

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 1st June 2021

2191

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 1st June 2021 at the King Edward Centre, Chatteris.

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

25) To Accept Apologies for Absence

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

26) Declarations of Interest and Dispensations to Speak and Vote on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items & Request for Any Updates to Register of Interest Forms

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

Members had been reminded to review their register of interest forms to ensure they were up to date.

27) Open Forum

Two members of the public were welcomed to the meeting and invited to speak by the Mayor. Both declined the invitation to speak.

28) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the annual meeting held on Tuesday 4th May 2021 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

29) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 10) Connections Bus: The Clerk had received an update from the Connections Bus Project manager who stated that the Youth Club from a Van had been attended by over 15 young people when it was parked at Wenny Recreation ground even though there was rain and thunderstorms. When it was parked at Furrowfields the next week there were no young people although the weather was dry. The manager asked if the Council wished to try again at Furrowfields or concentrate on Wenny. Members agreed the van should concentrate on Wenny.

30) Police Matters

Members had received the following report:

Local Police

There has been no report from Sgt Richard Lugg this month as he is not meeting with the Mayor and other Council leaders until Thursday June 3rd. However members will have seen on Facebook notification of the recent police activity in the town tackling drugs supply and anti-social behaviour by young people which resulted in a dispersal order being issued for 36 hours.

An email about anti-social behaviour in and around the Lindsells Walk area of the town was forwarded to councillors and the police.

Neighbourhood Alerts

10/5 & 1/6/21: Neighbourhood Watch May and June newsletters.

17/5/21: Information about Protect Your Pooch a dog theft campaign launched by Neighbourhood Watch.

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

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

32) Financial Officers Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 25th May 2021 showing expenditure of £46,078.37 and income of £81,399.73 (includes a Half 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.

33) Internal Auditors Report 2020/21

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 2021. Members noted that the Auditor had no issues that he wished to draw to the attention of the Council.

The Financial Officer advised Members that all relevant documents were ready to go to the External Auditor on Members' approval of the Internal Audit. She also advised that the unaudited accounts would be on public display on the Town Council's website, the Town's noticeboard and in the Town Council Offices window by 8th June 2021.

The Financial Officer confirmed that the Annual Governance & Accountability Return along

with the final accounts had been completed well within the timescales set under the Accounts & Audit Regulations 2015.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Internal Auditor's report for the year 01st April 2020 to 31st March 2021 be noted and approved.

34) Re-investment of Council Assets

Lloyds One Year Fixed Term Deposit Maturity.

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Lloyds Bank (£85,000 at 0.30%) matured on the 11th June 2021. Lloyds had confirmed the new reinvestment interest rate for a fixed 12 months term was 0.05%.

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 0.40%) matured on the 18th June 2021.

Nationwide had confirmed a new reinvestment interest rate for a 1-year fixed term was 0.30%.

Members were advised that the Financial Officer had compared other interest rates and found that the Nationwide rate was a fair rate under the current climate and she therefore recommended that the £85,000 should be reinvested with the Nationwide on a 1-year fixed saver.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had found a good rate of 0.60% with the Hampshire Trust Bank on a 1-year fixed rate. She advised Members that they should consider moving the £85,000 from Lloyds into the Hampshire Trust account.

Cllr Benney asked if Council could defer putting the £85,000 into a 1-year fixed account until the Combined Authority confirmed if the Town Council had been successful in its grant bid to purchase Barclays Bank for the Museum project. He advised that although the grant would cover most of the project costs, he was concerned that the project could overrun due to unforeseen additional expenditure and some of the investment would need to be easily accessed to pay for any costs over and above the grant money. If all of the investment was fixed for a year it would be difficult to gain access. He advised that the Combined Authority should be making a decision at the end of June; if the grant application was turned down then the investment from Lloyds could be reinvested.

