

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

Minutes of a meeting held via Zoom on Tuesday 14th September 2021

Present: Cllrs J Smith (Chairman), L Ashley, J Carney, A Charrier, A Gowler, W Haggata, A Hay and F Newell.

L29 21/22 Apologies for Absence

Cllr Hay sent apologies she would be a little late.

L30 21/22 FDC Update

Although there was no formal update from FDC, as these were now included with the monthly report to the full council meeting, councillors did point out that areas were still being missed by FDC's grass cutting contractors. Cllr Ashley said an area near Glebelands School had been missed again and another area at the top of St Peters Drive did not belong to anyone and because it was overgrown dogs were messing on it. It was agreed to bring the matter to the attention of the Street Scene officer. Cllr Ashley said she would be reporting a hedge encroaching upon the footpath to County Highways. She also said that her assumption that the humps in New Road had been reduced in size was incorrect they had just been painted.

She had reported the footpath along Ireton's Way was completely overgrown and Cllr Hay assured her she was chasing up the matter. It was likely some people working at the Leek Factory would wish to use the footpath. Cllr Smith was concerned if it was not cleared it would disappear like the footpath along London Road.

Members agreed the Market Hill Gardens were looking good after the re-painting of the bandstand and the benches as part of the Renaissance scheme. Cllr Smith said people had commented on how smart it was looking and it was good to see the work had been carried out to a high standard not patched up as in the past.

The Clerk said the contractors had been happy to put up the new town sign having refurbished the post but she had been unwilling to allow its erection while anti-social behaviour problems continued in the area. Members agreed there should be a celebration to mark the completion of the refurbishment works and the new sign going in as it was something the Town Council could rightly trumpet.

The Clerk admitted she had yet to chase up the refurbishment of the street name plates but she had approached the printers about producing a new town map to go in the noticeboard at the junction of High Street and Furrowfields Road.

L31 21/22 Any Matters Arising from Last Meeting of Group

Queen's Platinum Jubilee Celebrations: The Clerk had written an article outlining the nationwide plans to mark the Queen's Platinum Jubilee from the 2nd to 5th June 2022. The message stated the Council was planning to light the beacon, gave information about closing roads for the Big Jubilee Lunch and asked any organisations planning events in the town, which would be open to the general public, to contact the Council so a programme of activities could be drawn up. Members approved the article and Cllr Carney was asked if he would light the beacon at 9.15pm on the 2nd June.

L32 21/22 Little Acre Fen Pocket Park & Old Railway Line Updates

The Clerk had been contacted by the Council's contractors about the Old Railway Line. They had suggested that it was in need of a cut and had not been cut wide enough previously by the County Council contractors as the brambles were encroaching. The Clerk had taken this up with the footpaths officer at County who said the second cut had taken place on the 5th August and there was little that could be done. Councillors agreed the Clerk should go back and state the footpath/bridleway had not been cut to the correct width and it should be cut again. Cllr Hay asked to be copied in to correspondence.

Cllr Carney reported the water level of the pond at the Pocket Park was very low and the reeds were encroaching. It was agreed it would be a good time to ask the Council's contractors to remove some of the reeds and remind them to be careful not to remove plants which had been added to the pond such as irises.

An opening day for the park had been arranged for the 9th October but the idea of putting it back to mid-November was being suggested by the Clerk as a large number of trees were due to be delivered by the Woodland Trust at the beginning of November and these would need to be planted. The Clerk had suggested to FLAPP the idea of another family planting day.

Cllr Carney reported that FLAPP were organising harvest parcels to mark the open day. The plan was to ask for surplus locally grown produce which would be packed into hampers by the cubs and then distributed to the needy of the town. The aim was to raise awareness of the park. Cllr Carney also reported that FLAPP had received a grant from the Red Tile Wind Farm Trust towards the cost of the information board which had been installed near the pond. Thanks were expressed to Cllrs Smith and Carney for their work at the park.

L33 21/22 Middle Level Moorings Plans

Members had received a report of a meeting between Cllrs Ashley, Haggata & Smith, Mr David Thomas, Middle Level Commissioners Chief Executive, Mr Jon Fenn, Operations Manager, and the Clerk.

'Cllr Haggata explained the meeting had been called to discuss Middle Level's plans to put in more mooring places on waterways and the possibilities for Chatteris.

Mr Thomas began by giving a brief history of the Middle Level and said under a new Act which came into force in 2018, Middle Level had new powers relating to navigation, including the ability to charge for navigation, and to change bye-laws. The authority had to agree to a number of undertakings including investing 25% of income on improving the waterways for users.

