

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 4th March 2025

2653

1 of 11

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4th March 2025 at The Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Fuller-Gray, V Joyce, P Murphy, S Selman, M Siggee and S Unwin.

202) New Councillor to Sign Declaration of Acceptance of Office & Complete Register of Interests

Cllr Fuller-Gray was welcomed to the Council and signed her Declaration of Acceptance of Office and submitted her completed Register of Interests.

203) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs J Carney, A Gowler and A Jones and the Financial Officer.

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

Cllr Benney declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllr Hay declared an interest in the Museum and the King Edward Centre. Cllr Murphy declared an interest in planning, the KEC and the Museum; Cllr Unwin in In Bloom and Festival; Cllr Selman in Festival and the Community Car Scheme and Cllr Ashley in the KEC, Museum and Festival.

205) Open Forum

Two members of the public and Cllr C Marks were welcomed to the meeting. One of the members of the public expressed a wish to speak.

She explained that she was angered by cameras which had been erected on private land next to Campole Drove which were directed on to the public byway and not into the field. She also claimed the roof of a building, recently erected near the drove, was wrong. The Mayor said the Town Council had no control over the positioning of cameras and suggested reporting the problems to enforcement at FDC. The resident said they had been reported to the police. It was also pointed out that the drove belonged to the County Council so they should be approached, although it could be a civic matter. It was agreed the Clerk would make enquiries with the County Council.

206) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 4th February 2025 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

207) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 197) Consultation: The Clerk had submitted the council's comments on proposals to strengthen the standards and conducts framework and had received an acknowledgement.

Min 200) Old Auction Yard: Cllr Unwin asked if there had been any updates about the Crown Estate land. The Clerk said she had received a reply which could be discussed at the Leisure meeting.

208) Police Matters

Members had before them a report summarising Neighbourhood Alerts received in the past month. Many of the reports referred to arrests resulting from the incident involving hare coursing, violent disorder, criminal damage and dangerous driving in several towns and villages on the 25th January. The latest figure for those arrested in connection to the incident had been received that day and now stood at 23.

Cllr Ashley said she was concerned that although the Neighbourhood Alerts spoke about the police patrolling in nearby villages they did not mention patrols in Chatteris. Cllr Murphy said he was aware of someone who had been prosecuted for parking at the bus stop in the High Street.

209) FDC and Street Scene Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC and Street Scene reports. The Clerk said she had asked Cllr Murphy to check whether permission had been granted for the clothing bank which had appeared outside the Parish Church. Cllr Murphy was also asked to look into the issue of an FDC waste bin at Eastwood which had been moved by the developers of two new homes at Eastwood.

Cllr Hay had been contacted by a resident of the Old Auction Yard concerned that the poor lighting in the yard (which had resulted following the replacement of the streetlight bulbs) would lead to more fly tipping and anti-social behaviour. Cllr Hay said she had tried to raise the issue of the streetlights at the County Highways and Transport meeting but had been "slapped down" and told it would be discussed at a later date.

210) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 25th February 2025 showing expenditure of £485,377.47 and income of £493,053.00 (included a full year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and approved.

211) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

One application for a grant had been received from the Peter Pan Preschool. They were seeking £350 towards the cost of canopies for their outdoor play area to stop droppings from pigeons affecting the area, making it unusable. As there was no indication of the likely costs of canopies the Financial Officer had asked for a quotation and asked Councillors if they would consider approving a grant of up to £350, depending upon the cost of the equipment. The Clerk said the group had already received a grant from Court Leet. Cllr Joyce said the canopies were likely to cost about £7,000. Some of the trees near the play area had been pollarded, alleviating the problem, but the KEC had not been allowed to substantially reduce the size of one of the trees. Distraction devices, including a model owl and a spinning device, had been installed in the hope this would discourage pigeons from roosting in the trees.

Cllr Joyce pointed out the canopies would have to be erected safely and cleaned on a regular basis as pigeon excrement was acidic and would rot out the canopies. He had recently spent 4 hours cleaning the play area (at a cost to the preschool) but this needed to be done on a regular basis. There were also concerns that the canopies could be dangerous in high winds. Cllr Selman mentioned a Chatteris based company who might help with the supply of the canopies.

It was agreed no grant should be made until the project had been discussed with and agreed by the King Edward Centre management team. The Mayor said the Council also needed to know the full cost of the canopies and should only give a grant on production of an order form.

