

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 5th January 2021

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 5th January 2021 virtually via Zoom video conferencing system.

Present: Councillors L Ashley (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), A Gowler, W Haggata, A Hay, P Murphy, F Newell, M Petrou, J Smith and I Taylor.

174) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Carney and Charrier sent apologies for absence. Cllr Carney submitted comments on items on the agenda ahead of the meeting.

175) 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 FDC's planning committee

176) Open Forum

Four members of the public were welcomed to the meeting. Just one member of the public took the opportunity to speak, Stainless Metalcraft's Commercial Director who had noted that the plans for Metalcraft's training centre were listed for discussion by the Council. He said the company hoped to make progress with the plans as soon as possible but accepted the plans would need to go through the proper processes. He said the company planned to deliver a practical and aesthetically pleasing building and had spent many hours trying to bring the project to fruition however they would be receptive to any suggested alternatives or changes. He thanked the Town Council for their interest in the project.

177) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

It was agreed the Mayor should sign the minutes of the meeting held on 1st December 2020 as a correct record.

178) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 156) Connections Bus: The Clerk reminded members that they had agreed to re-start funding detached youth work sessions by the Connections Bus in January. With a third national lockdown now underway, the Clerk had yet to hear if the plans was still to launch the sessions but the Mayor pointed out it was unlikely as young people should not be around the town.

Cllr Hay proposed that the Town Council should resolve to only begin funding outreach sessions again when restrictions were lifted and the Connections Bus had outlined what they intended to do. This resolution was **agreed**.

179) Police Matters

Members had received a report on information received from the police in the past month as follows:

'Local Police

There has been no report received from Sgt Lugg this month as there was no meeting with council leaders in December. The next scheduled meeting with leaders is later this month.

Neighbourhood Alerts

2/12/20: Request to complete a survey to help police understand how Covid-19 has impacted on people's routine and online activities, crime and their perceptions of it.

4 & 12/12/20: Warning about thefts and attempted thefts of catalytic converters across Cambridgeshire in recent months including advice on most commonly targeted makes of cars.

6/12/20: Request that drivers tailor their driving to weather conditions, particularly in fog and ice.

6/12/20: Advice on how to improve cyber security by taking six actions.

7/12/20: Notification that the police made 12 arrests for drink driving across the county over that weekend, including one in Fenland.

10/12/20: December edition of Our News, the Neighbourhood Watch national newsletter.

10/12/20: Notification that owners of weapons made illegal under the Offensive Weapons Act 2019 are being encouraged to surrender them to the police by the 9th March 2021 under a scheme launched by the Government.

12/12/20: Advice about hiding presents from view if you leave them in a car.

15 & 18/12/20: Advice on how to keep your vehicle safe from thieves and the need for home security.

16/12/20: Thanks to all the Fenland people who supported the constabulary's annual Christmas gift appeal.

18/12/20: Invitation to take part in a survey about cybercrime.

19/12/20: Information about the arrest of a drink driver in Wisbech.

23/12/20: Scam warning from Action Fraud about a surge in reports relating to fake emails and texts purporting to be from DPD with links to fake websites that are designed to steal money and information.

29/12/20: Information about a Subaru spotted in Chatteris which was linked to hare coursing. The driver was arrested for multiple offences.

30/12/20: Warning to follow Tier 4 rules on New Year's Eve.

4/1/21: Notification that an investigation into a woman from Littleport, who plotted to have her ex-husband killed, would be the focus of a two-part special edition of 24 Hours in Police Custody on Channel 4.

5/1/20: Scam alert about fake texts which claim the recipient is entitled to a dose of the newly approved vaccine. A link on the text takes you to a webpage which asks for bank details.

The Mayor confirmed the next meeting between Sgt Lugg and council leaders was scheduled for the 21st January.

Cllr Gowler referred to photographs of drugs paraphernalia found in Meeks Cemetery which had appeared on Facebook over the weekend. He had forwarded the photographs to the police and the Mayor said the needles had been collected but not the glass.

180) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates

No reports had been received. Cllr Murphy said since the last meeting many members of staff at FDC had been off work and others had been seconded to Covid-19 work so little had been happening.

181) Financial Officer's Report

Financial Statement

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 15th December 2020 showing expenditure of £96,560.09 and income of £172,791.75 (includes 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.

182) To Approve Final Budget & Precept For 2021/2022

Members had before the final budget precept report for 2021/22 for consideration approval.

[1] **The main purpose of the report** was to: -

- [a] Highlight variations in the current year (2020/21).
- [b] Approve the base Budget for 2021/22
- [c] Approve the Precept for 2021/22

Members were reminded that the precept was the amount levied on Fenland District Council to be recovered from Council Tax payers in Chatteris to cover the Town Council's net general expenses as shown in the General Fund Budget. The Town Council's Precept was included in Council Tax bills along with the County Council and Police Authority Precepts, and District Council charges.

[2] **Variations 2020/21**

Expenditure not included in the 2020/21 budget

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Additional Costs

Covid-19 Additional grant Chatteris Car Scheme	625
CPALC Membership	1,218
Allotments Road repair	1,265
Citizen Advice Face to Face New Service	1,500
Total Additional Costs	4,608

Savings in 2020/21 were as follows: -

Business Rates – Small Business Rate Relief	-1,950
Staff Salary	-11,000
Gardening Services	-2,000
Insurances	-700
Premises	-3,950
Office Equipment	-1,200
Playgrounds & Rec	-2,500
Mayor’s Allowance	-1,450
Summer Fun	-500
In Bloom Watering Service	-1,200
Connexions Bus	-3,900
Officers Travel & Training	-400
Tree Works	- 200
Meeting Expenses	-300
Civic Newsletter	-900
Various small budget savings	-2,194

Total Savings in Year **- 34,344**

Net Expenditure Total 2020/21 **-29,736**

Original Budget **178,205**

Probable out turn **148,469**

Members were advised that the uncommitted balance in the General Revenue Fund at the 31st March 2021 was likely to be in the region of £105,299 which was considered more than adequate for current financial commitments of the Council.

[3] Budget 2021/2022

Members were advised that **Appendix A** showed detailed figures for the original budget 2020/21 and proposed Budget for 2021/22, summarised as follows: -

	£
Original Budget 2020/21	178,205
Proposed Budget 2021/22	189,234
Difference	11,029

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£

The main variations were as follows: -

Increased / Additional spending

[a]	King Edward Centre Grant	5,000
[b]	Grants to Voluntary Organisations	500
[c]	General Inflation and price adjustments	450
[d]	Allotments	1,400
[e]	Town in Bloom	1,500
[f]	Elections	1,000
[g]	Admin	500
[h]	Citizen's Advice Face to Face service	6,280
[i]	Christmas Lights	500
[j]	Electric Vehicle Charging points	10,000
[k]	Cycle path	10,000
		37,130

Less Non-Recurring Items/Reduced Budgets

[i]	Pay – National living wage & pension contributions decrease	-6,668
[ii]	Premises	-3,200
[iii]	Gardening Services	-1,000
[iv]	Town in Bloom Watering Service	-500
[v]	Recreation Grounds	-2,500
[vi]	Operation London Bridge	-3,000
[vii]	Misc. various income/interest increases	-733
[viii]	Insurances	-300
[viiii]	Office Equipment	-1,200
[x]	Grants towards EVC	-7,000
		-26,101

Net Additional Expenditure Total

11,029

The Budget reflected items [a] King Edward Centre Grant increase to help towards Covid -19 shutdown, [b] Grant increase towards Voluntary Organisations, [c] General inflation and price adjustments, [d] Allotments road repairs ongoing, [e] Town in Bloom general increase and additional increase as watering budget has been decreased (see below in savings), [f] Elections Budget increase to work towards next election, [g] Admin general inflation, [h] Citizen Advice new budget for face-to-face service in the town, [i] Christmas Lights general increase, [j] New budget for Electric Vehicle Charging points in the town, [k] New budget for a cycle path at the Old Railway Line.

