -- for keeping everything running smoothly and making sure our staff have been looked after throughout this period.

Coneygear Centre

The Coneygear Community Centre has been closed to the public for most of the year, but in line with social distancing regulations, it has been used whenever possible, one example being to train unemployed volunteers in a work-based project with Groundwork East. This project enabled volunteers to gain motivation and confidence as well as learning new skills – I visited the team in October and was really impressed at the work they have done around the community centre.

The Coneygear Centre Manager, Shilpa Desai Sakaldip, and her Assistant Manager, Sally Marchant, have supported several projects and community engagement throughout the year, the most recent being the Coneygear Centre being used for Covid testing using Lateral Flow devices.

I won't go into detail as we will be hearing from the Leisure and Community Services Committee later, but I can say that Councillors and Town Hall staff have been very proud of the support from Shilpa and Sally, as well as that of Peter Haynes and his team, throughout this crisis.

Grounds' Estate Team

The Ground's Estate team had initially been stood down during the lockdown, but as the guidelines changed, the team were keen to catch up on the backlog of work.

The Grounds' staff, led by our Head Groundsman, Peter Haynes, were divided into teams to minimise unnecessary contact and as a safety bubble to ensure that our open spaces, parks and gardens, cemetery grounds and allotments were well maintained. Unfortunately, for most of the year, the play areas have had to close to the public.

Around the town, bedding plants and some smaller displays were put in place, these included a Florence Nightingale theme at the Sebastopol Cannon site, a Hunts FA 125th anniversary display opposite the Bridge Hotel, and the Mayflower display at the Bus Station.

Peter and his team also supported the Coneygear Centre staff with the distribution of hot meals for the Older Peoples Program.

Cromwell Museum

After a complete refurbishment of the Cromwell Museum, it was a real blow that it had to close, but the pandemic did not stop our curator, Stuart Orme, from promoting the museum and the life of our most famous resident. Stuart has produced regular YouTube videos on the history of Cromwell. Stuart hosted a series of online lectures with guest speakers, the advantage of being online was we were joined by people from around the world listening to the Winter lectures, well done Stuart, I enjoyed every one

of the talks. Stuart has other projects on the go, so keep an eye out in the local press for more details.

Crematorium and Cemeteries

The Town Council's largest project to date is the building of our Crematorium and Cemetery. Work on the construction is progressing well, despite some delays caused by the covid restrictions and weather, but we look forward to seeing the Crematorium open soon.

We are pleased to welcome Samantha Smith as our new Crematorium and Cemeteries Manager. Over the coming weeks, Samantha will be joined by three new members of her team filling the roles of Deputy Manager, Technician, and an Office Assistant.

As you can imagine, a project as big as this does not happen on its own, many people have worked hard to get us to where we are, but I would just like to give extra thanks to Carol Rigden, as the Project Manager, I know how dedicated she has been to keep this project on track.

You may be surprised to know how active we have been over the year, I am not going into detail, but I shall just read out a few of the highlights:

Selected Highlights by Month

May 2020:

- VE Day – due to the restrictions in place, residents were asked to observe a two-minute silence at home.

June 2020:

- Wreath Laying for Armed Forces Day – Mayor & Mayoress, with the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress observed a Minute's Silence, the Mayor laid a wreath on behalf of Huntingdon Town.

July 2020:

- Councillor Training sessions, the first of a series of virtual courses with Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Association of Local Councils (CAPALC) were offered to councillors.

