

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 7th January 2025

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 7th January 2025 at The Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, A Gowler, P Murphy, S Selman and S Unwin.

165) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs J Carney, A Hay, A Jones, V Joyce and M Siggee.

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

Cllr Benney declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllr Murphy declared an interest in planning, the King Edward Centre and the museum; Cllr Gowler the KEC; Cllr Unwin in In Bloom and festival; Cllr Selman in festival and the Community Car Scheme and Cllr Ashley in the KEC, museum and festival.

167) Open Forum

Two members of the public were present along with Cllr C Marks. One member of the public said he wished to observe the meeting and the other said his hotel had won a gold award in the In Bloom competition but he was still awaiting the certificate. Cllr Unwin said as president of In Bloom she had already chased the certificate but would help to ensure that the chairman passed on the document. The Deputy Mayor said it was not a council issue but Cllr Unwin would liaise.

Cllr Marks reported that new, LED light bulbs had been fitted in the County Council owned street lights in Manea which were much dimmer than the previous bulbs and had led to numerous complaints. He said the County Council had not informed the parish council of the planned changes and warned the light bulbs in Chatteris were likely to be changed. The Deputy Mayor said when the lampposts in Chatteris were changed there were complaints but it was no longer a topic of conversation. Cllr Marks claimed there was a requirement for developers to put in street lights of 20 lumens brightness but those fitted by the County Council were just 6 lumens.

168) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3rd December 2024 were agreed and signed by the Deputy Mayor after a slight amendment: Cllr Carney had pointed out that mins 157) & 161) should have stated the A141 Fenland Way, not Fenton Way.

169) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 157) Signposts: The local Highways Officer had confirmed that the two missing green directional signs (on the approaches to Chatteris from Huntingdon and March) were to be replaced and were on order as was another sign which was damaged and missing wording.

Min 157) Capital Schemes: The Clerk had filled in the forms to submit schemes for consideration under the Highways Capitally Funded Maintenance Scheme.

170) Council Vacancy

The Clerk informed members that during the December meeting of the Town Council Cllr Ken Perrin had submitted an email stating he was resigning from the Town Council. As a result, the Clerk had informed Fenland District Council that there was a vacancy on the Slade Lode South ward of Chatteris Town Council and the vacancy had been advertised. The Clerk had subsequently been informed that an election had been called by more than 10 electors on that ward and would take place on Thursday 27th February 2025. The elections officer at FDC had asked if the Town Council wished for poll cards to be sent out to electors on the ward. The estimated cost of poll cards was £625.

Members unanimously **agreed** that polling cards should be issued to encourage electors to vote. The Clerk said the likely cost of the election was £6,000. She had already had enquiries from two residents interested in the vacancy and would pass on the nomination details once they had been issued.

171) Police Matters

Members had before them a report summarising Neighbourhood Alerts received in the past month. There had been no information received from the local police. There was information about a new Police and Crime Plan for Cambridgeshire and Peterborough which had been issued by the Police and Crime Commissioner, Mr Darryl Preston, following extensive consultation.

172) FDC & Street Scene Updates

The latest FDC and Street Scene updates had been received. It was noted that the Street Scene officer for Whittlesey had been involved in a very bad road traffic accident while he was working in November. The officer was a regular helper at the Midsummer Festival and an update on his condition was sought. Cllr Murphy said the officer had been allowed home

over Christmas and was now thankfully on the mend but it would be a long road to full recovery.

173) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 17th December 2024 showing expenditure of £428,646.57 and income of £485,798.11 (including a full year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

Members approved two quotations from the Council's gardening contractors for additional works:

- 1) To cut and remove dead wood from trees and clear all rubbish at the Bridge Street green area, £400 plus vat.
- 2) To supply and install shrubbery & gravel to the area at the side of the council offices building, £295.00 plus vat.

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

174) Final Precept & Budget 25/25

The Financial Officer reminded Members that the proposed first draft precept budget was approved at the December full council meeting with no amendments.

Members were advised that since then Cllr Perrin had resigned, and an election had been called to fill the vacancy.

Funds to cover the cost of the election could not be taken from the general fund as this would take it below the required level.

FDC Elections had advised that the previous election, when Cllr Perrin was elected, cost £6,000, and the cost would be about the same for another election.

There was only £1,906 remaining in the Elections holding account which would need to go towards the first election cost, leaving a balance to pay of £4,094.

The Financial Officer asked Members to consider approving a transfer of £4,094 from the General Reserve account to pay this remaining balance. The General Reserve account stood at £18,474.

Members were advised that with a second election having been called there would be no other option than to increase the Precept by more than the original proposal of £4,000.

The Financial Officer proposed two options:

Option 1 to increase the precept by an additional £6,000, (10,000 in total) making the Precept £183,500.

