

## **Progress and Challenges** by Ann Bonnett, Chair of Girton Town Charity

Girton Town Charity has had a very busy nine-month period, with changes to our team, progress on building new almshouses to increase housing provision for residents, growing use of the William Collyn Community Centre and managing our wide range of Schemes and Grants to help all sections of the community.

Inevitably, the impact of COVID-19 in the last quarter has brought additional challenges and we have adhered strictly to Government guidelines to ensure social distancing and the safety of residents. This has included temporary closure of the William Collyn Centre and the stopping of face-to-face activities.

In previous years, we have provided an interim report on GTC's activities for the Parish Council's Annual Meeting in May and although this year, the Meeting will not be held, we thought villagers might appreciate an update. Full accounts for the year to 30th June 2019 can be viewed on the Charity Commission website.



### **Trustees**

GTC currently has a full complement of seven Trustees, with two new ones joining this year: Michael Aston in August 2019, bringing a wealth of experience on planning and development and Debbie Macklin in April 2020, who has been an active participant in the voluntary sector including being a governor at Girton Glebe Primary School.

Two Trustees stepped down: Jenny Knights after 24 years during which she made a major contribution to Village life including delivery of the William Collyn Centre; and Brian Pycock after 11 years as Treasurer, managing the financial activities of the Charity. We owe both of them a huge debt of gratitude.

There was also a change at the helm during the year with Dr Robin Hiley stepping down after 22 years as the longest serving Chair. Under his leadership GTC saw the sale of development land in Wellbrook Way which was used to establish the Endowment Fund, enabling more almshouses to be built and an expansion of our Grants and Schemes. Robin remains as a Trustee and his extensive knowledge is a huge support to me as the new Chair.

The service provided by the GTC Office has been expanded with the arrival of Rachel Allchorne in February, joining Gilly O'Brien to give support to Trustees, beneficiaries and suppliers.

Between July and March, the Trustees met eight times to consider the regular business of the Charity and attended an Annual Strategy Day in July to review the Charity's finances and budgeting systems. Most recently we have had to deal with the problem of significantly reduced income from our Endowment Fund, as a result of falls in the financial markets caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. This, regrettably, will not allow us to support our grant recipients to the level we had hoped, although funds for our primary purpose, provision of almshouses, have been protected.

### **Almshouses**

There are currently ten almshouses in use: seven in Centenary Court at Wellbrook Way and one each in Girton Road, St Vincent's Close and Fairway. The six former bungalows on the High Street site were demolished in January and February and the site is now securely boarded up and awaiting rebuilding once planning permission has been obtained.

Godfrey & Hicks were appointed to build three new almshouses on the site of the old WI Hall, named Suffolk Terrace in recognition of the Hall being used as an army hut for the Suffolk Regiment during the First World War. Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, the site was cleared and piles installed. Contractors returned to site on 11th May to progress construction of the three cottages.

Sadly the redevelopment of the High Street Site has not progressed beyond planning, with the first application refused and revised plans awaiting consideration by South Cambridgeshire District Council. At the time of writing, a virtual Planning Committee has been scheduled for 10th June.

## Grants and Schemes

### CarePlus Grant Scheme

This Scheme helps Girton residents to live independently in their own homes by providing additional short-term care to suit their needs over and above any statutory care to which they are entitled. It particularly aims to assist residents to return home from hospital as soon as possible. Professional care providers nominated by GTC give the support through a grant. In the year to date, 34 villagers benefitted from the Scheme.

### Educational Grant Scheme

Designed to help with the cost of buying books and equipment for study in further and higher education, the Educational Grant Scheme is also available for some apprenticeships and similar qualifications at NVQ Level 4 or above. Awards up to a maximum of £300 per academic year are given. In the year to date, 32 grants were made.

### Hospital Taxi Scheme

This helps people travel by taxi to outpatient appointments at Cambridge University (Addenbrooke's) and Royal Papworth Hospitals, Brookfields, Mill Road and the University Eye Clinic, Bradmore Street when alternative transport is not practical. GTC remains grateful for the full co-operation of the Girton taxi companies: Nelsons and Wendy Barrett. The Scheme operates a 'membership year', with residents signing up to it benefitting from the capped rate of £7 per return journey. In the year to date, 194 villagers are registered on the Scheme.

