



Chatteris Town Council

Annual Report

Year To April 2024

The Growing Fenland project delivery has once again been a major part of the work of the Town Council's officers over the past 12 months.

Once the works to convert the former Barclays Bank to a new museum were complete, preparations began for the conversion and expansion of 14 Church Lane – the Council Chambers and Offices and the former home of the museum.

Those works are now well underway and in addition to new offices and a slight expansion to the council chambers, three rooms have been created which will be available to the community and it is hoped these will be used by, among others, Citizens Advice and the doctors' surgery to expand existing and create new services.

The first floor of the building has been converted to a two bedroom flat and a new first floor extension has been built at the rear which will be a second two bedroom flat. Both will be available to rent and the rental income will help the Town Council to support organisations and services in the town.

In order to complete both projects, the Council secured more funding from the Cambridge and Peterborough Combined Authority – money which was originally allocated to other towns who failed to deliver their projects.

The Council also helped the museum to obtain an outbuilding to be used for much-needed storage. The museum is now attracting greater numbers of visitors thanks to its more prominent position. The volunteers have worked long and hard cataloguing, packing and moving the thousands of artefacts to the new premises whilst continuing to put on interesting and informative exhibitions on the town's heritage.

During the year the Council has also:

- a) Completed and opened the extension to the made up surface of the Old Railway Line Footpath and Bridleway which has proved to be popular, particularly during the wet winter.
- b) With the help of FLAPP maintained and developed the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park, including repairs to the pond.

- c) Working with FACT organised a free bus service around the town and a twice monthly bus service to Cambridge. Cllr Ashley and the driver of the free bus have helped to organise a new timetable which will ensure greater coverage of the town.
- d) Worked with the County Council to deliver the new speed limit measures in Doddington Road.
- e) Successfully persuaded the County Council that a pedestrian crossing was needed in Bridge Street and agreed to the installation of another crossing in East Park Street.
- f) With the help of volunteers and Fenland District Council officers, organised another very successful Midsummer Festival which attracted a record attendance on the Saturday.
- g) Funded a successful junior youth club at the children's centre and a wellbeing café serving hot chocolate and advice for older youths, after school outside the Emmanuel Church.
- h) Planted a memorial tree for Cllr Florence Newell, a town councillor for over 40 years and chairman for 16 and agreed to commission a mural of boxer Jordan Gill.
- i) Explored ways to install a defibrillator in the old telephone kiosk in Wood Street.
- j) Wrote objecting to proposals to close Manea fire station.
- k) Gave out many grants to voluntary organisations including the Christmas Lights Committee, In Bloom and the museum.
- l) Working with the Allotments Association successfully administered over 130 allotments at Honeysome Road and six at Queensway.
- m) Agreed not to purchase the allotment land at Queensway from Clarion but to continue to administer the allotments under an existing licence.
- n) Submitted an LHI application for signs warning of the crossing point over Fenland Way.
- o) Organised another very successful, free-to-all, party for the Over 70s in Chatteris just before Christmas.
- p) Continued to organise the very popular Summer Fun shows for children.
- q) Organised the road closures for Remembrance Sunday.
- r) Agreed skatepark funds should be spent on a graffiti project.
- s) Passed on concerns about highways faults, littering and overgrown vegetation.
- t) Complained about the lack of Section 106 funding from developments.
- u) Visited the CCTV monitoring station and agreed to fund cameras for another 3 years.
- v) Helped to save trees in the grounds of the vicarage in Church Lane.
- w) Complained about the County Council policy of not spraying weeds on pavements and roadside verges. A policy which has been overturned.
- x) Put forward representatives to serve on the liaison group for the new Fens Reservoir.
- y) Attempted, unsuccessfully, to argue against dogs on leads being banned from cemeteries and churchyards.
- z) Drew up a section 106 shopping list.
- aa) Helped to design a new town map.
- bb) Updated the Council's Equality and Diversity Policy and the Councillors' Code of Conduct.
- cc) Cllr Carney pursued the idea of FACT running a bus service to Manea rail station.

The Council

Cllr Anne Hay was elected as the new Mayor in May 2023. Since May Cllr Hay has been very busy helping to run the council, attending events in Chatteris and representing the Council at numerous events in other towns. She also represents the town on Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council.

Cllr Ian Benney was elected as Deputy Mayor.

All bar one of the seats on the Council was filled at the elections in May 2023. Cllr Vic Joyce was subsequently co-opted to fill the vacant seat and, following the resignation of Cllr Alice Keating, Cllr Ken Perrin was elected to fill the vacancy in March 2024.

There have been 12 meetings of the full council and shown below is the number of meetings Councillors have attended (in brackets is the number they were eligible to attend). Many members have also attended monthly meetings of the planning and the leisure working groups and councillors have represented the Council on outside bodies.

Linda Ashley	12/12	Ian Benney	9/12
James Carney	8/12	Astrid Charrier	7/12
Alan Gowler	7/12	Anne Hay	10/12
Vic Joyce	8/10	Alice Keating	3/9
Peter Murphy	12/12	Ken Perrin	1/1
Sharon Selman	9/12	Matthew Siggee	11/12
Sue Unwin	11/12		

Cllr Charlie Marks, one of the district councillors for the Chatteris north and Manea ward, also attended most meetings.

Planning: The Council's planning working group, chaired by Cllr Ashley, made recommendations on planning applications and these were ratified by the full council. In total the Council made recommendations on 103 new and revised planning applications to Fenland District Council and Cambridgeshire County Council. They also successfully argued against a developer's suggested name for a development at Black Horse Lane.

Leisure: The Leisure Working Group, chaired by Cllr Charrier and Cllr Ashley, organised events, oversaw the Pocket Park and Old Railway Line footpath, monitored the FACT bus services, planned for the installation of a defibrillator in the old telephone kiosk and completed questionnaires. Speakers at leisure meetings included representatives of the Fire Authority who discussed the planned closure of Manea fire station, and the Chairman of FACT and Cllr Charlie Marks on FACT bus services.

Open Forum: The Council continues to meet on the first Tuesday of every month and the first 15 minutes are an Open Forum for members of the public to raise issues. Last year these included:

Suggestions on how the Pocket Park should be maintained;
Complaints about anti-social behaviour, street cruising and a lack of policing;
A complaint about a planning application for 9 properties at 13b Bridge Street;
Two representatives of Sparta ABC Boxing Club seeking funding.

Officers: The Council continues to employ two part-time members of staff, the Clerk and the Financial Officer. Contractors carry out grass cutting and maintenance work for the Council.

The officers have worked closely with the architect and the building contractor to deliver the new museum project in the former Barclays Bank and the conversion works at 14 Church Lane.

The Clerk has also carried out the wishes of the Council, helped to organise another successful Midsummer Festival and series of Summer Fun shows, administered the allotments, overseen works at the Pocket Park and the Old Railway Line footpath, produced the minutes of meetings, organised meetings, organised the road closures for the Remembrance Parade, submitted several grant applications, worked with FACT on the free bus service, passed on residents' concerns to the relevant authorities and made sure comments were submitted on all planning applications.

The Financial Officer prepared the final accounts and the annual governance and accounting statements for the annual audit, which was passed with no issues raised. She also administered the accounts in line with the financial regulations, advised on the precept, prepared the budget, undertook a financial review, organised contracts and re-invested the Council's assets. She gained sponsorship for and organised the Christmas meal for the Over 70s.

Joanna Melton
Town Clerk
April 2024