

Trustees report positive end to challenging year

2020 was a year like no other but it ended with positive progress on a number of projects, report the Trustees of Girton Town Charity.

Suffolk Terrace

Despite the constraints of lockdowns and adherence to Government guidelines, work on the three new almshouses at Suffolk Terrace in the High Street was completed a just few weeks over schedule with the homes made ready for occupation for appointed residents to move in the Spring.

This is a huge achievement and our thanks go to our contractors Godfrey & Hicks and other suppliers working on the project who have gone the extra mile to ensure that the completion was met, despite unforeseen challenges.

Applicants for the three cottages – named Parsley, Pond and Searle after the original Trustees of the WI Hall – were appointed following interviews in December and were able to move into their new homes at the beginning of April.



Architects drawing of Almshouses and GTC Office on the High St.

High Street

The second major almshouse project – the High Street redevelopment – has progressed well during the year and the six outdated single bedroom bungalows have been demolished to make way for the new homes. A revised application by our architects and planning consultants was approved in June 2020, the design was finalised and the tender sent out to selected contractors in mid-December.

The proposals are for a mix of bungalows and apartments built to Passivhaus standards and providing 15 comfortable and attractive homes for

people over the age of 55 who are resident in, or who have a strong connection with Girton, as well as a new office for the Charity.

Fortunately the funds for this project were ring-fenced ahead of the COVID-19 pandemic; the monies have been withdrawn from long-term investments and placed in liquid, interest-bearing, accounts with a variety of banks.

William Collyn Centre

Following its opening in April 2019, the William Collyn Community Centre has become firmly established as a valuable resource at the heart of our Village, hosting a wide range of activities and events for all ages.

In order to establish it on a firm footing, Cambridgeshire ACRE, a charity specialising in community facilities, was appointed to provide management for an initial period from January 2019 to March 2021. GTC were able to take over full management during 2021 but still to consult with Cambridgeshire ACRE to ensure continuity of good practice.

The arrival of COVID-19 – and the resulting closure of the Centre in March – meant that no bookings were made for the last three months of the GTC financial year and up to September 2020. As a result, GTC increased its annual grant to offset the shortfall, although successful applications for a £25,000 grant from SCDC for Community Centres and Business Rates Relief have helped to reduce the level of assistance required.

Grants and Schemes

Grants for Village infrastructure included repairing the Sculpture Railings, damaged by a car, and also maintaining the Sensory Garden. The figures that follow relate to the financial year end June 2020 and GTC's full report and accounts are available on The Charity Commission website www.charitycommission.gov.uk

In terms of education, GTC continued its support for Girton Glebe Primary School to fund enrichment

activities and to provide childcare for families-in-need. The Educational Grant Scheme, which provides assistance in buying books and equipment, continued to be popular with grants made to 32 recipients. The Hospital Taxi Scheme, which helps patients get to hospitals on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus, Brookfields Hospital in Mill Road and the ARU University Eye Clinic, was much used during the year by its 206 subscribing members.

GTC's CarePlus Scheme, which is to assist Girton residents to live independently by providing additional short-term care over and above any statutory care to which they are entitled, continued to meet a significant demand, benefitting 36 residents.

The Charity also supported two Age UK activities: the Community Warden Scheme used by 20 villagers and the Older Residents' Co-ordinator.

Grants were made to 13 people during the year to help with costs such as essential household goods, support for special needs and enhancement of mobility.

Other financial help was given to a range of specialist providers to enable them to give support and advice to Girton residents. These included: The Arthur Rank Hospice, East Anglia's Children's Hospices, Headway, Cam Sight, Macmillan Cancer Support, Relate and Cambridge CAB. Following declining use of the Girton Youth Project run by the YMCA, and funded by GTC since 2005, the annual grant was reviewed and, after closure at the onset of COVID-19, it was agreed that this would cease at the end of November.

Challenges

Commenting on the Trustees' Report, GTC Chair Ann Bonnett said: "The coronavirus pandemic has had a significant impact on our achievements and performance. The Trustees quickly reviewed the Charity's activities as soon as the pandemic was declared and it was clear that there would be a marked reduction in both returns on our investment and Community Centre income and therefore our ability to carry on supporting a wide range of activities within the Village. The almshouse provision and development was protected, in part because all the funds needed for the building programme had already been ring-fenced.

"The Trustees were unanimous in their view that grant giving must focus on the Charity's primary purpose: the provision and long-term maintenance of almshouses and responding to the needs of the elderly



GTC Almshouses at Centenary Court, Wellbrook Way.



The William Collyn Community Centre at Wellbrook Way.

residents in our Village. It was also agreed that this would necessitate a reduction in grants to individuals and groups. Those affected were contacted early to allow contingency plans to be put in place.

Continuity

"Our office remained open but not to personal visitors and with our two office staff working alternately in the premises and at home, we were able to ensure safety and continuity of support to as many individuals as possible.

"GTC's income is derived from our investments and with very careful management, we have ended the calendar year with a slightly improved financial position since the markets have started to recover. I'd like to thank all our Trustees for their support and guidance during this most challenging of years and our Administrators, Gilly and Rachel for their commitment to GTC and beneficiaries of the charity as well as the huge support they have been to me in my first year as Chair".