The Financial Officer advised that she was concerned the £85,000 wouldn't be covered under the FSCS whilst it sat in the Barclays main account, however she agreed that it could be reinvested as soon as the Combined Authority confirmed if the grant for the Barclays Bank/Museum project was approved.

The Reserve Accounts held balances of £144,777.50 the AWP and other holding accounts

held balances of £85,238.74 amounting to £230,016.24 in total.

Cllrs agreed that the £85,000 should be reinvested in Nationwide fixed for 1 year at a rate of 0.30% and the £85,000 in Lloyds would be transferred in to Barclays instant access until the Combined Authority confirmed approval or not of the grant for the Barclays Bank/Museum project under the Growing Fenland grant.

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

35) Payment of Accounts

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

Financial Officer	Payroll June 2021	1,811.96
Clerk	Payroll June 2021	2,377.91
Pension Fund	Payroll June 2021	1,563.73
HMRC	Payroll June 2021	1,713.59
Flying Fysh	Council offices cleaner	45.00
Barclays Bank	Bank Charges	6.50
Zen Internet	Website June-July	10.79
Cambs CC Summer Reading	Summer Reading challenge grant	350.00
R J Warren	Gardening Services	727.50
Chatteris In Bloom	Full size Willow Figure grant	1,200.00
Running Imp	Summer Festival Colour run paints and accessories	775.18
Viking payments	Stationary order	102.52
Viking payments	Stationary order	86.11
Onecom	May monthly phone bill	79.93
Chatteris Museum	Grant voluntary organisations	3,506.08
Chatteris In Bloom	Grant voluntary organisations	4,500.00

Clerk	Reim: monthly Zoom payment	2195 5 of 12 14.39
Daron Wild Concessions	Business properties refurb grant Growing Fenland	588.00
Balfour Beatty	Street lights refurb CCC owned, Growing Fenland	4,063.25
Chatteris Xmas Lights	Grant voluntary organisations	5,000.00
A Simpson	Fixing faulty taps allotments	50.00
So Dental	Business properties refurb grant Growing Fenland	918.00
M Saunders	Internal Audit and associated works re Council's Accounts 2020/21	300.00
S Proud	Allotment clearances and disposal of rubbish	315.10
Total		30,105.54

36) To Agree Meeting Dates for Coming Year

The following dates were agreed:

4th May 2021

1st June 2021

6th July 2021

3rd August 2021

7th September 2021

5th October 2021

2nd November 2021

7th December 2021

4th January 2022

1st February 2022

1st March 2022

5th April 2022

37) Planning

Cllr Haggata presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 25th May 2021 (**copy attached**). Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to i) (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 (no further comments)
- b) Support
- c) Support

- d) Support
- e) Support, welcome inclusion of bird boxes (Cllr Gowler declared an interest).
- f) Support the original application but do not support the revision. The footpath link through the site has been used for 70 years and should remain.
- g) Noted
- h) Support
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Recommend Refusal, over development of site (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)

38) Growing Fenland Project Update & To Approve Tender Sum for Street Furniture Refurbishment

Members had received the following report:

‘Business Grants

The Chatteris Renaissance Project is progressing well with a number of businesses already receiving the promise of a grant to help with the refurbishment of their premises in the centre of the town. Indeed one grant has already been paid out.

Please see attached a spreadsheet showing the grants already approved which amount to just over £20,000 of the £50,000 budget agreed by the Combined Authority. (Some grants are approved in principal dependent upon planning permission or a formal quotation).

Enquiries about grants are being received on a regular basis and are replied to and considered in a timely manner. In addition the Clerk has begun to target the owners of premises which are in greatest need of repair. This has received mixed results with some owners jumping at the chance of receiving up to 60% of the cost of the works and others showing no interest or stating they cannot afford the remaining 40%. It should be noted that three of the most run down premises are apparently in the ownership of one person.

Street Furniture Refurbishment

The Financial Officer is awaiting confirmation of the dates when the contractors appointed to carry out the works to the street lighting columns will begin work.