August 2020:

- Wreath laying for VJ Day, the Mayor, Mayoress and small civic party able to attend a socially distanced service at the War Memorial
- The Mayor's Cup – socially distanced football match between Huntingdon Town and Stevenage FC. Mayor, Mayoress and Deputy Mayor in attendance

September 2020:

- Social distanced presentation with the Station Commander, RAF Wyton, to mark the 65th Anniversary of the Freedom of Huntingdon being granted to the personnel at RAF Wyton
- Wreath laying to commemorate the 80th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain

October 2020:

- Virtual Mayor-Making Service, as previously discussed, this took place in the Town Hall and Online
- Online meetings of the Huntingdon and Godmanchester Twinning Association (the mayors of Huntingdon and Godmanchester, are both honorary Presidents of the Association)

November 2020:

- We held a limited, socially distanced, ceremonial Remembrance Day Service a few days before Remembrance Day. This was to ensure people did not gather in numbers at the memorial, sadly, the rules at the time meant that if we had too many people in attendance, we would have had to cancel the service.
- On Remembrance Sunday and Armistice Day, I laid a Wreath on behalf of the Town – some residents and former service personnel did go to the War Memorial but kept the Market Square clear
- Christmas lights were installed around the Town Centre, unfortunately, we were unable to hold an official ‘switch on’ ceremony, or weekend Christmas Market

December 2020:

- Supporting the BID team with Christmas stalls and street entertainers, also working with HDC promoting Think Local, judging Christmas Window decorations
- Delivering Christmas presents to the children at Hinchingsbrooke Hospital’s Holly Ward and Special Care Baby Unit
- Community Centre staff and Estates Team – cooking and delivering meals for the Older People’s Program
- Socially distanced Christmas services at St Mary’s and All Saint’s churches, these included a live broadcast over Huntingdon Community Radio

January 2021:

- The Precept for 2021/22 was set, details of which will be given in the Finance Report

February 2021:

- Community Centre is being used for rapid community Covid-19 testing, using lateral flow tests. These tests are for people without any covid symptoms and are offered at no cost.

There were so many things that I could report, but the list above gives an example of our support within the community. Even with covid measures being implemented throughout the year, the business of the Council has continued to function efficiently and professionally, I have been extremely proud of the way our Councillors and staff have conducted themselves, despite some difficult times.

I hope that, as residents, you are confident that your Town Council has looked after the needs of Huntingdon as best it can. Please do let us know if there are areas within our responsibility that you feel could be improved or changed.

Thank you everyone.

Councillor Karl Webb
Town Mayor of Huntingdon

Huntingdon Town Council's Finance Committee Annual Report 2020/21

Mr Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen. I am Councillor Phil Pearce and was appointed by Members for a third continuous term of office as Chair of the Finance Committee.

The Finance Committee comprises of the main Finance Committee itself including the following Sub Committees: -

- 1) **Finance Sub Committee** – responsible for overseeing and recommending the following year's budget for the Town Council. This Committee works hard with Officers in relation to the budget, which informs the precept level for the next financial year. I am indebted to the Chair of this Committee Cllr Luckham, who was appointed for his third term of office. This year, the precept has been agreed upon an 8p per week increase for a band D property as opposed to 7p per week last year. Thus, increasing our precept figure from £1,313,630 for 2020/2021 to £1,382,976 for 2021/2022
- 2) **Grants Sub Committee** – responsible for awarding grants to qualifying applicants of up to £500 from an eligibility criteria matrix, this Committee meets twice yearly. Again, I am indebted to the Chair of this Committee, Cllr Sir Peter Brown who was also appointed for a third term of office. In year 2020/2021 the total amount awarded was £1,840.00 to 4 local organisations.
- 3) **Lettings Sub Committee** – This Committee reviews our lease agreements, tenancies and hire rates for our buildings and prices for allotments and burial plots. Typically, business includes increasing charges in line with inflation and benchmarking with other local authorities.
- 4) **Staffing Committee** – This Committee makes recommendations to full Council on all matters relating to our staff – This Chair is again Cllr Tom Sanderson
- 5) **Twinning Sub Committee** – This is a long-established committee responsible for the ties between Huntingdon's Twin towns of Gubbio in Italy, Wertheim in Germany and Szentendre in Hungary and Salon de Provence in France. The Twinning Association's Chairman is Mr Malcolm Lyons and I applaud him and the Twinning Committee for all their hard work.

