

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023

2385

1 of 11

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2023 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

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

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

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

### **171) 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 a members of FDC's planning committee.

### **172) Open Forum**

Two residents were welcomed to the meeting.

The first, a resident who lived in the Furrowfields area, said he had requested CCTV footage when the catalytic converter was stolen from his car but was told the cameras were not working. The Clerk assured him the cameras were now working again.

The resident also complained about the state of the roads with major pot holes everywhere, particularly along the Forty Foot Road. The Mayor urged the resident to report the potholes on Cambridgeshire County Council's website, pointing out this was the quickest way to get a response and the more people who reported a problem the better. Cllr Hay, the County Councillor for Chatteris, confirmed this was the case and asked for photographs of the potholes so she could forward them to the highways officer for Chatteris.

Mr Alan Melton said he was attending the meeting as a concerned tax payer. As the Clerk to two parish councils and Financial Officer of another he had been surprised by the actions in other districts.

Through a Council in East Cambridgeshire he had found out that money paid into a company called Cambridgeshire Horizons had now been paid back to the District and City Councils. Cambridgeshire Horizons had been set up to pay for infrastructure in the County including the A14 upgrade. District and City Councils paid into the fund and the money spent on infrastructure was repaid from Section 106 payments. It had always been agreed that any money left and accrued when Cambridgeshire Horizons was wound up would go back to those District and City Councils. On discovering that had happened Mr Melton sent a Freedom of Information request to Fenland District Council asking about the money left in

the fund and how much had been returned to FDC for community use. He had been informed that £2m was allocated for Fenland and only £150k had been utilised to fund a levelling up bid. As the Town Council was struggling for funds, Mr Melton suggested the Council should contact FDC and ask for some funds.

Mr Melton had also asked about the lack of Section 106 payments in Fenland and had decided FDC had no clear policy. That was not the case in other districts where parish and town councils regularly received Section 106 and Cil payments. They did not even have to ask for the money it was automatically credited to their bank accounts by the district councils. In Fenland although developments were taking place there had been no section 106 payments made.

Mr Melton said he was making sure that the message went out to all the parishes in Fenland in the hope they would put pressure on the next Fenland District Council to ensure there was a Section 106 policy in place.

Mr Melton also claimed Chatteris Town Council was being “hoodwinked and robbed” when it came to land owned by FDC at The Elms. The Council had been led to believe the land, which used to belong to the Urban District Council, was worth £2m and if it was developed £3m, yet this land had been sold to Fenland Futures Investment Board, a subsidiary of FDC, for £200,000. This was legal. The Board would either develop the land or sell it to developers. There was a good chance they would claim the land was not viable for a Section 106 payment and the Town would therefore be deprived of both Section 106 money and capital receipts, said Mr Melton.

He asked why the Town Council should have to go cap in hand to the Combined Authority when Fenland was sitting on money and he said the town should fight for its fair share of the money.

Mr Melton was also concerned about the proposed new boundary arrangements for elections which would see the current 4 coterminous wards for the town on FDC replaced by a south ward represented by 3 councillors and a north ward which included Manea. He pointed out it was possible the north of the town could be represented by 3 Manea councillors under the scheme and it was equally possible that Manea could be represented by 3 Chatteris councillors. He said that the argument that 1,000 homes were to be built at Tithe did not stack up as that development had been on the cards for 70 years. He urged the Town Council to get the arrangements reversed in time for the 2027 elections.

Cllr Haggata was concerned about FDC’s actions in shifting money to the Investment Board but Mr Melton assured him it was legal. He also assured members that all the information he had given out was in the public domain.

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

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

**174) Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Min 162) Reservoir Consultation: The following comments had been submitted by the Town Council:

“Chatteris Town Council welcomes news of the proposed reservoir to the north of the town and is supportive of the idea and the location. It welcomes the opportunities it will bring for Chatteris and the surrounding villages and towns whilst also being mindful that it will lead to a loss of homes and businesses.

