

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 4th June 2019

1931

1 of 9

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4th June 2019 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Councillors L Ashley, I Benney, J Carney, A Gowler, W Haggata, P Murphy, F Newell, M Petrou and J Smith.

26) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Charrier, A Hay and I Taylor.

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

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

28) Open Forum

The Mayor welcomed two members of the public to the meeting.

The first resident said she was representing the "Save Wenny Meadow" campaign and as a matter of courtesy wished to update members on what was going on.

She said the group had been continuing to raise awareness of the great amenity the area provided even though it was on private land. She said there was a clear intention from the owners that walkers could use the land as the fencing which had been erected to keep out the motorbikes allowed access by walkers. Many hundreds of people had signed the petition to save the land and when a planning application was submitted the group would fight it tooth and nail.

The resident said Dr Sarah Spooner had provided valuable evidence of the architectural heritage of the area convincing the group it was important to save it.

The resident also stressed the Fenland Local Plan, which allocated land for development, was currently being reviewed and the review should be complete by February 2022. The group had been accepted as consultees in that process and would be lobbying hard to get the land removed from the strategic allocation. The group would be seeking to prove that there was other land in the town which was more suited to development and the need for green space was greater than the need for more housing. The meadow was unique and once it was gone it would be lost forever.

The resident acknowledged that it was possible a plan for the site would be submitted before the review was complete.

She asked the Council to consider where it stood on the meadow and its inclusion in the strategic plan. She said it was a time for vision and the plot of land concerned was unique due to its heritage and beauty. It was a wonderful space where people could get out and enjoy nature.

The second resident, a former leader of Fenland District Council, said he thought it was an admirable campaign but the land was in the strategic plan (which he had signed off) and if it was removed the houses would have to be built elsewhere as all political parties were pushing for more affordable housing.

If the campaign was successful and the developer left the parcel of land, resident two asked who would be responsible for maintaining it. Resident one said initially it would be declared as common land and the group would then look at various grants which were available and were in talks with organisations who maintained land.

She stressed she was not against housing per se but preferred to see smaller developments. Cllr Benney explained that broad concept plans took into account needs such as education and facilities and would deliver those benefits. Smaller developments would not.

Resident two said FDC could take Section 106 payments from smaller developments but too often rolled over when developers argued that a site was not viable and agreed to waive Section 106 payments. He said the viability should be reflected in the price of the land.

Cllr Gowler asked if access to the land was official and resident one agreed it was not but the owner had allowed access by walkers. Cllr Petrou said he was convinced by resident one's arguments and if it was seen as important would canvas all those on his ward for their views.

Cllr Newell stressed the area was never a meadow, it had been used as agricultural land in the past. Cllr Haggata said when he moved to Chatteris there had been no access to the "meadow" but in recent years the fencing had been trodden down allowing access. Cllr Carney said part of the "meadow" was a site of special interest and there were no plans to build on that area. He also pointed out part of the overall site belonged to FDC.

The Mayor warned those present that they had to be impartial because the area would be the subject of a planning application and anyone who had declared their stance in advance would not be allowed to take part in the decision making process.

Resident two then moved on to the Empress Swimming Pool issue. He said over the past week or two the Town Council, FDC and private individuals had been inundated with innuendos and lies on social media. Those making comments clearly knew nothing about the history of the Empress Pool and all that the Town Council and FDC had done to preserve

swimming facilities in the town. He pointed out if the appeal raised enough to buy the pool it was likely they would need another £1m to repair it.

29) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the annual Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 14th May 2019 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

30) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 22) MVAS: Cllr Gowler said he had consulted with his brother, who was a member of Doddington Parish Council and had asked him how they managed to get their MVAS erected. His brother had put up the brackets used for the sign after obtaining a Highway's policy and risk assessment, which took a few weeks to obtain. He was also responsible for managing the unit, moving it, changing the batteries and downloading the information. Cllr Carney said Somersham also apparently had no problems installing the sign.

Cllr Gowler said he was happy to pursue the matter, particularly as he was IOSH trained, and members gratefully accepted his offer.

31) Police Matters

Local Police

Members had received a copy of the confidential report from the local policing team and Sgt Lugg on the Fenland Neighbourhood Policing team's work over the past month.

Neighbourhood Alerts

14 & 28/5/19: Round-up of latest convictions and news relating to Fenland.

24/5/19: Notification that Neighbourhood Watch is supporting the Big Lunch 2019.

24/5/19: Scam warning about fake TalkTalk emails alleging the recipient is owed a refund.

32) FDC, Street Scene, Section 106 and CCTV Updates

Members had a copy of the latest updates (**copy attached**).

The Clerk informed members that Mr Phil Hughes, Head of Leisure Services at FDC, would be attending the next meeting of the Leisure Working Group. She asked for notification of any concerns which could be raised with Mr Hughes.

