

**CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL  
LEISURE AND GENERAL PURPOSES WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

**Present:** L Ashley, A Charrier, A Gowler, W Haggata, A Hay, P Murphy, F Newell and J Smith.

**L1 20/21 Apologies for Absence**

An apology for absence had been received from Cllr J Carney.

**L2 20/21 Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman of the Group**

Cllr Ashley proposed Cllr Smith be re-elected Chairman of the group, this was seconded by Cllr Newell and agreed.

Cllr Ashley proposed Cllr Newell be re-elected Vice Chairman of the group, this was seconded by Cllr Hay and agreed.

**L3 20/21 FDC Update**

The following update had been received from Mr Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services at FDC:

Leisure Centre/Gym: Following the Minister's announcement the other day, we anticipate Freedom Leisure reopening the gym and dance studio on 25 July. The facility will follow the Government guidance and be 'Covid Secure'. This will mean increased cleansing, booked sessions and no cash payments. Limited use of changing rooms will be encouraged, with customers asked to attend ready for their session and taking a shower at home if possible.

Additionally, distancing in exercise classes (with classes outside if possible) will be necessary, potentially reducing class capacity. There will be a similar situation in the gym; every other piece of equipment is likely to be out of use, again reducing capacity.

Our approach will be a phased reopening, initially limited opening hours for morning and evening sessions. As demand ramps up, the opening hours will expand to fill the time in the middle of the day. Information will be available on the Freedom website. We are expecting direct customer communication to commence next week. [Currently most Freedom staff are furloughed]

The closure of leisure facilities has hit the industry extremely hard – but we are hopeful that demand will ramp up rapidly and match 2019 levels as physical distancing measures are relaxed in the months to come.

Grounds Maintenance: Skate parks reopened several weeks ago, with play parks following last weekend. All inspections have been undertaken and facilities appear to be getting well used again. Signage is up regarding safe use with Covid considerations.

Tivoli grounds maintenance work is continuing; it has been a good season so far with works on track and completion rates high (with complaint rates correspondingly low). Sustainable planting is doing very well and looking excellent.

Work to re-instate the bench at Wenny Recreation Ground more securely is still outstanding.

Members noted the report and Cllr Hay welcomed the news that the gym was re-opening.

#### **L4 20/21 Any Matters Arising from the Last Meeting of the Group**

L68) EV Chargepoint: It was agreed to ask the county officer advising on electric charging points if she would attend the next meeting of the Leisure group via Zoom.

L68) FACT Bus: It was agreed to take guidance from FACT on when it would be possible to launch the new bus service to Peterborough and re-launch the service to St Ives.

L68) Hedging: Cllr Haggata said the hedging due to be cut back in November was now very tall.

L71) VE Day: Members pointed out many homes had decorated their windows with red, white and blue bunting to mark the anniversary of VE Day and in addition the roundabout at Wenny Estate had been specially decorated.

#### **L5 20/21 Little Acre Fen Pocket Park Update**

Cllr Smith reported the Willow trees on the approach road to the Pocket Park had been cut back. The park had seen a considerable amount of use during the Coronavirus epidemic.

Whilst it had initially not been possible to undertake work at the park, members of FLAPP had gradually worked on the park in isolation and now worked in small groups. In particular there had been a united effort to water plants and trees during the dry spell. The level of water in the pond had fluctuated.

There had been some minor damage, such as posts being pulled out but this had been dealt with. There had even been visitors who installed a picnic bench (believed to belong to the Sportsman) in a hollow beside the bund and this had become a drinking den. Fortunately the bench had now disappeared and Mr Ian Mason had cleared away the debris.

Cllr Smith said there were plans to put a fence around the dipping platform to stop dogs jumping in to the pond. FLAPP had received the offer of a grant from the Red Tile Wind Farm Trust (which they would have to match fund) to plant up the pond area and a letter of thanks had gone to the organisation.