The Finance Committee has worked exceptionally hard this year to overcome challenges and to oversee the Town Council Finances. I must applaud Councillors and Officers alike for the very swift response to revise our budget due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Our budget adjustment was agreed in June which saw us influence the budgets by just under £430,000, with the provision of a 50% rent reduction for a year offered to all our sports club tenants.

The focus of the Town's financial commitments over the last year and the planning for our forthcoming projects include:

- 1) The new Coneygear Centre was opened in February 2020 and received some great reviews. Although its doors had to close to the public shortly after opening due to the pandemic, it has been a hub for outstanding work carried out behind the scenes to support our community. I can now announce that the overall project has been confirmed as having no cost to residents, as the sale of the former Medway Centre and the asset swap with Huntingdonshire District Council exceeded the cost of the build. We are indebted and grateful to all organisations who have grant funded the internal fixtures and fittings and to all those involved we extend our sincere thanks:

- Huntingdon Freeman's Trust
 - National Lottery
 - Mick George
 - FCC Communities Foundation
- 2) Cemetery Wall Maintenance - Our work continues with maintaining and restoring our Grade II Listed cemetery walls at Priory Road for which we have a statutory obligation. We have spent some £100,000 so far and the £50,000 per year budget will continue to ensure the safety and preservation of the vast structure.
 - 3) Crematorium and Cemetery – This work started early last year and is nearing completion. Kier Construction was awarded the contract for the project and the team has worked tirelessly throughout the pandemic in very difficult conditions. The project is now close to handover and we have recruited a team of staff to run it. I am delighted to welcome Samantha Smith our new Crematorium Manager and her team and wish them every success when we open later in the Spring.
 - 4) Plant Nursery & Depot – This new facility is currently being built adjacent to the crematorium, with the heat recovered from the cremators being used to heat the glasshouses.
Installation of vehicle charging points as well as Solar panels will complement our existing green energy supply efforts, in line with our Corporate Plan to create a more sustainable environment. The Depot and Nursery should be fully operational by early Summer, after the transfer of equipment from our existing Depot. The facility will provide a fantastic space to grow all the plants and shrubs for our town. Our long-term programme is to replace the Council's vehicle fleet and equipment to battery and electric powered alternatives, thus furthering our ambitions of becoming carbon neutral.

The success of any Council is dependent on team effort between Councillors and Officers. For us, the safety and wellbeing of all our staff is of paramount importance. At the start of the pandemic, we sent our office staff home 10 days before the initial lockdown and very quickly equipped them to work safely from their homes where required. The Estates Services team has continuously monitored and adapted its way of working to ensure all in the team are kept safe while keeping our town clean, tidy and looking its best.

Throughout the pandemic, staff at the Coneygear Centre have been working tirelessly to prepare, cook and distribute hot meals once a week to some of our most vulnerable residents using funding from successful grant awards, particularly over the Christmas period, selflessly giving up their holiday time to fulfil this support, as well as delivering over 130 Christmas hampers to those in need of support over the festive season. On behalf of every Councillor, I would like to extend our thanks and admiration to all those staff involved.

Finally, I would like to commend all Members of the Finance Committee and the associated Sub committees for their support and excellent meeting attendance. This year has seen some extraordinary times and I am proud of every Councillor and every member of our staff for the manner in which we have all faced up to the day-to-day problems and challenges this last year has presented us.

It is a great honour to hold public office within this Historic Town Council and to be part of a team which is so forward thinking and patient, with a determination to succeed. I thank every Member for their support and each member of staff for their engagement.

Huntingdon Town Council's Leisure & Community Services Committee Annual Report 2020/21

Despite the many problems during the past twelve months, the Town Council's Leisure & Community Services Committee is still meeting on a regular basis to discuss the excellent work our staff are carrying out.

This report outlines some of the key achievements of the Council over the last year, which I hope helps to show the amount of work that continues to take place in our community.

Our Estates Services team hasn't stopped since the pandemic first sent us into lockdown. The team has constantly evolved its way of working to ensure everyone's safety, but to still maintain the high standard of service provision the Town Council prides itself on.