Middle Level had put in new moorings for the Well Creek Trust and were talking with Ramsey and March Town Councils about new and improved moorings. The authority had also put in four rural moorings and had plans to put in another four. At present there are no moorings near Chatteris so Middle Level was looking at the Forty Foot River near Carters Bridge.

Mr Fenn explained rural moorings had no water or waste disposal facilities, they were simply posts in the bottom of the riverbank.

Cllr Haggata suggested sites which might be suitable for a mooring including another along the Forty Foot near The Ship pub and a sluice along the Twenty Foot Drain. Mr Fenn said the latter site was owned by the Internal Drainage Board but the question could be asked, although it would be an expensive option as some form of lock would be required, and the former was not suitable.

Mr Fenn said Carter's Bridge was the easiest option but the problem was boaters had to walk beside a busy road (as there was no footpath) into town.

Members asked if there was any possibility of a mooring on the Forty Foot near the Womb Farm development. It was suggested the owner of the land, which could provide the link, should be approached. Members were keen to see boaters encouraged to visit the town.

Mr Thomas suggested not dismissing expensive schemes in case funding became available and Mr Fenn pointed out that boaters tended to be good supporters of small local businesses. Cllr Smith confirmed the position of moorings was important to the Town Council as were the links in to town. If a mooring was to go in at Carter's Bridge it might help with the argument for a footpath in to town from that location.

Cllr Smith asked if there was any preparatory work which could be undertaken by the Town Council in case funds suddenly became available and Mr Thomas suggested putting forward two or three schemes and Middle Level would give a rough cost estimate for each scheme.

It was agreed to draw up a wish list at a Leisure meeting.

While considering possible mooring sites, Councillors asked about re-opening the lock at Welches Dam. Mr Fenn explained the site was not in Middle Level's ownership, it would be down to the Environment Agency and was very unlikely.

Cllr Haggata asked if it was possible to open up footways along rivers/drains. Mr Thomas explained that there were ownership issues; in most cases Middle Level owned bank top to bank top, they did not own the land on either side. It would require the landowners' permission and many were reluctant to give it as they had problems with hare coursing. Middle Level had no access to the Forty Foot bank from the south side and even though there was a supposed right of way the landowner was not keen to allow people across his land.

Cllr Carney said it was encouraging to see the idea of a mooring near Chatteris back on the table. He said the Environment Agency had sponsored floating platforms on the River Nene and suggested they might be worth approaching. He pointed out there was a bus stop near Carters Bridge so boaters could catch the bus into town.

Cllr Smith said the mooring could be used to attract funding for a footpath connection into town, while Cllr Gowler said there was the potential to attract funding for footpaths and a path to Carters Bridge opened up the Forty Foot and Sixteen Foot drains. He agreed to mention the possibility to Cllr Benney who had been tasked to identify areas which could benefit from improved footpaths.

Cllr Haggata suggested there might also be the potential for a footpath along the river to Jacks from the Womb Farm Development.

It was **agreed to recommend** that the Council ask Middle Level to consider a mooring at Carters Bridge and obtain costings for that mooring.

L34 21/22 Cycle Routes Plan

Cllr Haggata had forwarded to the Mayor, Cllr Smith and the Clerk draft maps for improved cycling and walking routes in Chatteris as part of the Fenland Cycling, Walking and Mobility Improvement Strategy. The routes had been discussed by the TAG group. Cllr Haggata explained that the Government had allocated £2 billion to improve cycling and walking routes and it was hopeful Chatteris and other towns in Fenland would get some of that money.

As a member of the TAG group Cllr Haggata had been attending meetings looking at cycleways and footpaths. The group had been concerned with connectivity between points in the town. He pointed out roads in Chatteris were not suitable for cycle lanes but other ideas were being looked at and he felt it was important for Chatteris to have a representative on the group so it did not miss out on funding opportunities.

He said Chatteris was now being mentioned regularly and although some of it was fantasy he hoped something might come from the funding. Cllr Haggata was thanked for his efforts on behalf of the town.

L35 21/22 Any Other Business

Cows: Members mentioned the Cows about Cambridge scheme, a series of colourful, cow models which had been dotted about Cambridge during the summer and had been a big talking point. The large cows were now being auctioned. Cromwell Community College had decorated a mini moo which had now been returned to the school.

Members suggested approaching the creators to enquire if it was possible to commission a cow for Chatteris and the cost. Cllr Hay pointed out it would bring some fun to the town.

Signs: Cllr Carney asked again about new signs for the entrances to the town commemorating the Christmas Lights and the town's entry into the Britain in Bloom finals.

L36 21/22 Date of Next Meeting - Tuesday 19th October 2021

