

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

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

### 135) To Accept Apologies for Absence

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

### 136) 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.

### 137) Open Forum

Three members of the public were welcomed to the meeting and one indicated a wish to speak.

The resident said he had been listening to broadcasts on the radio and was very concerned that the Town Council was divided from the town. (At this point Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest and left the room).

The resident said it was 7 years since the last planning application had been submitted for Wenny Meadow and a lot had changed since then. 1,000 people had signed a petition and permission had been granted for 1,350 homes in Chatteris. There had been 400 objections to the planning application for Wenny Meadow and none in support. The objectors included those who owned adjacent fields. The resident called for the Town Council to talk to the towns' folk and to hold a public consultation. He claimed the Council had stated it was too late to change their minds and had pointed out there were no objections in 2014.

The Mayor explained the Council had made its decision based on planning policies. The land had been designated for development in 2014 and at that stage no-one objected to it.

She explained that the Council looked at the plans and took into account that the developer would be gifting a large proportion of the land as public amenity while at present people were trespassing on private land. It had been claimed the land had been used for fetes and sports events but that was an adjacent field not the land currently the subject of the planning application which in those days was a field with cows and bulls in it.

Councillors had looked at the plan carefully and had noted it was for just 93 houses with the developers giving land for the people of Chatteris to use. The only trees to be removed were a few at the entrances to the site and more trees were to be planted to provide tree-lined streets.

Cllr Hay explained that FDC was required by central government to build 550 houses a year and it was not meeting that target. Although there were outstanding permissions the houses were not being built and the 1300 homes referred to would not be built in one year but over a number of years. In order to retain the younger generation in the town there was a need for development and housing and the town did not have brownfield sites it could use. Cllr Hay pointed out the field had been used for animals and grazing and was never a meadow.

Cllr Gowler said there were no detailed plans in for the Tithe development, the only major developments being considered were Womb Farm and Wenny Road. Tithe had already been some 15 years in the development and was still not imminent. Feelings were running high on social media and people in support of the plan were unprepared to put their heads above the parapet. He said the plan was policy compliant, the land was included in the Local Plan and there had been a public consultation.

Cllr Haggata said the Town Council was being ostracised. He said when he moved to the town in 2004 the field was wired off and contained cattle.

Cllr Petrou said the movement against the planning application was too late. Consultation on whether the land should be developed had taken place years ago if well intentioned people forced the developers to take it to appeal it would cost the tax payers a lot of money as the developer would win and would be able to apply for costs. He re-iterated that a lot of the land was being saved and it was not over-development. It gave the private land owners what they wanted and the public what they wanted in publicly accessible land. Cllr Ashley was concerned that if the plan went to appeal the inspectorate would suggest the housing density could be greatly increased and Cllr Gowler admitted he was pleasantly surprised that so much of the land was being gifted as public access land. He pointed out Cromwell had been extended converted to a 4 to 18 years school to take the extra children.

Cllr Hay was concerned that those on social media had not explained that the land was currently private and people were trespassing when they went on it. She was also concerned about costs if the application went to appeal and said the objections would be looked at through the planning process at FDC if they were viable.

### **138) Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

### 139) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 128) Christmas Lights: The Clerk was pleased to report that the Christmas Lights had found a new home. They had signed a lease to store all their equipment in the former showroom at the Empress swimming pool.

Min 125) Remembrance Sunday: Members were reminded about the parade and the Mayor warned that the number of people able to attend the church service was limited. Only one extra person would be able to accompany each wreath layer. Numbers watching and taking part in the parade were not restricted.

### 140) Police Matters

Members had received the following report based on information received in the past month:

#### **Local Police**

Members have received a copy of the confidential report of the meeting between Sgt Richard Lugg, the Mayor of Chatteris, the Chairman of Doddington Parish Council, a local Neighbourhood Watch chairman, Pc Gary Stabler and Sgt Lugg's temporary replacement Sgt Joe Puntun. The meeting was held on the 28<sup>th</sup> October. The next meeting is scheduled for Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> December 2021.

#### **Neighbourhood Alerts**

14/10/21: Email seeking nominations for the Neighbour of the Year Award 2021.

18/10/21: Notification that more than 100 victims of modern day slavery have been rescued in Cambridgeshire in the last year and more than half the victims were children – many involved in county lines drug dealing.

20/10/21: Invitation to complete the Neighbourhood Watch 2021 Crime and Community Survey.

21/10/21: Notification that 22 people had been arrested and drugs, cash and weapons seized during the past week as the police cracked down on county lines drug dealing and exploitation.

