

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Annual Town Meeting

Minutes Dated 20th May 2016

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held at the King Edward Centre, Railway Lane, Chatteris, on Friday 20th May 2016.

Present: Cllr W Haggata (Mayor), Cllr J Carney (Deputy Mayor), Cllr L Ashley, Cllr J Burrow, Cllr A Hay, Cllr P Murphy, Cllr J Smith and Cllr L Templeman.
About 50 members of the public/electors were also present.

The Mayor Cllr Bill Haggata welcomed everyone to the meeting and began by mentioning two councillors who had sadly passed away since the last Town meeting, Cllrs Terry Shad and Sandra Rylance. He then thanked the Mayor and Deputy Mayor for the past 12 months, Cllrs James Carney and James Burrow.

1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Town Councillors A Carney, F Newell, I Taylor and K Patterson, County Councillor R Mandley and District Councillor D Green.

2) Financial Report

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

Total balances at the end of the year showed an increase of around **£37,200**. The main reasons for this were:

Annual contribution from Cromwell Community College to the All Weather Pitch Replacement Fund	£9,000
Investment Interest	£1,490
Contribution from Solar Farm	£10,000
Remaining balance of Tesco Fund (to be claimed)	£4,660
Unspent General Contingency Budget	£2,100
Budget Savings (including elections, premises & JFHI)	£9,950

The Financial Officer invited questions about the finances - there were none - and said the unaudited annual return was available to view on noticeboards and on the Council's website.

3) Report of the Year's Activities

The Clerk had written a report of the Council's activities throughout the last year (**copy attached**) which had also been distributed to those present.

She said the past year had been far better than the previous year as projects had come to fruition, in particular Aldi's had opened and the Tesco community fund had been distributed with many groups benefitting, some of whom would be giving a short talk later in the evening.

The Town Council had the foresight to agree to pay to keep the street lights on at night unlike councils in neighbouring towns who were now regretting their decision not to keep the lights on. Chatteris Town Councillors had been concerned for the safety of residents not only late at night but also those who had to set out early in the morning, such as carers.

4) Mayor's Report

Cllr Carney presented a report of his year as Mayor (**copy attached**). Among the highlights was meeting the Deputy Mayor of the Belgian city of Ypres, and exchanging gifts, during an RBL trip to the Flanders battlefields, lighting the town's beacon to mark special occasions and holding charity fund raising events. Cllr Carney also outlined the many events he had attended in neighbouring towns representing Chatteris.

5) Reports from Cambridgeshire County Council & Fenland District Council

Unfortunately there was no report from the County Councillors although Cllr Mandley had asked to be informed of any issues raised and said he would follow up any problems which involved the County Council.

Cllr Peter Murphy presented the District Council report as follows:

'Things have settled down after the first year of the new council with two large pieces of work being undertaken, which seem to have taken an extraordinary amount of time.

The largest is the Comprehensive Spending Review which started at the end of last year, and is still ongoing. The general public were asked where they would like cuts or savings to be made as the District Council has to save £2.3 million over the next 3 years. Some of the smaller items have been instigated but with the larger items business cases are being developed to see if they are a viable proposition or they have been dismissed altogether.

The second piece of work is Devolution, which has had several debates during the year about George Osborn and the Government's idea of joining Cambridgeshire with Norfolk and Suffolk and being run by an elected Mayor. (Cllr Murphy pointed out if you couldn't get a committee of 12 people to agree, what was the chance of three counties agreeing?) Cllr Murphy said the idea had met quite a lot of opposition and he did not believe it would happen. He thought the Government would change its mind and do something involving Cambridgeshire and Peterborough.

While all this was going on the day job of running all aspects of the District Council – including leisure, environment, tourism, planning, economy, finance, licensing and corporate governance – was carrying on as normal.

Cllr Murphy said at some time in the year every part of the organisation of the District Council had to be interviewed by the Overview and Scrutiny Committee to make sure everything was running smoothly.

Finally all District Councillors had had to embrace the 21st century by purchasing their own laptops or tablets as the Council had gone paperless. This had caused a few headaches and entertaining moments!