212) Payment of Accounts

Payroll	March Payroll	6,879.30
R J Warren	Gardening Services	756.84
R J Warren	Supply & fit gate at Allotments	600.00
U K Safety Management	PAT Testing	149.52
Lovell & Ward	Supply & fit Blinds in Community Rooms at 14 Church Lane	988.00
Fore Group Solutions	Village Scene, 1 year advertising	792.00
S Gibb	Office Cleaning	168.00
Hedley & Ellis	Xmas Lights electrical work	930.00
Viking	Stationary	234.07
FDC	Summer Festival Contribution	11,300.00

		2656
F/O	Mayors Event reim: sundries & mileage	4 of 11 62.26
Clerk	Mayors Event reim: sundries, Summer Festival sundries & mileage re: tip run	233.94
Muffin Oven	Mayors event cake & scones	102.50
Clerk	Mayors event reim sundries	290.67
D Stimson	Windows cleaned 14 Church Lane (annual fee)	160.00
Barclays	Charges	10.72
Youths of Fenland	Well Being Drop In Café	1,614.60
PS Electrical	Xmas Lights stuffing gland	47.04
KES switched on solutions	Xmas Lights new electrics replacement	1,919.04
K Grainger	Reim: credit back	31.60
T Payne	14B Management fee	72.00
Wave	2 Park Street Water bill	76.86
B Gas	Electric Bill 2 Park Street Ground Floor Feb	482.38
B Gas	Electric Bill 2 Park Street Ground Floor Jan	595.15
Mayday	Photocopier print & lease	60.34
T Payne	14A Extension to lease & management fee	102.00
Chatteris Museum	Voluntary Grant from CTC	6,500.00
Housdens Caterers	Xmas Party Catering	1,293.61
Whittlesey Town Council	Mayors Civic Event	90.00
Zen Internet	Summer Festival Domain name renewal	14.39
Zen Internet	Mar-Apr 25 website	13.79
B Gas	Electricity Bill 14 Church Lane	62.28
Total		36,632.90

213) Financial Review

[1] Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to review the Council's financial activities, as required to be undertaken annually under the Financial Regulations Clause 1.5, prior to approving the Annual Governance Statement and in preparation for the 2024/25 audit.

[2] Financial Regulations

Members were reminded that the Financial Regulations were reviewed and approved by resolution at the February 2019 meeting and revised regulations were published. (Min 221). The Town Council adopted CAPALC/NALC's Model Financial Regulations – (The England updated version May 2016). Since then, CAPALC/NALC had revised and published a 2019 Model with minor changes and had recently released and finalised a completely new model. The Financial Officer advised members that she could now proceed to update the Town Council's Financial Regulations using the updated model for Town and Parish Councils.

[3] Risk Management

Members were advised that the Council approved a Risk Management Policy in August 2002 and revised wording was approved in February 2014 (**Appendix A**).

[4] Insurances

Members were reminded that they approved a new 3-year long term policy with Zurich Municipal at the February 2023 Council meeting. (min. 198).

The insurance policy commenced on the 1st April 2023 and cost £1,988.60, this cost was based on the discounted 3-year long-term agreement.

The insurance policy was automatically renewed on the 1st April 2024, would be automatically renewed again on the 1st April 2025 and would remain active until 1st April 2026 whereby the long-term agreement would expire.

The annual renewal cost for April 2025 was 2,155.37.

[5] Protection of Assets

A copy of the Council's Register of Assets was attached (Appendix B).

Members were reminded, the value of assets were not contained in the balance sheet, they were just listed as a memorandum item in the supporting information. It had been discussed and previously agreed with the internal auditor that it was not necessary to pay a District Valuer for a re-valuation of any assets unless the Council intended to sell the assets.

Since then, the insurance company had advised that they would require a professional valuation on both properties once the refurbishment works had been completed.

Refurbishment of both properties was now complete and the Clerk reported that surveyors had been out that day and had valued both 14 Church Lane and 2 Park Street for insurance and rebuild purposes.

The notional value of the two properties, the street furniture, office equipment, fixtures, fittings, and contents were updated annually for insurance purposes and this would suffice until the valuation report had been received.

[6] Internal Controls

Members were advised that the new Financial Regulations 2019 approved under resolution by Members at the February Council meeting (Min 221) included everything that was appended in the Internal Controls (Appendix C). It was therefore no longer necessary for it to be included as a separate appendix in the Financial Regulations. The Internal Controls were reviewed every year under the financial review.

Appendix C had been revised due to the renewed approval of the use of Bacs, Chaps, variable direct debits and standing orders for process of payments. Under the Financial Regulations this approval should be renewed by resolution of the council at least every two years. This renewal was approved on the 5th April 2022 (Min 251).

The renewed approval would be included in the updated version of the Financial Regulations. In the meantime, Members were advised that any payments made by Bacs, Chaps, variable direct debits and standing orders were approved by resolution at the full Council meetings on the monthly schedule of payments.