The Council would appreciate Anglian Water and Cambridge Water considering the following ideas when drawing up more detailed plans for the reservoir and associated infrastructure:

- 1) The need for safe access to the reservoir for cyclists and walkers from Chatteris taking into account the presence of a main road between the town and the reservoir site. Safe passage across (or under the road) is essential.
- 2) The provision of fishing facilities on the reservoir.
- 3) The provision of paddle boarding, sailing and wild swimming facilities at the reservoir.
- 4) Moorings on the Forty Foot river so waterway users can use the facilities at the reservoir.
- 5) The re-opening of Horseway Lock to open up the waterways.
- 6) Improvements to local roads before the construction phase. Improvements could include the upgrading of Slade End roundabout and a roundabout on the A142 or A141 to give access to the visitor centre.
- 7) The provision of viewing platforms on site and an information point in Chatteris, during the construction phase, as part of measures to keep the public informed on progress.”

The Council had received a thank you for providing the feedback from the Reservoir Project team along with an email stating the consultation period was closed and a summary of all the feedback would be published. The team were now developing a design for the reservoir and proposed locations for the equipment needed.

Cllr Haggata had forwarded the Fenland Transport and Access Group’s comments on the consultation.

Min 153) Small Claims Court: The Clerk had been informed that the court claim had been transferred to Peterborough Combined Court Centre.

**175) Police Matters**

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

**“Local Police**

Members have received a copy of the confidential minutes of the meeting between Neighbourhood Sergeant Joe Punton and council leaders held on 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022. Sgt Punton also responded to an email, forwarded by the Mayor, regarding issues at the Railway

Lane zebra crossing when drivers ignored pedestrians on the crossing. He promised to monitor the situation with the hope of identifying the issue and persistent offenders.

### **Neighbourhood Alert**

6/12/22: Call for people to hide away presents until Christmas Eve to help prevent burglaries in the run up to Christmas.

8/12/22: Reminder that residents should only call 999 for emergencies that require immediate police assistance.

12/12/22: Notification that the Combined Authority is encouraging members of the public to have their say on its draft Medium Term Financial Plan.

12/12/22: Notification about the launch of a new national campaign, Operation Calibre, to tackle robbery across the UK. A machete had already been found in Peterborough.

14/1/22: Request to complete a short survey on eCops.

17/12/22: Appeal for help to identify people captures on CCTV images following disorder as the Peterborough and Cambridge United football match.

19/12/22: Thanks from the Neighbourhood Policing Team in Fenland for the overwhelming support for their annual Christmas gift appeal.

20/12/22: Updates on neighbourhood policing priorities (copy attached).

20/12/22: Latest news from the courts.

1/1/23: Happy New Year from Neighbourhood Watch.”

The Mayor said she was still waiting for a date for the next meeting with Sgt Punton.

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

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

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

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 20<sup>th</sup> December 2022 showing expenditure of £610,316.62 and income of £253,355.69 (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.

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

### **178) To Approve Final Budget and Precept for 2023/24**

Members were reminded that the precept was the amount levied on Fenland District Council to be recovered from Council Tax payers in Chatteris to cover the Town Council's net general expenses as shown in the General Fund Budget. The Town Council's Precept was included in Council Tax bills along with the County Council and Police Authority Precepts, and District Council charges.

The Financial Officer presented a draft budget for 2023/24 which was approved by Council at the full Council meeting held on 6<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

Members were reminded that the draft budget included new budgets for the Kings Coronation £1,500, Parish Poll £5,100 (to reimburse the elections budget for the 2023 elections in May), Over 70's Chatteris Residents Annual Christmas Party £2,000, 2 Park Street Repairs & Maintenance £3,000 and a merged budget for the Old Railway Line & Little Acre Pocket Park maintenance.

There were also various increases in other budgets due to rise in utility bills, and large increases to cost of living which had a knock-on effect to all budgets as detailed in the attached spreadsheet.