6) Questions from the Public

Cllr Haggata invited questions from the public but there were no questions.

7) Presentations by Organisations in the Town & Putting Chatteris on the Map

Cllr Burrow introduced the presentations by stating he and all councillors were proud of Chatteris but it did not always get what it deserved. The meeting would soon hear some great examples of what could be achieved and had been achieved when the community worked together.

In 2014 the annual town meeting looked back at achievements but the Council realised it was also important to decide where it was going and there was a need to better engage with the community. As a result a group of dedicated volunteers had stepped forward – the community plan team – and they were now working on a new town plan. They had been busy recently developing a questionnaire which would give the community an opportunity to say what was important to them.

Cllr Burrow urged people to fill in the questionnaire pointing out that by working together “we really can put Chatteris on the Map”. He then handed over to Cllr Carney for the PowerPoint presentation: ‘Putting Chatteris on the Map’.

Cllr Carney ran through what had been achieved by the Council since last April:

The launch and establishment of the Community Plan Team;

The decision to keep the street lights on;

The administration and distribution of the £10K Tesco community fund to various community groups;

Support for the establishment of the new skatepark at Wenny Recreation Ground;

The search for and receipt of funding for improvements to Little Acre Fen, the Old Railway Line and the gas lamps project;

Financial Support for the acclaimed Ancient Human Civilisation exhibition at the museum;

The return of Chatteris to a single County Council ward.

He also ran through previous CTC achievements including:

Playing a leading role in the development of the KEC to a successful community centre;

Part funding of the gym and the All Weather Pitch;
The purchase of the Old Railway Line and Little Acre Fen for public use;
Help in keeping the sorting office open;
The first town in Fenland to install CCTV;
Maintenance of an ongoing dialogue to encourage Aldi to open.

Cllr Carney ran through the history of the Tesco Community Fund, from the decision of Tesco's not to open to the distribution of the money to over 20 different organisations. He then opened the floor to local organisations who had benefitted from grants.

Healthy Fenland: The first presentation was by Ms Julie Jeffryes, a community development officer with Care Network Cambridgeshire, who outlined a new project called Healthy Fenland. The project's remit was to support anyone interested in starting a community group in Chatteris as long as it had a healthy angle. However, the health brief was very loose and any group would simply have to improve someone's physical or mental health or reduce social isolation. An allotment group, a knit and natter group or just a coffee morning could qualify if they brought the community together. Ms Jeffryes explained the pot of funding was for three years and she would help a group apply for the start-up funding and then look for funding elsewhere to make sure the group was sustainable. The scheme would eventually be Fenland-wide but was being launched in Chatteris.

Christmas Lights: Chairman of Chatteris Christmas Lights, Mr Chris Savill, gave a presentation on the history of the Christmas Lights in Chatteris, accompanied by photographs of the lighting display and the volunteers who had helped to put up the lights over the years. Mr Savill explained how the group spent the money it raised and was given and appealed for new volunteers to help put up the lights as there were only 8 people currently responsible for putting up the displays. Cllr Burrow commented that the Christmas Lights were a fantastic example of putting Chatteris on the Map.

Chatteris In Bloom: Mr Carl Harrison, Chairman of Chatteris In Bloom, said the group was celebrating its 10th anniversary. He also had photographs to illustrate his talk on how the group had developed over the years, the work volunteers carried out, how the money was spent and the problems being faced with Council budget cuts. He also appealed for people to join the group, particularly for people to help run the Little Bloomers gardening club for children which was now at capacity. Looking to the future Mr Harrison said a massive new feature would be unveiled in the town the following day in memory of Mr Ormond Connolly, who had put in so much effort for the group, and the group was hoping to improve its winter displays. Mr Martin Johnson, of Stainless Metalcraft, offered to provide gardening tools for the children and was thanked for the company's great input during the year.

Chatteris Town Football Club: Mr Lester Kent, a member of the club's management committee, said two years ago the club had been in trouble. The management was struggling with a dilapidated building and financial problems and the club was in danger of closure.