[7] Internal Audit

Members were advised that under current regulations, an annual review of effectiveness of internal audit was no longer required. It was, however, still necessary to re-appoint an Internal Auditor annually. The current Auditor, Mark Saunders, had confirmed he was willing to carry out the internal audit for 2024/25.

[8] Investments

Members were advised that the Council's Register of Investments, including yields, was attached at Appendix D. At the full council meeting held on 4th June 2024 (Min 35) Members of the Council considered and **approved** reinvestment of £85,000 with Nationwide Building Society at 4.25% fixed for 1 year.

The Mayor requested exact figures for the interest paid on the Building Society investments in 2021 and 2022, estimated amounts were shown.

[9] Risk Assessment

Members were advised that Risk assessments were carried out by the Clerk on a needs basis for all events organised by the Town Council.

[10] It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and approved as below: -

- [i] the Council's Risk Management Policy (Appendix A) be approved;
- [ii] the Register of Assets (Appendix B) be approved;
- [iii] the Internal Controls (Appendix C) be noted & approved;

- [iv] Mark Saunders be offered re-engagement as Internal Auditor for the 2024/25 audit;
- [v] the updated Register of Investments (Appendix D) be approved.

214) To Agree Grounds Maintenance Contractors for 2025/26 Based on Quotations

Members had received a report from the Clerk which stated that for the past 5 years R J Warren Ltd had undertaken the Council's grounds maintenance work having been appointed in March 2020. Initially that contract was awarded for 2 years but Covid, followed by the works to 2 Park Street and 14 Church Lane, meant the contract had been allowed to run.

The Clerk had now had the opportunity to revisit the contract and to seek three quotations for the works to be undertaken (which were set out on attached sheets).

R J Warren had already submitted their prices for 2025/26 and the Clerk sought further quotations from a local grounds maintenance company and a company who had emailed the Council.

The two new companies were given the opportunity to meet and visit the areas which were covered by the contract and the local company took up that offer.

The three quotations received were as follows:

	General Duties as Set Out	Works at Pocket Park	Total
Company A	£7,720.21 + VAT pa	£916.86 + VAT pa	£8,638.86
Company B	£10,740 + VAT pa	£2,700 + VAT pa	£13,440
Company C	£12,600 + VAT pa	£2,215 + VAT pa	£14,815

The Clerk **recommended** that the Council accepted the quotation from Company A and awarded them the contract; to be reviewed after two years. It was **resolved** to accept the recommendation and the contract was awarded to Company A, R J Warren, for two years.

215) Planned Changes to Pocket Park

Members had a copy of a plan for the Pocket Park which had been submitted by a new member of FLAPP, a landscape gardener. The member said the developers of the Womb Farm development were happy to help with the costs of installing new features at the park, in particular an extension to the bund with a tunnel through it, which children could crawl through.

The plans also showed metal arches, a maze in the dry pond, a new bug hotel, new wildflower meadow areas, a new compost bin and the word LAPP planted on the side of the bund. The Clerk warned all these ideas had yet to be agreed by FLAPP (the Friends of the

Pocket Park). The FLAPP member also mentioned making the path which had been made by walkers across the park, more permanent. The Clerk explained that there was currently a winding footpath around the park so visitors could take in all the features. She had also looked into the idea of a slide down the bund (to be officially named Bill's Hill after Cllr Bill Haggata) but that would cost in the region of £5000 and there were currently no funds available. Cllr Selman suggested going for a grant for the slide.

Members were happy with the proposed changes.

The Clerk said she had also asked the Council's contractors to install another bollard along the Old Railway Line, past the entrance to the Pocket Park heading to Somersham. She had been walking the footpath on the Sunday with her grandchildren and dogs and had witnessed a car driving along the footpath which had swerved around the existing bollard, which had been positioned to stop cars accessing the route.

Cllr Joyce had also visited the park and said it was a bit untidy and in need of re-seeding. The Clerk agreed and had already asked the contractors to carry out the work

216) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 25th February 2025 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to f) (as shown on the **appended list**) and considered two further applications. It was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support (Cllr Unwin declared an interest)
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support
- e) Noted
- f) Support
- g) Support
- h) Support with the condition that all trees removed are replaced with suitable species.

217) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report

Cllr Joyce (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 11th February 2025.

L52) Training Centre: Cllr Joyce commented that it had been a good meeting with the representatives of the training centre and they had been responsive to the council's suggestions. He felt regular meetings would be of benefit.

L53) George Clare Surgery: The surgery had confirmed they would send the agenda and minutes of future Patients Participation Group meetings to the Clerk so she could forward them to the councillors on the group.

