

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

Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 9th February 2021

Present: Cllrs J Smith (Chairman), L Ashley, I Benney, A Charrier, A Hay and F Newell.

L47 20/21 Apologies for Absence

Cllrs Carney and Gowler sent apologies for absence.

L48 20/21 FDC Update

Zip Line: Mr Phil Hughes had sent a report that the old zip line unit had been removed from Wenny Recreation Ground as it was unsafe and rotten and a metal replacement, which would hopefully be vandal proof, would be installed at the top end of the park where it was covered by CCTV.

Cemeteries: Mr Hughes confirmed Meeks Cemetery was in need of attention and said in the first instance he would ask Tivoli to carry out some clearance works at the entrance to the cemetery, up until the corridor of trees. He admitted a great deal of work was needed after that point but said FDC could not afford to do all the work so he would contact the probation team to enquire about them carrying out clearance works in selected areas with Tivoli then removing the cleared debris. Mr Hughes said the ultimate aim was to encourage a Friends group who could carry out regular targeted work in both Meeks and the New Road cemeteries where there were large open spaces and areas where it was necessary to be mindful of nature. Such areas were not good for a grounds maintenance contracts. It was hoped to push the idea post Covid-19 as it would allow more interaction with nature and help to bring communities together for healthier, happier people.

Cllr Ashley confirmed a lot of people visited Meeks Cemetery but Cllr Smith warned it would take a special effort to get a Friends group together. Members agreed it was a good idea to ask probation to carry out some work if the rubbish was taken away.

L49 20/21 Matters Arising from the Last Meeting of the Group

L40 Sculpture Trail: Cllr Smith had contacted the organiser of the caterpillar trail of pebbles in the churchyard who had explained parents had been asked to collect their pebbles and varnish them to preserve the decorations (any not collected would also be varnished). The Vicar had also confirmed that there had been talks about making a permanent display of the pebbles. It was suggested the caterpillar could be curled around and a display created on the slabs at the rear of the Church. Cllr Carney had also suggested the flower bed at the corner of Station Road and Station Street as a possible location. The Clerk agreed to mention the possible locations to the Vicar and it was hoped she and the organiser would manage to sort out the permanent display.

L42 EVCs: The Clerk said she had sent an email regarding EVCs to Cllr Chris Boden but had not received a reply.

Cllr Smith asked if the town Councillors on FDC could help to drive the project forward. Cllr Benney said there appeared to be no desire at FDC for EVCs because they took away parking spaces but he did admit that 2030 was fast approaching and personally he was in favour of them as they might bring visitors to the town centre and there was no shortage of parking spaces on Furrowfields car park.

Cllr Hay said the County Council was very keen to push forward the provision of EVCs but most of the council's work at present was concentrated on Covid-19. There were plans to install EVCs on new housing estates. She suggested launching an on-line consultation with members of the public to get a groundswell of support for the idea.

Cllr Smith pointed out the Town Council had done a lot of the work looking into EVCs and was not looking for money from the other councils, just permission to use a couple of the parking spaces at Furrowfields car park. She said there was no sign of new housing estates being built in the town.

Cllr Benney agreed to raise the issue of the Town Council using spaces in Furrowfields car park with Cllr Jan French at FDC.

L44 Council's website: The Clerk confirmed she had given the Council's website designer the go-ahead to update the website and ensure it complied with the accessibility requirements.

L50 20/21 Little Acre Fen Pocket Park Update

Cllr Smith reported builders' rubble had been dumped near the pocket park – the Clerk assured her this had been reported to FDC. She also reported the Friends of the Park had been busy planting hedging donated by the Council's contractors and rectifying some vandalism. This included the water butt in the Anglian Water compound which had been pushed over. Fortunately Cllr Carney was present when workmen were in the compound and was able to re-install the container. The pond was very full due to all the recent rain. Cllr Smith said Cllr Carney had applied for more funding for new signage at the park and the group was still hoping to organise an official opening of the park when it was allowed. The Clerk said the contractors had promised to rectify some damage caused when one of the gardeners drove on to the site when the ground was waterlogged. She did point out the gardener had been doing a favour for FLAPP by delivering the hedging plants to the site.

L51 20/21 Chatteris In Bloom

Cllr Smith was delighted to tell members that Chatteris in Bloom had decided to take up the invitation to enter the 2021 RHS Britain in Bloom competition. The invitation was very prestigious and was recognition of the hard work which had gone in to the In Bloom entries over the years and the Gold awards the group had won.

Cllr Hay said the story had made the front page of the Fenland Citizen where it said that Chatteris was one of only 5 towns from the Anglian region to go forward to the Britain in

Bloom competition. She asked the Clerk to pass on the Town Council's congratulations and thanks for all the hard work over the years.

