

Annual town meeting Fri 15/5/26

Mayor Cllr Debbie Whitworth - Welcome to our Annual Town Meeting, this year we have made a few changes and invited members of the JUG (Joint Users Group), we're delighted to be hearing from Allotments, Bowls, Football, Rugby and Netball, but to start with I'd like to share with you that:

The new **Olney Community Centre, Winterbottom Way** is now open for business, it's been a long time coming but we're very pleased with it, it's a lovely space and we're excited to let you know that we will be having an open afternoon at 3pm on Saturday 4th July, everyone is welcome.

It is already being well used with regular classes and many children's parties are already booked in. Bookings can be arranged with the town council office and details found on our website.

The ex-Football club building is coming along nicely; the builders are still looking at completing it by the end of August. Now to be called **The Rec Community Centre**, for those who don't know, the building is being refurbished and the extension on the side will become the new public conveniences.

The current public toilets will become a facility for **Men's Sheds**, a charity organisation supporting mental health for men by making and mending for the community. They only need from us a lockable space with power and they will combine both sides of the building for workshop style facilities. The current accessible toilet will become a lock up for the fishing club.

We are hoping to combine with them in the refurbished building some **repair café** sessions, watch this space.

PCSO TVP advice remains the same in that firsthand accounts need to be reported to the police via on line reporting or calling 101

However insignificant / minor nature anyone deems an issue to be, the advice from TVP is to Report Report Report .. this will assist in getting the correct level of resources for Olney

Obviously, anything of an urgent nature needs to be called in as a 999 goes without question

Regarding the summer, any ASB must be reported to the police

I've been assured if the calls are received officers will be deployed - understandably they cannot be here permanently as stretched as we all appreciated - so once again if anyone sees any ASB at the rec you are advised to kindly report it.

Hopefully, with all the national advertising about the appalling conditions of the river pollution, people may see sense and avoid our stretch of the river too!

Chair of **Finance** committee **Cllr Chris Shaw** - The yearend balance for 2025/2026 is again positive and shows OTC to be in a sound financial position. Income and Expenditure yearend figures were both broadly in line with budget, showing only relatively small variances. It is entirely to be expected that some variances will occur during any financial year, but it is pleasing to note that the financial year ended so close to budget.

As you may be aware, all figures are subject to review by both the Finance Committee and the full Council at its monthly meetings. The Accounts are also subject to two internal audits a year, followed by review by the government appointed external auditor. The latest internal audit has just been completed, and the findings were again positive and show that our accounts are being handled correctly and in line with appropriate guidelines. I have no reason to doubt that the external year end audit will give OTC a clean bill of health.

OTC continues to invest in the community. Regarding the new Olney Community Centre at Winterbottom Way, expenditure will be incurred to ensure fit for purpose community use but demand for this space is already high and much of this cost will be recouped through bookings and rental income. Similar costs will be incurred at the refurbished former football club building but again, bookings income will offset these costs.

Both are examples of funding for community assets that are designed to benefit a wide variety of community groups

Cllr Chris Tennant is Chair of **Development** –

The work of the Olney Development Committee has three principal areas of activity:

- (1) Firstly, the implementation, monitoring and continual review of the Olney Neighbourhood Plan involving commenting on strategic planning documents produced by Milton Keynes City Council

(MKCC), responding to changes in national and local planning policy and the engagement on the emerging New City Plan 2050, the replacement for Plan:MK.

- (2) A second role is to liaise with local businesses, schools, healthcare providers, community and sporting groups to enhance the social and community infrastructure and physical environment of the town through utilisation of s.106 funds received from developments promoted in the ONP.
- (3) The third, and possibly most important role is to monitor, review and comment on planning applications for development in the Parish of Olney. The Development Committee review approximately 10-15 planning applications every month and provide timely responses to MKCC planning department. It is also the responsibility of the Committee to attend MKCC Planning Committee meetings to represent the views of the town on important applications that have been objected to.

The Olney Neighbourhood Plan

A review of the Olney Neighbourhood Plan is underway.

The ONP was made in September 2017 by MKC following the referendum in July 2017. A review of the existing ONP has commenced with an assessment of the existing policies, the delivery on allocated sites, compliance with Plan:MK and other relevant National planning policy documents and guidance (NPPF and NPPG).

