

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 4th May 2021

2180

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Minutes of the annual meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4th May 2021 virtually via Zoom video conferencing system.

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

1) Election of Mayor

Cllr Haggata proposed Cllr Ashley as Mayor for a third year; seconded by Cllr Hay, who pointed out the past year had been unprecedented and Cllr Ashley had been unable to undertake many of the Mayoral roles due to the pandemic so she deserved another year. Members unanimously agreed Cllr Ashley should continue as Mayor for a third year. The Clerk explained the Standing Orders restricted the Mayoral term of office to two years but it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders and Cllr Ashley was duly elected to serve for a third term.

Cllr Ashley thanked members for supporting her and said it had been a difficult year but she had been working in the background for the good of the town and hoped to be able to get out and about in the coming year.

2) Election of Deputy Mayor

Cllr Ashley proposed Cllr Ian Benney be re-elected Deputy Mayor for a third year, seconded by Cllr Newell and agreed by all. Cllr Benney was duly elected as Deputy Mayor. Cllr Benney promised to do his best for the town.

3) 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.

4) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs J Carney and A Charrier.

5) Appointments to Outside Bodies

Members agreed to represent the Town Council on outside bodies as follows:

King Edward Centre Trustees – Cllrs Ashley and Newell

Safer Fenland CCTV Partner Liaison – Cllrs Benney, Carney and Gowler

Red Tile Wind Farm Trust – Cllr Hay
Chatteris In Bloom and Street Pride – Cllrs Murphy and Smith
Isle of Ely Blind Society – Cllr Murphy
Museum Trust – Cllrs Ashley, Hay and Newell
Midsummer Festival – Cllrs Ashley, Benney and Newell
Transport Committee – Cllrs Haggata and Newell
Feoffee Charity – Cllrs Newell and Smith
Metalcraft Charity Fund – Cllr Hay (Cllr Smith as substitute)

6) Election of Working Groups

Members said they were willing to serve on the working groups as follows:

Leisure and General Purposes: Cllrs Ashley, Benney, Carney, Charrier, Hay, Newell and Smith.

Planning: Cllrs Ashley, Carney, Gowler, Haggata, Newell, Petrou and Smith.

7) To Approve Mayor's Allowance

Members considered approving the Mayor's Allowance for 2021/22 as shown in the budget. It was **resolved** that an allowance of up to £1,550 be paid to the Mayor in respect of expenses incurred in the performance of official duties under the scheme approved by the Council on 11th January 2011 and in accordance with HM Revenue and Customs Regulations.

8) Open Forum

There were two members of the public present who declined the invitation to speak so it was agreed to move on to the next item on the agenda.

9) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6th April 2021 were agreed to be signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

10) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 252) Zoom Meetings: The Clerk had received notification that the High Court application to allow Zoom meetings of Councils to continue had been dismissed. As a result all councils had to return to holding physical meetings from 7th May. The Clerk informed members that the June meeting of Chatteris Town Council would be held in the King Edward Centre. Cllr Murphy commented that FDC were planning to hold meetings at the Hudson Centre in Wisbech.

Min 248) Library Grant: Further to the Council's agreement that the £350 grant approved for the library's Summer Reading Challenge in 2020 could be used for activities in 2021, the Council had received a letter from the Head of Libraries asking for more support for the Summer Reading Challenge. The letter pointed out that due to the disruption of children's schooling and the lack of opportunities to socialise it was felt the reading challenge had an even more important part to play in helping to recover children's reading levels, promoting re-socialisation and enhancing language skills and supporting children's well-being. Restrictions imposed by Covid meant additional resources would be needed to ensure as many families as possible were able to take part in and benefit from the Challenge. The Financial Officer suggested the Council should give a further £350 grant from its grant budget for 2021/22. Cllr Hay suggested the Council should have proof the library would be spending more than usual on the scheme but members voted and **agreed to give a further grant of £350** based on the information contained in the letter. (Cllr Smith had declared an interest and took no part in the vote).

Min 242) Connections Bus: The Clerk had received notification that the Connections Bus Project had obtained permission to use both Furrowfields Car Park and Wenny Road Recreation Ground as a venue for their Youth Club from a Van project. The project was looking to start the week beginning 17th May. Project manager Mr Alan Webb asked if the Council wished the van to visit both sites as detached youth workers had only seen young people at Wenny Rec. Members agreed they did wish the van to alternate between the two venues and for the Connections Bus to monitor the situation and report back.

11) Police Matters

The Mayor said she had requested a meeting between councillors and Sgt Lugg either via Teams or face to face. She commented that the current system where Mayors and Chairmen met monthly with Sgt Lugg via Teams worked well and addressed concerns.

