

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Notes from the remote Briefing Session that replaced the public council meeting due to be held on 7th April 2020. The meeting was cancelled due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Members were briefed on Council matters and asked to make decisions on urgent matters by e-mail. Those decisions will be ratified at the first public meeting of the Council.

All councillors were sent hard copies of most of the briefing papers and the minutes with additional briefing papers supplied by email on the 7th April.

The following councillors submitted responses: Cllrs L Ashley (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), J Carney, A Charrier, A Gowler, W Haggata, A Hay, F Newell and J Smith. Cllr Murphy agreed the minutes and payments by text.

1) Declarations of Interest & Dispensations to Speak and Vote on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items

Cllrs Benney & Hay declared an interest in all planning matters as members of Fenland District Council's planning committee.

2) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd March 2020 were agreed as a correct record to allow their publication on the Council's website.

3) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 229) Connections Bus: A termly report from the Connections Bus Project had been received (report was attached). The project had now been suspended due to government guidelines relating to the Coronavirus. The Clerk had subsequently received an email stating the majority of staff were now on furlough until such time as they could recommence face-to-face work. They continued to offer advice via their Facebook page and would respond to direct queries from young people as soon as possible.

Min 236) New Bus Service: After consultation with FACT it had been agreed to postpone the launch of the new bus service to Peterborough until the Coronavirus crisis was over. Advertising for the service had also been postponed.

Min 243) ACV: Notification had been received from Fenland District Council that the nomination for Wenny Road Meadow to become an Asset of Community Value had been rejected and, as per the Council's policy, it would be placed on the unsuccessful community asset list. Cllr Gowler pointed out that the decision notice on the ACV stated that 'No part of the site has ever been a public amenity or public leisure facility. Furthermore the Owners felt that it would be unnecessarily officious to take active steps against dog walkers when building development was imminent.

The Owners continue to manage the land, to repair fences and gates. In the past they have had to deal with fly-grazing, use by motorbikes and quad bikes including involving the Police when necessary. The Nominators have not demonstrated capacity, budget nor willingness to carry out this work.'

The report was noted.

4) Police Matters

The following information has been received from the police in the past month:

Local Police

Please see attached the confidential report from Sgt Richard Lugg.

Neighbourhood Alerts

Many Dates in March/April: PCSO Jonathan Hall submitted virtually daily reports on his patrols in March, Chatteris and the villages.

5& 20/3/20: Information from Neighbourhood Watch on protecting the isolated and vulnerable during the Covid 19 Outbreak and how NW has responded.

13/3/20: Appeal for information about masked men breaking in to a home in Doddington.

20/3/20: Notification of an operation to tackle a rise in knife crime.

20/3/20: Information on how to detect and avoid Coronavirus related scams following a 400% increase in Coronavirus-related fraud reports.

24/3/20: Message from the Chief Constable Nick Dean asking everyone to adhere to the measures put in place by the Prime Minister.

26/3/20: Notification that a number of Covid 19 phishing emails have been reported to Action Fraud.

3/4/20: Notification of the publication of a special edition of the Neighbourhood Watch E-newsletter.

6/4/20: Message from the Chief Constable, Nick Dean, including a plea for residents to stay at home.

7/4/20: Notification that a cannabis factory was discovered in March.

The report was noted.

5) Councils' Responses to Coronavirus Pandemic

Councillors received the following information which was current as of the 7th April 2020. The Clerk warned she was receiving daily updates and advice.

'Chatteris Town Council

The information letter giving telephone numbers of those who can help the elderly with shopping, deliveries of food, takeaways, deliveries of prescriptions, etc. went out to over 630 people aged 76 and over. (The list of recipients was supplied by Fenland District Council.)

On the whole the letter was well received with those unable to access the internet particularly grateful for the information.

The Council also agreed to fund the sterling work being undertaken by Chatteris Community Car Scheme in collecting and delivering prescriptions and helping with shopping for elderly

and vulnerable residents. The Council has already given a £600 grant which will cover the cost of collecting and delivering 200 prescriptions and the organiser has been advised he can put in a further request if the pandemic continues and the funding pot runs dry. The Council has also supplied the group with bottles of hand sanitiser. Judging by the positive comments on Facebook the Council's help has been appreciated.

The Clerk said she was aiming to send out a press release giving information about the Council's work and she would include an offer to send on the letter to any elderly or vulnerable person who wished to receive a copy.

Fenland District Council

The Clerk had already forwarded a press release from Fenland District Council stating the Council would be keeping its Covid-19 response hub open over the Easter Bank Holidays. The telephone number for the hub was 654321 and the email address covid19@fenland.gov.uk

The response hub brought together a network of Council, community and voluntary efforts to support Fenland's most vulnerable residents during the pandemic.