A “modifications version” of the ONP was issued for consultation last year and a detailed ONP Questionnaire was produced by the Development Committee and consulted upon with the community,

The Development Committee are working on an update to the Modifications Version of the ONP to reflect the feedback from the public consultation, the changes to policies with the emerging New City Plan and to pick up the changes to plan-making in line with the new National Planning Policy Framework and the Governments Planning Reform Agenda.

Project work

The Development Committee working in partnership with other OTC Committees and Groups have a number of live projects underway and in the pipeline and monitor a s.106 tracking document to bring forward new development projects or help local groups with applications for s.106 funding

A selection of projects that the ODG have reviewed:

- **Yardley Manor multi-purpose community hall and sporting facilities** opened last month after 4 years in the development, planning and construction phases. Also, after some remediation works the play area and public open spaces are finished and being used by the new community.
- **The refurbishment and enhancement of The Olney Centre** - through utilisation of MKCC carbon offsetting grant and s.106 funding a significant refurbishment to the Olney Centre has taken place enhancing the insulation, energy efficiency, energy generation with new solar panels and heating systems with a new air source heat pump. All part of the Town Council’s drive to reduce running costs become Carbon Neutral by 2030.
- **Installation of new EV charging points** throughout the town to encourage use of electric cars to help off-set vehicle air pollution including an EV point at the Olney Centre to charge the community mini-bus.

I’d like to invite the first of our **JUG** members to address us, **Andrew** from the **Olney Allotment Holders Association**...

There are approximately 150 Council Allotment plots on the site and 35 plots on the Community Allotment. Of this number we currently have 117 Members signed up in the Olney Allotment Holder Association.

Olney Allotment Holders Association has a committee of 7 all with full active involvement at our monthly meetings.

We are grateful to the Olney Town Council who allows to use the areas known as the Community Allotment free of charge. The 35 plots there are for people who want to give growing a try on a small scale. Ideal for parents with children, the elderly, people with physical challenges or busy lives. We provide all the tools they need to get going and keep going. Perfect for new people to try and see if they get on with keeping an allotment. Some Community Allotment holders have gone on to taking on a full size council allotment

When you join the Olney Allotment Holders Association the annual fee is £12, which then give the member:

- National Allotment Society (NAS) affiliate membership
- Public liability insurance via the NAS
- Seed order discounts, via the NAS Kings Seeds Catalogue
- Purchase of compost and manure on site from the OAHA
- Free access to rotavators, strimmers and wheelbarrows
- OAHA weekly updates via email of news and events
- Help and advice via the NAS "Members Only" web pages
- 10% Discount at Alban Hill Garden Nurseries

The OAHA HQ

Thanks to the fund raising efforts of previous OAHA committees, the council and the National Lottery we have an HQ cabin and a loo on site by the main car park.

The HQ cabin has solar power, which provides electricity for kitchen appliances, tool charges, audio visual equipment, a printer, security cameras and internet. On the outside of the cabin we have an NHS Defibrillator unit that is regularly checked by the OAHA.

We open our cabin every Saturday morning from February to November between 10am to 12pm where tea, coffee, & biscuits are provided - this is open to all so you do not need to have an allotment to enjoy the banter and allotment surroundings. We are also this year going to open the cabin once a month on a Sunday morning. There is always a never-ending list of jobs required to be carried out. Last year we recovered the large polytunnel on the Community Allotment.

We installed a wildlife pond (with considerable help from Olney Town Council) which has been a wonderful success and is slowly being discovered on site by walkers as they pass through the allotments. We also managed, with help from OTC, to take advantage of Santander's volunteering day programme. Santander staff assisted us for a day last year with jobs at the Community Allotment and Community Orchard.

The Community Orchard

known now as the Amazing Grace Community Orchard

This was an initiative by the OAHA several years ago and is now a separate set up to the OAHA

We work with the Amazing Grace Community Orchard Committee on various events during the year.

Including: The Wassail Celebrations, The Apple Day and OAHA volunteers help out on maintenance days at the Orchard.