Although she sent out tender packs to five approved contractors for the street furniture refurbishment works and chased up their quotes, unfortunately only one company responded and submitted a quote for £23,193.90.

This is below the budgeted price and the recommendation is that the Council should accept the tender to enable the Financial Officer to commission the work.

Museum Project

Mr Phil Hughes, FDC Officer, assisted by the Clerk, is working on the Chatteris Museum Relocation project submission which is due to be considered by the Combined Authority board on the 30th June.

It is hoped that the Growing Fenland project will continue to receive the financial backing of the Combined Authority following the election of a new Mayor, Dr Nik Johnson.

Recommendation:

It is **recommended** that members:

- 1) Note this update on the Growing Fenland Project;
- 2) Accept the tender of £23,193.90 to carry out the agreed street furniture refurbishment works.'

The Clerk explained that she had been trying to target properties which were in particular need of improvement but it was not always easy to get to the person responsible for maintenance in particular for properties occupied by national institutions such as the postal sorting office and Lloyds chemists. It was suggested FDC might be able to issue an improvement notice for the properties which were particularly bad.

Cllr Gowler asked why disabled access to Lloyds Chemist was still a problem and Cllr Benney explained it was probably due to conservation area restrictions. When he had tried to put in sliding electric doors to improve accessibility to a shop he owned the plans had been turned down by the conservation officer. Provided disabled people had access to a service, i.e. could press a button for service, a shop was compliant with DDA legislation.

Members unanimously **agreed** the recommendations.

39) FACT Bus

The Transport Manager at FACT had emailed the Clerk asking if the Council wished to start the St Ives and Peterborough bus services or if they had any other ideas for services.

Members questioned if the St Ives route was required following the launch of the V2 service. Cllr Haggata suggested looking at alternative routes. It was agreed to consider current bus services and decide which other routes might work. The Clerk was asked to request the timetables from Cllr Carney.

40) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Smith (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on 11th May 2021 (**copy attached**).

L4) Speakers: Cllr Smith said the two speakers from Think Communities had discussed the importance of open spaces and had been asked to look into the possibility of improving the

Old Railway Line Footpath and Bridleway with improved signage and extending the made up surface. Mr Garford had already approached Somersham Parish Council but the Council clearly still had doubts about the idea. Mr Garford had offered to help put together a document outlining the benefits of the scheme which could be used to attract funding. Cllr Smith was fully in favour of trying to attract funding.

Cllr Haggata said improving walking and cycling between the two communities was also being considered by Fenland's Transport Team and a joint approach might help to achieve a good outcome.

L7) Pocket Park: Cllr Smith reported the Pocket Park had become overgrown (the wet weather had obviously not helped) however it was possible to walk through the park using the pathway.

L10) Training Centre: The Clerk reminded members that the group had stated they had no objections to plans for the Stainless Metalcraft Training Centre proceeding without further consultation but they had requested consideration be given to the provision of a safe crossing over the A141. The planning officer had confirmed that a pedestrian crossing point leading from the site to the existing footway at Huntingdon Road had been agreed in principle between the applicant and the Highways Authority.

41) Conclusions of Complaints Committee

Cllr Hay, Chairman of the Complaints Committee, read out the following statement:

“In response to a complaint by a member of the public, regarding an incident at the Town Council meeting on the 3rd March 2020 when the member of the public was asked to stop filming the meeting, the Council wishes to make the following statement.

‘The Council has made a rigorous investigation into the events on the evening of 3rd March 2020 and in line with its Complaints Procedure held a Complaints Panel meeting on the 21st May 2021 which was attended by the complainant and his representative.

