

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 3rd December 2024

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 3rd December 2024 at The Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Gowler, A Jone, V Joyce, S Selman and S Unwin.

143) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs M Siggee and P Murphy.

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

Cllr Benney declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllrs Hay and Ashley declared interests in the King Edward Centre and the Museum. Cllrs Ashley, Selman and Unwin declared an interest as members of the Festival committee, Cllr Unwin declared an interest as a member of Chatteris In Bloom and Cllr Selman as a driver for the Community Car scheme.

145) Open Forum

Three members of the public and Cllr C Marks were welcomed to the meeting.

Mr Lee Bevens said as an architect, who had been practising in Chatteris for 18 years, for the first time he had been accused of being a liar on social media. The accusation came from Cllr Perrin, who also suggested he should be prohibited from practising in Chatteris. He said Cllr Perrin clearly had pre-determined views about development and he asked if Cllr Perrin could be stopped from voting on any development which bore his name or that of Howard Developments. Mr Simon Howard said he believed Cllr Perrin had a vendetta against him. The Mayor assured the public that the views expressed by Cllr Perrin on social media were not the views of the council. Cllr Gowler said Cllr Perrin did not sit on the planning working group, having refused to say he would be open minded about planning applications, but he was able to vote when the planning recommendations were ratified at full council.

Cllr Marks said Cllr Perrin had also made disparaging and bullying remarks on social media about himself and the Clerk, with regards to recording his apologies for a meeting.

The Mayor said the only recourse, if someone wished to complain about a councillor, was to contact the Monitoring Officer at Fenland District Council. A council had no powers to get rid of an elected member.

146) Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 1st October 2024 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record after Cllr Selman asked for her name to be inserted under minute 124) as she had also stated traffic travelled the wrong way down Victoria Street.

147) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 137) FACT Bus: Cllr Carney asked why he was not consulted on the plan to cancel the FACT bus to Manea station. The Clerk apologised for not informing him in advance but said the Council made the decision because no-one was using the service which was taking money from an ever-diminishing pot.

Min 137) George Clare Surgery: The Clerk had requested a copy of the George Clare Surgery's Patients Participation Group Constitution and had been told it was being updated and would be sent over in due course. It was agreed those attending the next meeting of the group, on the 16th January, should request a copy of the old constitution so they could be compared.

148) Police Matters

Members had received an update of notifications from Neighbourhood Alert received over the past month. The Mayor said she had spoken with Sgt Chris Arnold about issues relating to thefts and threats of violence made to security staff on the Persimmon building site. He had promised to look into the matter.

Sgt Arnold also updated the Mayor on recent actions in Chatteris which included the theft of a CCTV camera from a wall, the issuing of six parking tickets in the High Street, a visit to Victoria Street by two PCSO's , the seizure of a car and a closure notice issued for a flat at Compass House.

149) FDC, Street Scene & CCTV Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC, Street Scene and CCTV updates. Cllr Gowler commented that he liked the new CCTV information format.

150) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26th November 2024 showing expenditure of £406,321.34 and income of £482,256.88 (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.

Over 75's Christmas party

Members were advised that 95 residents attended the Christmas party for the over 75's held on Friday 30th November. The party was a great success, it went extremely well and everyone had a really good time.

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

151) Payment of Accounts

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

Stephen Bull	Xmas Party entertainer	200.00
December Payroll	Payroll	7,013.73
F/O	Reim Xmas party Sundries	89.31
F/O	Reim Petty cash	105.17
Cromwell Fire Ltd	Replace fire extinguishers at 14 Church Lane	495.15
Clerk	Reim sundries - festival event & Postage	48.61
Dal Rod	Test drains 2 Park Street	300.00
Art on Glass	Final payment re glass supply & labour Church Lane	186.00
PC OK	Keyboard & mouse	32.00
Clerk	Reim Re Furniture & Sundries	700.41
Iris Business Software	Payroll software license renewal	561.60
British Gas	14a Church Lane Elec bill	23.80
Barclays Bank	Bank charges	21.70
Cllr Unwin	Reim Re Boozy afternoon tea summer festival	50.00
SSE Energy Supply	Electricity bill 2 Park Street	1,120.16
Cllr Hay	Reim Civic mileage	41.85
Rose Fire & Sec	Dualcom alarm monitoring charges annual fee	798.00