The "Skip & Swap" weekend in March

For the last two years we have provided allotment holders with Free "Skip & Swap" weekend. This is so they can off load any non green waste, such as old pallets, timbers, metals and surplus plastic and junk. Allotment holders can swap or exchange tools and equipment they don't need and that way clear their plots of unwanted items. This has been a great success and we can see a change on plots as less junk is left to pile up. With the news of the possible closing of the Newport Pagnell Recycling Centre, the OAHA intends to manage future skip weekends to help allotment holders clear their plots

OAHA EVENTS

The OAHA have a full programme of events planned for this year - these include the following:

FREE CPR & DEFIBRILLATOR TRAINING at the OAHA HQ

by the Olney & Newport Area of the South Central Ambulance Service 24th May (SUNDAY) 10am to 11.30am
The Sunday of the May Bank Holiday Weekend.

PLANT SALE WEEKEND at the OAHA HQ

30th & 31st May (SATURDAY & SUNDAY)

AN OAHA STALL AT THE CHERRY FAIR

The Glebe Field by St Peter & St Paul Church
28th June (SUNDAY)

SCARECROW FESTIVAL at the Allotments

15th & 16th August (SATURDAY & SUNDAY) The Scarecrow Festival will be free to enter and free to visit. Open to all allotment holders, local residents, local schools, Olney shops/businesses. We will ask everyone who would like to take part to send an email to the Olney Allotment Holders Association to register their intention to enter a scarecrow, so that we have an idea in advance of how many scarecrows to expect to manage. Allotment holder scarecrow entries will be placed close to the perimeter of their plot, to save the public having to walk onto any allotment. Scarecrows that are made by contributors from outside the allotments will be allocated scarecrow spots along the allotment un-made grass/gravel road. All visitors (with the exception of people who have mobility issues) will be encouraged to leave their cars at home and walk to the Festival as there is limited parking on site.

ALLOTMENT OPEN DAY at the OAHA HQ

16th August (SUNDAY) Part of the National Allotment Society Allotment Annual Week where we will announce the SCARECROW winners

COURGETTE FESTIVAL

at the OAHA HQ 12th September (SATURDAY) Food and items made with courgettes can be eaten and enjoyed

TAKING PART IN REMBERANCE SUNDAY

Last year for the first time we were proud to be part of this special day and we added ourselves to the many organisation that laid a wreath on the day. We plan to repeat this in 2026 and onwards.

OAHA CHRISTMAS TREE

St Peter and St Paul's Church Christmas Tree Festival, we enter a Christmas Tree every year

TO SUMMERISE

We want to create a welcoming atmosphere for all to enjoy the space and learn about growing plants on the Olney Allotments.

Cllr Whitworth - Community Engagement continues to thrive, in addition to all the groups run for all manner of clubs and organisations, OTC run:

The **community minibus** continues to run several times a week, our wonderful volunteers take it out Tuesdays and Thursdays weekly, two Wednesdays a month we collect several residents for the CAMEO event, one Friday a month to the jazz afternoon tea at Olney Meadows and we are due to start the new route next week that will take residents to the café in Emberton Park, monthly to start but depending on volunteers and demand, we could increase this.

Tea & Chat is 2-3pm on the second Monday of each month

Come and Connect, is every Tuesday 10-12

Thursday lunch club, run by another bunch of lovely volunteers, we have just received 5 stars from the Food Hygiene. Weekly we serve a nutritious cooked meal for just £5 to around 25-30 residents.

The **Hangout Hub** is every Friday 5.30-7.30pm for children in school years 6-11 Fun activities like pizza and cookie making (and eating), model making, arts, first aid, games or movie night, with table tennis, pool and table football always there.

The **Community fridge** is there to help reduce food waste, volunteers collect from Co-op and Sainsbury's weekdays, varying amounts, one day one of the volunteers took 6 trips in her car and moved nearly 1.5 tonnes

of food in just one day! Other people donate food too, maybe excess allotment produce or for any other reason.

The **Food Bank** is for people in need and is run by Olney is Kind volunteers, they guarantee food which has been donated.

