

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Town Meeting

Minutes Dated 9th May 2014

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held at the King Edward Centre, Railway Lane, Chatteris, on Friday 9th May 2012.

Present: Cllr J Carney (Mayor), Cllr J Burrow (Deputy Mayor), Cllr C Colbert, Cllr C Howes, Cllr P Murphy, Cllr F Newell, Cllr A Melton, Cllr S Rylance and Cllr D Connor. About 40 members of the public/electors were also present.

Cllr Carney welcomed everyone and explained that after the formal part of the meeting there would be a presentation on the achievements of Chatteris Town Council followed by an interactive session to discuss ideas for the future.

1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies had been received from Cllrs L Ashley, J Chambers, R Cross and T Shad.

2) Financial Report

The Financial Officer presented the Financial Report. Copies of the final accounts (**copy attached**) had been distributed to members of the public who were present.

The capital reserves had increased by around £10,490, mostly due to the addition of £7,500 to the All Weather Pitch carpet replacement fund which had been passed to the Town Council from Cromwell College as required under the conditions of a grant from the Football Foundation towards the development of the pitch.

The general fund had increased during the year by around £14,770, mainly as a result of under-spending on pay, grants and use of general contingency. Interest yields on investments had been poor with interest rates down to just 1.4% in 2013/14, which would reduce still further in 2014/15.

3) Report of the Year's Activities

The Clerk presented the Annual Report on the Council's activities for the year ending 30th April 2013 (**copy attached**). She read out the first section of the report which outlined the achievements of the Council over the year.

4) Mayor's Report

Cllr Carney apologised that there was no report from the outgoing Mayor Cllr John Chambers due to unforeseen circumstances.

5) Reports from Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council

Cllr David Connor began by thanking Cllr Alan Melton, who had just stepped down as leader of Fenland District Council, for all he had done for Fenland for the past 33 years and wishing him well with new ventures. Cllr Melton said it had been a pleasure to represent Chatteris for the past 33 years.

Cllr Sandra Rylance then gave the County Council report. She said she and Cllr Connor had held surgeries in Chatteris which had been poorly attended but they had solved the problems brought to them.

Cllr Rylance said she and Cllr Connor had taken an interest in the scheme for an anaerobic digester within the Chatteris parish. They remained concerned about the amount of traffic and mud on the road the scheme would generate but they were working with Highways on the issue. Cllr Rylance hoped there would be time to organise a meeting for all the parties involved before the application was determined. Cllr Rylance said she and Cllr Connor had called a public meeting about the plans but only about 20 people turned up. They could only represent the views of the public if they were informed of those views.

Cllr Rylance said the County Council was still having to find savings and one idea being considered was renting out Shire Hall. She assured those present that she and Cllr Connor would continue to fight for Chatteris and the Fens at County Council level whenever the opportunity arose. Cllr Connor had been instrumental in obtaining funding for improvements to Byall Fen Road while Cllr Rylance's main interest was health and well being. She urged everyone to fill in the questionnaire in the consultation document on proposals to improve older people's healthcare and adult community services.

Cllr Melton gave the Fenland District Council report and began by explaining many of the problems the County Council faced had been also been experienced by Fenland District Council. The Council's budget had been cut from £18million to £12m and was likely to fall to £10m so the Council had been unable to do all it wished to do.

However, FDC was the first authority to have a new Core Strategy, incorporating the new planning acts, approved. That strategy would be the defining document for growth. Cllr Melton warned the only way to get services was through growth and enterprise. He reminded those present that a huge number of homes would be built in Chatteris over the next 20 years and it was necessary to concentrate on what was wanted for the community. When developments were planned the Town Council needed to decide what they wanted by way of planning gain because they were in the driving seat. Those wishes should be known at the pre-application stage.

Cllr Melton said the next government was also signed up to the current government's growth agenda so the Town Council had to ensure it obtained all it could for the community from the planned development.

Cllr Newell praised Cllr Melton explaining FDC had been judged the 8th best council in England under the leadership of Cllr Melton.

6) Reports from Other Organisations

Mr Bill Haggata took the opportunity to give reports on three organisations.

He said Chatteris Community Archive now had over 2,000 photographs of Chatteris and it was easier to download old photographs to the organisation's new website.

Cycleroutes4Chatteris were trying to encourage cycling around Chatteris and would welcome new members.

Another new group was the civic society Chatteris Past, Present and Future, whose aim was to protect the heritage of Chatteris but also to see the town develop. There were concerns about public transport in Chatteris as bus routes did not connect. Once again the group was looking for new members.

Mrs Sue Elam-Fowler gave a report on Chatteris In Bloom and Street Pride. Unfortunately In Bloom had lost one of its founder and most active members, Mr Ormond Connolly who had received an award at the last In Bloom awards for his outstanding contribution. Mr Connolly had been responsible for much of the watering and as a result of his ill health and concerns that the lamp posts might be replaced few hanging baskets had not gone up in the High Street in 2013. The group had a new co-chairman and was now concentrating on sustainable planting and was working hard towards gaining gold. Mrs Elam-Fowler invited volunteers to join the group. On Street Pride she asked anyone looking after the area where they lived to let the group know so they could be provided with refuse bags.