The meeting concluded that:

- 1) The Town Council asked the member of the public to stop filming having sought advice from an Officer at Fenland District Council who concluded that allowing filming could be a potential breach of GDPR regulations which were introduced in 2018 after the Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 (which cover the recording of meetings) and the Council's own Press and Social Media Policy (approved in October 2015). The Council was mindful that any breach of GDPR regulations could result in an unlimited fine which would be passed to the council taxpayers of Chatteris. Given these considerations the panel did not accept a breach of policy.
- 2) The complainant was not treated in a disrespectful manner.
- 3) Following the meeting the Council adopted a new Recording of Meetings Policy and all Councillors are now aware of that policy, the implications of The Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014 and the Data Protection Act 2018.

- 4) Recordings will be permitted at future meetings, however the Council will itself only be audio recording meetings on occasions and will not be posting those recordings on social media sites as there is no legislation which requires it to do so.”

The Clerk said a copy of the full findings of the Complaints Committee was available for anyone who wished to view it.

42) Doctors' Surgery

A long letter had been received from the clinical manager of the George Clare Surgery in response to the Council's letter outlining concerns about difficulties in getting appointments, the lack of face to face appointments, having to wait outside the surgery during the pandemic and being referred to alternative services.

After outlining the reasons the reason why it was seeking funds to increase the size of the surgery building, the letter asked for complainants to be directed to the Patient Participation Group who were able to raise concerns at meetings.

The letter also pointed out that although the surgery had upgraded its telephone system calls had substantially increased due to Covid-19 and the vaccination programme. The surgery admitted it was still using telephone consultations but said if a clinician felt it was appropriate face to face meetings could be arranged.

Patients had to wait outside for safety reasons during the pandemic but the doors had recently re-opened. The letter also admitted that if appointments were full patients with routine problems would be deferred to another day.

Councillors agreed that they still had concerns and questions and requested a meeting with a representative of the surgery.

43) Consideration of FDC Motion on Fens Biosphere Project

The Council had been notified of a motion agreed by Fenland District Council on 19th May which firmly rejected the Fens Biosphere Project. The Motion stated:

“As the only local authority which is wholly contained within the proposed Fens Biosphere area, Fenland District Council officially opposes putting the Fens Biosphere project forward for consideration as a UNESCO-recognised Biosphere Reserve”.

Cllr Benney explained that those working on the project had failed to outline the aims of the project and did not appear to understand farming and agriculture. Their aim appeared to be to replace farming with tourism and to introduce more wildlife on farms which farmers did not favour. Cllr Benney reminded members that Fenland was built around the agricultural industry and the project seemed to want to dismantle that industry. In addition if the area was designated a world heritage site there would be implications for planning and future development and the project went against the economic policy for Fenland which was encouraging more industry and better paid jobs.

Cllr Haggata admitted he also had reservations asking how Biosphere Reserves had affected other areas and querying the benefits to Chatteris.

Cllr Murphy said he had been to seminars and meetings and still could not work out what the project hoped to achieve or how much it would cost Fenland. Cllr Benney was worried FDC would be signing a blank cheque and would be signing away the area's heritage and agricultural industry. There were also concerns about how the project would affect the Internal Drainage Boards who were so good at keeping the area free of flooding.

Members **agreed** by a majority to support FDC's decision to oppose the project. (Cllr Smith abstained from the vote.)

44) To Consider Purchase of More User Friendly Speed Signs

Cllr Gowler reminded members that the Council owned an MVAS (flashing speed sign) and he and Cllr Benney had spent two years trying to work out how to operate it and download the information it recorded. They had yet to fully understand it. Cllr Gowler proposed the Council spend some money getting the sign working properly and also considered purchasing a new sign or a couple of smaller signs in an attempt to slow down motorists in the town.

The Financial Officer said she had looked at the cost of signs and reported Whittlesey Town Council had purchased four user friendly signs for £9,518 plus VAT and had a service level agreement with an electrician who changed the batteries and moved the devices on a regular basis and downloaded the data on a laptop specifically purchased for the purpose. The Financial Officer explained this would lift the burden from councillors' shoulders.

