

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> October 2022 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

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

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

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Charrier, A Hay and M Petrou.

### **104) 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.

### **105) Open Forum**

Four members of the public were welcomed to the meeting (another member of the public joined later in the meeting). They were invited by the Mayor to speak but all but one declined the invitation at that stage. The resident said he used the road from Chatteris to Ely on a regular basis and was concerned by the number of tractor drivers making their way to and from the anaerobic digester plant who were on their phones. The resident was concerned there would be an accident and someone would be killed. The Mayor said she had already reported the matter to the police and she would mention it again at the meeting with the local sergeant. Cllr Carney said the problem did appear to be worse this year.

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

After the omission of a paragraph, the minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> September 2022 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

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

Min 98) Highways Officer: The Mayor reported that along with Cllr Hay and the Clerk she had met the Highways officer for Chatteris, Ms Amanda Hill, and pointed out the problems with the footpath in New Road, especially near the doctors' surgery. A nearby overgrown hedge was also mentioned. Ms Hill had agreed to arrange for the footpath to be re-surfaced. Cllr Smith said she had reported the problem a few years ago but at that stage it was deemed not bad enough for action. Cllr Gowler said there was a general issue of deteriorating paths and roads throughout the town. The Mayor said the overgrown hedgerows at Claire Street

and the junction of New Road and the bypass had also been mentioned to Ms Hill who promised to investigate. She also took on board the call for the restoration of the footpath in London Road to the new garden centre.

Members then pointed out there was a large crack in the pavement near Glebelands School, the path around Wenny Recreation Ground was also cracking up and the road markings at the junction of Station Street and Burnsfield Street (where the children crossed) were very faded.

Min 102) Small Claims Court: The Clerk said following the Council's agreement that the person who owed the Council money should be taken to the small claims court she had been made aware that the person was also the subject of a police investigation. She had agreed to give a statement to the police the following Monday. It was agreed she should still pursue the money owed through the small claims court.

### **108) Police Matters**

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 latest confidential crime statistics supplied by Sergeant Joe Punton. Unfortunately the meeting between Sgt Punton and council leaders, due to be held on the 8<sup>th</sup> September 2022, had to be cancelled. Sgt Punton asked to be notified of any issues.

#### **Neighbourhood Alert**

7/9/22: The Law has Changed is a podcast highlighting a woman's struggle for justice after surviving historical abuse and rape committed in the Huntingdon area.

7/9/22: Warning about energy rebate scam emails. The fake emails purport to be from Ofgem.

8/9/22: Following call for help in tackling ram raids, news that a man was arrested on suspicion of being involved in a ram raid.

20/9/22: Information about a careers open evening for those interest in a career in policing to be held on 13<sup>th</sup> October at the force HQ in Huntingdon.

22/9/22: Information about an awards ceremony which recognised excellent prevention and problem-solving work undertaken by officers and partner agencies.

23/9/22: Request for residents and those who work in Fenland to complete a survey so the police can understand the issues in the area.

24/9/22: Information about an online quiz, which is part of the Call When It Counts Campaign.

26/9/22: Information about the Cambs Cops: Our Stories podcast which explores police officer recruitment myths.

26/9/22: Notification that the Neighbourhood Watch 2022 Crime and Community Survey has been launched and an invitation to take part in the survey.

30/9/22: Story about a police officer who performed crucial first aid thanks to a smartphone app.

30/9/22: Notification that the March, Chatteris and Whittlesey neighbourhood team have arrested 10 people for possession with intent to supply class A and class B drugs. As a result over £90,000 in cash was seized along with a significant quantity of drugs.

30/9/22: Warning about energy bill scam texts which claim to be from the UK government

2/10/22: Invitation to report crime, seek advice or provide the police with intel by using their dedicated web chat page.

3/10/22: October edition of Our News, the Neighbourhood Watch national newsletter.

3/10/22: Latest news from the courts.

The Mayor said she would be meeting with Sgt Punton the following Monday. Cllr Taylor asked the Mayor to mention problems with motocross riders in the middle of the town and Cllr Gowler said they were also using the Old Railway Line footpath.

### **109) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates**

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

**Bench**: Cllr Murphy said he had requested the bench at Jubilee Gardens be put back. He also reported problems with glass being smashed at Wenny Road Recreation Ground and a seat uprooted, yet again. The Clerk said the Town Council's contractors had rescued the seat which had been collected by FDC's contractors.