L53) Defibrillator: Cllr Joyce said he had repaired the phone box door and he would now paint the roof yellow and put up the signs before putting in the defibrillator. He was thanked for all his work by Cllr Selman.

L54) Fibre Network Cabinets: It was pointed out that the cabinets had to be in certain positions for the signals to work.

L54) FACT Bus: The Manager of Barber Gardens had not responded to the Clerk's email about the cessation of the service. However, FACT had confirmed it was not a problem as the driver of the minibus had made them aware of the problems and they agreed with the way the email was worded. The last service for Barber Gardens went ahead on the 21st February.

218) Replacement Street Light Bulbs Issues

Members had received a copy of correspondence between Cllr Marks and the information Governance team at the County Council regarding the new replacement street/pavement light bulbs. Cllr Marks had explained that he had received a number of complaints about the new lights which appeared to give up to 50% less illumination than those they replaced. This had resulted in inadequate light splays and many dark spots. There were worries this could lead to people tripping up and security issues. Cllr Marks had asked a number of questions including the cost of the scheme, what trials were held and if the police had been consulted. The County Council had argued the new LED bulbs saved energy, reduced the amount of light hitting the highway and were expected to last for 20 years.

The Clerk and councillors had received complaints about the new streetlights which were also being introduced in Chatteris.

The meeting was suspended to allow Cllr Marks to talk on the issue. Cllr Marks said he had replied to the email questioning a lot of the County Council's claims. He was still concerned about health and safety and security issues. He said the lights were being introduced throughout the County and the County Council claimed they were replacing like for like. He was concerned that the costings and the warranties were not correct. Cllr Unwin said she was keen to compare drone photos of the town lit up before the exchange of bulbs with how it looked now. Cllr Marks said Manea Parish Council was installing LED bulbs which were much brighter.

Cllr Joyce said some people welcomed the new lights and he felt in a few months' time residents would take no notice of the new lights but it was agreed the Town Council should write and point out there were numerous complaints about the new lights.

Cllr Marks also asked to be informed if any street lights belonging to the County Council had been missed or removed. It was pointed out that the bulbs in the heritage lights in the centre of town were not being changed or those along major routes.

210) Traffic Issues

LHI: The Clerk had received an email stating a preliminary design for the Fenland Way warning signs scheme had been drawn up and was being reviewed by the County Road Safety Team and designers before being sent out to the Town Council to review.

Updates: The Mayor had passed on three highways updates she had received in her role as County Councillor.

- i) The first was the 20mph zone for Burnsfield and Station Streets (leading to Kingsfield School). An order had been placed for the wig-wags and it was anticipated these would be delivered during March or April.
- ii) Another was the investigation of options to improve cycling in the Chatteris to Doddington Road area, including re-aligning the roundabout to provide a safe crossing, consideration of a signalled crossing and investigation of a wide shared-use path. The feasibility study was expected. Cllr Murphy said district councillors had rejected the idea of cycle lanes in the area as the road was not wide enough and there were parking problems.
- iii) The final update was on investigations into the provision of a continuous footway along Dock Road and Short Nightlayer's Drove. Again a feasibility report was expected. Members asked the Clerk to write and ask if the scheme might include some street lights.

Traffic Order: Notification had been received that St Martin's Close in Chatteris would be closed for footway slurry sealing. The exact date was not given.

Roadworks: The latest lists of planned road works in Fenland had been received, along with the March list of events affecting the Highways in the County.

211) Correspondence

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

Leisure Improvements: Councillors were anxious to know more about the plans for a swimming pool in Chatteris. Cllr Benney said FDC were looking to spend money on leisure centres, including the one at Chatteris. The hope was that the new unitary authority (which would replace the district and county councils) would keep the leisure facilities open if they were in good condition. FDC was anxious to make sure its money was spent in Fenland. The Mayor said every town had been asked what they wanted and she had stated Chatteris wanted a swimming pool, which would be built next to the leisure centre. A sum of £160,000 had been set aside to look into the viability of providing a pool. Cllr Selman was concerned that the Chatteris project might be the last to be delivered and would miss out. She was assured that all the projects would be delivered together and that would be within the next two to three years. The future of the Empress Pool was discussed and Cllr Benney said if the pool was repaired it would continue as a private pool.

212) Reports

Re-location: Cllr Benney said it had been announced that Pecks of Ely would be closing their depots in Ely, Spalding and Ramsey and would be re-locating to Chatteris on the former Nightlayer Leek Company site. He said the economic growth team had been working hard to attract businesses to Chatteris and listed recent successes.

Homeless: Cllr Unwin was concerned about a homeless young man sleeping rough in Chatteris. The Mayor suggested contacting the outreach team at FDC.

213) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.