33) Financial Officer's Report

Financial Statement

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 28th May 2019 showing expenditure of £39,273.00 and income of £76,894.86 (includes a half years 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.

34) INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT 2018/19

Members had before them copies of the Internal Auditor's Report and his signed certificate of the Annual Return for the year end 31st March 2019. Members noted that the Auditor had no issues that he wished to draw to the attention of Members.

The Financial Officer advised Members that all relevant documents were ready to go to the External Auditor on Member's approval of the internal audit. She also advised that the unaudited accounts would go on public display on the Town Council's website, Council Offices' window and the Town's notice board on the 5th June 2019. The Financial Officer confirmed that the Annual Governance & Accountability Return along with the Final accounts had been completed within the timescales set under the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

All were in favour and it was **RESOLVED** that the Internal Auditor's report for the year 1st April 2018 to 31st March 2019 be noted and approved.

35) Reinvestment of Council Assets

1) Lloyds One Year Fixed Term Deposit Maturity.

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Lloyds Bank (£85,000 at 1.0%) would mature on the 6th June 2019. Lloyds had confirmed their new reinvestment interest rate of 1.25% fixed for 12 months.

2) Nationwide Building Society Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Maturity

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Nationwide Building Society (£85,000 at 0.90%) would mature on the 16th June 2019. Nationwide had confirmed that the new reinvestment interest rate for 1 year fixed was 1.1%

The Financial Officer advised Members that whilst there were no short-term plans for use of the £170,000, any reinvestment for a period longer than a year would be inadvisable in the current financial climate and with current rates of interest there was little to be gained by increasing the Council's total investment. The Reserve Accounts held balances of £138,401, the AWP and other holding accounts held balances of £67,439 amounting to £205,840 in total.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had compared the above rates to similar

fixed term savings accounts and confirmed that the rates offered by Lloyds Bank and Nationwide Building Society were competitive and were both protected under the FSCS. The savings schemes had a low risk factor and the interest rate offered reflected this. Although the rates were very low, they would give a better return than an instant access savings account.

It was **RECOMMENDED**: -

Members of the Council considered and approved reinvestment of £85,000 with Lloyds Bank at 1.25% and £85,000 with Nationwide Building Society at 1.1% both fixed for 1 year. All were in favour and It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and approved.

36) Payment of Accounts

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

Payee	Description	Amount £
Financial Officer	Payroll June	1058.92
Clerk	Payroll June	1537.81
Pension Fund	Payroll June	1365.37
HMRC	Payroll June	630.10
Zen Internet	Website June-July	10.79
Onecom	Phone Bill May	82.34
Vital Sign Design	Summer Festival Banners	463.20
Barclays	Bank Charges to April	6.73
Barclays	Bank Charges to May	11.86
Fen Regis trophies	Summer Festival Trophies	75.90
L Ashley	Mayors Allowance 1st instalment	500.00
Financial Officer	Summer Festival Float money Reim	500.00
Financial Officer	Mileage Reim Pensions Forum	35.10
Clerk	Reim Phone Box spare parts	87.35
Clerk	Reim Mileage Delivery & collections	32.40
Aitch	Summer Festival Photographer	175.00
M Saunders	Internal Audit of 2018/19 accounts	300.00
R J Warren	Grass cutting maintenance service Little Acre	259.20
S Payne	Grass cutting service	800.00
CF Corporate	Quarterly Photocopier lease	212.36
Viking	Stationary order	138.22
Cash	Petty Cash	58.87
Total		8341.52

37) Planning

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 28th May 2019 (**copy attached**).

Working group members made recommendations on applications a) to d) (as shown on the appended list) and these were ratified, members then considered applications e) to g) and it was agreed to return the applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support (Cllr Smith declared an interest as the applicant is a work colleague)
- c) Request site visit by FDC Planning Committee
- d) Noted but concerned that it may set a precedent
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Request a site visit by FDC Planning Committee as there are a number of mature trees on site

The Clerk informed members that a scoping opinion had been submitted for mineral extraction and inert waste disposal at a proposed Langwood Fen Quarry at Langwood Fen Drove. It was likely a planning application would follow.

The application to alter a flat roof to a gabled roof and to erect a first floor rear extension at 128 High Street (which the Town Council had opposed) had been withdrawn.

38) Green Dog Walkers Campaign Launch in Chatteris

A date had been agreed for the launch of the Green Dog Walkers campaign in Chatteris - Friday 5th July (the Clerk gave apologies that she would be on holiday). The original suggestion had been the 3rd July but the Clerk had pointed out it would be useful to promote the campaign at the Friday market.

