



Chatteris Town Council

Annual Report

Year Ending 30th April 2015

Unfortunately the past year was over-shadowed by Supermarket-gate, a series of unfortunate events which resulted in the town being left with two empty shops and no major supermarket.

Tesco's decision not to open its £22 million store in Chatteris was met with anger and dismay by the town's residents and brought the town to national attention. The situation became more critical with Co-op's decision to shut its store and sell the site to Aldi, who then announced they would not be opening until early 2016. The Town Council unfortunately has no powers to insist a supermarket is opened but will continue to encourage Aldi's to open as soon as possible and Tesco's to find a new tenant for the site.

On a more positive note the Council began the process of drawing up a new Town Plan by organising a well-attended public meeting. The new plan should be community-led and it is hoped local residents will agree to form a group to take the project forward.

The Midsummer Festival was once again a great success despite some atrocious weather, particularly on the Sunday. Everything went ahead as planned although the Party in the Park became a party in the marquee and the It's a Knockout competitors appeared to have swum through a river of mud by the time they reached the end. Spirits remained high and let's hope that the theme of this year's Festival – Mardi Gras – will encourage the sun to shine.

During the year the Council:

- a) Was successful in its bid to banish two small electoral wards created after the last electoral review of Fenland District Council by the Boundary Commission.

- b) Fought plans for an anaerobic digester. Unfortunately the digester was granted planning permission but the Council continued to raise the issue of dangerous road conditions around the site.
- c) Unveiled the refurbished town sign, thanks to local artists Richard Savage and Kelvin Palmer.
- d) Vehemently opposed the felling of a Plane tree at Ash Grove and then fought to get a replacement tree – a battle which is still on-going.
- e) Attempted to persuade Fenland District Council to adopt a replacement tree policy and opposed the felling of all trees unless absolutely necessary.
- f) Worked with the County Council to improve adult education opportunities in the town.
- g) Appointed a new Town Crier – Mr Lawrence Weetman.
- h) Wrote in favour of retaining March Recycling Centre.
- i) Agreed to continue helping with the funding of the CCTV cameras in the town.
- j) Organised and funded another very successful series of Summer Fun shows for children.
- k) Gave grants and financial aid to many voluntary organisations including Christmas Lights, In Bloom and the Museum.
- l) Put forward ideas for the road safety scheme in Wenny Road and applied, unsuccessfully, for funding for a speed reduction scheme along Fenland Way.
- m) Opposed plans for the additional use of the motox track at Mepal.
- n) Put forward ideas for infrastructure requirements in the town for inclusion in a document to go out to developers.
- o) Helped to prepare a bid for WREN funding for a new skate park at Wenny Recreation Ground.
- p) Submitted views on the future of secondary school provision in Chatteris by arguing projected pupil figures were far too low.
- q) Organised a successful annual town meeting which included a film about residents' views of Chatteris.
- r) Took part in the electoral review of Cambridgeshire County Council consultation by arguing that all electors in Chatteris should be represented by one county councillor.
- s) Organised and hosted Neighbourhood Forum meetings.
- t) Responded to a consultation about possible cuts in public transport.
- u) Took up the case of Fen View residents arguing they should be allowed to continue using a parking area near their homes.
- v) Councillors attended a meeting about business rates in the town organised by the MP.
- w) Put forward ideas about the running of the gym.
- x) Argued that developers should be required to bring roads on new estates up to an adoptable standard.
- y) Received monthly reports and updates from Fenland District Council.
- z) Commissioned an architect to look at a scheme to install old gas lamps outside the Council Chambers and museum.

Speakers and guests at Town Council and working group meetings included:

Chief Inspector Mike Hills, Sgt Martin Monger and PCSO Sam Dyer on policing issues.
Mr John Merryweather on environmental health issues.
Mr Ian Trafford & Ms Elisabeth Haines on secondary education provision.
Mr Steve Lucas on the Princes Trust programme.
Mr Phil Hughes, of FDC, on Chatteris gym.
Ms Rachael Brown, of ACRE, on a new town plan.
Mrs Lynsi Hayward-Smith and Ms Jane Shardlow on adult education in Chatteris.
Councillor Sandra Rylance on County Council issues.

The Council

Cllr James Carney was elected Mayor in May and has represented the council and the town at a number of events during the year. In February he held a successful ball in aid of charity. Cllr James Burrow was elected Deputy Mayor and has represented Cllr Carney at events on occasions.

During the year Cllr Bill Haggata was co-opted on to the Council to fill a vacancy and sadly at the end of the year Cllr Terry Shad, a hard-working councillor and chairman of the Planning Working Group, died after a short illness.

Shown below is the number of full meetings of the Council members attended during the year (with the total number of full meetings they were eligible to attend in brackets). Most members also attended monthly meetings of the planning or the leisure working groups and several attended meetings of both groups. Councillors also represented the Council on numerous outside bodies.

L Ashley	10 (12)	J Burrow	6 (12)
J Carney	11 (12)	J Chambers	1 (12)
C Colbert	6 (12)	R Cross	5 (12)
W Haggata	6 (6)	C Howes	10 (12)
P Murphy	9 (12)	F Newell	12 (12)
M Petrou	0 (5)	T Shad	10 (12)
I Taylor	9 (12)		

For contact details for the new council contact the Town Clerk Mrs Joanna Melton on 01354 695166, e-mail chatteriscouncil@btconnect.com or visit the Council's website www.chatteristowncouncil.info

The Town Council continues to meet on the first Tuesday of the month and the first 15 minutes are an open forum for members of the public to raise issues. This section of the meeting has become increasingly popular and every open forum was well attended with a wide range of issues raised including:

Parking issues in East Park Street, York Road and at the junction of East Park Street and Wood Street and cars travelling the wrong way down Church Lane;
The lack of a supermarket in the town;
The blocking off of the parking area at Fen View;
Plans for a wood turbine;
Cycleways around the town;
Adoption of the Woodlands estate;
Gating off Topham's Yard;
Maintenance of flower beds;
Felling of the plane tree at Ash Grove;
"Closure" of the police station;
Plans for a fun run;
Plans for the Museum;
State of the roads around the anaerobic digester site;
Lack of progress on adult education in Chatteris;
The state of the Larham Way play area;
A community storage point;
A call for a dedicated arts centre in the town.

The Council's planning working group made recommendations to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council on 106 new and revised planning applications. The Leisure working group discussed plans for a new skate park, arrangements for the annual town meeting and the town plan meeting, the running of the gym, adult education in the town and the gas lamps project.

Three part-time members of staff are employed by the Council – the Clerk, the Financial Officer and the gardener. The Financial Officer prepared the annual return (which was passed without comment by the Internal and External auditors), the budget, advised on the precept, invested the Council's funds, dealt with grant applications and carried out a financial review. The gardener maintained the allotments and other open spaces owned by the Council (including the Old Railway Line footpath) and assisted FDC in the maintenance of play areas.