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Housdens Caterers	Boozy afternoon tea catering	300.00
RBL Poppy Appeal	Wreath re Remembrance Day	20.00
Cllr Selman	Reim mileage	8.10
F/O	Reim Xmas party sundries	173.06
Clerk	Reim Festival event & Sundries	167.89
Eden Tree Specialists	Tree Survey	540.00
Ringway Infrastructure	Road closure Remembrance parade	1,650.00
Warren Access	Hire Cherry Picker Xmas Lights	660.00
Rose Fire & Security	Call out re: alarm	290.95
Rose Fire & Security	Final balance payment works 14 Church Lane GF	3,120.00
SLCC	Renewal Membership	300.00
Avanti	Xmas Lights Road closure	2,808.00
Avanti	Xmas Lights Road closure	540.00
The Community Heartbeat Trust	Purchase of defibrillator	2,904.00
T Payne & Co	Management fee, Church Lane flats	144.00
Total		25,413.49

152) Precept & Budget 25/26

Draft Precept Budget 2025/26

The Financial Officer presented Members with a proposed draft precept budgetary control sheet for their consideration, comments, and approval.

The draft budget proposed an increase of £4,000 to the precept, making the precept £177,500.00, an increase of 2.25%

Members were advised that the impact this would have on a band D household was an increase of £ 0.58p per year (1.14%) based on the estimated tax base of 3491.

The annual precept for a Band D household would be estimated at £50.85 - currently £50.27.

The proposed budget was made up of reduced expenditure in some areas and small increases in others, but the significant difference was the increase in the income budget thanks to the income from the rental of the two flats at 14 Church Lane. There was one new expenditure budget as listed below. The budget also reflected many benefits to the residents of Chatteris without significantly impacting the household precept.

Members were advised that funds could not be taken from the general fund as this would take it below the required level.

(1) Financial Statement

Members were reminded that as per SLCC advice Members would need to consider any projects which might require funding in the next financial year to ensure sufficient provision was included in the Precept budget.

Under the Local Government financial regulations any new project to be included in the Precept budget normally required a written report.

(2) New Budgets

New budget proposed for the new financial year: Management Fees re 14 Church Lane Flats.

Budgets renamed: Defib in phone box - Defibs & maintenance of accessories

Xmas Lights contractor's costs - Xmas Lights contractors & new electrical works to meet standards re CCC instructions.

2 Park Street- 2 Park Street maintenance & utilities.

The Clerk warned members that without significant investment the Christmas Lights would not be able to continue, as some of the 40 year old fitting were not up to current standards. She pointed out the loss of the Christmas Lights would not go down well with the public. Members expressed concerns about putting the precept up but acknowledged there was a need to do this to be able to continue offering all the services the Council currently supplied.

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

153) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Applications for consideration by Members at the meeting were scheduled, with recommendations, as listed:

Chatteris Town Football Club - Grant towards draining & equipment of the main pitch - £500.

Community Defibrillator for Chatteris - Grant towards electrode pads to replenish units - £1,000

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

154) To Consider Whether to Renew CAPALC Membership

The Clerk had been informed that the estimated affiliation fee for NALC and CAPALC in 2025 was £1,402 plus an optional £50 for the data protection officer. The Clerk and Financial Officer said the sum could not be justified as CAPALC had been of little help in 2024 and the only benefit had been reduced costs of training for members. It would still be possible to access the training without membership but the costs would be higher.

Members **agreed not to renew** the Council's membership of CAPALC in 2025.