The list below highlights just some of the work undertaken by the team over the past 12 months:

- Planning, ordering and preparing for the Town Council's Crematorium landscaping
- Themed floral displays to celebrate Florence Nightingale, 125 years of Hunts FA and 400 years of the Mayflower
- Weekly food deliveries to some of our most vulnerable senior residents in the town
- Football pitch improvements and marking at Coneygear Park
- Play area inspection training for our portfolio of 20+ play areas
- Weekly play area inspections and specialist Covid-19 cleaning
- Wildflower planting across several sites
- Replacing play area equipment and safety surfacing
- Painting the exterior frontage of the Commemoration Hall

The doors to the brand new Coneygear Centre sadly had to close less than a month after they officially opened, however the building has been a non-stop hive of activity behind the scenes, offering support to local residents via various different projects:

- The Supporting Older People's Project has continued to provide a freshly cooked hot meal once a week, delivered to the most vulnerable in the community. Our Estates Services team deliver these to residents, along with a weekly newsletter and they have proved to be a valuable link to people who need help during the lockdown. Over 2000 meals have been delivered since April 2020.
- The Summer Brunch Club saw up to 100 weekly lunches provided for local families during the summer holidays, which could be enjoyed at the park in allocated spaces for each family bubble. Partner agencies were in attendance to offer help and advice to any families in need of additional support.
- The first all-girls football club is now based at Coneygear Park, with ongoing improvement works being carried out by our Estates Services Team.
- The annual Christmas Hamper project took place with over 100 food hampers made up and sent out to families in the community in need of support over the festive period.
- A community garden project took place with the Green Team to create a pergola seating area and raised planters that can be used for community growing

projects in the future. The project supported young people in the local community to build on their skills to better future employment prospects.

- A click and collect service at the Coneygear Centre library to still allow access to books in the local community during the lockdown periods.
- This week, a new pilot project called Tepees of Hope has been set up at Coneygear Park on a Monday, to bring face-to-face projects for local children back but, crucially, in a COVID-19 secure way. Each participant will have their own tepee to provide a secure base from which they can engage in face-to-face activities but with exceptionally low risk of transmission. The project will offer enrichment sessions and activities to local children and families.

Last week we presented two new Local Highway Improvement bids to the County Council for consideration. They were for a formal pedestrian crossing by Owl Way in Hartford and an additional filter lane at the St Peter's Road and Redwongs Way junction. The results are expected in April. Some of last year's projects have now been completed by the County Council, including a safer footpath at Hinchingbrooke Park Road and on-street parking restrictions in Lake Way, Stukeley Meadows.

And finally, CCTV has been installed at Bloomfield and Coneygear Park to provide additional security across both open spaces and we are carrying out a pilot delivery for the June issue of our Huntingdon magazine with a new distributor to ensure all Huntingdon residents receive a copy.

Let's hope that the coming year allows us to continue with our community events which we've had to put on hold, as well as opening up the Coneygear Centre once again for the community to enjoy.

Huntingdon Town Council's Planning Committee Annual Report 2020/21

Huntingdon Town Council works in conjunction with Huntingdonshire District Council, who is the planning authority, on planning matters relevant to the town. The Council invites any large-scale planning projects that may affect the town to come and provide information and answer queries to enable the committee to put forward an informed opinion.

Over the past year various applications have been submitted, approved and work has begun. Various developments are in progress, nearing completion or have completed.

- Work is continuing on the new crematorium and cemetery and this is hoped to be completed in spring 2021.
- A14 works completed, work continuing to remove flyover at Huntingdon train station.
- Lochailort gave a presentation about changes to development known as the former Sainsbury's site. The number of units has been revised down to accommodate more houses and less flats.
- Colonnade Revival gave a presentation about renovating 111 High Street, creating an arcade with 18 units, a bar and function areas.
- Members agreed to begin the process of revising the Huntingdon Neighbourhood Plan to reflect changes in the town since the plan was made in 2019.

