

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022

2341

1 of 10

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

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

### **84) To Accept Apologies for Absence**

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

### **85) 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.

### **86) Open Forum**

One member of the public was present and said he wished to speak on the Local Plan Review. Cllrs Benney and Murphy left the room.

The member of the public said that now the draft Local Plan was out to consultation he trusted that the Council would make reference to the Parish Poll result at the appropriate time. The Mayor informed the visitor that the Parish Poll cost the Council £5,093.65. The member of the public left the meeting and Cllrs Benney and Murphy returned to the meeting.

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

The Mayor had requested slight amendments to the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> August 2022. Min 78) paragraph 3 read the Mayor and Cllr Ashley and should have read the Mayor and Cllr Hay. Min 81) read £347 and should have read £347k. The amendments were agreed and the Mayor then signed the minutes as a correct record.

### **88) Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Any matters arising from the minutes were on the agenda.

### **89) Police Matters**

Pc Harry Howe, a member of the Neighbourhood policing team, was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that Sgt Punton was his supervisor and he was the new local policeman for Chatteris. He was based out of March with four other Pcs, a Sgt and a PCSO.

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

**“Local Police**

The Mayor has forwarded to members, by email, the confidential minutes of the meeting between Neighbourhood Sergeant Joe Punton and council leaders held on the 3<sup>rd</sup> August 2022. The next meeting is scheduled for the 8<sup>th</sup> September

**Neighbourhood Alert**

1/8/22: Latest edition of Neighbourhood Watch “Our News” newsletter.

3/8/22: Information about the best way to contact the police in addition to calling 999 or 101. This includes online reporting and live web chats.

3/8/22: Invitation to take part in a College of Policing survey and help to shape the Police Race Action Plan.

8 & 30/8/22, 5/9/22: Latest news from the courts including Fenland cases.

9/8/22: Information about a podcast from a Peterborough police officer who was attacked and suffered a bleed on the brain.

10/8/22: Advice to keep windows shut (despite the hot weather) to stop burglars.

16/8/22: Information about a retired dentist from Soham who transferred thousands of pounds in an internet romance scam.

17/8/22: Information about the number of hoax calls to 999 (31 in 2 weeks) and the penalties for making such calls.

22/8/22: Information about a podcast which looks at how a serial paedophile, who abused girls in offences spanning 40 years, was caught.

25/8/22: Notification that a 21-year-old Chatteris man had been arrested by the neighbourhood policing team in connection with drug dealing in the town.

29/8/22: Information about a new podcast which focuses on neighbourhood policing.

30/8/22: More information about the live web chat service.

31/8/22: Appeal for the public to report anything suspicious around ATM machines after a report reveals Cambridgeshire is targeted at least 10 times a year by ram-raiders.

5/9/22: Campaign encouraging anyone who witnesses street harassment to ask the victim if they are okay.”

Referring to the report Pc Howe said the 21-year-old who had been arrested was part of a drugs gang. A lady in her 50s had also been arrested at the time for assaulting a police officer and a drugs offence. There were other crimes associated with drug dealing such as dangerous driving.

Cllr Gowler thanked Pc Howe for attending and said a major issue for the council had been drugs. The feeling among the public was that not a lot was being done about the issue but the Council knew differently. Pc Howe said two other Chatteris men had been pulled over for drugs and he asked Councillors to pass on any information and photos which might assist the police.

Cllr Newell asked about the injured Peterborough police officer and Pc Howe said he was now back at work.

Cllr Murphy asked Pc Howe to keep an eye on the Wenny Road Recreation Ground where damage had been caused and youngsters were throwing rubbish out of bins and smashing crockery and glass. The Mayor said she had also received an email about older children being abusive to other children. Pc Howe asked if Cllr Murphy could arrange for him to have vehicular access to the site.

The Mayor said she had reported a spate of drain cover thefts in the town. Pc Howe said it was now the season of ram raiding and he asked the public to report any suspicious vehicles near ATMs.

The Council had received a letter about the police asking for evidence from private CCTV cameras and querying if the town's cameras worked. Pc Howe said everyone was entitled to have CCTV as long as it was correctly directed and the police did ask for footage if they were seeking information about a crime. However they also had access to and checked the town/public CCTV cameras which were monitored in Peterborough.

Cllr Benney said he had received a complaint about two cars parking on the path right up to the wall of a property in Wood Street. Pc Howe said he would investigate and the Mayor asked him to also monitor vehicles parking on double yellow lines at the junction of St Peters Drive and New Road.