The spending powers relevant to the detailed budgets were shown in attached **Appendix B**.

[4] Precept 2021/22

Savings have been made on items: - [i] Staff Pay budget reduced by £6,668, national living

wage & pension contributions decrease, [ii] The Premises budget has been reduced by £3,200 as savings were made due to no major works needed and utilities reduced due to the building not being open as Museum and staff working from home due to covid-19, [iii] Savings have also been made of £1,000 on the gardening services as work was contracted out to a contractor, [iv] Town in Bloom watering service budget has been reduced by £500 as the budget has not been fully spent in the last two years, however the budget for Town in Bloom has been increased as listed above, [v] The Recreation Grounds budget has been reduced by £2,500 due to it being underspent in the last two years, this underspend is because the gardening services are carried out by a contractor therefore no petrol or mileage is taken from this budget, [vi] Operation London Bridge budget was underspent as not required, therefore the underspend has been transferred to a holding account for when it is required, [vii] Various miscellaneous income/interest increases £733, [viii] Insurances budget savings of £300 due to 3-year contract, [ix] Office Equipment savings of £1,200 as no new equipment anticipated, [x] Grants towards the Electric Vehicle Charging points budget.

On this basis the recommended funding of the 2021/22 budget is as follows: -

	£
Proposed Budget	189,234
From Balances (includes rounding)	-38,234
Net Precept 2021/22	151,000

The Financial Officer advised Members that by transferring the above balances from the general fund the proposed recommended Precept of £151,000 remained the same as the last two year's Precept. The uncommitted general fund balances on a full budget spend would still be considered adequate to carry forward into the next financial year.

The effect of the Net Precept (i.e., the figure recovered through Council Tax) was as follows:-

	Net Precept	Tax Base	Band D Effect
2021/22	£151,000	3,357	£44.98 Estimated

The comparison of Nett precept (i.e., the figure recovered through council tax) was as follows:-

	Net Precept	%	Tax Base	Band D Effect	%
2021/22	£151,000	0%	3,357	44.98	
2020/21	£151,000		3,345	45.14	
			12	-16p	-0.36%

Due to the increase in the Tax Base and the Precept remaining the same the Band D cost effect had gone down by 0.36%.

Members were advised that this Tax Base figure provided by Fenland DC was current estimates. Any changes to these figures should have been notified by FDC by the end of December 2020.

[5] Fund Balances

The Financial Officer advised Members that as part of the budget preparation exercise it was appropriate to remind Members of the forecast balances at the 31st March 2021 on the Council's other reserves and funds: -

	£
Old Railway Line Development Fund	615
General Capital Reserve	23,032
Leisure Capital Reserve	95,648
Closed Circuit Television Reserve	25,358

[6] It was RESOLVED that: -

- [i] Probable savings in 2020/21 be noted and approved.
- [ii] A Net Budget for 2021/22 of £189,234 be approved.
- [iii] A Precept of £151,000 be approved for 2021/22.
- [iv] Estimated Reserves and fund balances at the 31st March 2021 be noted.

183) Payment of Accounts

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

Financial Officer	Payroll January 2021	1,086.39
Clerk	Payroll January 2021	1,577.06
Pension Fund	Payroll January 2021	900.20
HMRC	Payroll January 2021	643.71
Zen Internet	Website January - February 2021	10.79
Barclays Bank	Bank charges	8.00
Clerk	Reim. Zoom	14.39
British Gas	Q Gas bill	363.52
CLlr Ashley	Reim. Printer Ink	18.95
Cambs Acre	Membership Renewal	57.00