22/10/21: Notification that the murder of a man who was stabbed in a Cambridgeshire suburb would be the focus of the latest episode of 24 Hours in Police Custody.

25/10/21: Following an increase in Anti-Social Behaviour incidents, notification that Neighbourhood Watch are launching a 'Say No to ASB' campaign.

27/10/21: Request for residents to take extra home safety precautions during the darker winter months.

27/10/21: Request for trick-or-treaters to respect their neighbours over Halloween.

29/10/21: Invitation to complete a cyber-crime survey.

29/10/21: Invitation to attend a free online webinar about preventing and disrupting county lines exploitation to be held on Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> November from 5pm to 6pm.

The Mayor reported that the new sergeant had previously been working in Cambridge City and Insp Lombardo was leaving to work with the Metropolitan police force.

**141) FDC, Street Scene, & CCTV Updates**

Members had received the reports (**copy attached**) which were noted.

Cllr Murphy reported that all the litter bins would shortly be replaced with new bins.

**142) Financial Officer's Report**

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 showing expenditure of £117,494.87 and income of £184,928.90 (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.

The Financial Officer updated Members on the plans for the Christmas party for the elderly of Chatteris which will take place on the 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at the King Edward Centre.

The party will be funded by the donation from the Good Companions group along with donations from other individuals and business.

The Financial Officer reminded Members that the 2022/23 budget and Precept would need to be drafted for discussion at the December Council meeting with the final draft to be approved in January.

She asked Members to think about any expenditure that may need to be considered.

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

**143) Payment of Accounts**

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

Financial Officer	Payroll November 2021	1,325.68
Clerk	Payroll November 2021	1,845.34
Pension Fund	Payroll November 2021	1,126.21
HMRC	Payroll November 2021	995.81
Wave	RHS Allotments water bill	96.36
Wave	LHS Allotments water bill	138.24
Wave	Council offices water bill	44.08
Barclays Bank	Bank Charges	26.50
Zen Internet	Website Nov-Dec	11.99
British Gas	Elec bill	202.79
Magpas	Grant Vol Org	500.00

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Chatteris RAF Memorial	Refreshments re unveiling ceremony	200.00
Chatteris RBL	Refreshments re Remembrance parade	200.00
Onecom	October phone bill	67.80
R J Warren	Gardening services	986.70
Vaughtons	Restraining chain for Mayors civic chain	37.86
J Melton Clerk	Zoom reim & Mulled wine license	35.39
Cpalc	HR Training 2019	150.00
BHH Chatteris	Bramley House Business premises grant	5,000.00
Rose Fire Security	Dualcom annual Monitoring charges	516.00
Rose Fire Security	Bi Annual service & Parts	336.60
Rose Fire Security	Faulty Emergency lights replacement	468.24
Warren Access	Christmas Lights Van & Lorry Platform Hire	960.00
Colin Silvester	Reim Tree ties Little Acre PP	16.95
CF Corporate	Nov Q payment for photocopier lease	295.20
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,583.74</b>

#### **144) Allotment Rents 2022/23**

Members had received a report from the Clerk following a request that she enquire about charges for allotments set by other town councils while the Financial Officer was asked to look at breakeven costs for the allotments.

Attached were spreadsheets prepared by the Financial Officer showing income and expenditure at the allotments for the past 3 years.

The Clerk explained the latest figures showed a substantial deficit at present as allotment rent collection was still underway with the sum collected expected to be the same as 2020/21 (£3,596). There had been substantial expenditure on road repairs in the current year with the expectation that only minor repairs would be required for the next three to four years.

Members were able to see prices charged by neighbouring towns for allotments, which all appeared to be around the £30 mark for full allotments (with the exception of Whittlesey who charged considerably more).

The **recommendation** was that the price of allotments in Chatteris should increase to £32 for a full allotment and £16 for a half in October 2022. This would ensure the allotments at least broke even and were likely to make a profit in 2022/23.

### Deposit

The Clerk said she had been struggling to re-let some allotments because of the state in which they were left. If they were particularly bad the former tenant was reminded of the allotment agreement they signed and was asked to either remove the rubbish or pay towards the cost of removal. The success of this was limited so, after discussions with the Allotments Association, the Clerk was now suggesting a deposit scheme for new tenants.

If the allotment was in a good state the new tenant would be asked to pay a sum, equivalent to a year's rent, as a deposit which they would get back if they left the allotment in the same state.

If the allotment was in a poor state the new tenant would either be offered the chance to take it as it was and clean it up or pay the deposit (a year's rent) to have it cleaned up. Again the deposit would be returned if the allotment was left in a good state.