#### **90) FDC, Street Scene, Section 106 and CCTV Updates**

Members had a copy of the latest reports (**copy attached**).

Referring to the Open Spaces report, Cllr Murphy said the bench at the clock tower which had been removed belonged to the County Council and would be going back. Work on the new play equipment at Cricketers Way was complete and the table tennis table at Wenny Recreation Ground, which had been demolished for the second time, would be taken away and not replaced.

The Clerk had passed on a message left on the Town Council's website about the disabled and ladies public toilets not working. FDC had responded quickly to say they would be checked and any repairs arranged. The officer said he would also contact the customer who complained.

Cllr Smith asked if the new bench in the High Street could be re-painted or stained using money from the Town Centre Renaissance Fund. The FO confirmed funds were available and the Clerk said she would order the work.

#### **91) Financial Officer's Report**

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2022 showing expenditure of £441,819.75 and income of £86,453.33

(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.

#### Chatteris Christmas Lights Storage

Members were advised that the Christmas Lights committee had received planning permission for a new security door and new cladding for its storage unit in Park Street. The Financial Officer advised Members that she had received a Street Renaissance grant application form asking for a grant towards the cost of the works.

She advised Members that the total cost of the materials and labour was almost £12,000 and that a grant of £5,000 from the Growing Fenland project had been agreed.

The committee were looking for additional funding to cover the shortfall. They would be making grant applications to a number of sources and the Financial Officer asked if the Council would consider making an additional one-off grant towards the costs.

Members agreed to consider an additional grant application at the October meeting.

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

### **92) External Auditors Report**

[1] Members had before them a copy of the External Auditor's (PKF Littlejohn) report and a copy of the Notice of conclusion of audit for the year end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.

[2] Members were advised that the Level of External Audit for 21/22 was a Level 4 – Intermediate Level Review. This was because the Growing Fenland Grant Project for the Museum/Community Rooms had taken the income over £200K.

Members were advised that the audit would also be a Level 4 - Intermediate Level review next year as the Growing Fenland Grant Project for the Museum/Community Rooms would take the expenditure over £200K.

The grant income was received in 21/22 financial year but wasn't spent until 22/23.

[3] Members noted that the audit report was 'clear', in that there were no matters that the auditor wished to draw to the Council's attention.

The Financial Officer advised Members that although the Audit came back clear, she had to provide an in-depth detailed explanation to the Auditor on the following: -

All variance explanations had to be supported numerically.

This information was provided; however, the auditor requested the explanations for boxes 3, 4 and 6 to be broken down into more depth and to be supported numerically to within 15% of the previous year's value.

Box 3- Total Other Receipts

Box 4- Staff Costs

Box 6- All other payments

The Financial Officer provided the explanations and supporting evidence which was duly approved by the auditor.

In consultation with other Financial Officers and from observations on the SLCC website it appeared that PKF Littlejohn had raised similar queries with many parish and town councils.

[4] Members were advised that to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the notice of conclusion of audit, which detailed the rights of public inspection in line with the statutory requirements, along with Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Annual Return would be displayed for a period of 14 days from 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022 and copies of the full Annual Return would be available upon request. As with last year, it was not proposed to charge for copies.

[5] Members were advised that under the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015, the SAAA central auditor was responsible for appointing external auditors to all applicable opted-in smaller authorities.

The next 5-year appointing period would run from 2022/23 until 2026/27.

Smaller authorities had the option to opt out of the next round of 5-year audit appointments, however; all authorities required an appointed external auditor. If an authority wished to opt out it had to formally reach and record that decision in a way that met the requirements of its own governance framework, by convening a full council meeting or an extraordinary council meeting.

The Authority would need to meet the Local Audit (Smaller Authorities) Regulations 2015 to appoint its external auditor.

Nalc and Cpalc had advised councils not to opt out of the central procurement as it would be a significant decision which required careful consideration.

Based on the information received the Financial Officer recommended that Chatteris Town Council remain opted-in to the central procurement and appointment scheme as the process was onerous and very time consuming to appoint its own External Auditor.

It was **RESOLVED** that the External Audit report for 2021/22 be approved.

### **93) Payment of Accounts**

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

Members were advised that RJ Warren payment for Gardening Services in August was on the schedule of payments for £1,025.24, however the invoice for payment was only £814.04 due to reduced grass cutting services because of the dry weather conditions.