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Booster Cushion	Summer Fun	318.00
FDC	CCTV Maintenance contribution	21,270.00
Cambs CC	20/21 LHI Contribution Wenny Rd Speed Reduction Scheme	6,000.00
Viking	Stationary Order	157.07
Elizabeth's Florist	Appreciation Bouquet	30.00
Onecom	December's phone bill	76.84
R J Warren	Gardening services	727.50
Total		33,259.42

184) To Approve Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Members were reminded that the Council's current policy was to consider grant applications at the April, July, October and January meetings each year. Budget limitations mean 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. The approved budget for grants in **2020/21** was **£3,500**

Applications for consideration by members were as follows:

Organisation	Recommended Grant
<u>Cambs Search & Rescue</u>	
Grant requested towards thermal imaging cameras that cost £3,000	£150
<u>Friends of Little Acre Pocket Park</u>	
Grant towards tree bark, trugs, gloves and other gardening sundries	£150

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

185) To Agree on Allotment Roadway Quotations

Four quotations had been sought for the repairs to the south side roadway at the allotments, including the provision of four bollards to protect the water meter, and three had been received as follows:

Company A £4,200; Company B £3,700; Company C £2,850.

The Clerk pointed out company B was quoting to supply 50 tonnes of plainings and Company C just 15. Councillors asked if it would be possible to get the plainings for free from the County Council and the Clerk admitted this was a possibility although the Town Council might have already received its share as it had been given plainings for the north side roadway.

It was agreed to ask the contractors for the price of the plainings. Councillors favoured awarding the contract to Company B as they were keen that the repairs should last for a number of years.

186) Planning

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the minutes of the planning working group meeting held on Tuesday 15th December 2020 (**copy attached**).

The working group made recommendations on applications a) to i) (as shown on the **appended list**) and these were ratified by the full council.

The Council then considered a further four applications and agreed to return all to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council marked as follows:

- a) Support but request contribution towards road safety improvements on the A142 as scheme will result in more slow moving, heavy vehicles on the A142.
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support (Cllr Gowler abstained from the vote)
- e) Noted (Cllr Gowler abstained from the vote)
- f) Support
- g) Support
- h) Recommend Refusal, lack of detailed plan, concerns about drainage and servicing property, beyond development boundary, will set dangerous precedent
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Support (Cllr Hay abstained from the vote)
- l) Support, tree should be replaced as stated in application
- m) Fully Support, fantastic project, will be a great asset to Chatteris. If possible members would like to see some form of safe pedestrian/cyclist crossing across the A141.

187) To Formally Approve Growing Fenland Project Idea

New Build Project Idea Confirmation

Members were reminded that at an informal meeting of Chatteris Town Council, held on Tuesday 8th December 2020, they discussed the idea of using a substantial amount of the money set aside for the Growing Fenland – Chatteris project on a new building adjoining the library.

After much discussion it was agreed to request plans be drawn up for a building to house the museum at ground floor level with a residential flat or flats above. The flats would bring in an income to subsidise the running costs of the museum. New premises would allow the museum to expand.

Moving the museum out of 14 Church Lane would then enable the Town Council to refigure a building they owned. It would enable the creation of a larger Council Chambers, an office for the Financial Officer, a small meeting room and more storage space. To pay for the conversion costs a residential flat could be created on the first floor which would be rented out. Additional space downstairs could be used to create a community room or commercial office.

The ideas for the new build were subsequently conveyed to the FDC Officer and the Development Consultant working on the project and the Clerk said plans were now being drawn up and costings obtained for the new build. These would then be used to apply for the funding from the Combined Authority.

The Clerk said as the above was agreed at an informal meeting the ideas needed to be formally approved by the Council.

It was therefore **recommended** that the Council agree that plans should be drawn up which would be used to apply for a substantial proportion of the funds set aside for the Growing Fenland – Chatteris Project. The plans to be for a new building adjoining the library to house the museum on the ground floor with residential accommodation above.

Members **resolved** to accept the recommendation.