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

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 13<sup>th</sup> September 2022 showing expenditure of £457,111.37 and income of £86,773.21 (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.

### **111) Grants to Voluntary Organisations**

Members were reminded that the Council's current policy was to consider grant applications at the April, July, October and January meetings each year. Budget limitations meant that grants given by the Council were an expression of support for an organisation and were not at a level where, on their own, they could sustain a group's financial viability.

The approved budget for grants in **2022/23 was £4,000.**

There were separate approved budgets set in 2022/23 for the following: -

	£
Chatteris King Edward Centre – Staffing contribution	8,000
Chatteris Museum Trust	4,500
Chatteris Christmas Lights Committee	10,000
Chatteris Town in Bloom	5,000
Chatteris Youth Service Provision	4,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom Paid Watering service	1,000

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Summer Children's Fun	1,500
Summer Festival Contribution	4,000
Youth Club	5,400

Applications for consideration by Members at the meeting were scheduled, with recommendations. The following was agreed:

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Recommended Grant £</b>
<b>Cambridgeshire Search &amp; Rescue</b>	<b>300</b>
Grant towards water project for purchase of equipment, kits & training for water-based searches.	
<b>Chatteris Royal British Legion</b>	<b>550</b>

Grant for redecoration of the Chatteris War Memorial railings sides and rear. The Financial Officer advised Members that these works fell under the Growing Fenland Chatteris Town Renaissance Street Furniture Refurbishment project. She advised Members that there were funds still available in the budget and proposed that the cost of the refurbishment to the railings be paid for from this grant. This was agreed.

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

### **112) Christmas Lights Grant**

The Financial Officer reminded Members that she had received a grant application from the Christmas Lights Committee for help towards improving the external appearance of its new premises at the Empress Swimming Pool, and a new roller shutter door which will provide a level of security required to protect the display currently valued in excess of £150K.

Members were reminded that planning permission had been approved and the committee were keen to get the works completed ASAP to maximise the security of the equipment and lights.

Members were advised that the original estimates for the provision of a roller shutter and personal access door, and repairs and cladding for the outside of the building, totalled £9,071. Since then, prices had increased to £11,020 and detailed works had been amended to meet the conservation and planning approval requirements. A further cost of £984 had been incurred for the planning application and professional fees, making a total cost of £12,004.

Members were advised that the grant application to the Growing Fenland fund had been approved for the maximum sum of £5,000. This left a shortfall of £7,004. The grant could only be given if the additional shortfall was found.

The Christmas Lights Committee had previously advised that they would be applying to the Metalcraft Community fund, Tesco Community fund and Court Leet but didn't know when the applications would be considered.

Members were advised that the Christmas Lights reserve fund of £5,000 was held for emergencies, however the committee had agreed that they would access some of this to get the works completed if there was no other source of income. If the emergency reserve was used there would be no money left for other unforeseen expenses.

The Financial Officer said it was unfortunate that the Christmas Lights had to move premises, (not through their own choice) and the expense of getting the new storage unit up to a secure, safe and acceptable standard was a cost that was not anticipated or expected.

The Financial Officer reminded Members that the Christmas Lights committee was made up of volunteers who worked hard to organise and deliver, in all weathers, the Christmas lights for the town. By doing so it meant that the Town Council did not have the responsibility of organising the event.

The Financial Officer and the Clerk recommended that the Council offer a one-off grant of £5,000 towards the costs of the work as this would not only protect the Christmas Lights collection but would also help improve the look of a significant building in the town.

Such a grant would then allow the Christmas Lights Committee to get all the works completed ASAP with a minimum impact on its reserve fund.

As a comparison, Members were advised that March Town Council paid contractors and suppliers to supply, erect and dismantle its Christmas lights. Total cost last year for this work was £23,440. Wisbech Town Council also did the same as March for its Christmas lights and the cost for last year was £25,683.

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

### **113) Over 70's Christmas Party**

Members were reminded that the Over 70's Christmas party was a great success last year and all who attended really enjoyed themselves.

As the party was so successful the Financial Officer asked Members to consider approving an Over 70's Christmas party for the current year.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had provisionally booked the caterers, entertainer and the venue for the 2<sup>nd</sup> December. FDC Golden Age organisers had confirmed they would be willing to come along and help as they did last year.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she had received estimated costs for the catering and the entertainer had confirmed her fee.