It was **recommended** that the Council introduce a deposit scheme for allotments as set out.

Members **agreed** to both recommendations.

### **145) Planning**

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> October 2021 (**copy attached**). Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to j) (as shown on the **appended list**) and considered two further applications.

It was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Noted
- d) Object as Chatteris Town Council has requested works to improve the safety of the A142 on previous similar applications and these requests have been ignored and safety measures have not been introduced. Safety on the A142 is of prime importance to the residents of Chatteris and the surrounding area. The Town Council is becoming increasingly concerned that the extra traffic being generated by developments off the A142 are increasing the dangers on a road already acknowledged as a high accident route.
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Support Town Council continues to argue bus stop build out is not required but the cycleway/footpath link along Fenland Way is essential.
- h) Support but trees must be protected as set out in arboricultural report.
- i) Support provided there is no adverse effect on neighbouring properties.

- j) Object as Chatteris Town Council has requested works to improve the safety of the A142 on previous similar applications and these requests have been ignored and safety measures have not been introduced. Safety on the A142 is of prime importance to the residents of Chatteris and the surrounding area. The Town Council is becoming increasingly concerned that the extra traffic being generated by developments off the A142 are increasing the dangers on a road already acknowledged as a high accident route.
- k) Recommend Refusal, over development of the site (Cllrs Hay and Petrou declared an interest)
- l) Support

#### **146) Growing Fenland Project Update**

Members asked about progress of the Renaissance Fund and the Clerk and Financial Officer confirmed there was still money remaining but the timeline for businesses to claim grants had been extended. A reminder letter about the scheme had been sent to FDC who had promised to forward it to businesses.

Concerned about the state of some buildings whose owners had failed to apply for the grant, Cllr Benney confirmed FDC could issue a compulsory purchase order but there had to be a project for the building, a short timescale and someone willing to take on the building. Such an order would not be issued just because the building looked a mess. However if the building became a hazard the Council would have to step in.

The Clerk and Financial Officer reported that the purchase of Barclays Bank was progressing. Following the steer given by the Council at a special meeting the solicitor had confirmed that she was planning the purchase of the freehold of 2 Barclays Bank and the purchase of the freehold to go ahead on the same day. Also on that day the accountants would sign a new lease for the first floor of the building.

The Mayor, Cllr Benney and the Council's officers had met with a representative of the accountancy firm the previous day to discuss the terms of the new lease and the solicitor had now been asked to draw up the lease. The plan was to increase the rent once the lease was signed and to review the rental fee again when the repairs to the building were complete. The Financial Officer had researched commercial rents and confirmed that the sum being suggested was below the market average. A sum had been suggested which the accountants' representative would be putting to his partners.

It had been agreed that the solicitors would no longer occupy the ground floor room, just the first floor accommodation. The Financial Officer said this presented a business opportunity as the room could be hired out.

The main concern now was the planning process as the Conservation Officer had yet to visit the building and submit her comments. Cllr Benney confirmed he was chasing planning.

In response to criticism about the purchase of the building on Facebook, Cllr Benney pointed out the grant from the Combined Authority was criteria based and other ideas could have been thrown out. He said the important thing was that £1million of funding had been secured for Chatteris and when all the works to the former bank and the Council Chambers were complete the scheme would generate money which would allow the Town Council to put more into the community and the Council would own another asset.

#### **147) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations**

The Mayor presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 19<sup>th</sup> October 2021 (**copy attached**).

L38) FDC Update: Cllr Murphy said litter bins in the centre of the town were very shortly to be replaced with new ones. He also reported that the play areas in Larham Way and Huntingdon Road were due to be refurbished in January. The Mayor said the cut through from Curlew Avenue to Furrowfields Road was not too bad but the bottom of the dyke between St Stephen's Drive and Furrowfields still needed to be cleared.

L40) Pocket Park: Cllr Hay said she would be representing the Red Tile Wind Farm Trust at the official opening of the Pocket Park.

L42) Covid Caterpillar: Cllr Smith had requested an amendment to the minutes; she wished them to note that other volunteers had helped her to varnish the pebbles.