### Prescription Delivery Service

Run by the pharmacist at the GP practice serving Girton, the Prescription Delivery Service is available for patients who live within the Pepys Way dispensing area and are unable, through reasons of incapacity, to collect dispensed medicines from the Pepys Way or Huntingdon Road Surgeries.

### Youth Project with the YMCA

The Youth Project, which has held evening club nights all year round and additional events and

activities during the Spring and Summer holidays, has sadly seen a reduction in regular attendance over the year and GTC is reviewing the activities with the YMCA to assess future sustainability.

### Cambridge Citizens Advice Bureau

Outreach sessions of CAB have been held at the William Collyn Centre, providing advice for residents on many issues including personal finances, employment and housing.

### Relate Counselling Service

A range of relationship counselling services have been on offer at the William Collyn Centre to help residents address specific difficulties or learn new skills and strategies to deal with particular issues.

### Age UK Activities

GTC supports two Age UK activities. In the Community Warden Scheme, Fiona has provided full-time cover with support from Jane to more than 20 villagers who subscribe. As Older Residents' Co-ordinator, Patricia has worked on a number of initiatives to broaden provision and participation in a variety of activities across the Village. Over recent months these have included: Taster sessions for New Age Kurling and T'ai Chi, resulting in the holding of regular weekly classes and a Breakfast Club at Girton Golf Club.

### Grants to external charities

GTC supports charitable organisations outside the Village with grants based on the number of Girton participants in their activities. These have included Macmillan Cancer Support, Cambridge Dial-A-Ride, Arthur Rank Hospice Charity, East Anglian Children's Hospices, Cambridgeshire Headway and Relate.

### Grants to local schools

Girton Glebe Primary School has received substantial financial support for intervention, as well as for educational enrichment activities and provision of wrap-around support for the children of families-in-need. GTC has also supported School Trip costs that could not be met by the families of the children concerned. The Be-A-Buddy Scheme provided by Relate at the School was also awarded a grant to cover increased costs.

Before it was closed, Cottontails received a grant towards Forest School activities.

### **Grants to village organisations**

Grants were given to organisations based in the Village including Club-55 Girton and Girton Colts.

### **Grants to individuals**

Grants to individuals are given to cover costs such as modest fees for activities that were otherwise unaffordable, support for those in need of respite breaks and contributions towards household items such as support chairs, cookers, fridge/freezers and beds. In the year to date, 23 grants were made to individuals.

### **Future focus**

In six months' time, Girton Town Charity will see its 500th anniversary, having been established in the reign of King Henry VIII by the generosity and social concern of William Collyn. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic we will enter that year with a very different social landscape from previous years.

Unquestionably, the pandemic has forced many changes to our everyday lives and activities and as we move forwards, our Trustees will be focusing on how best to support Girton residents as we adapt lives and working environments to comply with new social distancing requirements to keep us all safe. This will run in parallel with other important tasks to complete the new Suffolk Terrace development and the replacement for the High Street bungalows to ensure that we can futureproof our provision with truly affordable housing that many of our residents need.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank all our Trustees for their huge contribution and also our Administrators who support us and run the office so efficiently. The next year will undoubtedly bring fresh and difficult challenges – just as the last few months has done – but GTC is in an excellent position, with a very strong and skilled team to find solutions to take us forward

## **Educational Grants 2020**

Applications for an Educational Grant are invited from young people over 18 leaving secondary education and moving on to higher education and some training schemes or NVQ qualifications Level 4 and above.

The Grant covers books, equipment, tools or other direct costs relevant to the course and is a maximum of £300\* per year for up to four years.

Next payment date for grant applications received will be July 2020.

Applicants must have lived in Girton for a minimum of two years immediately before leaving secondary education.

Contact the GTC office for an application form.

\* Terms and conditions apply

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Girton Town Charity exists for purposes which include the relief of need in Girton, either individually or collectively, or the support of any charitable purpose for the benefit of the inhabitants of Girton.

Enquiries on behalf of individuals or village organisations may be made in confidence and addressed to any of the Trustees below:

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Michael Aston	t: 07878 319743
Marc Bermann	t: 277319
Colin Carr	t: 276312
Dr Robin Hiley	t: 277296
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