Savings had been made of £10,000 on the LHI Highways budget and £2,000 on the Queens Platinum budget.

An estimated income of £6,300 had been included in the budget for 2 Park Street first floor tenancy rent.

Members were reminded that the Council agreed that funds in some of the holding/reserve accounts should be transferred into the general fund at the end of the financial year.

The 2023/24 budget reflected these transfers by keeping the Precept down and using some of these funds in the budget.

Since the 6<sup>th</sup> December meeting the Financial Officer had received an email from FDC advising the estimated amount of the elections costs for May 2023. FDC had advised the indicative costs for the May 2023 elections was £17,287 if contested.

The cumulative budget set for Elections was originally £10,006, leaving a shortfall of £7,281. Following on from FDC's email the Financial Officer advised Members that the Precept would need to go up a further £7,000 to meet the additional costs.

These additional cost meant the new proposed amount of the Precept would be £170,000 instead of £163,000, which was initially proposed and agreed in the draft budget for December meeting.

The impact this additional £7,000 would have on a Band D property was £2.05 per annum. The overall Band D effect compared to last year's Precept would be an additional £4.22 making the total annual cost of £50.02 for Band D properties.

On this basis the recommended funding of the 2023/24 budget was as follows: -

	£
Proposed Budget	223,836
From Balances (includes rounding)	-17,817
From Holding & Reserve accounts	-36,019
<b>Net Precept 2023/24</b>	<b>170,000</b>

The Financial Officer advised Members that the new proposed recommended Precept of £170,000 was an increase of £15,000 from the 2022/23 Precept. The additional £7,000 for the Elections cost had been added to the Precept, as the transferring of the above balances from

the general fund, and the smaller holding & reserve accounts was already at its maximum to keep the cost of the Precept down.

By adding the £7,000 additional Election costs to the Precept the uncommitted general fund balances on a full budget spend would still be considered adequate to carry forward into the next financial year.

The effect of the Net Precept (i.e., the figure recovered through Council Tax) was as follows:

	Net Precept	Tax Base	Band D Effect
2023/24	£170,000	3,398 Est	£50.02 Est

The comparison of Nett precept (i.e., the figure recovered through council tax) was as follows: -

	Net Precept	%	Tax Base	Band D Effect	%
2023/24	170,000		3,398Est	50.02	
2022/23	155,000		3,384	45.80	
	<b>10.96% inc.</b>		<b>14</b>	<b>4.22</b>	<b>8.44%</b>

Due to the increase in the Tax Base and the small increase to the Precept the Band D cost effect had only increased by 8.44%. (£4.22 per year).

This Tax Base figure provided by Fenland DC was current estimates. Any changes to the figures would be notified by FDC by the end of January 2022.

#### Fund Balances

It was appropriate as part of the budget preparation exercise to remind Members of the forecast balances at the 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023 on the Council's other reserves and funds: -

	£
Old Railway Line Development Fund	0
General Capital Reserve	0
Leisure Capital Reserve	40,000
Closed Circuit Television Reserve	27,479

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

#### 179) Payment of Accounts

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

Barclays	Bank Charges	8.50
Clerk	Reim Zoom	14.39
J T Chambers	Valuation 3 works to 2 Park Street	16,490.09
Zen Internet	Jan-Feb Website	13.79
British Gas	Gas Bill	367.86
Avanti Traffic Management	Christmas Lights Switch on Road Traffic Management	2,022.00
SLCC	Annual Membership Renewal	222.00
Chatteris District Guiding Assoc	Grant to Vol Organisation	342.00
Chatteris District Guiding Assoc	Mayors Charity grant	200.00
Housdens Catering	Xmas Lunch for over 70's residents	540.00
SLCC	13th Edition LCA Book	141.80
St John Ambulance	Provision of First Aid for Xmas Lights switch on	230.40
British Gas	Elec Bill	85.77
PC OK	Supply & set up new office laptop	750.00
R J Warren	Supply & install concrete bollards down the old railway line	1,020.00
R J Warren	Supply & Install post and rail fence around pipe at the old railway line	720.00
RJ Warren	Gardening Services	742.04
R J Warren	Part payment for works on the Hoggin Path at Old Railway Line	14,032.00
Rural Cambs Citizens Advice	Face to Face service	1,537.00
Onecom	December phone bill	75.08
Chatteris Scouts group	Mayors Charity grant	200.00
Payroll	January Payroll	5,665.28
<b>Total</b>		<b>45,420.00</b>