#### **148) To Agree Submission on Fenland Accessibility Report**

Members agreed to make the following points in their submission on the Fenland Accessibility Report, as suggested at the Leisure meeting:

- Councillors wish to express their appreciation for the amount of work which has gone into the report which is a positive move.
- It was helpful to have confirmation in a report that bus services for Chatteris have significantly reduced.
- The lack of service does not satisfy users' needs and infrequent buses mean less people are likely to use that method of transport.
- The absence of any evening services and very poor weekend services were of particular concern.
- Members are concerned that two bus services referred to in the report are no longer as stated. They believe there is no longer a service to Ramsey (336) and the service from March to Huntingdon station is now only first thing in the morning. On a more positive note there is currently a better service to St Ives, although it is for a trial period.
- Councillors agreed that all the issues outlined in the report needed to be addressed. They also pointed out the best way to improve levels of walking and cycling was to get the basics right by improving road and pavement surfaces.
- Councillors wished to see FDC and the County Council working with the Combined Authority in exploring the idea of bus franchising as a matter of urgency.

- Councillors also agreed that bus companies could do more to encourage people to use their services by advertising them properly.
- Councillors are keen to see the introduction of a frequent, direct bus service to Manea railway station.

#### **149) Consultation on Ward Boundaries for Fenland District Council**

The Council had been notified, by the Boundary Commission, of a 10-week public consultation inviting proposals for new council wards and ward boundaries for Fenland District Council.

Cllr Benney said the proposal was to increase the size of Fenland District Council from 39 councillors to 42. The Boundary Commission was now inviting proposals to help them draw up a pattern of wards to accommodate the 42 councillors.

Cllr Benney said it was likely that the number of councillors representing Chatteris would increase from 4 to 5 as every councillor should represent roughly the same number of electors. Ultimately it would be up to the Boundary Commission to draw up the new electoral wards but they were taking suggestions.

In addition to electoral equality the Boundary Commission stated the pattern of wards should, as far as possible, reflect the interests and identities of local communities and the electoral arrangements should provide for effective and convenient local government.

#### **150) Place Shaping Project**

Members were informed that Mr Stephen Barclay MP had funded the first stage of a Place Shaping Project to be delivered in the Fenland district. The project was being led by thinkingplace and the idea was to work with the four towns in Fenland to develop a place brand to promote the towns. The Mayor and the Clerk had already met with a representative of the company and had discussed the strengths and weaknesses of Chatteris and the needs for the future – mainly development, more businesses and better transport. They encouraged members to take part in a workshop for Chatteris on the 9<sup>th</sup> November so Chatteris' voice could be heard.

#### **151) Traffic Issues**

Disabled Parking: The Clerk had received a letter from a resident concerned that his sister, who was a blue badge holder, was unable to use the disabled parking bay outside her home in West Street because it was being used by other residents as the bay markings were practically non-existent. Cllr Hay said she had been pushing to get the bay re-painted and was awaiting a reply to an email to the Highways officer. Cllr Gowler said some residents were pushing to have the bay removed. Cllr Hay said she would continue to pursue the case.

Van: The Clerk had also received a complaint about vans belonging to a pharmaceutical company being parked continually in the High Street from Friday evening to Monday morning, contrary to parking restrictions. Members agreed it would be difficult to get anyone to take action but suggested mentioning it to the Street Scene officer and the police. Members were also concerned about a van parked in Huntingdon Road near the junction with Clare

Street which had parking cones around it and was obstructing the view of motorists leaving Clare Street. Cllr Gowler said he had also reported an overgrown hedge in the area which was further restricting the view of motorists.

MVAS: Cllrs Benney and Gowler were delighted to announce that they had finally got the MVAS working. Thanks to Cllr Gowler's brother they now had the correct software and were able to change the speed on the sign and download the data. This showed that in Huntingdon Road cars were travelling at just over the 30mph but in Willey Terrace they were travelling considerably in excess of the speed limit of 40mph. Cllr Benney said he would now change the batteries on a regular basis and download the data which he would publish on Facebook. The information could also be sent to the police. It was agreed this information would help with the LHI application and Cllrs Benney and Gowler were thanked for all their hard work.

A47: Information had been received about the A47 dualling campaign and a social media day of action along with the latest news on the upgrade of the Guyhirn roundabout.

Highways: The Highways events diary for November had been received including all the road closures for Remembrance Sunday.

#### **152) Correspondence**

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

#### **153) Reports**

Cllr Benney gave a verbal report of the George Clare Surgery Patients Participation group meeting he had attended. He said the surgery was very, very busy with the number of people seeking appointments double those of the previous year. This explained why the surgery was struggling and this was the case everywhere not just in Chatteris. Advice for GPs was not to see more than 25 patients a day but all the doctors at the George Clare were currently seeing over 30 people a day.

Vaccination rates showed 92% of people had had their first jab and 89% their second.

#### **154) Items for the Next Agenda**

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