The main launch would be at a gazebo and stall in Furrowfields Recreation Ground, where a dog bag dispenser was to be installed by FDC. Two FDC officers would be on site from 10am to 2pm to sign up those interested in the scheme and hand out promotional material. The officers were hoping they would be joined by local volunteers and councillors. Ms Layna Warren, FDC's Street Scene and Markets Team Leader, said the event would be publicised beforehand with boards, a leaflet drop and through social media.

The Clerk had already purchased the dog tags to be given out to those signing the Green Dog Walker pledge and said she would purchase poop bags which would also be given out.

It was agreed the Clerk should also alert the local Street Pride team to the event.

39) Register of Electors' Updates

Members were asked to complete a form if they wished to receive a copy of the Electoral Roll for their ward in electronic form and if they wished to receive monthly updates in the same format. Notification had been received that in future the electoral roll would only be in electronic form and Councillors would need a password to view the contents of the roll as the files would be encrypted due to the confidential nature of the information. The Clerk said she would pass the forms to FDC.

40) Traffic Issues

One Way System: The resident proposing a one way system for Chatteris High Street had written again countering the Town Council's arguments against such a system (namely the inadequacies of Railway Lane and the lack of budget). He had also written to County Highways officer Mr Andi Caddy with his suggestions. Mr Caddy had explained the scheme would need funding through the LHI scheme or privately, serious consideration from a design perspective and crucially support from local residents, the Town Council and the local County member which was not currently forthcoming. Cllr Carney re-iterated that it would be very difficult to manoeuvre a bus through Railway Lane and the Station Street junction if the proposal went ahead. Members instructed the Clerk to write back to Mr Tanner and simply say no.

Road markings: The resident had also written asking the County Council to renew the road markings for disabled parking bays as many were so indistinct that drivers ignored them. On this point the Council supported the resident. Mr Caddy had promised to pass on the request to the maintenance team but warned the department had "incredibly challenging budgetary constraints."

Road Closure: The Council had been notified that Huntingdon Road would be closed for 24 hours from the 8th to 9th July to allow for a connection to the existing main. Cllr Smith pointed out the judging for In Bloom was on the 9th and it was agreed the Clerk should write seeking confirmation that the road would be open on the 9th or ask that the work be put back until after the 9th.

Road works: The latest bulletins listing road works & events affecting the highway had been received as had the IHMC Incident Report for April 2019.

41) Correspondence

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

42) Reports

There were no reports.

At this point the person applying to list the Empress Swimming Pool as an Asset of Community Value appeared at the meeting, to hand in a letter of support from the Head of Glebeland's School, and members agreed to suspend the meeting to allow him to speak.

Mr Lawrence Weetman explained that listing the pool would be useful to allow time to make a decision on the future of the facility. He said it would give six months to see whether the Trust or anyone else wished to buy the pool and would give FDC time to look at alternatives. An ACV was a reversible decision. Mr Weetman explained that the pool was no longer owned by a local family, it had been sold to a development company.

Members mentioned their concerns about a Gofundme campaign which had been launched to raise money to purchase the pool. Mr Weetman said one of Save the Pool campaigners had identified some grants which could be used to buy the pool and renovate it.

Cllr Benney said the Council had two reports which went back 20 years on the structural fabric of the building and the mechanical and electrical works. These had been carried out when the Council had considered making an offer to buy the pool but when the reports showed faults the Council had decided to pursue the idea of a new pool and the Trustees continued to run the Empress Swimming Pool as a private pool. Cllr Benney gave copies of the two reports to Mr Weetman for his information and said they revealed many problems including dry rot, wet rot, the need to replace roof trusses, cracking walls and the presence of asbestos in the roof.

Councillors were concerned that if these problems had not already been addressed it could cost hundreds of thousands to bring the building back into some sort of order. There were also concerns that the pool would be shut down immediately if the building was investigated by HSE.

Cllr Benney said it was highly commendable that Mr Weetman was trying to save the pool but it might be easier to build a new pool rather than repair the Empress pool building. Councillors were concerned that they had unjustly been given stick for not supporting the pool bid and pointed out they had spent 20 years trying to preserve swimming in the town.

Cllr Benney warned that if the pool was deemed a public asset it would presumably have to be open to the public and would come under a different set of rules. There might also be covenants of which the Council was unaware. Cllr Petrou pointed out a public pool would need life guards, other health and safety measures and a proper access.

Mr Weetman said the main aim of gaining an Asset of Community Value status was to allow groups to continue using the pool and to stop it being demolished. He said his understanding was that the pool would not have to be open to the public. Cllr Haggata said he believed that those donating money to purchase the pool should be aware of the state of the building. Cllr Murphy warned that there was not one swimming pool in the country that made money; they all lost money.

Mr Weetman was thanked for attending the meeting and left.

43) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

The following item was taken In Committee due to the sensitive nature of the information to be discussed.

44) Chatteris Empress Swimming Pool