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

'Local Police

A confidential report from Sgt Richard Lugg has been forwarded by email as have the crime figures for April 2021. The report follows a meeting between Sgt Lugg, the Mayor and other Council leaders from the Fenland area held on the 30th April 2021.

Neighbourhood Alerts

7/4/21: April 'Our News' newsletter from Neighbourhood Watch.

19/4/21: Request for recipients of Neighbourhood Alerts to provide feedback about the Alert system and the messages received.

24/4/21: Results of the national survey of the Neighbourhood Alert system in 2020 and local version.'

12) FDC, Street Scene, CCTV & Section 106 Updates

The latest updates were noted by members (**see attached**).

Cllr Smith asked if the replacement Street Scene Officer could be asked to note blocked drains when she was patrolling the streets as many were blocked with detritus such as straw. Cllr Murphy said it was up to Anglian Water to sort the problem of blocked drains.

13) Consideration and Approval of Annual Governance Statement Part 1 (AGAR 2020/21)

Members had before them Section 1 of the Agar 2020/21 Annual Governance Statement both (attached).

The Financial Officer reminded Members that the Annual Governance Statement set out the assurances that Members were required to attest to in Section 1 of the AGAR 2020/21, together with qualification of each section to enable the Council to provide the required assurance over the signatures of the Mayor and the Clerk.

This was to be considered and approved in advance of the Accounting Statements (section 2 of the AGAR) and minuted accordingly.

The paragraph numbers and the headings in bold in corresponded to the individual parts of the Governance Statement contained in the 2020/21 AGAR.

It was **Resolved** that: -

The Annual Governance Statement as detailed had been considered and approved by the Members as a whole for signature by the Mayor and the Clerk prior to the approval of the Accounting Statements.

14) Approval of the Accounting Statements (Section 2 Agar 2020/21) and the Annual Return with amendments

[1] Introduction

Members had before them the Annual Return report and Accounting Statements (Section 2 of Annual Governance and Accountability Return for 2020/21) for Member's consideration and approval.

The Accounting Statements required approval after the Annual Governance Statement had been approved and both to be minuted accordingly.

[2] Type of Audit

Members were reminded that the Council's accounts for 2020/21 should attract a 'Basic' audit as neither the total income nor the total expenditure for 2020/21 exceeded £200,000.

[3] Annual Governance (See Separately under Agenda Item No 13)

This was considered and approved in advance of the Accounting Statements.

[4] The Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR 2020/21)

Members were advised that Financial Officer was required to certify and sign the document in advance of the Council meeting. The Mayor was required to sign the document after approval by Council. As required the Accounting Statement was approved after the approval of the Annual Governance Statement. The minute reference has been recorded for both accordingly.

[5] Statement of Accounts

(The detailed Statement of Accounts is **attached** (Balance Sheet).

Members were asked to consider approval of the reports, balance sheet, and bank reconciliation as detailed in the Annual Return.

[6] It was **Resolved** that: -

[i] The Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR 2020/21) certified by the Financial Officer and endorsed by the Mayor be approved.

[ii] The detailed accounts, bank reconciliation and analyses of the Annual Return for 2020/21, as submitted be noted and approved.

15) Accounts for Payment

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

Financial Officer	Payroll May 2022	1,088.19
Clerk	Payroll May 2022	1,578.86
Pension Fund	Payroll May 2022	900.20
HMRC	Payroll May 2022	638.73
Came & Co	Insurance Renewal re Museum	993.92
Barclays Bank	Bank Charges	6.50
Zen Internet	Website May-June	10.79
British Gas	Elec Bill	321.09
R J Warren	Gardening Services	727.50
J Papworth	Youth Club 1st term payment	1,200.00

Ben Payne	Allotment roadway repairs	2185 6 of 11 3,700.00
D Stimson	Window Cleaner	180.00
Suffolk & Cambs Bloodrunners	Grant vol org	200.00
Onecom	April monthly phone bill	80.99
cf Corporate	Q photocopier lease	239.95
F/O	Reim petty cash	59.44
Clerk	Reim monthly Zoom payment	14.39
Wave	LHS Allotments water bill	176.56
Wave	RHS Allotments water bill	122.07
Wave	Council offices water bill	52.90
Capalc	Annual affiliation fee renewal	1,305.30
Total		13,597.38

16) Planning

ClIr Haggata presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 27th April 2021 (**copy attached**). Members made recommendations on planning applications a) to l) (as shown on the appended list) with the exception of h) as the group was split on a decision. The application was discussed again along with one further application and it was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support will be an improvement
- b) Support will be an improvement
- c) Support
- d) Support
- e) Support
- f) Recommend Refusal, would not object to works but strongly object to felling as the tree is in good condition, was present before the house was built and is covered by a Tree Preservation Order. The development was called Sycamore Crescent because of this tree.