Renaissance Project Agreement

The Clerk further reported that she and the Financial Officer had spent the previous day going through a 39 page document outlining the terms of the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority's offer for the Chatteris Town Centre Renaissance Project (a fund totalling £92,000).

The grant funding agreement would need to be signed by the Applicant's Representative – the Clerk, as FDC had transferred all responsibility for the project to the Town Council.

- 1) The Clerk said she was therefore seeking full authority to act on behalf of the Applicant (the Town Council) for the purposes of the agreement.
- 2) She was also seeking authority to delegate powers under the agreement, if necessary, to the Financial Officer by notice in writing to the Combined Authority.
- 3) She then asked if the Council wished her to seek legal advice from either an FDC legal officer (at a cost) or an independent solicitor before signing the agreement?

Members **agreed** to points 1) and 2).

Councillors Hay and Murphy agreed it would be best to seek legal advice from an FDC legal officer as they would be familiar with the agreement document having looked at similar documents for other towns, the cost was, therefore, likely to be substantially less than consulting an independent solicitor.

The Clerk said by the end of the week she and the Financial Officer planned to have completed two outstanding documents – the Project Milestones and the Project Outcomes and Outputs – and would then begin work on obtaining quotations for the street furniture refurbishment work and advertising the grant fund available to local businesses to improve the appearance of their town centre buildings.

The Financial Officer warned there would be a substantial amount of work involved in delivering the project as tenders would need to be sought from contractors to carry out the work. Cllrs Haggata, Ashley, Murphy, Smith and Gowler all kindly offered to help in any way they could.

188) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Smith (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure meeting held on the 8th December 2020 (**copy attached**).

Min L30) Street Scene: The Clerk reported that the occupant of the bungalow in St Martin's Road, who had rubbish piling up in his garden, had been contacted by Clarion Housing following an investigation by the Street Scene officer. He had claimed he was waiting for a skip to take the rubbish away. Both Clarion and the Street Scene officer had promised to monitor the situation.

Min L30) Leisure Centre: Cllr Hay said thanks to the latest national lockdown the leisure centre was closed again and would not be opening any time soon.

Min L32) Pocket Park: Cllr Smith said another meeting of FLAPP was planned (via Zoom) and arrangements would be made for more planting. The group was still pursuing its plans to install an information board at the pond.

Min L33) EVCs: The Clerk said FDC was not in favour of the installation of EVCs at Furrowfields Car Park at present but she would explain more at the next leisure meeting (on the 19th January).

Min L34) Sculpture Trail: Cllr Smith said she had receive a positive response from the graphic artist she had approached about drawing up a plan to show the location of the sculptures.

189) Ideas for Updating Council Website

The Clerk had been fortunate to contact the website designer who set up the Council's website and he had indicated he was willing and able to update the website so it met the accessibility compliance criteria. He also asked if the Council had any other ideas for updating the website.

The Clerk asked anyone with ideas to contact her and it was agreed the matter would be discussed at the next leisure meeting.

190) Conservation Area Appraisal Update

The Leader of Fenland District Council, Cllr Chris Boden, had responded to the planning working group's request that FDC should carry out a long overdue appraisal of the conservation area in Chatteris.

Cllr Boden said the request was timely as considerable informal discussion had taken place recently between some FDC Members about FDC's policy towards Conservation Areas within Fenland. The enthusiasm and engagement of local Town and Parish Councils was recognised as being clearly highly valuable.

As part of FDC's budget considerations for next year, and as part of its Medium Term Financial Strategy, members would be considering their options and priorities, and as and when any options relating to Conservation Areas were firmed up Cllr Boden said he looked forward to consultation with all of the relevant Town and Parish Councils in the District, as they were clearly significant stakeholders in the matter.

Cllr Smith asked if the town's district councillors had any further information on the likelihood of there being a budget for an appraisal. Cllr Benney admitted it was still up in the air and the emerging Local Plan could change things. Cllr Gowler pointed out changes to the planning system were being proposed through the new white paper and he was against spending money on an appraisal which might be defunct in a couple of years' time.