Cambridgeshire County Council

The Clerk reported there was a Countywide Hub which could be contacted via: the website www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/coronavirus; email communitycv@cambridgeshire.gov.uk or on 0345 045 5219

The aim of the hub was to co-ordinate the distribution of support to the Shielded Group of residents who were at the highest risk, to support the sustainability of critical public services and to make best use of available resources.'

Updates: Members had also been sent the latest FDC, CCTV and Section 106 Updates.

6) End of Year Balance Sheet & Bank Reconciliation

1] Introduction

Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to recommend approval of the Annual Return for 2019/20. However due to the Covid-19 Virus the External Auditors had not yet published any timelines for completion of the 2019/20 Accounts or indeed provided the documents to complete the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR). Despite this the Financial Officer advised members that she had balanced the final accounts and drafted the Accounting Statement for 2019/20 in preparation for when the paperwork was finally received.

The draft Accounting Statement (Section 2) of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR 2019/20) was presented to Members for information only as it could not be considered and approved before approving the Annual Governance Statement.

2] Type of Audit

As neither the total income nor the total expenditure for 2019/20 exceeded £200,000 the Financial Officer concluded the Council's accounts for 2019/20 should attract a 'Basic' audit.

3] Annual Governance

Previously it had been stipulated that the Annual Governance Statement needed to be considered and approved in advance of the Accounting Statements. As the AGAR documents had not been received this could not be considered for approval, therefore the draft Accounting Statement could not be approved and was attached for information only.

4] Statement of Accounts

a] The detailed Statement of Accounts was **attached (Balance Sheet)**.

b] Members were advised that the **Reserves & Holding Accounts** had increased to £214,215.46 through revenue contributions of £2,000 to the CCTV Reserve, £500.00 to the Night Time Lighting Fund, £4,136.60 to LHI & Highways holding account, accrued investment interest for the year of £1931.78, £1,000 into Tree works fund and payment deductions of £923.75 from the Summer Festival Holding account to pay towards the summer festival expenses, £500 from Little Acre towards the cost of plants, etc. £2,000 from Recreation & Open Spaces for Little Acre mound and additional works.

c] The **General Fund** balance decreased by £11,086. The reasons for this were shown in the document attached Analysis of the General fund, expressed as a comparison with the original Budget for 2019/20.

5] Members had before them a copy of the 2019/20 year-end bank reconciliation statement along with bank statements, general ledger income & expenditure sheets.

6] Internal Auditor's Report

The Internal Auditor's Report would be submitted for approval once the External Auditors released dates and documents for completion.

7] It was **RESOLVED** that: -

[i] The Draft Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR) (be noted).

[ii] The detailed accounts, Bank Reconciliation and analyses of the Annual Return for 2019/20, as submitted, be noted and approved.

[iii] The report be noted and approved.

7) Payment of Accounts

It was **RESOLVED** that the payment of the following accounts be noted and approved: -

Payments up to and including 31st March 2020: -

Barclays Bank	Bank Charges	6.50
British Gas	Electricity Bill	296.50
British Gas	Gas Bill	618.82
Clerk	Reim. Rat Bait for allotments	53.84
Rose Fire & Security	Service of fire alarm system	210.00
Camguard Fire & Security	2020/21 Service agreement of the security alarm	345.60
PC OK	Setting up laptop and emails for working from home F/O	50.00
Cllr Smith	Reim. plants for Little Acre Pocket Park	50.40
Clerk	Mileage re Rat poison course	20.40
One Com	March Phone bill	76.19
E Moore	Reimbursed Condolence books & additional loose leafs	160.50
The Connections Bus	Six bus visits	1,200.00
Viking	Stationery order	41.95
Viking	Stationery order	688.84
R J Warren	Gardening service & additional clearance work	991.50
Total		4,811.04

Payments for April 2020: -

Due to the Covid-19 crisis Members agreed to pay a grant of £625.00 to the Chatteris Community Car Scheme towards the costs of petrol and hand sanitiser for volunteers who were providing a delivery/collection service for vulnerable residents who were house bound.

Financial Officer	Payroll April 2020	1,067.88
Clerk	Payroll April 2020	1,546.77
Pension Fund	Payroll April 2020	878.67
HMRC	Payroll April 2020	608.60
Zen Internet	Website Apr-May	10.79
Anglia Stairlifts	Service contract for 20/21	300.00
Came & Company	Annual Council Insurance	1,816.10
David J Richards Ltd	Printing of photos	19.58
Chatteris Community Car Scheme	Covid-19 (Grant re volunteers' delivery/collection service for residents)	600.00
Clerk	Reim. hand gel Chatteris Car scheme	25.00
Came & Company	Museum insurance paid from Museum grant budget	966.42
Total		7,839.81

8) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

1) The Financial Officer reminded members that the Councils current policy was to consider grant applications at the April, July, October and January meetings each year. Budget limitations meant that grants given by the Council were an expression of support for an organisation and were not at a level where, on their own they could sustain a group's financial viability.