155) Tree Survey Recommendations

In order to meet insurance requirements, the Council had engaged a specialist tree company to carry out a tree survey and risk assessment of all the trees of a certain size on Council-owned land. A report had been received and recommended urgent works to four trees at Bridge Street and works within the next year to a number of Willows at the Pocket Park and a few trees along the Old Railway Line. Members agreed that the Clerk should get a quote for the works to the trees at Bridge Street.

156) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk reported that the tenants of both the residential flats appeared to be happy with the accommodation and the accountants were also still happy with their offices. There was nothing else to report as the project had been delivered.
(Cllr Joyce left the meeting at this point).

157) Planning

Cllr Ashley presented the minutes of the planning working group meeting held on the 26th November 2024 (**copy attached**).

Members agreed that repairs to Wenny Road, Station Street, New Road, West Street and the mini roundabout in the High Street should all be put forward for consideration as Capitally Funded Highway Maintenance Schemes and said they would also support Cllr Carney's bid for the continuation of the footpath along Fenton Way.

It was also agreed that the signpost problems, identified by Cllr Selman and the Clerk, should be forwarded to the County Council.

Members ratified the planning recommendations put forward by the working group on planning applications a) to c) (as shown on the **appended list**) and considered a further five applications. It was agreed to return all applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support with the condition that all trees removed should be replaced.
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Request Tree Officer visits site to determine if felling is necessary. The Council will support his decision.
- h) Support and request a Section 106 contribution of £2,000 per dwelling for facilities in Chatteris.

158) Request from Museum

The Museum management team had written seeking the Council's permission to build a covered area to infill between the outside brick built store and the new prefabricated building at the rear of the museum. Mrs Sue Spooner, a member of the team, said the plan was to use the area created to display agricultural equipment. The Museum Trust were in favour of the new area in principle and Cllr Ashley said the conservation officer had no objections to the idea.

Members had no objections to the proposals and asked the museum to establish if planning permission was required.

159) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Meeting Report & Recommendations

Cllr Ashley (Vice Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Meeting held on the 12th November 2024 (**copy attached**).

L39) Ceremony: The Clerk reported that the unveiling ceremony of the memorial plaques for former councillors Florence Newell and Rosemary Stimson had gone well despite the wet and windy weather. There had been a good turnout of family members and the engraver had also attended. Cllr Unwin had paid tribute to the two councillors and Cllr Ashley had unveiled the plaques. Cllr Selman had served mulled wine and mince pies. Cllr Ashley said the families had appreciated the ceremony.

L40) Remote Attendance: Members agreed with the suggested response to the Government's consultation on enabling remote attendance and proxy votes at local authority meetings. In principle the Council was against remote attendance, unless there were exceptional

circumstances such as those who were medically or physically unable to attend, or for reasons of local or national emergencies. They were also firmly against proxy voting.

L41) Section 106 Shopping List: Members considered the suggested shopping list. Cllr Gowler was against the cycleway between Sutton and Chatteris pointing out the cycleway between Sutton and Ely was poorly used and a waste of money. Members said it would be useful to have a cycle link along the A142 between the proposed new road to the Tithe development and Wenny Road but it was hoped this would be delivered as part of the development scheme. After removing the cycleway the following shopping list was agreed: A footpath from the North Cambs Training Centre along the A141 Fenland Way to link up with the existing footpath to Tesco's and the underpass.

An outdoor gym for adults either located on a new development or at Hunters Close.

The provision of more football facilities in the town.

More CCTV cameras - covering all footpath/cycleway approaches to the reservoir, at Furrowfields Recreation Ground and at the Pocket Park.

New interpretation boards in the town.

A solar-powered, ornamental water feature.

More benches in the town, in particular a suitable bench for the land at the Old Auction Yard.

160) To Approve Design for Bus Stop Mural

The Clerk had received the suggested design for the bus stop mural from the artist. It showed images of Chatteris' most famous boxers Eric Boon, Dave 'Boy' Green and Jordan Gill. Members fully approved of the suggested design and the Clerk said she was just seeking final permission from Fenland District Council and would then go ahead and order the work.