- g) Support
- h) Support subject to the flat only being used as accommodation for a member of staff.
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Support
- l) Support Councillors can confirm there has been one caravan on site for a significant number of years and they would support one remaining but the second must be removed. Councillors request clarification on which caravan is to be removed. (Cllr Gowler abstained)
- m) Support

17) Growing Fenland Project Update

Members had received the following report:

‘Renaissance Project Update

Businesses: With the help of Fenland District Council letters have gone out to all business rates payers in the centre of town outlining the Renaissance Project.

There has already been considerable interest in the grant fund which must be spent on refurbishment works such as re-painting and minor repairs to trading premises and initiatives to improve the appearance of empty properties. Applicants must pledge to contribute 40% of the total cost of the works proposed and the maximum level of grant is £5,000; there is no lower limit.

The Clerk, Financial Officer and the Mayor have already met and considered applications covering six premises and all or part of the works proposed were agreed, some subject to formal quotations or planning permission being granted. The amount offered so far amounts to £14,306 of the £50,000 fund pot. The works proposed range from a simple paint up of the front of the premises to new shop fronts.

Requests for application forms are being answered swiftly and the group will be meeting regularly to consider applications. Over the next month the Clerk and Financial Officer will also be targeting premises which are obviously in need of repair/refurbishment. It is hoped that more retailers will become aware of the scheme once improvement works begin.

Street Furniture: A specification for the works required to the street furniture was drawn up by the Financial Officer and sent out to five companies who expressed an interest in quoting for the work. Those quotations are due back in May.

In addition Balfour Beatty were asked to quote to re-paint the heritage street lights owned by the County Council in the town centre and Cabletest were asked to quote for the street lights and CCTV posts owned by FDC. Those quotations have been received and approved and officers are now waiting for a start date.

It is hoped work on the street furniture will be completed by the autumn.

Museum and 14 Church Lane Project

Unfortunately the bid for the project to re-locate the museum and redevelop 14 Church Lane did not go before the Combined Authority Board in March as it was missing information and notification of the additional information required was given too late for it to be accumulated.

However Mr Phil Hughes at FDC has been working with the Clerk and the Museum Curator on compiling the information required with a view to the bid being submitted to the board in June. Mr Hughes has written a business plan for the museum and it is hoped that this along with evidence of the Town Council's commitment to continue giving a grant to the museum and to give match funding for the project and details of the new community facility will be sufficient for the project to be presented to the Combined Authority for consideration on June 30th.

The Clerk and Mr Hughes are due to meet with CPCA assessors on the 4th May to clarify if all the information required to take the bid to the board has been collated.'

The Clerk confirmed she and Mr Hughes had met with the assessors earlier in the day and guidance had been given on how to re-write the business plan for the museum and how to put forward suitable economic measures on which to assess the projects impact. The bid was due to be considered by the Combined Authority Board on 30th June.

18) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Smith (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on 13th April 2021 (**copy attached**).

Cllr Haggata asked if any members had suggestions to put forward to the Fenland Transport Advisory Group Walking and Cycling committee, of which he was a member. He said several plans had already been put forward, including how cycle routes could also be safely used by electric cycles. Cllr Haggata stressed the need to put forward ideas for Chatteris. Cllr Smith said suggested ideas for possible cycle routes had been put forward several years ago and she was also keen to see walking routes beside waterways and a public footpath link from Chatteris to Horseway Lock.

Cllr Smith invited all members along to the next meeting of the Leisure Group on the 11th May as two representatives of the Think Communities Project were due to attend and outline their work.

The Clerk said she would be meeting Kerrie Tonks, a youth and community co-ordinator the following day to discuss youth provision in Chatteris. Cllr Hay said she had been approached about the lack of a youth club for children aged 13 and above in Chatteris. She asked for ideas of how a youth club could be facilitated. The Clerk pointed out the Council did fund youth work by the Connections Bus Project which was aimed at teenagers.

19) Consideration of Complaint

The Clerk advised members that she had been contacted by a member of the public stating his complaint, which dated back to March 2020, had not been properly considered.

Although the complainant was supplied with all the information he requested and, as a result of his complaint, the Council adopted a Recording of Meetings Policy, he was not satisfied and wished the Council to follow its Code of Practice for Handling Complaints (**copy attached**).

The Clerk had sought the advice of CAPALC and the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council, as the complaint was against the whole council, but neither had been able to assist in a meaningful way and it therefore fell to the Council to follow its complaints procedure.