2) The approved budget for grants in **2020/21 was £3,500**

There were separate approved budgets set in 2020/21 for the following: -

Chatteris King Edward Centre -Staffing Contribution	3,000
Chatteris Museum Trust	4,500
Chatteris Christmas Lights Committee	9,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom	3,000

Chatteris Youth Service provision	4,200
Chatteris Town in Bloom Paid Watering service	2,000
Summer Children's Fun	1,350
Connections Bus	5,400

3) Applications for consideration by Members were scheduled, with recommendations in **Appendix A**.

There were no late applications received.

Organisation	Comments	Grant
Citizen Advice Rural Cambs	Grant towards running costs	Waiting on info

Members were advised that the Financial Officer had requested figures and information regarding how many residents in Chatteris were seen by the CARC and also if CARC would be looking to set up a surgery in Chatteris so the residents didn't have to travel out of the Town to receive this service. She asked CARC for the costs of providing this service and what was required.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had not received this information to date and therefore could not recommend a grant for Members' consideration and approval at this moment in time.

Summer Reading Challenge.	Summer Reading Scheme in Library	£350.00
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It was **resolved** to pay the grant of £350 for the Summer Reading Challenge.

Two members queried the level of grant paid to the Museum but the Financial Officer explained the grant had been agreed when the budget for 2020/21 was agreed.

9) Membership of CAPALC

Members had received a copy of a letter from the Chairman of CAPALC, Mr Henry Clark, urging the Council to join CAPALC and a document outlining the benefits of membership of CAPALC and NALC (the National Association of Local Councils).

The Clerk said in the past both she and the Financial Officer had been opposed to re-joining the organisation arguing the membership fee was not justified. However, it was now their understanding that the organisation was being run along very different lines and offered invaluable advice and training opportunities. Indeed the Financial Officer had experienced first-hand the benefits of belonging to the new look CAPALC during her time as Clerk to a parish council in Huntingdonshire. She found the new officers at CAPALC very helpful.

Membership of CAPALC also enabled the Council to access advice, essential documents and legal help from NALC. Documents included templates for Standing Orders, Financial Regulations, etc. which were all essential for the correct running of the Council.

Throughout the coronavirus pandemic NALC had been contacting the Government seeking guidance for Councils on alternatives to public meetings, changes to regulations governing meetings, etc. and had been updating Councils accordingly.

Had the Council been a member of CAPALC it would have been able to seek advice on the subject of recording meetings which would have been helpful.

The Clerk and the Financial Officer, therefore, now **recommended** that Chatteris Town Council re-join CAPALC and pay the membership fee of **£1,218.30**, for the period 1st April 2020 to 31st March 2021.

This was **agreed** by Councillors.

10) Planning

Following a consultation exercise via email, which ended on the 31st March 2020, seven of the nine councillors eligible to vote on planning applications responded with their views. It was agreed by a majority of those councillors that the planning applications (as shown on the **appended list**) should be returned to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) F/YR20/0195/F - Support
- b) F/YR20/0197/F - Recommend Refusal. Over development of site and loss of amenity space (garden). No parking provision means more vehicles will require on-street parking leading to more problems in the area. Are FDC aware that 49 and 49a London Road appear to be HMOs and are they registered?
- c) F/YR20/0237/CERTLU – Support application but no evidence about the use over the years.
- d) F/YR20/0252/F - Support
- e) F/YR20/0254/A - Support
- f) F/YR20/0248/LB - Support
- g) F/YR20/0197/F - Recommend Refusal. Over development of site and loss of amenity space (garden). No parking provision means more vehicles will require on-street parking leading to more problems in the area. Are FDC aware that 49 and 49a London Road appear to be HMOs and are they registered?
- h) F/YR20/0264/F - Support
- i) F/YR20/0261/LB - Support
- j) F/YR20/0266/F - Support

Appeal: Notification had been received that an appeal had been made to the Secretary of State by Mr & Mrs Thistlebank against FDC's decision to refuse an application to erect a dwelling (3-bed, 2-storey) on land south west of 38 Burnsfield Estate, accessed from Treeway. The Town Council recommended refusal of the application and this representation would be forwarded to the Planning Inspectorate and the appellant.

Since 31st March: There had been no further plans for Chatteris to view on the FDC website but official notification had been received that the plan to build on the car park at The Elms had been withdrawn.

11) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

The minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 17th March 2020 were agreed (**copy attached**).

