

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 2nd April 2024

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Minutes of the meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 2nd April 2024 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor) I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Charrier, A Gowler, V Joyce, P Murphy, K Perrin, S Selman, M Siggee and S Unwin.

238) Apologies for Absence

There were no apologies for absence as all members were present.

239) New Councillor to Sign Declaration of Acceptance of Office & Complete Register of Interests

Cllr Perrin was welcomed to the Council and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and submitted his completed Register of Interests.

240) Declarations of Interest & Dispensations to Speak and Vote on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllr Unwin declared an interest as a member of In Bloom and the Midsummer Festival committee, Cllr Selman as a driver for the Community Car scheme and Chairman of the Festival committee, Cllr Ashley as a trustee of the museum and member of the Festival committee and Cllrs Hay and Murphy as trustees of the museum and the King Edward Centre. Cllr Gowler declared an interest as a trustee of the King Edward Centre.

241) Open Forum

There was one member of the public and Cllr Charlie Marks present and both chose to speak in Open Forum.

Mr Alan Melton, a former councillor for Chatteris for over 40 years, said he would be sending a Freedom of Information request to Fenland District Council asking who applied for the £20m worth of funding which had been allocated to Wisbech and what the money would be spent on. Reading through FDC papers he had noticed there was no capital funding allocated for Chatteris and he quoted money which had been allocated for schemes in Wisbech and March. He said he hoped Chatteris would be getting some investment and pointed out FDC was proposing to spend money on all the leisure centres in Fenland except Chatteris which had been built using Town Council funding, an FA grant and money from FDC with the County Council giving the land.

Mr Melton acknowledged it was too late for the current financial year but he suggested Councillors put their heads together to decide what was needed in Chatteris so the District Councillors could put requests to FDC for the next financial year.

Mr Melton also asked why so much money had been spent on a small section of road leading from Huntingdon Road to the recreation ground when a similar sum had been spent on improvements to the paths and road in the whole of Eastwood. Cllr Benney said he had requested the works to the road as he wished to see something for Chatteris and he thought a road leading to a playpark was a priority but the works had cost more than anticipated because of drainage problems and a concrete pad.

The Mayor said she was willing to take matters to FDC and the County Council. Cllr Unwin said the main issue was the lack of space for additional childcare now being sought, thanks to a Government initiative to provide more funding to parents for childcare. The Mayor said that issue would go on a future agenda. Mr Melton thanked councillors for their work.

Cllr Marks said there had been another meeting regarding the closure of the Manea fire station and the decision had now been put on hold for six months while the recruitment process was ongoing. In addition, a new chairman of the fire authority was due to be appointed in September/October time.

Cllr Marks also spoke about the encampment in New Road/Horseway. He said the enforcement planning officer had now stated they would be taking action against two or three of the sites on the encampment and he was hopeful that the planned water connection would not be going ahead. No planning applications for the site had been submitted but Manea Parish Council were against the illegal encampment. He said it would appear that those who owned parcels of land on the site were hopeful they would come under a compulsory purchase order for the planned reservoir.

Cllr Marks explained where the encampment was located and said a number of caravans and a building, which looked like a church, had appeared on the site which only had permission for a chicken shed. Cllr Gowler said those on the site were likely to put in planning applications and he was firmly against any development there. The Mayor warned councillors to be careful as they would not wish to be seen as pre-determined.

242) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 5th March 2024 were agreed by a majority of councillors (Cllrs Benney and Siggee abstained and Cllrs Carney and Gowler said they had not been present at the meeting) and were then signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

243) Matters Arising from the Minutes

The only matters arising from the minutes were listed under agenda items.

244) Police Matters

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

“Local Police

The Clerk has advised a resident of Horseway to contact the police with his concerns about the dangers being created by mud left on New Road.

Neighbourhood Alerts

5/3/24: Notification that an aggravated burglary investigation is to appear on national TV.

6/3/24: Notification that response officers were out and about in Chatteris town centre and the park areas the previous day, keeping an eye out for suspicious activity.

6, 13, 19 & 26/3/24: Latest court news.

9/3/24: Information about crime webinars which were due to be held in the week beginning 19th March 2024.

18/3/24: Information from the national fraud and cybercrime reporting service which showed that 22,530 people reported that their online accounts had been hacked in 2023, with victims losing a total of £1.3million. Also, advice on how to secure accounts.

