

Godmanchester in Bloom (GMCinB) 2008

Minutes of Public Meeting held at the Queen Elizabeth School on 31st January 2008

1. John Thackray welcomed everyone and explained his perception of the benefits of Godmanchester in Bloom, GMCinB, at Town and County level. A 20 minute film clip was shown reflecting how the residents of Bury St Edmunds had approached the challenge of improving their town. He then invited comment from each of the following agencies how they could contribute to the Project. John also presented a selection of self watering containers of the kind that could be used for flower displays.
2. Schools: Phil Ellington informed the meeting that the schools have had numerous initiatives to promote their children's understanding of nature, science based subjects and they would actively support this Project. They were keen to be part of this. The schools had previously made arrangements to work within the HDC nursery allotments in Park Lane as part of the schools' curriculum.
3. Churches: Simon Prince advised that bird boxes had been built and positioned within the churchyards coupled with a culture that encouraged youths to appreciate nature.

The youth group would like to help.
4. Policing: One of our local PCSOs reported that Godmanchester has been enjoying a reduction in anti-social behaviour and whilst cannot guarantee future good behaviour, would continue to work with youths and monitor trends.
5. Luminus: Nicky Findlay, who served as Godmanchester's neighbourhood warden supported the PCSO's interpretation and confirmed that the residents of Rectory Gardens, Roman Gate and other areas were being invited to not only assist with planting new shrubs and flowers but to maintain their areas throughout the year. Betty Turner and her committee, with help from Debbie Millington of Luminus, are upgrading the gardens at Rectory Gardens.

6. At McCartney House and in the adjoining streets, Muir Group have agreed in principle, to refurbish shrub and flower beds at McCartney House. They are also looking into providing large hanging baskets on the ends of the blocks of flats. Further to this Rushes Walk and Fairey Avenue flower beds will be tidied up and replanted.
7. Stuart Bond, chairman of the Godmanchester Community Association outlined the support provided to everyone in the town by way of Annual Gala Day, Picnic in the Park and Bonfire Night events, but also a range of entertainment provided within the Comrades club on a weekly basis. He also raised the question of Insurance and Public liability coverage which will be clarified by GMCCA legal advisors.
8. District and Town Councillor, Colin Hyams, confirmed that HDC is keen to support this Project and is confident that additional plants are being propagated for use with this project.

John thanked the town council for their initial grant of £1000 towards setting up the project.

9. The Town Clerk, Mrs Madelaine Liddiard, encouraged everyone to contribute enthusiasm towards this project and recounted examples how small actions by groups or individuals could help raise residents' level of pride in the town. She reminded everyone that the Annual Litter Pick held in April each year encouraged people to pick up litter instead of ignoring it and making the town look a nicer place to live. Other initiatives such as providing free plastic bags for use by dog walkers encourages everyone to clean up after their pets when in public places. Negotiations with EDF have resulted in agreement to replace the dilapidated power distribution plinth with a new one thus improving the appearance and security of the street scene, additionally adopting a proactive culture to dissuade swans to build nests adjacent to Ethnic Origins could not only improve the survivability of the signets but also help suppress the rat population that grew due to the amount of food thrown to the swans by the well meaning public. The Town Clerk reminded everyone that the next major event in the town's history was the 800th Anniversary which falls in 2012. It is hoped that by competing with other towns in the district on an annual basis through the Godmanchester in Bloom competitions, we will enhance the feeling of pride that the residents in this town will have.
10. John then invited comments from the floor. Christopher Vane Percy expressed concern that the repairs effected to the Mill Sluice, Car park and Coronation walk areas; have fallen short of that expected within a

Conservation area and that further dialogue is required to persuade them to effect appropriate maintenance that is in keeping with the area. He made reference to the number of self seeded trees and shrubs that are causing structural damage to the slipway to the South of the Causeway, along Coronation walk. He proposed removal of these and the Sycamore tree adjacent to Ethnic Origins, possibly planting a tree of character to maintain interest in that area.

Mr Vane Percy suggested compiling a list of good and bad aspects throughout the town in order to preserve the good and assess what is to be done to improve the bad. Further, he suggested that the Environment Agency be requested to clear fallen branches from the river in front of the Causeway that have remained unmoved for too long.

On a positive note he recognised that the Luminus housing group goes beyond its' legal obligations in order to improve the local areas.

The church gates at Church Place and Chadley Lane have now been fully restored after some 20 years of disrepair. All agreed that these were good examples of how people are working to improve Godmanchester residents' quality of life.