It was **RESOLVED** that the amendment be noted.

|                       |                                      |                  |
|-----------------------|--------------------------------------|------------------|
| JC Wilkinson          | Just Us Too Band Summer Festival     | 150.00           |
| Tina Prior            | Mayor CTC In Bloom Award             | 25.00            |
| I J Hargreaves        | Renaissance Grant Business Premises  | 1,038.00         |
| FDC                   | Parish Poll                          | 5,093.65         |
| R J Warren            | Gardening Services                   | 742.04           |
| R J Warren            | Sleeper benches Old Railway Line     | 216.00           |
| PKF Littlejohn        | External Auditor Fee                 | 1,560.00         |
| Rural Cambs CAB       | 1st Qtr Face to Face Meetings        | 1,537.00         |
| R J Warren            | Allotments Clearance                 | 288.00           |
| Clerk                 | Reim: Zoom                           | 14.39            |
| Rose Fire & Security  | Fire Alarm service                   | 420.05           |
| Wisbech Town Council  | Charity Afternoon Tea                | 35.00            |
| S J Butler            | Summer Fun Stripey Wipey Entertainer | 235.00           |
| Onecom                | Phone Bill                           | 74.60            |
| Barclays Bank         | Bank Charges                         | 8.50             |
| CTC September Payroll | Payroll September                    | 5,416.58         |
| Financial officer     | Reim: Petty Cash                     | 96.72            |
| <b>Total</b>          |                                      | <b>16,950.53</b> |

#### 94) Planning

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> August 2022 (**copy attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to k) (as shown on the **appended list**). It was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Recommend Refusal, over-development of site, not in keeping with the area, loss of visibility splay will reduce vision to the right for vehicles leaving the car park.
- d) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- e) Noted
- f) Whilst Councillors do not object to the development of the site per se they strongly object to the access from The Elms and request the applicant consider an alternative access. The original plan was for the development area off Wenny Road (including this site) to be accessed via a feeder road from a roundabout at the junction of Wenny Road and the A142. When the access to the site was left at The Elms there was considerably less traffic in St Martin's Road, Birch Avenue and The Elms. Additional vehicles include school traffic for Glebelands School.

The roads leading to the site are unsuitable for yet more traffic, including construction vehicles, and will become congested.

- g) Support
- h) Support
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Request FDC officer views tree as councillors are concerned at the size of the reduction proposed.

Councillors had also received a copy of The Fenland Draft Local Plan pages which were specifically relevant to Chatteris, ahead of the planning working group meeting on the 27<sup>th</sup> September when the Plan would be discussed. All councillors would be invited to the meeting.

### **95) Growing Fenland Project Update**

The Clerk reported that a meeting had been held that afternoon between the Town Councillors on the Growing Fenland project committee, the Mayor, the contractor, the architect and the Council's officers.

It had been agreed that work on converting 2 Park Street (the former Barclays Bank) would begin on the 26<sup>th</sup> September. The accountants would be asked to remove their items from the first floor to allow the works to be undertaken.

The architect had warned there could well be hold ups as many planned works had to be agreed in advance with the Conservation Officer. These ranged from bricks and roofing tiles for the outbuilding to windows, electrical layout and a damp proof course for the main building. The builder would be supplying examples of the materials proposed so these could be submitted in advance to the Conservation Officer.

In the meantime the Financial Officer and the Clerk had calculated the anticipated additional costs and likely shortfall in funding for the works to 2 Park Street and 14 Church Lane, bearing in mind the increased costs of materials and labour, and had submitted this sum to the Combined Authority asking if there were any opportunities for additional funding. Mr Martin Lutman, the Senior Programme Manager at the Combined Authority, had promised to explore if there were any options to bridge the shortfall. The priority would be to complete the works to 2 Park Street before deciding on works to 14 Church Lane.

### **96) Water Usage at the Allotments**

Members considered the following report from the Clerk:

#### “Background

There has been one main topic of conversation at the allotments this summer - the amount of water being used by some allotment holders. Various ideas for reducing water usage have been discussed both at Allotment Association meetings and during the Clerk's visits to the

allotments. All new allotment holders are urged not to attach a hosepipe for long and to keep water usage to a minimum but this often falls on deaf ears and high water bills are anticipated after the long, dry and hot summer.

There are frequent warnings that this sort of summer will become more common and it is, therefore, necessary to look at ways of either reducing water usage or recouping water bill costs. It does not seem fair to put up rental bills for all allotment holders as some use water very sparingly (and recognise that by not over-watering they are ensuring healthier plants with a good root system).

Unfortunately the Clerk does not have time to patrol the allotments 24/7 to catch those who are attaching hosepipes to the taps for hours on end.