20/3/24: Notification that 60 people were arrested in a county lines crackdown across Cambridgeshire.

22/3/24: Information about six people who are currently banned from areas of Fenland due to offending affecting local businesses.

25/3/24: Round up of work undertaken by the local neighbourhood team during late shifts, including visits to local stores to give crime prevention advice and the arrest of four people for drug related offences.”

The Mayor said she was due to attend an online meeting with Sgt Arnold and other council leaders on the 9th April but, unfortunately, she had another meeting that evening and she asked if anyone was able to deputise. Cllr Selman said she was willing to attend.

The Clerk was asked to forward the email from the resident of Horseway to Cllr Selman and Cllr Gowler said the Sutton Gault road was also in a shocking state thanks to mud on the road.

245) FDC and Street Scene Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC updates (**copy attached**). Unfortunately, there had been no Street Scene update but the Mayor explained the Street Scene officer for Chatteris was not well.

The Clerk said her work on the ground was being covered by other Street Scene officers who had requested cleansing look at the ditch between St Stephens Drive and Furrowfields Recreation Ground (which was full of rubbish), collect abandoned trolleys and clean graffiti from a utility box in Bridge Street. The Clerk had passed on information about broken equipment at Furrowfields which was quickly repaired.

Cllr Ashley reported the dyke which ran from St Martins Road to the Elms at the rear of Birch Avenue and Birch Close was full of weeds and stagnant water.

Cllr Selman asked when the vegetation which had been removed from the planting beds in Furrowfields car park, would be replaced and Cllr Murphy said there were no plans at present.

Cllr Perrin said an elector had complained that trees along the A141 were overhanging her home in Old Station Place blocking gutters and causing water to pour down her home. Cllr Perrin had tried to report the matter to Highways but they had denied the trees were planted on their land and had closed the case. Cllr Perrin insisted the trees were planted on the highways verge and the Mayor asked for photographic evidence so she could take the matter to the County Council's Chief Executive and ask him to task officers to look into the issue

246) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26th March 2024 showing expenditure of £612,687.12 and income of £585,597.90 (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 advised that the budget control sheet was showing an estimated underspend in the budget, however the final figures would be shown in the end of year accounts which would show any under and overspend and reasons why.

Cllr Gowler voiced his concern regarding the precept being increased for the new financial year in view of the fact that the last financial year was estimating an underspend.

The Financial Officer advised Members that the estimated figures could not be compared to the new financial year's budget figures until final figures had been completed. Also, there were several new budgets set for 24/25 that were not in the 23/24 budget, these were requested and agreed by Members at the January 2024 full council meeting.

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

247) Payment of Accounts

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

	April 2024 Payments	2542 5 of 10
R J Warren	Pocket Park Spray & Re-seeding (Creditor)	799.20
FDC	Contribution for Summer Festival 2023 (Creditor)	10,300.00
J T Chambers Dev	Val 5 Town Council refurb, Growing Fenland phase 2 works (Creditor)	29,640.00
Barclays	Charges (Creditor)	8.50
Cllr Hay	Mileage Reim civic duties (Creditor)	22.50
	41,637.16 Creditors	
Zurich	Council Insurance	2,095.77
Payroll	Payroll April	5,946.71
Zen Internet	Website Apr-May 24	13.79
	8056.27 April	
Total		49,693.43

SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS up to End of March 2024 not included in March's Schedule of payments

British Gas: Gas Bill £267.08 listed on February's schedule of payments, not claimed as account in credit due to gas not being used while building is refurbished. Bill cancelled.		£
Rural Cambs Citizens Advice Bureau	Face to Face Service Q4	1,587.25
Wave	RHS Allotments	196.43
Wave	LHS Allotments	294.40
City of Ely Council	First Aid Training Cllr Joyce	84.00

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British Gas	Elec bill Church Lane	13.40
Zen Internet	March Website	13.79
Zen Internet	Summer Festival renewal domain Website	14.39
Onecom	Feb Phone Bill	93.00
Total		2,296.66

248) To Agree Renewal of CAPALC Membership

Members had a copy of paperwork received from CAPALC inviting the Council to renew its membership for 2024-25 at a cost of £1,400.93 plus £50 for membership of the Data Protection Officer scheme. The fee was an increase of 5% on the previous year. The paperwork listed the benefits of membership.