The Clerk said she had received complaints that vegetation along the Old Railway Line footpath was too long and buggies, etc., struggled to get through when it was overgrown (Cllr Smith said there were also brambles encroaching on the path). The Clerk said extending the made-up path along the Railway Line from where it currently ended to the entrance to the Pocket Park would help to improve matters. The Council had money in reserves and as they owned the land and the park and footpath were currently very popular it would be a worthwhile use of Council funds.

Members **agreed** the Clerk should obtain a price for extending the made-up path.

#### **L6 20/21 Street Nameplates**

Cllr Smith had been praised by the Mayor and highlighted in the press for re-painting the street name sign for New Road. Cllr Smith said many nameplates were in need of renovation and she had been informed they could be reported on Fenland District Council's website. Cllr Hay praised Cllr Smith for taking a pro-active stance.

Cllr Smith explained she carried out the work because she was concerned that old signs might be replaced by new signs. She said some signs had disappeared and had been acquired or sold but she was anxious for historic signs to stay in situ.

It was agreed to add street signs in need of refurbishment to the Street Furniture audit as they needed to be smartened up and preserved.

#### **L7 20/21 Street Furniture Audit**

One of the proposals under the Growing Fenland Masterplan for Chatteris was a community fund to smarten up the town. As a result the Clerk had carried out a survey of all the street furniture in the centre which was in need of repainting and repair – this included lampposts, other posts, benches, railings, signboards, etc. She pointed out they had not been re-painted since they were installed, railings were bent and the paint had faded so they gave a shabby look to the town. If a business case could be established it could be submitted to the Combined Authority seeking the release of funding from the Masterplan allocation.

Cllr Murphy confirmed much of the street furniture was put in as part of a Millennium project jointly funded by the County Council and Fenland District Council. Cllr Hay said it was important to establish whether items appeared on the County Council or the FDC assets register. She also suggested approaching other organisations for help in carrying out the work.

Cllr Smith agreed refurbishment of the street furniture could transform the town centre and she pointed out in the past In Bloom had been marked down because of the state of the street furniture. She said health and safety measures meant it was difficult to get the work done by anyone other than a professional business.

It was **agreed** the cost of carrying out the refurbishment work should be sought after ownership of the assets had been established.

#### **L8 20/21 Changes to Definitive Map of Public Rights of Way for Chatteris**

County Definitive Map Officer Mr Tom Ruzsala had written to the Town Council to explain that he was working on an updated version of the Definitive Map and Statement for Cambridgeshire, a legal record of all known public rights of way within the county.

Whilst working on the update he had noticed that there had been a significant changes to the parish boundary between Chatteris and Manea in 2015.

As a result it was necessary to transfer all the public rights of way previously recorded in that part of Chatteris into the Manea parish. There would be no change to alignments or statuses simply to names and descriptions. Members had received a list of the Rights of Way affected and were asked if they had any comments they wished to make.

Members **agreed** they had no objections to the proposed changes.

Cllr Gowler said footpath 17 seemed to have disappeared and many footpaths were not signposted so residents were unaware of them. He suggested a re-appraisal of all footpaths would be helpful (the Clerk said this work had been undertaken by two groups in the past). Cllr Gowler was currently trying to follow the footpaths using an on-line map and offered to appraise them as he went pointing out there were miles and miles of footpaths around Chatteris, some of which were quite picturesque. He warned it might take some time to cover all the footpaths. Councillors thanked him for his offer which they gratefully accepted.

Cllr Gowler also suggested putting some of the walks in the town guide. Cllr Smith informed him the circular walk would be included and suggested if more information on walks was available it could be included in a special pamphlet.

The Clerk offered to report any problems Cllr Gowler found to the County Council.

#### **L9 20/21 LGA Model Member Code of Conduct Consultation**

Councillors, officers and whole councils had been asked by the Local Government Association to complete a questionnaire on a draft model Member Code of Conduct.

As there were so many questions it was agreed members should individually respond to the consultation. It was also agreed the Clerk should submit a response as an officer.