In order to do this the Council needed to set up a committee to hear the complaint and set a date for a meeting when the complaint would be heard. The Clerk suggested a committee of 3 or 4 members along with the Clerk should suffice.

The complainant would be invited to attend the relevant meeting and bring with him such representative as he wished. He had to provide the Council with copies of documentation or other evidence he wished to refer to seven clear working days before the meeting and the Council had similarly to provide the complainant with copies of any documentation upon which it wished to rely at the meeting within the same time frame.

Cllrs Ashley, Benney, Gowler and Hay agreed to form the committee (Cllr Hay pointed out she had experience of hearing complaints against councillors having previously sat on FDC's Conducts Committee). It was suggested the complaint hearing should be held on a Friday afternoon at a date to be agreed. The Clerk said she would use the latest advice to decide if the meeting should be on-line or face to face and if face to face would ensure the location was Covid safe.

20) Traffic Issues

Complaints

Station Street: The Financial Officer had received a phone call from a resident of Station Street concerned about speeding along the road which he feared would lead to casualties. The problem was particularly bad at teatime. Cllr Gowler said he had also been approached and asked if it was possible to either lower the speed limit or introduce traffic calming. Cllr Gowler had pointed out it would be difficult to enforce a reduced speed limit. Cllr Gowler suggested parking along the road was a bigger problem as it wasn't really possible to travel along the road at more than 30mph.

Cllr Smith acknowledged that there was more traffic and parking along the road, due to additional development, but suggested the parking slowed the traffic and Station Street was probably no worse than other roads in the town.

Clare Street: Cllr Gowler had also been approached by a resident of Clare Street concerned about the volume of traffic using the A141 past her home. She had counted the number of lorries, tractors and vans using the road over a one hour period. The resident said noise levels

from the A141 were unacceptable, she was woken at nights by the noise from the road, the speed limit was too high, there was a dangerous pedestrian crossing over the road, the road surface was in a “disgusting” state of repair, noise levels meant she was unable to enjoy their garden, many vehicles used Station Street and Clare Street and took the corner at dangerous speeds and there was a problem with noise from the factory across from the A141.

The resident requested a lowering of the speed limit on the A141 to 30mph, the erection of sound barriers, a pedestrian crossing over the A141 and repairs to the road surface.

Councillors pointed out the A141 bypass had been in existence since 1982 and in years gone by the railway had run past Clare Street. They suggested the resident must have been aware of the road, which was a major route, and the factory when she purchased her home.

Members did agree repairs to the road surface were required as was a safe pedestrian crossing but pointed out a 30mph limit could not be imposed and enforced on an A-road on the outskirts of the town. It was suggested if you bought a house near a main road you must expect a level of noise and after a while you became used to it. Cllr Benney said of more major concern was the Slade End roundabout which desperately required alterations but the funding could not be found for that.

The Clerk informed members that she had reported that the yellow lines were faded and barely visible in Clare Street and this was leading to parking problems and she had received notification that work to address the issue would be carried out in the current financial year.

Bus services: The Clerk had received notification of a temporary suspension of the Milton Park and Ride service in Cambridge so resources could be used on other routes seeing a greater demand for services. Cllr Hay said she would look into the issue if she was re-elected to Cambridgeshire County Council.

Members agreed they were strongly opposed to the move as it was an essential service for those living in the north of the county and those in the south should not be given priority.

Updates: The Clerk had received updates on the A47 Guyhirn Junction improvements and the Ouse Washes project.

Works: The Clerk had received regular updates on the micro asphalt/gripfibre works programme for roads around the County but Chatteris was never mentioned.

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

Newsletter: The first edition of a new quarterly e-newsletter for Stagecoach East stakeholders had been received.

21) Correspondence

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

HRH Prince Philip: A letter of condolence from the Council and the town had been sent to Buckingham Palace on the death of HRH Prince Philip. The letter, which included comments posted on the Council’s website from residents, had been signed by the Mayor who had received a “lovely” letter back thanking her for the condolences and assuring her the message had been passed to Her Majesty the Queen.

22) Reports

The Clerk had submitted a written report on an online meeting she had attended to discuss the Support Fenland project. The meeting was for statutory sector officers in Fenland and discussed the voluntary and community sector and what support was needed to help the sector flourish. A Support Fenland meeting for community groups was due to be held on the 5th May with a further meeting planned for councillors, which the Clerk urged members to attend so Chatteris' voice could be heard.

23) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

The following item was held **In Committee** due to the confidential nature of the business to be discussed. Members of the public, the Clerk and the Financial Officer were asked to leave the meeting.

24) Officers' Appraisals: To Agree Recommendations