### 180) Youth Work Sessions

The Clerk had received costings for three youth group schemes and asked members to decide which they wished to pursue.

Youths of Fenland had quoted for junior youth group sessions to continue at the Children's Centre from April at a cost of £121 per session and a well-being/drop in café at the Emmanuel Church to run from January to April at a cost of £128.15 per session.

The Connections Bus had also been in contact to state it was expected the bus would be back on the road after the Easter break and the cost per session would be £275.

Members asked about the previous success of all the ventures. The Clerk did not have figures to hand for the two ventures aimed at older children but said the junior youth club was attracting 15 to 20 youngsters a week and was very popular.

The Mayor favoured the drop-in café as it was the cheaper option and had proved to be popular in the past. She also feared some children might not go to the bus. Cllr Smith agreed it was often harder to engage with the older children. The Financial Officer said the budget set aside for older youth services would not cover three terms of the connections bus but would cover three terms of the drop in café.

Cllr Hay requested regular updates on whichever schemes were chosen.

Members **agreed** to fund the junior youth club at a cost of £121 a session and the drop-in café until April at a cost of £128.15 per session. A decision on whether to continue with the drop-in café after April would be taken at a later date, based on the numbers it attracted.

### 181) Planning

Cllr Haggata (Chairman of the Planning Working Group) took members through the latest planning applications (as shown on the **appended list**). It was agreed to return applications a) to g) to Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Request FDC Tree Officer visits site. Town Council will support all necessary works but these need to be clarified by FDC's tree officer.
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Recommend Refusal, not in keeping with the area. The Town Council continues to have no objections to the development of the site but continues to insist all dwellings should be single storey to reduce impact on neighbouring properties. Clarification of conservation boundary lines is also required and surface water

concerns raised by residents should be addressed. (Cllr Petrou abstained from voting).

The Clerk updated members on the latest planning decisions from FDC. The following had all been granted permission:

The siting of containers, solar panels and hardstanding for use of land as a smallholding at land east of Iretons Way;

Extension to existing dwelling at The Boat, Normoor Drove;

Replacement window in a listed building at 48 High Street;

Internal works to a listed building at 2 Park Street;

Erection of extensions to dwelling at 58 London Road;

Erection of a 2.3m high wall, widening of access and demolition of 2 dwellings at 113-115 High Street;

A Certificate of Lawful Use was issued to replace a window with a door in a listed building at 44 New Road.

An application to erect 3 dwellings at land west of 1 King Edwards Road was refused permission.

## **182) Growing Fenland Project Update**

The Clerk and the Financial Officer updated members on the project. They were delighted to report that at a meeting with the officer from the Combined Authority he had confirmed that underspent budgets from other projects would be re-directed to the museum project in Chatteris as it met all the Combined Authority's criteria. In addition it had been agreed that any underspend from the Street Furniture and Business Grants project could also go towards the museum project.

As a result of the good news a meeting would be held with the architect to discuss a schedule of works for 14 Church Lane so that estimates could be obtained from builders in the hope that that project would follow on from the 2 Park Street/museum project.

On a less positive note officers reported that the museum project was now being held up by conservation as they had refused to accept that a damp proof course was needed and to agree to the solution put forward by an expert. The architect had gone back to the conservation officer to ask him to think again. A decision on the replacement window designs was also awaited before this work could go ahead. Officers were concerned that no conservation officer had ever visited the building to view the damp and the works.

