



Annual Report 2020/21

Town Mayor
Cllr Stewart Gardiner

Town Clerk
Adam Keppel-Green

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Knutsford Town Council

Annual Report 2020/21

Welcome to the 2020/21 annual report of Knutsford Town Council.

It has been and challenging year for the whole world, and I would like to thank all the volunteers who have given time to help their fellow Knutsfordians.

In particular our thanks go to We Are Knutsford, Knutsford Hosts and Knutsford Rotary Club for all their work supporting our Town throughout the pandemic; I know how much the support they provided has meant to many of our residents.

2020 was of course an unusual year for the Town Council, many of our planned events had to be cancelled or drastically altered and our meetings had to move online too.

It was also a sad year for the Town Council as we lost a serving member; Cllr Barbara Hamilton Coan passed away following a short illness in November.

The year was additionally unusual as my predecessor Cllr Andrew Malloy served an extended 18 month term of office, and I will be doing the same.

Previous mayors would open this report looking back at a successful year of charity fundraising and a busy year of engagements and I hope that I am able to do this for our next annual report.



Cllr Stewart Gardiner
Town Mayor



Video Awards

We were unable to hold our Town Awards ceremony, so instead we produced a celebratory video which we broadcast online to highlight the 2020 award winners.

We were also unable to hold a commemorative VE Day event so held a virtual service on our Facebook page featuring a video made up of toasts from local residents and footage of our centennial war memorial.

Supporting the Town Centre

The past year has been exceptionally challenging for our local businesses and our Town Centre and Marketing Officer, Sandra Curties, has been working to support them throughout the lockdown periods. As many turned to online shopping, we helped our independent traders keep their businesses in everyone's mind.

Sandra hosted an extremely popular series of Facebook live 'behind the door' interviews via Zoom where we all found out more about the people behind some of the town centre businesses and what they have on offer.

We worked with We Are Knutsford to run the Knutsford Virtual High Street Facebook group

which provided a space for our local businesses to promote their offer to the town and later we worked with local marketing agency Box Red Marketing to launch www.knutsfordhighstreet.com; this new website was designed to help residents shop local during lockdown and provides a comprehensive directory of town centre shops.

In August we took part in the national Monster Hero Safari a safe trail which encouraged footfall to the town centre and raised funds nationally for the NHS charities and in October we coordinated Five Fest a fortnight of special offers from local businesses and this was followed in November with Knutsford Flash Fashion, where our fashion retailers

organised promotions, raffles, models and styling advice.

As restrictions ease, we have developed a recovery plan of activity and initiatives to continue supporting local businesses and minimise the local economic impact of the pandemic.

Knutsford Voucher Scheme

The Knutsford Voucher was a new scheme launched in November with the aim of encouraging local spending to support the town centre.

Launched in denominations of £5 and £10, over 50 local businesses signed up to participate and hundreds of vouchers were sold in the run up to Christmas.

Cemetery Chapel Refurbishment

In October, we commenced the refurbishment of the cemetery chapel.

This £130,000 project aimed to bring the chapel, which Cheshire East Council returned to us in a poor condition in 2016, back into regular use. It has been fully funded through a grant of £52,000 we

secured from Cheshire East Council as part of accepting the chapel with the balance drawn from the proceeds of the sale of the cemetery lodge.

The works included installing a new power and water supply to the building, repairs to stonework and rainwater goods,

repointing and replastering.

A new kitchenette was installed in one anteroom whilst the other has been converted into an accessible toilet. The building has been repainted, had a new heating system installed and we've installed new lighting and fire and intruder alarms.

The works have now been completed and we are furnishing the chapel ready for its reopening.



Public Toilet Building Works

In January, work started to create new commercial letting units in our public toilet buildings. The works, funded from the sale of the cemetery lodge, will create a new regular

income for the council and utilise space in the buildings that was just sitting empty. The works involve creating a new frontage to the buildings and opening out the old toilet spaces.

Our public toilets are unaffected.



Nature Action Plan Progress

In March last year we adopted our Nature Action Plan as part of our commitment to making Knutsford a greener and more wildlife friendly town.

During the last 12 months we have created a tree planting plan mapping where we intend to plant hundreds of trees - and we've planted the first 30 or so of these.