Since then the finances had improved thanks to fund raising, grants from the Town Council and Tesco's and a reduction in business rates. He praised all those who had helped to turn the club around. With Ashley Taylor managing, the first team had won three cups for the first time in its history and would be playing in a higher league next year. The first match of the season had attracted 170 spectators. At present there were five adults' teams and one youth team but the plan was for more youth teams and a ladies team. Sport England had agreed to give a grant of £75,000 towards refurbishing the changing rooms and club room and Cambs FA had nominated the club for the 1966 fund. Mr Kent presented the Council with a photo of the cup winning team.

Chatteris Foxes Netball Club: Ms Lucy Peyton, Chairman and Head Coach, said in 2008 there was no netball club in Chatteris but Mr Johnson gave her the confidence to launch a netball club in the town. The club now ran 8 teams which had been nominated for many awards and had won the title of Outstanding Club at a regional awards ceremony. Money from the Tesco fund had helped the club to train three more coaches which meant it now had the capacity to take 36 more juniors.

Chatteris Community Plan Team: Mr Andy Smith, chairman of the team, explained they were trying to develop a living and growing plan. As an enabling organisation the Town Council had given the team financial support and a meeting place. Mr Smith stressed the team was not part of the Town Council. The team was trying to draw up a plan which could influence where Section 106 money was spent. Initially postcards were issued asking what was good and what was bad about living in Chatteris. Top of the list of good things was the sense of community while top of the bad was the lack of shops and lack of public transport. Members of the group had also spoken to children about how they saw the town developing. The main questionnaire would be going out to every household in Chatteris and the results would help the team to produce a plan.

Cllr Carney then ran through ongoing schemes supported by the Town Council including the Midsummer Festival, the Summer Reading Challenge at the library, Summer Fun, Chatteris In Bloom, Chatteris Christmas Lights, Chatteris Museum and the King Edward Centre.

Current and future challenges included:

The Tithe Barn development – infrastructure needs;

The Wenny Road development;

The Tesco site;

The promotion of Chatteris and the need to encourage new business development and investment.

Cllr Carney said the community plan was vital and he encouraged everyone to complete the questionnaire and to encourage others to do likewise.

Mayor: New Mayor Cllr Haggata said it was great to hear from so many groups full of volunteers who catered for so many needs. He was keen to harness the energy to push Chatteris forward and spoke of the need to promote the town. With so much going on, he said he was proud to be part of the community.

Looking to the future Cllr Haggata spoke of the need to encourage businesses into Chatteris. He said he hoped there would be progress on the Tesco store site and he looked forward to the Post Office opening again after the improvement works. Cllr Haggata spoke of the need to press for more funding for Chatteris and the need “to let Cambridgeshire and Fenland Councils know where we are”.

He was also keen to see improved public transport and encouraged people to use the buses since this would help to make the case for more bus services. He also said he wished to see improved cycleways around the town and praised the new footpath and cycleway around Wenny Recreation Ground.

Cllr Haggata said Chatteris was ideally located within easy access of three cities and people should be encouraged to move to the town as this would help to provide more facilities and better transport links. The Council had three objectives – Chatteris, Chatteris and Chatteris!

Street Lights: Mr Savill asked those present to be aware that there were plans to replace the streetlights in the centre of the town. He said provisional drawings showed lampposts vital to the Christmas Lights display being removed and replaced by lampposts without the facilities to connect the Christmas Lights (some lampposts would disappear altogether). In addition the proposal was to change the street lights in July and August when In Bloom would have their hanging baskets attached. Mr Savill said the existing lampposts were only installed in 2002.

Cllr Haggata assured Mr Savill that the Town Council had already objected to the plans to replace the lights and County Councillor Mandley was also taking up the issue. He said the Town Council appreciated what the Christmas Lights and In Bloom did in Chatteris. Mrs Sue Elam said the lights were put in as part of the regeneration scheme to compliment the street furniture and were specially reinforced to take the Christmas lights and brackets, which had been used for the hanging baskets.

Mr Harrison said even if the new lampposts could be used for the lights and baskets who would pay for the new brackets which would be required. It was agreed that the replacement scheme would be a disaster.

At the close of the meeting those present were invited to stay and enjoy refreshments.