The Council continues to work with residents in opposing some proposed applications within the town or affected the town:

- The proposed outline planning application at Washingley Farm for a phased development of 648 dwellings was refused. Members felt there was high density with no single dwellings and there were concerns over access.
- The licensing application for a gaming premises licence/bingo was refused. Members objected to the gambling facility which was felt would be detrimental to the financial and mental health wellbeing of residents. Concerns were raised about crime, disorder and public nuisance.
- Members of the Council were against the proposed Luton Airport stacking area. Concerns were raised about the noise level and increase of pollution.

Huntingdon Town Council actively supports the Huntingdonshire Tree Strategy and where possible plant trees on Town Council land.

The Planning Applications Panel provides comments on any planning applications, works to trees, street naming and change of use of properties relevant to Huntingdon. Members of the public are welcome to comment on upcoming planning applications to be considered by the Town Council by contacting the office and can attend meetings of the Planning Committees and speak on matters on the agenda.

Huntingdon Town Council's Environment Sub Committee Annual Report 2020/21

I am delighted to be delivering the first report from the Environment Sub Committee to an Annual Town Meeting as its first elected Chair.

The work of Huntingdon Town Council in recognising the enormous challenges we face as a community is something that I am immensely proud of.

Firstly, I must thank Town Council Officer Hayley Burns for her phenomenal support since the formation of the Sub Committee, her hard work and dedication to the improvement of this Council's environmental impact has been incredible – and the internal audit carried out on the Council's own internal practices has ensured that every viable opportunity for Huntingdon Town Council to improve and reduce its carbon aims, objectives and commitments has been taken, in line with the comprehensive Environment Policy and draft Climate Action Plan – which was unanimously agreed by this Council. Tackling the climate emergency requires leadership and I am proud that Huntingdon Town Council is showing this quality in the district by participating in the early access testing Parish Council Eco Audit Tool.

Huntingdon Town Council is also now in the process of sourcing quotes for a full and comprehensive professional eco audit as we continue to take the necessary steps to reduce our carbon footprint.

Next I must pay tribute to Peter Haynes, our Head Groundsman, and the whole Estates Services team who have, day in day out, through the elements, continued their hard work in making our town look amazing – from the Summer into Winter, through the Covid-19 pandemic and, hopefully, into more normal times in the future, adapting their practices and minimising waste.

Unfortunately, due to the Covid-19 pandemic, we have had to postpone our plans for the first Huntingdon Eco Fair. However, I am pleased that we are still hoping this event can go ahead in the not too distant future, with stallholders still being looked at and these plans still very much part of Huntingdon Town Council's programme of events when we return to something closer resembling normality.

The year ahead will be another full of challenges, but I have confidence that we will continue going from strength to strength and continue taking positive steps in the years to come. I am pleased also to report on the excellent progress as we approach the completion of the new state of the art crematorium to the north of our town, which is perhaps the biggest and most ambitious project undertaken by Huntingdon Town Council in modern times.

National Geographic reports that 78% of people opt for cremation when they pass away in the UK. The new crematorium will ensure sustainability and dignity for people of all faiths and families across Huntingdonshire, whilst embracing innovation and new technologies in the form of the first all-electric carbon neutral cremator in the country, recycling of recovered heat, rainwater harvesting, solar panels and the composting of plant materials. As well as this, the site will serve as a depot and plant nursery for the Estates Services team, with electric car charging ports for Council vehicles. The new crematorium will also offer natural burials and will play a key role in ensuring friends and families can pay their respects to their loved ones locally, removing the need to generate excess carbon emissions from cars travelling into Cambridge or Bedford.

Finally, I must say that it has been an honour to sit as the first chair of the Environment Sub Committee. I would like to thank my Vice Chair, Cllr Juliet Cole, and the Town Clerk, Philip Peacock, for their fantastic support and work behind the scenes since the Sub Committee's formation. As well as this, I would like to thank all members of the Environment Sub Committee for the important role they have played in shaping Huntingdon's environmental policies, and I look forward to continuing our work together over the next year.