The Financial Officer advised that she estimated a budget of £1,500 was needed and although there was no budget set aside for the party there were funds available in the General & Leisure reserve that could be utilised.

She also advised that she would try and get donations for bingo & tombola prizes from local businesses. Councillors raised concerns regarding the estimated budget of £1,500 whereby the Financial Officer assured them that she would keep the costs down as much as she could and didn't anticipate spending the full budget.

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Cllr Ashley reminded members that the Town Council did so much for youths and other organisations in the town and the planned party was something good that the Town Council could do for the over 70's age group.

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

**114) Payment of Accounts**

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

Barclays	Bank Charges	8.50
ICO	Renewal Fee	35.00
D Stimson	Transportation of Festival Staging	80.00
Clerk	Reim Zoom & Postage stamps	82.39
Cambs CC	CAB room hire library	253.50
Reg Tibbitts	Bunting Summer Fest	163.78
R J Warren	Gardening Services	1,073.24
Onecom	September phone bill	74.09
High Sheriff	Mayor's Charity donation	50.00
Clerk	Reim Sundries Queen's death	65.97
Financial officer	Reim Sundries Queen's death	33.94
KEC	Hire fees for Annual Town Meeting & Summer Fun	140.00
Zen Internet	Website Sep-Oct	11.99
Viking	Stationary Order	156.22

KEC	Grant towards running costs	<b>2357</b> 7 of 13 8,000.00
Payroll	October Payroll	5,416.58
<b>Total</b>		<b>15,645.20</b>

### 115) Allotment Rents 2023/24

Members had received a report from the Clerk. She explained rent levels for the Council's 132 allotments at Honeysome Road and 6 at Queensway had to be set one year in advance. As allotment rents were collected in October it was now time to set the allotment rents for 2023.

Members had a breakdown of expenditure so far this year and expenditure at the same time last year. The water bills due in October had been estimated by the Clerk after taking readings of the water meters. The income was also estimated as rents were just starting to come in. The anticipated expenditure in 22/23 was £3,281.80 compared with expenditure of £5,719 in 21/22. However the expenditure on the roads in 21/22 (£3,700) was to be spread over 3 years.

Expenditure on water in 22/23 was expected to be well in excess of the previous year, the bill was likely to be over £1,000. To reflect the increased use of water the Clerk proposed another increase in bills in 23/24, following a £2 rise in the current year.

#### Current Rents

##### Honeysome Road

£32 for a full allotment for a full year

£16 for a full allotment for 6 months

£16 for a half plot for a full year

£8 for a half plot for 6 months

##### Queensway

£25 a year for a plot

#### Proposed Rents

##### Honeysome Road

£35 for a full allotment for a full year

£20 for a full allotment for 6 months

£18 for a half plot for a full year

£10 for a half plot for 6 months

##### Queensway

£26 a year for a plot

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

### **116) Planning**

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> September 2022 (**copy attached**).

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

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Recommend Refusal. The Council does not object to development of the land but the development should be in keeping with existing buildings and the dwellings should be single storey. The current application is over development of the site and is not in keeping with the surrounding area.
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Recommend Refusal, over development of site and access issues (Cllr Smith declared an interest)
- h) Support, in keeping with the area
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Recommend Refusal as access is unsuitable, there is poor visibility for vehicles leaving the site as the opening is too narrow and is on a bend in the road.

### **117) To Agree Response to Draft Local Plan Consultation**

The Planning Working Group had fully discussed the draft local plan and made recommendations on the Town Council's response to the plan.

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest and left the room as Cllr Haggata read out the recommendations which were ratified by the full council.

Members voted six in favour and one against the following comments being submitted as the Council's response to the Fenland Local Plan consultation:

Two sites had been put forward as Local Green Space - the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park and the land off Wenny Road. Having considered the criteria for a Local Green Space members agreed the following should also be put forward:

Recreation Grounds and play areas at Wenny Road, Furrowfields, Huntingdon Road, Larham Way, St Pauls Drive, Cricketers Way, Lancaster Way, Willey Terrace and Hunters Close.