Cllr Smith said the competition would be judged virtually. Chatteris in Bloom were eligible to enter 5 categories but had decided to play to their strengths and enter the community effort and care of the natural environment categories. People would be encouraged to get involved in whatever way was possible due to Covid. One of the showcase areas for community effort would be the roundabout at Wenny Estate where the plan was to focus on the agricultural heritage of Chatteris. There were plans to install two wicker figures on the roundabout and the group was likely to seek grant funding from the Council to help with the costs. Cllr Smith warned there were also likely to be additional watering costs as the floral beds were some way from the town centre.

Cllr Smith warned In Bloom would have to up their game and might need other financial help but she pointed out entry into the Britain in Bloom competition was a real boost for Chatteris as it was so prestigious.

Cllr Hay urged councillors to look at any applications for extra funds on a positive note and suggested the public would feel the extra expenditure was justified. Cllr Smith said the competition would benefit the community – not only those taking part but those who observed and appreciated the displays.

Cllr Smith said it might be possible to include the willow figures in her artwork trail if they were created. So far she had identified for her trail: the Batman graffiti figure near Aldi, the mural on the underpass to Jacks, the town sign, the fox and hen sculptures outside the library, the pebble caterpillar trail, the train in Huntingdon Road, the Si Mitchell graffiti at the skatepark and the Fen Tiger sculpture at the Pocket Park. Cllr Smith said a piece of artwork was needed in the centre of town and she suggested possibly commissioning an ironwork sculpture from a local artist.

L52 20/21 Any Other Business

Victoria Street: Cllr Hay said she had made enquiries about the installation of bollards on the path in Victoria Street to stop motorists (visiting the vets) blocking a driveway. She was meeting the local highways officer the following day to discuss if it was possible and the likely cost. Cllr Hay said the householder might be prepared to fund the bollards herself. Cllr Smith was concerned it might displace the problem but Cllr Hay reassured her that there were few dropped kerbs on that site of the road.

Buses: Cllr Hay was delighted to announce the launch of a new bus service from March to St Ives (via Chatteris) where passengers could pick up connections to Cambridge and Addenbrookes. At present the scheme had government funding and the County Council had six months to show it was of benefit to the area. Cllr Hay said she was encouraging Chatteris residents to use the service although she was aware there should be no non-essential travel. There were four two-way journeys daily with the final bus leaving St Ives at 5pm.

School: Cllr Hay also commented that the Cromwell Community College extension was looking “fantastic”. She said it was important to emphasise how good the project was especially as Chatteris was the first town to have a 4 to 18 years school. The primary phase would ensure that in future small children would not have to be bussed to Wimblington or Manea as there would be sufficient school places in the town. Councillors asked why the school had opened with just reception year pupils and Cllr Hay explained it would increase in capacity over the next three or four years but there would have been insufficient numbers in other school years to justify those classes and children’s education would have been disrupted if they had moved from other schools.

Face to Face Meetings: The Clerk had been advised by NALC to start preparing for face to face meetings as the regulations which allowed local authorities to hold meetings remotely only applied to meetings held before 7th May 2021. In view of lockdown it was hoped this date would be extended but in case this did not happen councils were advised to conduct as much business as possible before the 7th May, consider if meetings could be delayed until later in the year, implement a scheme of delegation or conduct a risk assessment in advance of face to face meetings. A long list of requirements for such meetings was included such as wearing face masks, placing seating at least 2-metres apart, carefully choosing a large enough venue and ensure the venue capacity was no exceeded.

It was agreed the King Edward Centre would be the best place for face to face meetings as the Council Chambers were not large enough. The main hall at the centre would provide sufficient room for all councillors with some space for members of the public. It might be necessary for members of the public to book a place at the meeting.

The Clerk reminded members that the Annual Town Council meeting was due to be held on the 4th May ahead of the deadline and said she was fairly confident that the regulations would be extended past the 7th May.

Celebrations: A Chatteris Rotary Club member had contacted the Council asking if it planned to hold an event to celebrate the end of Covid and “a step back to normality”. The Rotary Club asked to be informed of any plans and suggested the town would welcome such an event. The Clerk had already explained that it was hoped some form of Midsummer Festival would go ahead, if allowed. Cllr Hay urged caution and said the most important thing was for families to be able to meet again. She said she believed it would be 2022 before any event could be organised. Cllr Benney agreed suggesting the vaccine was not the magic bullet as Covid-19 was mutating. Cllr Smith suggested following the lead of other towns.

L53 20/21 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 9th March 2021.