

# FOCUS on Godmanchester

Spring 2018 - 19



## Update on County and District Council Services

### Rising council tax and cuts to services

The demand for services, especially for the elderly, is increasing. Adults and Children in Need take up over 60% of the council's budget. The Tory government has been reducing its grant to all local councils. For Cambridgeshire, from £85 million to nil between 2013 and 2019. This year the Tory-controlled County Council have increased their council tax by 2% for Adult Social Care and 2.99% for other services. They intend to use this extra £7.7 million to pay off the £4.3million overspend on this financial year and put the rest in reserves.

The Lib Dems would have cut £256,000 from councillor allowances and then used the additional resources, including the new reserve, to improve services such as Special Needs, Adult Social Care, Highways and Footpath maintenance and improved Street Lighting.

### District Council Budget

Last year the Financial Officer at the District Council warned that the five-year proposed budget for HDC was unbalanced – not viable. Last year the Lib Dems said the only way it could see to balance the books was to raise a 2% tax last year and this year. We don't believe in tax rises for the sake of it- this was because there are so few savings now to make without stopping services and because the Government are stopping all local Authority grants. The ruling group disagreed and said it would manage with 1.5%. No other parties provided any alternative solutions. In February, the proposal was 2% after the ruling group couldn't find a way of making the lesser 1.5% work.

### Tories cave in on care charges

At the last minute, the Tories in charge of the County Council have backed away from their plan to increase a range of charges for social care services. After a disastrous public consultation in which up to 83% of respondents opposed the changes, the Tories announced that they were 'rejecting' their own earlier proposals.

Liberal Democrat county councillors opposed the plan from the start. "We realised straightaway that these proposals would hit some very vulnerable people very hard", says Cllr Graham Wilson, Lib Dem lead member for adult social care services. "An awful lot of people across the county have experienced months of anxiety over this. It's good that the Tories have backed down, but it's a pity they didn't listen to the Lib Dems in the first place."

### Update on Children's Centre

Whilst the County Council is still planning to cut £0.9 million from Children's Centres in 2018/19, we have been reassured that services in Godmanchester are secure. They tell us that they will be continuing to run a Baby Clinic, Bumps to Babies group and a Drop in for families, as well as Parenting courses and other Pop up activities within the Godmanchester area. If you use the existing groups, please let us know whether you are happy with the new arrangements.

### Return to the Opposition

We have returned to be become the Opposition on the District Council after being displaced by the Independent Group. We are continuing to ensure that the Council delivers for all residents and to bring robust challenge to the decision making process.

### From your local Lib Dem Team

The main topics on side 1 of this Focus are bleak. We are not in such a dire position as Northamptonshire County Council and Milton Keynes but Cambridgeshire County Council is close to being unable to meet the needs of residents.

The Tories' plans for 'transforming' the way services are provided are ambitious and highly risky. And we can see in the state of our roads and the deteriorating services to the elderly that things are getting worse.

Please call or email us if you want to talk about this.

We do not guarantee to solve all the problems you tell us about but we can sometimes help.

## The Godmanchester Team –

*contact any of us if you have a problem we can help with*



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## Early warning!! - Local Elections on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> May 2018 District and Town / Parish

**District Council:** The boundaries for the ward including Godmanchester have been changed and there will now be three councillors to be elected to serve on Huntingdonshire District Council to represent Godmanchester, the Offords and Hemingford Abbots.

Huntingdonshire District Council is organised around party political groups. Sarah Conboy and David Underwood, your existing Lib Dem district councillors, will be re-standing together with Mike Grice a well-known local resident and secretary of the Huntingdonshire Lib Dems. (Graham Wilson continues as your County Councillor).

**Town Council:** 17 councillors to be elected for a four year term. The Town Council is non-party political.

If you would like to know a bit more about what is involved, please approach any of your current councillors. Town Council meetings are open to the public and take place in the Town Hall on the third Thursday of the month at 7.30pm. District Council meetings are advertised on the HDC web site and are also open to the public.

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### Responding to Grumbles in Godmanchester

#### Pigeons

In the last Focus, we reported we had a date for the works to be done to remove the pigeons from the A14 bridge. Since then we've been very frustrated as Highways England have changed their contractor and things have been delayed. We are now being told it will be in the next few months. We are continuing to do all we can to get this work brought forward.

#### Footpaths

A number of residents have raised this issue with us and specifically how dangerous they can be for wheelchairs users / mobility scooter users. We have an offer from the County Council to come out and meet us on site to identify the worst locations and to consider what could be done. If this affects you, please could you get touch so we can share information about the worst locations.

#### Buses

There are continuing grumbles about the regularity of the bus services. We are doing what we always do and have been raising these issues with the service providers and County Council officers. We are happy for you to let us know which buses don't show up or are excessively late. You can also contact the County Council  
direct: [passenger.transport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:passenger.transport@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

#### Potholes

There's a worrying trend in the condition of our roads and footpaths. We all see the potholes and we generally think there are more this year than there were last year. But they are the tip of the iceberg which is a year on year decline in their underlying state as measured by an objective and rigorous annual survey. CCC continues to patch holes but often they don't seem to last. Please keep reporting the holes to the County Council and they should repair them.

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### Possible new Secondary School

The academy group that have been given the task of opening a new secondary school in Godmanchester held an open meeting for residents to find out more. It was a well-attended session that gave us all the opportunity to ask questions. We now know that the Department for Education is still looking at how many school places might be needed and will then decide on next steps. In the meantime, we heard about what the new school might provide for residents, much of which was well-received by potential parents of those children who might attend; it's thought it could open in 2021/22. We want to achieve the best possible educational opportunities for local children, so we will be keeping a close eye on further developments. Please let us know your views and watch this space for further news.

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### Why not help Godmanchester's Liberal Democrats

You can help here by getting involved in practical ways: delivering these FOCUS leaflets, assisting the elected councillors and helping us as we move towards this year's elections. Given us a call or drop us a line – our details are on the other side.