Cllr Benney said he would prefer to get the existing device up and running properly first and it was agreed the company should be asked to send a service engineer out to examine the device and explain how it could be programmed. Cllrs Gowler and Benney confirmed they were still happy to replace the battery and move the device on a regular basis but had been hampered by Covid.

Cllr Gowler was still in favour of considering the purchase of a smaller device in future so it could be set up on smaller roads, such as Station Street, where there were reports of speeding.

It was agreed to arrange for an engineer to examine the existing device and to then re-visit the idea of purchasing a smaller unit.

45) Traffic Issues

LHI Bid: In response to the Council's concerns about the unfairness of the LHI panel's decision and composition, the Highways officer had stated that the panel had decided the scheme put forward by Chatteris would only have "limited" or "some" improvement. Each division could submit just one application but Whittlesey and Wisbech comprised two divisions each and their schemes were considered to be of greater benefit.

Fenland Way: An email had been received from a resident living directly opposite Jacks supermarket who stated there had been a growing incidence of shock waves travelling

through his house every time a Large Goods Vehicle passed by. The vehicles were not speeding but were doing close to the allowed speed of 60mph which caused a large dynamic 'wash effect' resulting in the shock wave. The resident claimed there was some visible damage to his house caused by the vibration. The resident called for the speed limit on the road to be 40mph and even offered to help pay for the 40mph limit signs.

Cllr Gowler said he sympathised with the resident but suggested reducing the speed limit would not make a difference and the Mayor queried if lorries could reach 60mph on that particular stretch of road given the number of roundabouts. Cllr Haggata said he was in favour of lowering the speed limit and pointed out a crossing was to be introduced for the new training centre which should help to reduce the speed of vehicles. Other developments were proposed along the road so it was agreed to monitor the problem, especially as it would not be easy to achieve a 40mph limit on a major road.

Order: Notification had been received of a temporary prohibition of traffic order which would affect London Road to enable water connection works to be carried out between the 21st and 23rd June.

20's Plenty: An email had been received seeking the Council's support for the 20's Plenty for Cambridgeshire campaign. The campaign was calling for default, wide-area signed 20mph speed limits across all of Cambridgeshire's urban and village settlements to help save lives. Cllr Hay said she had attended a seminar on the issue and most people were in favour of 20mph zones near schools but not a blanket speed reduction and Cllr Gowler had put a poll on Facebook and 80% of people did not support the idea of 20mph speed limits throughout the town.

New Road: Cllr Hay reported that she had met the local Highways Officer to discuss the speed bumps in New Road following concerns from a householder that traffic going over humps was damaging his house which was listed. Cllr Hay had sought help on the date the speed humps went down and it had been decided they were put in during the 2000's as part of the safer routes to school scheme for Glebelands School. This appeared to be in breach of legislation introduced in 1996 which prohibited speed humps outside listed buildings. The problem had been exacerbated when the original rubber humps were replaced by asphalt cushions. Cllr Hay said the options appeared to be to either move the cushions further along or remove them altogether. Councillors favoured the latter option as they pointed out there were listed building all along that stretch of New Road and cars parked along the road made it difficult to negotiate.

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

46) Correspondence

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

Members asked if the contact details for the Rights of Way volunteers for Chatteris could be obtained so they could be invited to a Leisure meeting.

Details about Covid testing stations in Chatteris were exchanged and it was agreed information should go on the website and Facebook page.

47) Reports

The Clerk had submitted a written report of a meeting she had attended with the Fenland Youth and Community Co-ordinator Kerrie Tonks when youth provision in Chatteris was discussed.

It was agreed to set up a Chatteris Focus on Youth Group which would look at three areas:

- 1) A cohesive and coherent approach to working with young people in Chatteris;
- 2) Joint and partnership working in the search for funding;
- 3) Increasing opportunities for young people from Chatteris.

Ms Tonks and the Clerk agreed who to invite to join the group. Cllrs Ashley and Hay expressed an interest in attending the first meeting on the 16th June.

48) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.