The Clerks said the main benefit in the coming year would be access to new Financial Regulations currently being drawn up by NALC (the National Association of Local Councils). The Town Council's current Financial Regulations dated back to 2019 and were, therefore, out of date. The Clerk had checked with SLCC about whether it would be possible to access the new Financial Regulations through them but she was informed that the Regulations would only be available from NALC/CAPALC. They were expected to be published in May.

Cllr Benney pointed out that in previous years when the Council had not been a member of CAPALC, NALC's advice had been needed. He pointed out the legal back up and advice the organisation afforded made for good governance and safeguarded officers.

It was **agreed** to renew the Council's membership of CAPALC and the Data Protection Officer scheme at a total cost of £1,450.93.

249) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

The Financial Officer reminded members 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 **2024/25** was **£4,500**.

There were separate approved budgets set in 2024/25 for the following: -

	£
Chatteris King Edward Centre-Staffing contribution	12,000
Chatteris Museum Trust	6,500
Chatteris Christmas Lights Committee	11,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom	7,000
Chatteris Youth Service Provision	4,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom Paid Watering Service	1,500
Summer Children's Fun	1,500
Summer Festival Contribution	6,500
Senior Youth Service Provision	5,400
Rural Citizen's Advice Bureau Face to Face Service	6,280

Applications for consideration by Members at the meeting were as follows:

Chatteris Library Re Summer Reading Challenge - To help support the Summer Reading Challenge, to include additional family activities, staffing the events and visiting schools.
£500 Approved.

Fenland Sparta ABC Boxing Club

Members were reminded that at the March full council meeting the boxing club asked for a grant towards the cost of the boxing shows for the youth and junior boxers.

Members asked for more information and agreed to discuss it at the Leisure meeting. It was then deferred until information was gathered.

At the full council meeting Members agreed to wait until all the information they required was received.

Cllrs Siggee and Perrin agreed to meet with the Boxing club at their training club to find the answers to some of the questions posed by councillors.

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

250) To Consider Producing Leaflet for New Timetable for Free Bus

The Clerk reported she and Cllr Ashley had met with the driver of the free FACT bus which operated around the town on Fridays. He had suggested a new route and timetable for the bus which would cover more of the town and take out stops which were never used. Much of the route would be request stops where passengers would be able to flag the bus down. The driver had drawn the suggested route on a map of the town.

In order to get the message out to the public the proposal was to print out a leaflet which would contain a map of the route in the centre and details of the service and timetable/pick up times on the front and rear. The local printers had quoted a price of £117.91 for 500 copies (with the ability to print more if required). The leaflets would be distributed through the King Edward Centre, the library and FACT and any other ways members chose to mention. Cllr

Selman said a copy of the map would be included in the town guide. Cllr Ashley said there were still issues with the pick-up of Barbers Garden residents and if the bus became even busier it might be necessary to suggest Lifeways, who ran Barbers Gardens, join FACT and organise their own bus for their residents.

It was **agreed** to accept the printer's quotation of £117.91 and to ask them to produce 500 copies of the leaflet.

251) Growing Fenland Update

The Clerk reported works were now progressing well at 14 Church Lane. With the extension complete tradesmen, including the electrician, plumbers, carpenters and plasterers, had all been working on the new flats in the past few weeks. The Combined Authority had continued to promptly reimburse the Town Council when the Financial Officer submitted invoices.

252) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 26th March 2024 (copy **attached**). (Cllrs Benney and Marks left the room while the plans were discussed and Cllr Hay gave belated apologies for the meeting).

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

- a) Support
- b) Noted
- c) Support
- d) Support with the condition that all trees removed are to be replaced.
- e) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- f) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- g) Support, covenant issues to be resolved with Fenland District Council
- h) Support

253) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Ashley (Vice Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 19th March 2024 (**copy attached**).

Swimming Pool: Cllr Gowler said he had spoken to the chairman of the pool's trustees and the chairman had asked for details about the swimming pool to go in the new town guide.

254) Midsummer Festival Update

Members received the following update from the Clerk:

“This year’s Festival will be held on the 22nd and 23rd June and the theme is Movies.

The committee already has most of the weekend planned and is busy trying to persuade organisations, schools and nurseries to take part in the walking parade.