Members **agreed** to the following recommended course of action being adopted:

“In the event of public meetings being banned due to the Coronavirus outbreak, Council meetings may need to be cancelled. The Council has been advised to consider different scenarios and what actions might help mitigate any risks to the Council. This includes reviewing the scheme of delegation to ensure it is fit for purpose and would ensure minimal disruption to the work of the council.

The Clerk and Financial Officer will attempt to keep councillors updated and seek decisions via email where possible so members are requested to not only check their emails regularly but to respond to any requests for decisions. Some matters and decisions may require delegation to the Clerk and Financial Officer in consultation with the Mayor and Deputy Mayor.

Having looked through agendas for last year’s meetings the Clerk and Financial Officer have highlighted the following items which may require a decision by email or delegation:

Monthly

Planning Applications

Payment of Accounts

Traffic Matters

Emergency Repairs costing over £1,000

Time Specific

April/May: Approval of the Annual Governance Statement

Approval of Accounting Statements and Annual Return

Operation Bridges Expenditure

LHI Decision

April: Grants to Voluntary Organisations (which are time specific)

June: Re-investment of Council Assets

Internal Auditor’s Report”

12) Recording of Meetings Policy

The Clerk submitted a draft Recording of Meetings Policy (**copy attached**) based on a policy adopted by St Ives Town Council. It was **agreed** to adopt the policy.

13) General Privacy Policy

The Council had a General Privacy Policy which had never been adopted. Members **agreed** to adopt the policy (**copy attached**).

14) To Put Forward Ideas for LHI Submission

2020/21 Scheme Update

Members were reminded that they had been notified by email that the Council had been successful in its bid for LHI funding for speed reduction measures outside Cromwell Community College.

On the 31st March the Clerk was contacted by Mr Jacob Hobbs the Highways engineer responsible for delivering the scheme. He wrote as follows:

“I must state that due to the current and evolving situation with COVID-19 there will be some disruption to our service as a local authority. However, as soon as it is deemed safe and sensible for us to arrange a site visit, I will contact you with some proposed dates. I will still be developing schemes during this time and creating draft designs to get the ball rolling on your project, in which case I will keep you involved as much as possible.

Ideally we would look to install this scheme at the same time as the new Raised Zebra Crossing outside the school on Wenny Road. As you may be aware this is isn't far away so I will try my best to get everything designed, audited and target costed so we can carry out the works at the same time. Lastly, please can you confirm that you are still in a position to progress financially?”

The Clerk had confirmed that the Council was in a position to progress financially and she was willing to meet to discuss the scheme when it was deemed safe. Councillors would be notified of the meeting date.

2021/22 Scheme

On the 20th March the Clerk was informed that the idea of changing the application window for the 2021/22 LHI schemes had been agreed by the County Council and the application window would, therefore, be open from 1st April to 31st May 2020.

Members were asked to put forward ideas for schemes which could be put submitted for funding.

One idea put forward by a resident had been reducing the speed limit in Doddington Road from 40mph to 30mph as houses were now built along the length of the road. Other residents had put in requests for double yellow lines in London Road and at the junctions of estates leading off New Road.

Members were asked to submit their ideas for LHI schemes by the 17th April 2020 so these could be considered by the Council.

The Clerk had then been informed that the application deadline of 31st May had been removed due to the coronavirus crisis.

Members submitted the following ideas: 1) Reducing the speed limit in Doddington Road from 40mph to 30mph; 2) Extension of the double yellow lines and improvements to the junction of Wenny Road, East Park Street, Wood Street and south Park Street; 3) A review of the Station Street/Station Road junction with regards to double yellow lines; 4) yellow lines at junctions along New Road.

15) Traffic Issues

Members had received the following briefing which was noted:

Zebra Crossing: Local residents had been sent a copy of the notice of the intention to install a humped zebra crossing in Wenny Road. The work was originally programmed to begin the week commencing 30th March and it was anticipated it would take three weeks and would involve road closures. However on the 31st March the Council received notification that all non-essential highways works had been stopped to ensure both the County Council and

contractors could follow Government guidelines to stay at home. The works were now on hold until the restrictions were lifted or further measures could be put in place. Although there were no firm dates when the work would be carried out the hope was they would now take place in the school summer holidays.

Repairs: Notification had been received of a temporary traffic order application to close Rosemary Lane for its full length to allow repairs to take place from the 15th to 29th June. There was also notification about a micro asphalt programme due to begin in April, however no roads in Chatteris were listed.

Road works: The latest bulletins listing road works & events affecting the highway had been received as had the IHMC incident report for February 2020. However the latest communication from County Highways said an events diary would no longer be distributed in the short term as many events were being cancelled.

16) Correspondence

Members had before them a list of correspondence received since the last meeting (**copy attached**).