#### Ideas to be Considered

- a) A tax on poly tunnels and greenhouses. The number of poly tunnels and greenhouses has significantly increased in recent years and most do, undoubtedly, use extra water. An extra £5 or £10 could be added to rental bills for every poly tunnel or greenhouse. This would involve the Clerk checking each allotment and issuing the additional charge where needed. It is certainly possible but allotment holders would need to be warned that a charge would be coming in.
- b) A restriction on the number and size of water butts and water containers. Water butts which capture rainwater are fine but many allotment holders have large water butts and even larger water tanks which they fill up using a hosepipe from the taps.
- c) Turning off the water supply. This happens in the winter but turning it off in the summer would be unpopular and is unfair on those who use the occasional watering can full of water.
- d) Restricting the flow of water to discourage hosepipe usage. The plumber is looking into this idea to see if it is feasible having ruled out taps which have to be held down to be used on the grounds of cost.

#### Recommendations

The Clerk is looking for members' views on the ideas above and seeks permission to send out a note with the annual rent letter either warning that measures will be introduced if water usage is not reduced or warning that certain measures will be introduced on a date to be decided.

Members **agreed** that allotment holders should be warned in a letter that rents would have to go up substantially unless there was a reduction in the amount of water used as the rents had to cover allotment costs, including the water bills.

#### **97) FOI Request**

The Clerk had received another Freedom of Information request from Mr Lawrence Weetman. He had requested a copy of the written decision of the complaint hearing held on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021 which considered his complaint about the council's decision to bar him from filming in March 2020. He had also requested any minutes of the meeting and notes taken. The Clerk had supplied him with a copy of the written decision (letter) which was sent to him

after the meeting (which was also a record of minutes made at the meeting), a copy of the public notice read out at the Chatteris Town Council meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 and an extract from the minutes of that meeting. She no longer had the notes taken as she was under no obligation to keep notes once minutes had been approved.

## 98) Traffic Issues

LHI: The highways officer dealing with the Doddington Road LHI scheme had confirmed that a road safety audit was not required, just Road Safety's comments. A consultation would be held on the proposed speed limit changes.

Footpaths: The Mayor and the Clerk had arranged a meeting with the Highways officer for Chatteris to look at the state of footpaths in New Road, in particular near the doctors' surgery. Cllr Hay was invited to the meeting. The Clerk had also written to the Rights of Way officer asking if the footpath in London Road leading to the new garden centre could be reinstated. The officer was currently on holiday.

Traffic Orders: A late order had been received to close part of the High Street to carry out emergency electrical cable repair works. The works had been undertaken.

Works had already begun at Huntingdon Road near the roundabout and an order had been agreed to close part of the roundabout 24/7 from 10<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> October to carry out roundabout improvement works and the installation of a rising sewer main.

A small section of Station Street (near the Cross Keys) would be closed 24/7 between the 25<sup>th</sup> and 27<sup>th</sup> October for communication pipe repair works.

The final plan was to close off parking bays in part of London Road on December 1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> to enable works by UK Power Networks.

Road Safety Day: Notification had been received that the Vision Zero Partnership from the County Council was planning a Road Safety Day of Action in March market square on the 22<sup>nd</sup> September. A poster had been displayed.

Reports: The latest roadworks and events information for Fenland had been received along with TMC incident report for July and the Highways events diary for September.

## 99) Correspondence

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

Market: A member of the public had enquired if a market could be set up at Furrowfields car park with the traders not paying any rent for 6 months to a year in a bid to bring visitors to the town. Members pointed out there was already a Friday market in Park Street which was struggling to survive, they queried who would fund the idea and suggested Furrowfields was out of the way for a market.

Cllr Murphy said there was a problem for the existing traders because cars were parking in spaces where the traders need to set up in Park Street, despite notices stating no parking from Thursday evening. Pc Howe said he would look into the problem.

Access: Another resident had asked why Moxons Passage, off the High Street, was now gated and locked despite being marked on the town plan as a right of way. She also asked why it was only possible to access half of Blackhorse Lane and why the home-owner claimed it

belonged to him. It was suggested the author should go to land registry and Cllr Gowler said there was a detailed map showing rights of way on the County Council website. Cllr Hay said she would speak to the County rights of way officer. She warned if it was not a right of way and the road had not been adopted it would be private land.

**100) Reports**

There no reports.

**101) Items for the Next Agenda**

To consider an additional grant for the Christmas Lights Committee.

It was **agreed** to consider Minute 102) **In Committee** due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the information to be discussed.

**102) To Consider Whether to Make a Small Claims Court Application**