



# **Chatteris Town Council**

## **Annual Report**

### **Year To 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019**

It has been a year of mixed fortunes for the Town Council with some projects making great strides while others seem to have been thwarted at every turn.

On the plus side the Council is very proud of the progress at the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park with the area almost completed - just the pond to create and the bund/hill to complete. The Council is also very heartened by the way the community has taken the project to heart. A Friends of Little Acre Pocket Park group is in the process of being formed following a very successful family planting day when hedging and dozens of donated trees were installed by willing volunteers.

Councillors have been working with consultants, business representatives and students on Growing Fenland – Chatteris, an exciting project to create a masterplan for growth for the town. The plan will be used to bid for funding so the vision for the future of the town can become a reality.

The youth club, funded by the Council, is becoming more and more successful thanks to new leader Joe Papworth.

The opening of the first Jack's store in the country was welcomed and councillors are now pushing for more development on the site.

On the negative side a 20 point letter to Barclays on why they should not close their Chatteris branch and how they could mitigate the effects of the closure fell on deaf ears and the last bank in Chatteris will close in May.

Added to this is frustration that continued attempts to obtain a crossing in Wenny Road for the safety of children at Cromwell Community College have been unsuccessful despite the

plans to convert the school to the first 4 to 18 years school in the county. The fight will, however, continue.

During the year the Council also:

- a) Agreed to fund new Traffic Regulation Orders for parking and no parking areas in Huntingdon Road.
- b) Funded new litter bins.
- c) Agreed to launch a Green Dog Walkers scheme.
- d) Launched a shuttle bus service to Ely using the money given to FACT by the developers of the Tesco site. Unfortunately the service was not well used but new services will shortly be operating.
- e) Helped persuade FDC to allow Lloyds mobile bank to use Furrowfields Car Park.
- f) Drew the MP's attention to a lack of investment in Chatteris, a lack of development and poor promotion of the town.
- g) Helped to organise another very successful Midsummer Festival despite record temperatures. New features included a pamper evening and a foam canon.
- h) Requested an appraisal of the Chatteris conservation area.
- i) Improved security at the museum and council chambers to enable the museum to secure long term loans from the British Museum.
- j) Raised grave concerns about the impact on the A142 from future plans for sand and gravel extraction.
- k) Agreed, if required, to help fund the Bikeability scheme.
- l) Launched a new Town Council Facebook page.
- m) Gave out grants totalling almost £3,000 to smaller organisations in the town whilst also supporting larger organisations such as the Christmas Lights, the King Edward Centre, In Bloom and the Museum.
- n) Organised and funded the ever popular Summer Fun shows in August.
- o) Marked the end of World War I by joining the national commemorations "Battles Over" and lighting the beacon.
- p) Agreed to join with neighbouring parishes in the push for better bus services.
- q) Asked the police to look into problems with ASB by motorcyclists and parking issues.
- r) Made recommendations on disabled parking bay applications.
- s) The Mayor and Clerk met with County Officers to discuss a new transport strategy for Fenland.
- t) Supported FDC's suggestions for improvements to Furrowfields Car Park to cut down on ASB driving.
- u) Received regular updates from Fenland District Council.
- v) Helped to fund two reading schemes.
- w) Supported the creation of new Footpath 32.
- x) Complained about overgrown footpaths and open spaces.
- y) Worked with Cromwell Community College to ensure the future of the All Weather Pitch.
- z) Councillors attended planning training, a local councils' conference and a meeting to discuss plans for a memorial for crash victims of World War II.

## The Council

Cllr Bill Haggata was re-elected Mayor for a third term in May 2018 and represented the Council at all the events in Chatteris he was invited to attend. He also attended many events outside the town not to mention many meetings about the future of Chatteris. Cllr James Carney was re-elected Deputy Mayor for a third term and supported the Mayor.

To date this year there have been 11 meetings of the full council plus an extra ordinary meeting and shown below is the number of meetings Councillors attended. Several members also attended monthly meetings of the planning and leisure working groups and councillors represented the Council on numerous outside bodies.

L Ashley	9	I Benney	9
A Carney	4	J Carney	7
A Hay	10	W Haggata	12
P Murphy	10	F Newell	11
K Patterson	7	J Smith	12
I Taylor	8		

As a result of non-attendance Cllr J Burrow was disqualified from the Council but his position was not filled as there was less than six months until the elections.

Planning: The Council's planning working group and the Council made recommendations to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council on 78 new and revised planning applications (a reduction on previous years).

Leisure: The leisure working group has been very busy with the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park project, implementing suggestions raised in the town/community plan, planning the annual town meeting, the community bus project and the Church meadow project. Up until his retirement they also communicated regularly with Mr Bob Ollier (FDC's open spaces manager) to discuss the maintenance of and improvements to recreation grounds and green spaces in the town.

Open Forum: The Town Council meets on the first Tuesday of every month and the first 15 minutes are an Open Forum for members of the public to raise issues. Matters raised during the year have included:

Concerns about empty shops in the High Street.

A request for a zebra crossing outside Cromwell Community College.

The lack of a consistent policy on upvc windows in the conservation area and in listed buildings.

Traders hoping to open a new tea room.

Concerns about FACT and the use of the Tesco money for a bus service.

The unfairness of charity shops not paying business rates.

Problems of motorbikes and quad bikes illegally accessing land and riding in a dangerous manner through the town.

The blocking of a public footpath.

Speakers: Speakers at Council, leisure and planning meetings have included:

Sgt Richard Lugg, PCSO Dawn Rae and Pc Jacob Reeves of the Neighbourhood Policing

on local policing, local issues and a new way of reporting to Councils.

Cllr David Mason, FDC portfolio holder for growth on the Market Towns Masterplan.

Mrs Liz Fox, business manager at Cromwell Community College, on safeguarding the future of the All Weather Pitch.

Mr Bob Ollier, former FDC parks and open spaces manager.

Cllrs Will Sutton, Maureen Davies and Mr Graham Chappell seeking the Council's support for a joint LHI bid for a safety barrier along the Sixteen Foot Bank road (the request was turned down as there were more pressing issues in the town).

Postmaster Mr Satish Karia, his wife and the area sales manager for the Post Office on the services the Post Office can offer with the imminent closure of the last bank.

Officers: The Council continues to employ two part-time members of staff (the Clerk and the Financial Officer) as the maintenance work is now carried out by contractors.

The Financial Officer prepared the final accounts and annual governance statement for the annual audit which was passed with no issues raised. She also administered the accounts as per the financial regulations, updated the financial regulations, advised on the precept, prepared the budget, undertook a financial review, organised contracts and re-invested the Council's assets.

The Clerk carried out the wishes of councillors, continued to administer the allotments, organised the Summer Fun events and helped to organise the Midsummer Festival, oversaw the work on the pocket park, recorded meetings, acted as an intermediary between councils and passed on residents' concerns to the relevant authorities.

For more information on the Council visit the website [www.chatteristowncouncil.info](http://www.chatteristowncouncil.info)

**Joanna Melton**

**March 2019**