Green areas at: Tithe, Queensway, Heronshaw, Treeway, Whitemill (including the pond area), Burnfield estate, Eastwood, the rear of the Parish Church, Huntingdon Road (adjacent the A141), St Stephens Drive, Ash Grove, Harold Heading Close and Southampton Place,

junction of Blackmill and Fairway, Slade Way, Fenview, Westbourne Road, Fairview Avenue, Lindsells Walk, New Road, Green Park, between Tesco's and the drain, Wood Farm (London Road), junction of Station Street and Station Road. The Old Railway Line Footpath and Bridleway.

Sports Venues: football ground at West Street, football ground at Peacocks Paddock (Wenny Road), football field behind the Sportsman (Fairway), Cricket Club ground (Wenny Road), Bowls Club ground (Wood Street).

School Playing Fields at Cromwell, Kingsfield and Glebelands.

Public Gardens & Cemeteries: Jubilee Gardens, Market Hill Gardens, garden at the top of Huntingdon Road. Two cemeteries (New Road).

Members also agreed to ask why the large reservoir being proposed by Anglian Water in Fenland was not shown on the Local Plan.

They agreed comments should be made on the following sites which were mentioned in the emerging Local Plan:

Chatteris CP 40167 – land off Slade Way. The site had been rejected in the report but members felt it was potentially suitable for development.

Chatteris CP 40211 (LP46.01) – land south of Salisbury House, Blackmill Road. The site had been allocated in the report but members agreed it was unsuitable due to the access.

Chatteris CP 40248 – land off the A142. The site had been rejected in the report but members agreed it was potentially suitable for development.

Chatteris CP 40284 – land off Wenny Road. The site had been rejected in the report (although it was classified as uncertain suitability) but by a majority (4 to 1) members agreed that the part of the site which was the subject of a live application for 93 homes should remain as allocated land and the area identified in the planning application as green space should be identified as Local Green Space.

Chatteris CP 40326 (LP46.02) – land east of 80 The Elms. The area had been allocated in the report but members reiterated their belief that the access proposed was unsuitable.

## **118) Bus Services**

The Mayor began by asking members to suspend standing orders to allow those members of the public present to speak about the plans by Stagecoach to cut all bus services to the town by the end of October. This was agreed.

Members had a copy of comments received from residents pleading for bus services to be maintained and a reply from the Mayor of the Combined Authority, Dr Nik Johnson, to Cllr Charrier's plea for help in saving services. Cllr Haggata had been on local radio stating it was disgraceful to leave Chatteris without public transport and Cllr Carney had been on television outlining the problems which would arise if bus services were withdrawn.

The Clerk also gave members a copy of the latest statement about attempts to save bus services from Dr Johnson.

One member of the public said her daughter relied on the buses to get to school and buses were essential. A number of vulnerable and disabled people relied on the bus services. Another said the Community Car Scheme, which relied on volunteers, would not be able to cope with the extra demand for their services.

It was agreed the Clerk should write to Dr Johnson and protest in the strongest possible terms about the plans to cut all bus services to the town. Members pointed out there had to be a minimum level of service.

It was agreed the Clerk should appeal for help in preserving bus services, not only in the short term but also in the long term.

She should point out that the loss of all bus services would have a devastating effect on the town and state that it was interesting to note that BBC Look East chose to concentrate on Chatteris when it ran a feature on bus service cuts. This presumably was because Chatteris was a thriving market town which would be left with no public transport since it did not have the benefits of a train station. This was totally unacceptable.

The Clerk should also state that the Council was told time and time again about the need for a cleaner and healthier environment by lowering carbon emissions yet Chatteris was set to lose the only method of transport which prevented the reliance on cars. For years the town had campaigned for better public transport only to find services were to be cut.

The letter should also point out that the Council had been approached by many residents regarding the difficulties which would arise if the bus services were cut, especially for those unable to drive and those without access to a car.

Residents who would suffer would include students unable to continue their studies as they could not get to school or college, teachers unable to access the schools, people who were unable to get to work or hospital appointments, vulnerable and disabled people and those needing to access a bank (since all banks in the town closed a few years ago).

As one resident put it “the elderly community will be isolated and totally forgotten”. The same resident pointed out this would lead to huge mental health issues.

It was agreed the Clerk should also mention that the organiser of the Community Car Scheme in Chatteris had attended the Town Council meeting and said he feared being inundated with requests for transport if the bus services were withdrawn. The scheme would not be able to cope, especially as it relied on the goodwill of volunteer drivers and recruiting such drivers was difficult.