Cllr Smith asked if there was anything more the Town Council could do to feed into the process as she was keen not to have to wait another two years. Cllr Benney said FDC were fully aware an appraisal was needed and work was being considered as part of the Local Plan. Cllr Murphy agreed and said it could not be rushed through as the Government was involved.

Cllr Benney said FDC's sole conservation officer did not have the time to carry out appraisals as the officer was busy with planning applications. Another person would be required to carry out appraisals and that person would be expensive to employ; even the process of employing someone took a great deal of time. However the portfolio holder for planning was looking at possible ways of funding someone to carry out appraisals.

191) HR Panel Update

Cllr Haggata said the panel had met for the first time the previous day and planned another meeting in February. After that the members would begin the appraisals process.

192) Traffic Issues

New Road Humps: The Clerk had written to Highways regarding concerns about the height of the speed cushions in New Road asking them to either reduce the height or remove the cushions. Highways had responded saying that unless the cushions exceeded the permitted tolerances there was no funding available to adjust or remove them. The householder who had complained about the cushions had written to Highways about the excessive vibration and noise generated by heavy vehicles going over the speed cushions and stated that he believed the cushions were above the recommended height.

Cllr Haggata said he was against removing the cushions unless they were above regulation height as they had been installed to prevent accidents. Cllr Murphy agreed reminding members they were installed several years ago as residents of New Road were concerned about speeding, even though cars were parked on both sides of the road. Cllr Gowler suggested they were the wrong type of speed cushions as motorists rode down the middle of the road to straddle them so they had never achieved their aim. The Mayor said the cushions outside the resident's home were away from the school and were higher than all the over speed humps and cushions. She supported the cushions being inspected and either removed or reduced in height if they did not conform to standards.

York Road: Further correspondence had been received about the parking issues in York Road. The author said the Barnes Gardens management company had been berated on social media and verbally abused for installing Flash Park signs to control parking. The author said this was a last resort and had come about because residents did not understand that Barnes Gardens was a private road covered by a Deed of Covenant people which prevented motorists from parking on the road. A turning area was provided for the use of all residents. Cllr Gowler, who had tried to intervene, explained it was a neighbourhood dispute between three sets of people, those who lived in Barnes Gardens, those who lived in York Road and had nowhere to park so wanted double yellow lines removed and those who did not want the yellow lines to be removed. He pointed out it was a historic situation which had arisen as many of the houses were built when there were few or no cars. However those living in York Road had moved in knowing there was no parking provision. Cllrs Hay and Taylor said they had sympathy for all those involved but all the residents needed to work together. Cllr Benney said the yellow lines at the end of York Road were installed to provide a turning area which was no longer required as the turning area was now in Barnes Gardens. The Clerk reminded members the yellow lines could be removed but the residents would have to pay for their removal as a new traffic order would be required.

Disabled Parking Bays: A message had been received via the Council's website asking Cllr Hay to chase up the re-painting of the disabled parking bays throughout Chatteris as the lines were barely distinguishable and were abused by many. Cllr Hay said she had chased up the bays in the High Street in the past and had been promised they would be done but Highways did not have the manpower to check all parking bays. She said if anyone came to her and pointed out a bay where the lines were badly faded she would chase it up. Cllr Benney confirmed the lines in the town centre had been re-painted, he believed in the summer.

Cllr Gowler said the road markings which indicated the crossing point for the lollipop lady on Station Street needed to be renewed. They were close to the junction with Burnsfield Street. The lollipop lady had complained because they were so faded that motorists parked on them.

Temporary Road Closures: Notification had been received of temporary road closures in January to allow for roadworks and carriageway crack sealing works. The road affected were Newlands Road, Blackmill Road and Wimpole Street.

Roadworks: The latest bulletins listing road works and events affecting the highway had been received along with the IHMC incident report for November.

193) Correspondence

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

194) Reports

There were no reports.

195) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.