Following notification that the existing air conditioning/heating units were beyond repair, it had been agreed new units should be installed and as a result it would not be necessary to re-install the suspended ceiling which would result in a costs saving.

**183) To Agree Dates for Annual Town Meeting & Annual Town Council Meeting**

The Clerk had received guidance from CAPALC and NALC on annual council meeting dates for councils with elections bearing in mind that the Coronation Bank Holiday would fall on the 8<sup>th</sup> May, the first Monday after the 2023 local elections (to be held on Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May). As a result of the bank holiday councillors would not take office until Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May making the relevant 14-day meeting period for the annual town council meeting 10<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> May inclusive.

In view of this ruling it was agreed the **annual town council meeting** would have to take place on **Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023**.

The annual town meeting had to take place between the 1<sup>st</sup> March and the 1<sup>st</sup> June and the Clerk suggested, as reports referred to works carried out by the current council, that the meeting should take place in April 2023. However Councillors would by then be observing purdah so would not be able to promote their works as individuals; they would only be able to report on and publicise works carried out by the council as a body.

It was agreed the **annual town meeting** should be held on **Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April 2023** at the King Edward Centre.

**184) LHI & Crossings Updates**

Cambridgeshire County Council's highways department had responded to Cllr Hay and the Town Council's call for the suggested crossings in Park Street and East Park Street to be substituted for a crossing in Bridge Street and a footpath along the A141.

They had stated they were looking to progress the Park Street crossing but not the East Park Street crossing and were looking to put a design together for a crossing on Bridge Street. Cllr Hay had responded by welcoming the news about the Bridge Street crossing but re-iterating that the collective preference was for a footpath connecting the new training centre to the existing footpath along the A141. Members agreed to back Cllr Hay's stance and asked the Clerk to respond by insisting the preference was the footpath and the crossing in Bridge Street.

The Clerk said she would also send over evidence that there was public support for a crossing in Bridge Street. The resident who had requested the crossing had put out a poll on Facebook and over 180 people had responded, with all but one person being in favour of the crossing. The comments and statistics would be passed to highways.

In the meantime the Clerk said with the Council's backing she would continue to apply for LHI funding for a crossing in Bridge Street for two reasons: firstly it was a back-up in case highways failed to proceed with the scheme and secondly it was the only scheme which was ready to go and the LHI bid had to be in by the 6<sup>th</sup> January. This was agreed.

The Clerk had also received notification that a target cost for the agreed LHI works in Doddington Road had been received and was within budget, therefore the works had been ordered and the officer would inform the Clerk when the works were programmed for delivery.

#### **185) Traffic Issues**

The latest roadworks and events information had been received from Cambridgeshire County Council.

#### **186) Correspondence**

Members had a list of correspondence received since the last meeting (**copy attached**). The Mayor invited members to enter a team in the quiz, being held on the 20<sup>th</sup> January, to raise funds for the Midsummer Festival.

#### **187) Reports**

Cllr Murphy explained why Fenland District Council had been forced to temporarily stop its bulky waste collection service. He said the Environment Agency had decreed that any furniture containing Persistent Organic Pollutants, such as sofas, beanbags, cushions and upholstered chairs, would not be allowed at recycling centre from the 1<sup>st</sup> January as they contaminated other items. Although FDC and the County Council had been expecting this to be brought in eventually they only received notification of the 1<sup>st</sup> January cut off in the week before Christmas. This meant residents would not be allowed to take any bulky items of furniture to the tips.

Cllr Murphy said FDC was trying to get something sorted as quickly as possible. They needed somewhere such items could be stored until they were incinerated. Cllr Murphy admitted FDC were concerned that the ban would lead to more fly tipping and had written to the Environment Agency and the County Council to complain about the lack of notification about the new rules.

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

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