11. Selwyn Hammond, a new resident to Earning Street reported that a litter bin located at the Mill Sluice car park has a door that swings open and cannot be fastened closed yet it has not been replaced by HDC. This gives the impression that the town is not valued.

David Brown agreed to ask the Town Clerk, Madelaine Liddiard, to arrange it's repair or replacement.

12. General frustration was expressed with the amount of litter accumulating at local shops]. It was requested that each shop be approached and requested to ensure shop frontages remain litter free.
13. It was felt that there are insufficient litter bins in the town, especially along the alleyway between Merton Walk, Earning Street, Pipers Lane, New Street and St Ann's' Lane.

David Brown informed those present that this has been an issue that the Town Council has taken up with HDC in the past and that it also requires increased bin emptying schedules as the bins are filled to overflowing because people are doing what they should be; using the correct facility. Further liaison will be made with HDC.

Sec's note: Proposals for additional litter bins may be necessary for other areas in Godmanchester during this project.

14. David Brown referred to the earlier clip that referenced involvement of law enforcement measures to support elements of work. He suggested that it would be worth approaching the Probationary authorities to explore the use of individuals to help keep the town displays and flower beds in good order.
15. It was suggested that local residents might be appointed to co-ordinate improvements within their local area capitalising on their knowledge of local skills and enthusiasts.
16. A proposal was made to create garden competitions, an idea that John agreed to develop.
17. It was stated that there are already many groups of volunteers that have been looking after flower beds etc throughout the town. It was suggested that details of these groups be logged to capitalise on their skills and enthusiasm and preserve their areas of responsibility within this Project.
18. It was suggested that the neighbourhood watch structure be mirrored to co-ordinate improvements within each area and Councillor Carol Godley agreed to co-ordinate this aspect.
19. In reply to a proposal that a Committee be formed to co-ordinate this Project, John Thackray advised that the following people had already agreed to action this capacity:

Malcolm Cohen, Godmanchester's Mayor, Ex officio President
John Thackray
David Brown
Carol Godley
Nina Collier
Mary Stokes

Others would be welcome.

20. It was stated that for this Project to be successful, contractors must not compromise the standard of local area when they need to carry out their work. An area opposite the White Hart at Earning St had disturbed the grass but no re seeding had been carried out to restore the

verge. It is hoped that a higher level of husbandry be adopted in future but that greater vigilance would be required by the public to ensure the contractor in question is identified and area made good.

Other reports of Contractors riding over or cutting flowers before time can ruin displays and prevent the area looking its' best.

John Thackray would follow this issue up

21. One significant improvement has been the reduction of alcohol related anti-social behaviour due to a decision by Unwins (Threshers) management to close at 8.30pm instead of 11.00 pm.
22. It was requested that the Project would also concentrate on sustaining any new beds, shrubs and or trees that are planted. This was agreed by all.
23. It was reported that several local residents are endeavouring to fund the planting of wild flowers in the burial area within the non -conformist part of St Mary's church yard. This is conditional to obtaining the relevant permissions
24. Next Steps:

It was agreed that local groups be formed to progress work in specific areas and details of progress would be fed back to the committee to ensure progress or complications were logged.

It was proposed that 'before' and 'after' photos be taken and incorporated into the Godmanchester web site.

Use of both flowers and shrubs was agreed.

Effective sharing of information was agreed to be important and the committee will be identifying all stakeholders and developing processes to ensure all volunteers and the wider public will be able to view the Projects' current status and be able to locate their nearest project member should they wish to volunteer their services.

The Town Council has also agreed to promote Godmanchester in Bloom in successive Newsletters that are delivered to every household in the town.

Minutes of all GMCinB meetings will be uploaded onto the Godmanchester Web site.

Proposed areas for improvements will be marked on A4 size street maps, copies of which will be on each of the following notice boards:

St Mary's Church – Chadley Lane

Methodist/Baptist Church – East Chadley Lane

Godmanchester Community School – facing Island Hall on Post Street

Town Council Notice Board – London Road & Chinese Bridge

St Anne's Junior School – facing London Road

It was agreed this was important for the residents

25. People who wished to help with the Godmanchester in Bloom Project were invited to leave their details before leaving so that they can be included on future correspondence.

There being no other business the meeting closed at 8.50pm

26. Date of next Meeting: Wednesday 27th February 2008

27. After the meeting John noted the following apologies;-

Paul smith of HDC- Anglia in Bloom judge
Julia Prichard and Debbie Millington- Luminus
Marie and Trudie - Muir group
Betty Turner Rectory Gardens
Jackie Vickery – McCartney House
Claire Short
Peter and June Hughes.

D C Brown

Date of Minutes: 4th February 2008