#### **L10 20/21 Councillors' Skills Set Survey**

The Clerk had been approached by a Sawston councillor asking if Chatteris Town Council had a skills set list for Councillors. The Clerk asked if members would be interested in drawing up such a list based on skills which councillors felt they could bring to the role, such

as: working well with young people, the ability to carry out practical work (painting or putting up signs, etc.) and practical knowledge of the public transport system.

Councillors agreed they would submit their skills to the Clerk so she could draw up a list.

### **L11 20/21 Any Other Business**

Xmas Lights: Cllr Murphy reported that March had cancelled their Christmas Market and the Christmas Lights switch on event due to the pandemic but they would still be putting up the lights. Wisbech were also considering cancelling their Christmas market.

The Clerk said she had spoken to the treasurer of Chatteris Christmas Lights who was concerned about the lights in Chatteris as some members of the committee were shielding. He had asked if the Council would still pay over a grant if there was no switch on night or the lights did not go up. The Clerk said it was likely the Council would still pay a grant if the lights went up even if there was no switch on event but it was unlikely to pay if there were no lights. She had stressed the importance of the lights for lifting public morale. She also said it would be Councillors' decision on whether to pay over the grant.

She encouraged the Lights Committee to put out an appeal for help in putting up the lights if they were short of volunteers. Members agreed it was important for the lights to go up and suggested in addition to putting out an appeal through social media putting an article in local newspapers. Cllr Smith favoured paying over the full grant even if they could not put up all the lights.

KEC: A discussion took place on work that had been carried out to the garden at the King Edward Centre to aid vision for drivers turning into Railway Lane from King Edwards Road. It was agreed the garden needed to be re-designed with low shrubs and low maintenance requirements.

Cycleways: The Clerk was attempting to contact the County Council seeking funding for new cycle routes but was unsure who to approach. Cllr Hay agreed to make enquiries. Cllr Haggata was concerned to note, in a report from FDC, that while Chatteris was being allocated temporary cycle racks other towns in Fenland were being allocated funds to create temporary cycle routes and 20mph speed limits with flashing signs. Cllr Haggata said once again Chatteris was missing out and he felt it was important to pursue cycle routes in Chatteris. Cllr Hay said most of the roads in Chatteris were not wide enough to accommodate cycleways but Cllrs Haggata and Smith insisted it would be possible. Cllr Smith pointed out the path across Furrowfields could be used as a cycle route to Glebelands School.

The report mentioned that a second tranche of funding for walking and cycling strategies would soon be available and asked for potential projects deliverable in the short term which incorporated key walking and cycling priorities highlighted in the Growing Fenland masterplan.

Members still favoured the cycle route to the Mepal Outdoor Centre. Cllr Haggata was very keen to see the Centre up and running again and said it was important to find out what plans East Cambs District Council had for the site. Chatteris had the potential to access money to put to any scheme and it was a great opportunity to provide an outdoor project, especially as there were also plans to develop a country park near the Centre. Cllr Hay offered to speak to the leader of East Cambs District Council to try and ascertain their plans. Cllr Murphy warned that the expanse of water at the Outdoor Centre was not large enough for some outdoor sports but Cllr Smith said it was a useful starting point for someone with children wishing to get out on the water.

Clock: Cllr Murphy was pleased to report that FDC had now ordered a new part for the clock on Jubilee Gardens which was faulty. Members welcomed the news.

Rural Market Towns Group: The group had emailed the Town Council again asking if they wished to join for free until April 2021 after which there would be an annual charge of £150. Members agreed they did not wish to join.

Marketing Strategy: The Clerk had been informed that, as part of the Growing Fenland discussions in Whittlesey, the idea of a Fenland wide marketing strategy had been discussed. This would include a website and using other social media channels. The views of Chatteris Town Council were sought.

Members agreed it would be better for Chatteris to stand alone since in the past the town had always drawn the short straw and the lion's share of publicity had gone to the other Fenland towns. It was agreed to make this point but to also enquire what the content of the marketing strategy would be and the likely costs.

## **L12 20/21 Date of Next Meeting**

Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2020.