We commissioned Cheshire Wildlife Trust to create a new, locally sourced, wildflower meadow on the Barncroft which should come into flower this year!

We've also installed bird and bat boxes at the cemetery, obelisk, Higher Town Green and Wallwood plus two bug hotels at the latter two.

Working with volunteers we have



started to log and map every tree on public land. This project has been led by our local 'tree champions' Kevin Griffiths and Malcolm Thomas.

We have had great co-operation from Cheshire East Council's open spaces team (ANSA) who have given permission for many of our tree planting plans. We are working to urge the highways department to change their policy to allow planting on highway verges which will unlock space for many more trees and shrubs.

Over the next 12 months we will be planting many more trees and running a programme of community bulb planting.

We will also be launching a 'hedgehog highway' campaign, encouraging residents to plan trees in their gardens and working with local landowners to create green corridors linking local wildlife sites.

You can view more information on the plan and what we are doing on our website.

All the small things

Friends of St Johns Wood

In February we hosted a community meeting to launch a new community group. Over the next year we'll be supporting them to help improve this much loved space.

New Bin for the Barncroft

We funded a new bin on the footpath through the Barncroft in response to reports of a littering problem.



Easter Colouring Competition

We couldn't hold our Bunny Hop event, so we organised a children's colouring competition and encouraged children to

display them in their home windows to brighten up everyone's daily walk!

Cemetery Potting Bench

We installed a potting bench at the cemetery to store the watering cans and provide a space for families to prepare tributes.

Active Travel Proposals

We ensured Cheshire East withdrew proposals to close Ladies Mile to traffic and have put forward alternative active travel proposals.

Memorial Safety Testing

We commenced a programme of safety testing each memorial in the cemetery.

Conservation Area Appraisals

A consultant was engaged to undertake an appraisal the Legh Road Conservation Area; this would be the first review for the five



conservation areas in Knutsford but has been delayed to due the impact of coronavirus.

Redrow Update Meeting

In February we hosted a community update meeting with Redrow Homes on their 190 home development. We plan to hold further meetings in the future.

Street Name Signs

We replaced a number of faded and missing street name signs.

New Benches

We installed two new benches on Bexton Lane.

Planning Applications

Between April 2020 and April 2021, the Town Council has reviewed and commented on 326 planning applications!

Community Events

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, there were big changes to our events programme over 2020 resulting in the cancellation of our spring and summer programmes.

We held a prolonged one-week version of our Pumpkin Path event over Halloween week and local families were thrilled with the opportunity for some Covid-19 safe Halloween fun.

A stripped back version of our Christmas Market

was held in December which offered vital trade for local traders. The market was well attended by local people despite the very wet weather! The switch on and parade were not held.

A new Christmas Cracker Trail was held for one week in December to offer further Covid-19 safe entertainment due to cancellation of many other events. The trail was reasonably successful so close to Christmas.

Town Centre Masterplan

In May 2020, we published the consultation report on the From Top to Bottom Street proposals which received 658 responses from residents and local businesses.

Overall, 58% of respondents supported the proposals in the plan to discourage through traffic, increase off street parking and limit on street parking.

The report was submitted to Cheshire East Council and we called on the council to support the proposals and allocate budget and resource to further develop the scheme. Cheshire East Council has included undertaking work on the feasibility of the proposals as part of their Local Transport Delivery Plan.



Your Councillors 2020/21



Cllr Sewart Gardiner
Town Mayor



Cllr Mike Houghton
Deputy Town Mayor



Cllr Quentin Abel



Cllr Elizabeth Beswick



Cllr Peter Coan



Cllr Lesley Dalzell



Cllr Neil Forbes



Cllr Christopher Gray



Cllr Andrew Malloy



Cllr James McCulloch



Cllr Jan Nicholson



Cllr James Power



Cllr Matthew Robertson

Councillor Changes

In April 2020 Cllr Katherine Fletcher resigned from the council following her election as Member of Parliament for South Ribble.

It was with great sadness that we also said goodbye to Cllr Barbara Hamilton Coan who passed away in November 2020.

By-elections for the vacancies take place in May 2021.