Cllr Howes invited those involved in green projects to apply for funding from the Red Tile Wind Farm Trust. He explained there was little take up of the fund at present and the trustees would be delighted to hear from anyone with a project. Eligible projects included renewable energy, use of re-cycled materials, projects encouraging people to take exercise, etc.

Mr Chris Savill, Chairman of the Christmas Lights Committee, thanked the Council for their support over the years and invited anyone able to help put up the lights to come forward. Mrs Sharon Selman, Chairman of the Midsummer Festival, committee also appealed for help.

7) Questions from the Public

The Mayor invited questions from the public and the following were put forward:

*The Clerk was asked to expand on the campaign for road improvements in Wenny Road and the Community Governance Review. She outlined the problems in Wenny Road, the

solutions which were being considered and said £22,000 had been set aside for a scheme. She also explained why a Community Governance Review had been requested – to iron out the electoral inequalities which would result from a change to electoral wards.

*The population of Chatteris was queried – officially it was just over 10,000 but many thought it was over 12,000.

*Cllr Connor took delivery of a petition calling for adult education classes at Cromwell Community College, a new swimming pool and more frequent bus services and more routes. He suggested if the anaerobic digester went ahead the developer should pay towards a swimming pool. Cllr Rylance said if the opportunity arose they would press for more buses through the Transport Strategy but she warned the area was the poor relation when it came to highways projects; there were problems just getting potholes filled.

*On the anaerobic digester Mrs Julie Smith pointed out the majority of people were most concerned about the amount of traffic it would generate on poorly maintained roads. The Mayor hoped another public meeting would be organised to consider that issue.

*The problem with developers failing to fulfil all their planning conditions was raised by Mr Ian Mason; in particular their failure to bring roads up to adoptable standard. Cllr Colbert said it was often down to the drafting of planning permissions which later could not be enforced. It was suggested when the development to the south of the town went ahead there should be an insistence that roads should be in place and adopted before building work began.

*Another example of a planning condition which could not be enforced was raised, the parking space in St Francis Drive which should have been for the use of residents of New Road but was usually occupied by St Francis Drive residents' cars.

*Other traffic problems were also raised – yellow lines which were not legally enforceable because of a lack of time plates and faded lines; parking on pavements and the apparent lack of any enforcement of parking restrictions. Councillors pointed out these were police problems and urged members of the public to attend the Neighbourhood Forum meetings when police priorities were set.

*Mr Bill Haggata called for buses from Chatteris to link in with the increased number of trains stopping in Manea.

*Questions were asked about the development of the Old Railway Line footpath and Little Acre Fen. The Mayor explained the plan was to further develop Little Acre Fen as a pocket park. He said following a successful guided walk along the Old Railway Line he had hoped to form a friends group to develop the footpath but no-one had come forward. Mrs Heather Wicks offered to form a group while Mrs Davies asked about the possibility of creating a cycle route along the footpath.

*Another lady said her dogs had been taken ill after eating drugs they found along the Old Railway Line. She also spoke about the problems with litter and drugs at Little Acre Fen. The Mayor said information about the problems had been passed to the police who had stated they were collecting information against suspects. A resident of Huntingdon Road reported drug dealing in the Old Railway Line car park and problems with motorcycles using the footpath. Residents were once again urged to take the problems to the next Neighbourhood Forum meeting as a failure to raise the issues would lead to the police setting their own priorities.

8) Fun Quiz

Deputy Mayor Cllr James Burrow began the informal part of the evening by outlining some of the differences the Town Council had made in the town. He said it was now a matter of deciding what should happen next and the Council needed the views of residents as it was a partnership. The Council needed to know what was important to the community as it was planning to produce a new town plan.

The audience was then invited to take part in a short quiz which highlighted the responsibilities of the Town Council.

9) Vox Pop Film

Cllr Burrow then introduced a short film produced after he and Cllr Howes had spoken to local residents and asked them three questions:

- 1 What is the best thing about Chatteris?
- 2 What could be better/what would you improve?
- 3 If you had a magic wand what 1 thing would you change?

He thanked those people who had gone in front of the camera and said the most consistent comment was that the best thing about Chatteris was the sense of community.

10) Your Views of Chatteris & How to Improve the Town

Members of the audience were asked to fill in a sheet which asked the same three questions, gave them the opportunity to add another comment and asked if they would be interested in being involved in the development of a Town Plan. Cllr Burrow explained this was just the start of engaging with the public and views would be captured and fed back.

Cllr Burrow then said there were some fantastic organisations making a real difference in the community and he said if anyone could help by giving some of their time this was a real opportunity to make a difference.

He ended with a quote from Bear Grylls: "If like-minded people get together for the common good great things can be achieved."

The Mayor brought the meeting to a close by also encouraging residents to be involved in the town plan. He warned it would probably take 18 – 24 months to complete but said everyone needed to work together to get what was needed in Chatteris.

He thanked everyone for attending and for their input and invited them to stay for refreshments.