Thanks to fund raising by the group – the sale of mulled wine, the annual quiz and the boozy afternoon tea (which will be held on the 13th April) – and a successful arts grant application, a number of attractions have been booked. These include performances by stunt man Dangerous Steve, music from Chatteris and Manea Brass Band and the Army Cadets Drum Corps and dance routines from local groups.

Headlining the Party in the Park on the Saturday evening will be local ska group The Gangsters while on Sunday there will be plenty of activities on offer from the ever popular dog show and colour fun run to new activities including a water gun fight and a family disco with a foam cannon.

It promises to be an action packed weekend and any offers of help would be much appreciated as the committee is a small group of willing volunteers supported by the Town Clerk and FDC officer Isabel Edgington.”

Cllr Selman, Chairman of the Festival organising committee, also called on fellow councillors to help out at the Festival pointing out it would relieve pressure on the committee members. Even a couple of hours on the gate would be helpful. The Mayor and Cllr Joyce offered to help. Cllrs Ashley and Unwin would be present throughout the weekend as members of the committee.

255) To Agree Wording of Plaque for Memorial Tree

The Clerk informed members that the memorial tree for former councillor Florence Newell had been planted at the pocket park and was a very tall and fine specimen of a Beech tree. She asked members for an idea of the wording which should go on the memorial plaque. It was agreed it should be similar wording to the plaque for Cllr Stimson’s tree, such as In memory of Florence Newell who served Chatteris Town Council for over 40 years and was chairman for 16. The Clerk had information on a company who would hopefully be able to manufacture the plaque and a replacement plaque for Cllr Stimson’s tree. Cllr Ashley had spoken to Florence’s family who had expressed a wish to attend the unveiling ceremony for the plaque.

256) Traffic Issues

Road Issues: Cllr Gowler reported that the road between Doddington and Chatteris which had recently been repaired still had a major dip/hole. Cllr Gowler said he would be reporting the matter and the Mayor asked for a photograph and details so she could follow up with

Highways. Cllr Ashley said the footpaths in St Peters Drive had been re-surfaced but there were weeds coming through the new surfacing and puddles were appearing. The Mayor also agreed to chase up that matter and Cllr Murphy asked for a complaint to be made about the state of the road in Ash Grove which needed repairing for the third time in 8 months. Cllr Perrin commented that one of the road repair machines -the dragon pitcher – did not work.

Temporary Orders: Notification had been received of temporary traffic orders to close Church Lane for 3 days from the 2nd April (the work was underway and involved a new water connection to 14 Church Lane) and to close London Road on the 2nd May to allow access to a telegraph pole for the provision of fibre overhead cabling for a customer.

Training: Notification had been received that the County Council would be running three funded training courses which would qualify those attending to close roads for such events as Remembrance parades and street parties. The Council was also looking for suitable venues to host the training sessions. The Clerk said anyone interested in attending a course should let her know as once the dates were released they would be quickly filled.

Tweets: A list of responses to Cambridgeshire Highways tweets published in 2022 and Highways' response to those responses had been published and the Clerk had been notified that going forward there were plans for the information to come out monthly.

TMC: The Traffic Management Centre's figures showing incidents on the County's roads in February had been published. There were 126 incidents recorded.

Road works: The latest lists of planned road works in Fenland had also been received.

257) Correspondence

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

Grant application: The Clerk was disappointed that the stage two application for a grant from the Cambridgeshire Priorities Capital Fund had not been successful as she had spent many hours on the grant application form. The money would have been spent on new furniture and equipment for the community rooms being created as part of the Growing Fenland project. The Mayor offered to look for other possible sources of funding.

258) Reports

Cllr Selman had submitted a written report of the Fens Reservoir Liaison group meeting she had attended representing the Council (Cllrs Benney, Gowler and Hay were also present). Cllr David Connor was eventually appointed as chairman and the group was shown maps of where the reservoir would go and was given a programme of events which would include a further series of public consultations. Cllr Selman had given ideas of how to get the message about the consultations out to local people. Cllr Ashley said the King Edward Centre had been booked as a venue for the consultations weekly between the 10th June and the 1st July.

259) Items for the Next Agenda

The Mayor asked that grant applications for the King Edward Centre go on the next agenda as a confidential item.