161) LHI Scheme Meeting Report

The Clerk reported she had met with Ms Carole Hutton to discuss the LHI application for signs warning of people crossing the A141 Fenton Way and to the site. Miss Hutton agreed there should be signs warning of the crossing between the end of Clare Street and the footpath/cycleway along the A141. Fencing and tactile paving lead pedestrians and cyclists to the crossing point but there was no warning that pedestrians might be crossing the 60mph road. The crossing did not have reflective bollards.

The Clerk explained the improved cycleway and footpath, which led to Stainless Metalcraft, Honeysome Road and the Tesco's site, had been installed in recent years but there was nothing to say it was there or that people would be crossing the road to it. It was, however, well used as witnessed when the Clerk and Ms Hutton walked it. The Clerk showed Ms Hutton how it linked with the underpass and explained that residents from the Station Street/Huntingdon Road area regularly crossed the road as it was quite a distance through town to the entrance to the underpass in Larham Way (the Clerk showed Ms Hutton the entrance), the short cut was crossing the A141. On the positive side Ms Hutton said visibility for crossing the road was very good.

The Clerk also explained the Town Council's wish for an extension to the footpath/cycleway so it linked up with the new training centre. Ms Hutton agreed that was a good idea and made sense.

She said she would draw up plans showing the signs which could be placed on the A141 warning motorists of the crossing point. The plans would include the installation of reflective bollards to show the position of the crossing point.

The Clerk then spoke to councillors about the LHI application for 2025/26. She was concerned that the suggested scheme of a speed reduction on the A142 around the New Road junction might not be deliverable as it might not meet the criteria.

Councillors pointed out the public had demonstrated they wanted something done at the junction to improve safety. They suggested better signage, road markings, in fact anything to draw awareness of the junction. It was agreed the Clerk should seek Highways officers' advice on what would be acceptable.

There was also a suggestion the speed camera near the junction was out of order and needed to be reported.

Cllr Benney reported some money had been identified for improvements to the Slade End roundabout.

162) Traffic Issues

FACT Bus: The Clerk had been asked for a steer on a question which had arisen over the Friday free bus around Chatteris. The driver had pointed out that in order to accommodate wheelchair users on the bus he needed to remove seats and this could cause a problem as the bus was becoming very popular. He stated just one wheelchair user caught the bus and that was on an occasional basis. FACT had then pointed out that it would be discriminatory if the bus was not available to wheelchair users. The Clerk had confirmed the seats should be taken out, the previous week, as the wheelchair user had rung FACT to say she wished to travel on the bus. It was agreed to initially state that wheelchair users would be accommodated if they rang up the day before to book a space and if no call was received the bus would have its full complement of seats. It was agreed to review the situation if the service was seen as discriminatory.

Updates: The Mayor had received the following updates on schemes being looked at by County Highways. i) The project to install a 20mph school zone or flashing wig-wags in Burnsfield Street and Station Street was nearing the end of the design stage, with the aim it would be sent for costing in December and delivered in the next quarter. ii) The investigation into improving cycling from Chatteris to Doddington Road had put forward 3 options which were considered and preliminary reports were scheduled to be released in December. iii) The project to provide a continuous footpath at Prospect Way, Dock Road and Short Nightlayer'swq Drove was being assessed for an options report.

Removal: Notification had been received that the vehicle activated speed sign outside 57 London Road was to be removed. The Clerk pointed out it had never worked properly.

Traffic Orders: Temporary traffic orders had been applied for to close Huntingdon Road (near Linden Drive) on the 7th January to enable a water meter exchange and to close Bridlepath 14 (which linked Wenny Road and the A142 Isle of Ely Way) from the 20th to 24th January to maintain the watercourse.

Disabled Parking: Notification had been received of an order enabling disabled persons parking places to be installed near 20 West Street and 49 The Elms.

Roadworks: The latest lists of planned road works in Fenland had been received, along with a list of events affecting the Highways in the County and the TMC report for October.

163) Correspondence

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

164) Reports & Items for the Next Agenda

There were no reports or items put forward for the next agenda.