As you can see, there is a massive amount of work being done by some fabulous volunteers, and although there is often too much attention given to the negative comments on the Moany Noticeboard, these people are very much in the minority and thankfully there are many more wonderful volunteers around.

I'd like to invite the next **JUG** member to address us, **Liz** from the **Olney Bowls Club** – Liz gave a report on the Bowls Club activities.

Olney Community Centres Management, HR and Dickens Committees are chaired by **Cllr Deirdre Bethune**, she is unable to attend this evening so has sent the following report:

The Olney Community Centres Management Committee - is responsible for this building, **The Olney Centre**, the newly finished **Olney Community Centre, Winterbottom Way** and the ex-football club, to be called **The Rec Community Centre**, you may know that this is currently undergoing a complete refurbishment and the extension on the side will be the new public conveniences.

The Olney centre has four rooms to let, the WW site has one large hall and the Rec centre will have two halls and a changing facilities that can either be let out separately or as one, and while Laura in the council office manages the ever increasing bookings very well, we are looking at having a booking system, to manage all three sites so potential customers can view on the website any available spaces and invoicing can be linked to the accounting package we currently use.

The **HR Committee** – has very little to do! The staff are all settled and now highly experience in their roles, indeed, we have received many lovely comments from residents and visitors about the landscaping around town, the pitches on the recreation grounds are envied by many visiting teams, this feedback in turn gives staff a sense of pride in their work and becomes a perpetuation cycle of positivity. I would also like to mention the amazing help we get in the cemetery the contractors take such pride in their work, and it certainly shows, it looks so good. My thanks on council's behalf for all the hard work put in by everyone. Inside and outside the office.

There is also very little to report on **Dickens** as it's managed very smoothly by Rob, last year we trialled having everything at the Market Place location, rather than using the north site as well, this year we will see what applications come in and manage this accordingly.

Cllr Whitworth - The **SIDs** continue to be monitored, the location rotated monthly, the results downloaded and shared with TVP; the general trend shows that speeds are within the limit, there is always going to be those who think the law doesn't apply to them, but will continue to support the police in the only way we can.

Johnson's Field The junior play area works in the northwest corner will commence sometime around mid-June (no date as yet as dependent on deliveries of the equipment)

The application for the Certificate of Lawfulness (which will confirm if a formal planning process is required for the teenage area and skate / pump track) is due to close on 18 May. Once received MKCC will confirm the next steps (either timeline for a formal planning application or timeline for further community engagement and construction).

We have been sent 'proposed plans' for the junior and teenage play area including a new footpath, seating and tree planting. These have been produced to inform the certificate of lawfulness process.

No detailed plans have yet been created for a skate or pump track as MKCC are reviewing the consultation responses

As this progresses, MKCC will of course give us updates.

Rob, I believe that you have a report from **Football, Rugby and Netball** –

Olney Netball Club

Since starting in 1991 we have gone from 8 to circa 150 members. 2 senior teams increasing to 3 next season, addition of a back to netball squad along with 7 junior teams ranging from year 4 onwards. Approximately 20% of our junior section are involved in various development/county/development squads in Bucks, Beds and Northants.

We are a recognised club now in the netball world with 8 qualified coaches and a solid committee and development structure that everyone has worked hard on to get to this stage. We even have two tours seniors and juniors arranged this year from our coaches and parents hard work.

Thanks to Olney Town Council for all their support and to Joan Jones who initially helped us with the creation of the first netball court in Olney - that after recent refurbishment is fab and we will be utilising for our summer training.

Olney Rugby Club report to the Annual Meeting of Olney Town Council 2026

The club's vision for 2030 is to be the leading community rugby club in the region, striving to be the most exciting place to play and watch rugby and be an inclusive home for all.

The playing membership of the club continues to grow with over 120 adult players representing the men's and women's teams and a further thirty plus members taking part in touch and walking rugby, the non-contact versions of the game.

It is the junior sections of the club (under 6s to under 18s) has seen significant growth in recent years with 485 registered players in the season just ended. The success of this section has come with some challenges. The club is short of sufficient playing space for all the age groups on a Sunday morning and finding adequate parking spaces during match days is a major issue, particularly when there are town events or the other sports clubs are in action. The club has recently embarked on a fundraising initiative to extend the kitchen to help cater for the increased demands placed on the facilities and clubhouse.