Chatteris, with a population of 11,000, had good road links to many towns in Cambridgeshire including Cambridge, Peterborough, Huntingdon, Ely and March. It was not in an isolated position but the only way to get to those towns would, in future, be by car.

Stagecoach stated they had withdrawn services as they were not profitable yet they did nothing to advertise those services and were continually cancelling buses so people feared they could not rely on them.

It was agreed the letter should urge Dr Johnson to spend part of the £1.7m funding he had pledged in maintaining bus services on Chatteris in the short term and to look urgently at a long term solution.

It was agreed Mr Steve Barclay MP, the leader of Fenland District Council, the leader of the County Council and the Minister for Transport should be copied in to the letter,

### **119) Reservoir Proposals**

The Clerk had hoped to have a plan of the exact location of the new reservoir being proposed in the Fens by Anglian Water. She was aware that letters had been sent out to residents whose properties would be affected by the reservoir, either directly or indirectly, and these included properties at Horseway, Chatteris.

Members agreed the reservoir would have a massive impact on the district and Chatteris. It was a major infrastructure project to meet the need for additional water. On the positives it would bring not only the additional water but new leisure facilities and jobs and would put Chatteris on the map. On the other side people would lose homes and land. Cllr Haggata said if the Council got the chance it should push for the leisure facilities to be located near Chatteris.

### **119) Growing Fenland Project Update**

The Clerk reported that the contractors had begun work on converting the former Barclays Bank to a museum. The Clerk said she hoped there would be no delays due to the lack of a conservation officer at Fenland District Council as many of the works needed the approval of the conservation department before the builders could proceed.

### **120) EV Charging Points**

The Council had received an email from a resident suggesting Chatteris could stand out from other towns and villages if it was to install an ev charger as there was a shortage of chargers for electric cars in the area.

The Clerk had written back to explain that the Council had looked into the idea of installing ev chargers a few years ago. The best place to locate chargers – Furrowfields car park – had been decided upon, based on advice from suppliers. The Clerk was about to apply for grants and the Town Council had money put aside for the project but Fenland District Council had refused permission for the chargers to be installed on their land.

Members agreed it would be timely to approach Fenland District Council again about the project as they had failed to install ev chargers in that location.

### **121) Pride in Fenland Awards**

The Clerk asked members if they wished to nominate anyone for the Pride in Fenland awards. She suggested putting forward the gentleman who had planted all the trees along the Old Railway Line footpath. This was agreed.

Cllr Smith said she wished to nominate the Festival committee. This was agreed.

### **122) Traffic Issues**

LHI: Members had received brief details of planned changes to the Local Highway Improvement Initiative ahead of the 23/24 round of applications. The main change was the introduction of two process routes: non-complex, for such schemes as parking restrictions, street lighting and speed limits; and complex, schemes to include raised features, central islands, pedestrian crossings, etc. The levels of funding would also be dependent on the type of project. There would also be a change to the make-up of the member panel, who scored schemes, and community groups would be able to apply for funding, in addition to the Town Council. The applications window would open on the 31<sup>st</sup> October and close on the 6<sup>th</sup> January. As a result members were asked to bring ideas for LHI schemes to the next Town Council meeting.

Transport Plan: Members were informed that a draft transport strategy for Fenland had been drawn up based on comments received about the first draft strategy. A public consultation on the strategy had been launched and a number of public consultation events were planned including an event at Tesco's in Chatteris on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> October from 2pm until 5pm. Information would also be located in libraries.

Traffic Orders: Temporary traffic orders to close roads for surface treatment works had been received for Burnsfield Street, Green Park and Windsor Close for works to be carried out between 1<sup>st</sup> November 2022 and 30<sup>th</sup> April 2024 and for Clare Street for a new water connection to be installed between 21<sup>st</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022.

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

### **123) Correspondence**

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

Polling stations: It was agreed to discuss the polling stations and polling places review at the Leisure Working Group meeting on the 11<sup>th</sup> October.

Geocache: Members agreed that they had no objections to a geocache being located at Little Acre Fen Pocket Park.

**124) Reports**

Poppies: Cllr Carney said he would be organising the Poppies on a Lamppost scheme again.

Footpath: The Clerk said the contractors were due to begin work on extending the made up surface of the Old Railway Line Footpath very soon. The footpath would be closed for two weeks while the work was underway.

**125) Items for the Next Agenda**

No items were put forward for the next agenda.