

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019

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Minutes of an extra ordinary meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2019 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

**Present:** Councillors W Haggata (Mayor), J Carney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, I Benney, A Hay, F Newell, and J Smith.

### **212) To Accept Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs K Patterson and A Carney.

### **213) Declarations of Interest & Dispensations to Speak and Vote on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items**

There were no declarations of interest.

### **214) To Agree a Response to Barclays Bank's Closure Letter**

The meeting had been called by the Mayor to consider a response to a letter from Barclays Bank informing the Council that they would be closing their Chatteris branch on May 10<sup>th</sup> 2019. The Mayor said it was very likely the town would have to accept the inevitable but he believed the Council should write and explain how the loss of the town's last bank would impact on the people of Chatteris.

Barclays' letter asked Councillors what would be the biggest impact of the closure on the local community and customers of the branch and what alternative ways of banking should be provided to help customers and the community adapt to the change.

There had been universal condemnation of Barclays decision to close the last bank in Chatteris with most councillors expressing, via email, disappointment and anger. There had also been a lengthy email from a local shopkeeper pointing out the adverse effect of the closure on the elderly, small shopkeepers and businesses and local community groups.

The following points were expressed by councillors:

- i) The Woolwich and Nationwide building societies and Lloyds bank had all been closed in a short space of time.
- ii) The Council is convinced Barclays have failed to do market research into the impact of the closure of the bank on the town.
- iii) Had Barclays not reduced the days the branch was open they might have retained customers.
- iv) The Post Office does not have the capacity to take on all the extra banking and has nowhere private for people to discuss any issues.

- v) If Barclays had carried out some marketing in the town following the closure of Lloyds they could have attracted new customers but they failed to take advantage of Lloyds closing
- vi) How will Barclays' customers unable to drive be able to seek advice from the bank?
- vii) Chatteris is geographically isolated. Public transport is very poor making it very difficult for those who do not drive to access banks in other towns. With the current bus timetable it would take people many hours to visit a bank in a neighbouring town
- viii) The town has a high percentage of elderly people many of whom do not use computers and are not able to access on-line banking, therefore they will be seriously disadvantaged.
- ix) Barclays have failed to take into account the fact that Chatteris is a growing town. Chatteris always seems to be the poor relation to March and Wisbech.
- x) The Town Council is always trying to promote Chatteris as a good place to live and the lack of a bank will be a serious disadvantage.
- xi) Closure of the bank will have a serious impact on the many small shops and businesses in the town. Many will be unable to access a bank without closing up or taking time out to travel to another town. Closure of the bank represents a tax on rural living.
- xii) The Town and District Councils are working hard to try and attract more businesses to the town but this will be difficult when it is noted the town does not have a bank.
- xiii) Chatteris prides itself on a strong community spirit and has many community groups providing services which in other towns are provided by the statutory authorities. Barclays have always provided a good service for community banking and as a result many community groups have accounts with the bank. They will be seriously inconvenienced, for example by the loss of the ability to bank subs, etc.
- xiv) There used to be a gentleman's agreement between the banks that a town would not be left without a bank but that appears to have disappeared?
- xv) The banks could work together to ensure there is coverage in the town – why not all share one building? Or why not move to a smaller premises?
- xvi) The loss of one of the major cashpoints in the town will be keenly felt.
- xvii) Could Barclays create a banking hall (accessible at all times) with a cash machine and a machine giving people and businesses a secure means of depositing money/takings?
- xviii) Could Barclays hire one of the many community rooms or the library to give those unfamiliar with on-line and telephone banking advice and instruction on how to use those services.

xix) Could Barclays provide a mobile banking service?

xx) Would Barclays fund community transport to take customers to other branches?

Councillor Benney requested the Council also write to the Postmaster and invite him to attend a Council meeting to explain what he could do to help the community when Barclays closes. This was agreed.