This last season, just ended, has seen both the men's and women's teams retain their place in their respective leagues with both having much improved performances in the second half of the season. It is always pleasing to see so many juniors go on to represent the club at a senior level or indeed play elsewhere.

The coaching and development of the junior age groups has continued to reap success with festival, league and cup wins across the East Midlands and further afield. A recent notable achievement in the history of the club came earlier this month when the Colts won the National Under 18s Cup final, a competition for the best 120 community clubs in the country. This was the third time in four years that Olney have made the finals of this competition.

In 2027 the club will be celebrating 150 years since it was first formed. As then and now, the club continues to depend on volunteers to run the club. To each and everyone of them we say thank you. Without their support there would be no Olney Rugby Club.

Football - At Olney FC we have nearly 500 registered players and 35 teams from U5s to U18 and ladies, mens and vets squads.

The 25/26 season started with a name change as **Olney Town Colts Football Club** became **Olney Football Club**. As our teams now represent a wide and wonderful mix of players, including a fast-growing number of **female players** who bring skill, passion, and energy to the pitch every week, we decided it was time to drop the word "Colts".

On the pitch, we had some great performances over the season, with 5 cup finals and numerous top finishes within the leagues.

We launched the FA's Comets, which is a recreational, pan-disability football programme for disabled boys and girls aged between 5 and 11 years old.

We run these free sessions twice per month to offer a new, flexible and inclusive way of playing, one that's all about playfulness, friendships and having fun.

For our 4th year in a row we achieved 3 star accreditation from the FA.

This is the highest tier of England Football Accredited status for grassroots clubs and is achieved through demonstrating good governance, developing player pathways and being inclusive not just being compliant. 3 star clubs are viewed by the FA as model grassroots clubs and this accreditation puts us in the top 8% in the country.

Looking ahead we hope to continue our growth of youth a girls/ladies teams and also to keep improving the facilities that we provide.

We want to thank every one of our players, parents, coaches, volunteers, sponsors and supporters, for helping to make Olney FC the successful community club that it is.

Cllr Whitworth - The town's **Markets** continue to thrive, there is usually a waiting list for stalls to attend the monthly Farmers market, the Thursday market goes through phases of being well attended and appearing to be quite sparse, but Laura is always on the hunt for new stalls to attract visitors. The Vegan Market will return in June, this was very well received in March so we look forward to their return.

New planters and benches to clarify the situation on the hanging baskets, as I know there is a lot of mis information out there! The hanging baskets are too small, with the hot weather we have experienced of late, they would need to be watered twice a day to get any form of display from them, additionally, the brackets are very old and rusting, becoming a safety hazard. To get new hanging baskets and new brackets, we need permission from MKCC, who will not permit the additional weight on their lamp posts. As it happens, if you look along the High Street, most of the lamp posts are not visible through the wonderful trees we have there now.

As we are looking to have new benches along the High Street, we have asked permission from MKCC to have them installed, along with some planters, which they have approved.

These will give more colour than the hanging baskets and at a different eye level, not competing with the trees, and will be colourful all year round.

The benches will benefit everyone, but we are particularly looking to become an "Age Friendly" town.

Around the time of investigating this project, we were approached by SDC, the builders developing the convent site, as in addition to their S106 obligation, they wanted to put towards a community project, we suggested the benches and planters, and they have very kindly contributed £10k towards them! They are on order; due to arrive mid-June and we just hope that MKCC will be able to install them soon after that.

Upcoming events -

OTC Armed forces tea Tuesday 23rd June here at TOC 3pm

Mayor's Armed Forces Event for RBL Saturday 25th July 2-6pm at The Carlton House

Do we have anyone wishing to ask any questions?

Ward Councillors

Before we finish, last but by no means least - I want to give a BIG thank to all of our fantastic council staff Office, caretaking and groundsman - They all work tirelessly in keeping this council ticking over and serving our community behind the scenes, each and every member of staff is valued and truly appreciated for everything they do.

Can I ask you kindly join me in showing appreciation of their hard work and commitment to the town

Please join us for cheese and wine in the foyer