Option 2 to increase the precept by a further £6,000 (£16,000 in total) this would allow for the cost of a possible future by- election. This would make the precept £189,500.00
Members agreed that there should be provision in the budget for future by-elections as the Council could not keep taking funds retrospectively.

Members were also advised that the tax base figure had increased to 3517 from the estimated figure of 3451.

The impact of a precept of £189,500 on a band D household showed an increase of £ 3.61 per year based on the tax base of 3517.

The annual precept for a Band D household was estimated to be £53.88 - currently £50.27.

On this basis Members agreed that the precept should increase by £16,000 making the precept figure for 25/26 £189,500.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and an increase in the precept to £189,500 was approved.

175) Payment of Accounts

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

January Payroll	Payroll	6,117.90
Clerk	Reim Microsoft Licence	59.99
Community Defibs Chatteris	Grant Vol Organisation	1,000.00
Quick Fix Window & Door Repairs	Lock replacement Communal door to flats	70.00
Chatteris Comm Car Scheme	Taxis re Xmas party	100.00
St John Ambulance	Xmas Lights switch on First Aid provision	343.20
FDC	CCTV Contribution	21,220.00
FDC	Election Costs By-Election Slade Lode South Ward	5,963.91
RJ Warren	Little Acre Grass cutting	134.83
RJ Warren	Chatteris parks gardening services	756.84
Warren Access	Cherry Picker Hire Xmas Lights	477.60

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Cllr Selman	Reim Festival & Xmas Lunch sundries	115.58
S Gibb	CTC Office Cleaning Nov	56.00
S Gibb	CTC Office Cleaning end Nov & Dec	70.00
S Gibb	Xmas Party	84.00
V Joyce	Xmas Party	141.75
Onecom	Phone bill	92.98
Total		36,804.58

176) Growing Fenland Update

The Clerk reported that although the project was now complete minor issues were being brought to the attention of the Council's officers, who then sorted them.

The official opening of the refurbished council chambers and the new community rooms would take place on Friday 21st February and the Mayor had chosen to mark the occasion by issuing invitations to a cheese and wine event. Among those invited were the Mayor of the Combined Authority, the MP, the Lord Lieutenant and local dignitaries. All councillors had received an invitation and were invited to bring along a guest. The Council's officers would organise the food and drink. The museum had been asked to open to allow visitors to see the other part of the Growing Fenland project.

177) Planning

Cllrs Benney and Marks left the room for this item and Cllr Ashley chaired the meeting. The Clerk began by updating councillors on the latest planning decisions from Fenland District Council.

The following had all been granted planning permission:

Erect a self-build/custom dwelling (2-storey, 4-bed) at The Haven, Huntingdon Road.

Installation of solar panels on annexe building and insertion of 1.65m high gate at Grove House, 74 High Street.

Erect a dwelling (2-storey, 4-bed) at 25 Victoria Street.

Reserved matters application for dwelling at land north west of 24 Willey Terrace.

Erection of 8 dwellings at land north east of 81-87 High Street accessed from Slade Way.

Erection of 5 dwellings at land south of 19 Blackmill Road.

Felling of a Silver Birch tree within a Conservation Area at 13 Huntingdon Road.

Installation of air conditioning unit on rear flat roof at 8 Market Hill.

New sign and air conditioning unit on listed building 8 Market Hill.

It was also decided permission was required to erect an agricultural store with 74kw refrigeration unit at Night Layers Farm, Fenton Way.

The Clerk informed members that two Chatteris planning applications would be considered by FDC's planning committee the following day. These were the applications for 70 dwellings at West Street and for two dwellings land north east of Highfield Lodge, Doddington Road.

Cllr Ashley asked members to consider planning applications a) to k) (**as shown on the appended list**) and it was agreed to return the applications to FDC marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) No Further Comments
- d) Noted, request Section 106 funding
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Noted
- h) Support, will improve the street scene
- i) Support
- j) Support
- k) Rec Refusal, not in keeping with the local street scene

Cllr Gowler said he had been informed that the rear of the former Mrs Wool's sweet shop in the High Street had fallen down. FDC were aware and had authorised safety works.

178) To Agree Dates for Council Meetings and Annual Town Meeting

Members had received the following recommendations:

Dates of Full Council Meetings 2025

Tuesdays: 7th January, 4th February, 4th March, 1st April, 6th May, 3rd June, 1st July, 5th August, 2nd September, 7th October, 4th November, 2nd December

Suggested Date for Annual Town Meeting

Friday 18th April

Dates of Planning Meetings 2024

Tuesdays: 27th January, 25th February, 25th March, 29th April, 27th May, 24th June, 29th July, 26th August (TBC), 30th September, 28th October, 25th November.

Dates for Leisure Meetings 2024 (could be subject to change)

Tuesdays: 14th January, 11th February, 11th March, 15th April, 13th May, 10th June, 15th July, 16th September, 14th October, 11th November.

It was pointed out that Friday 18th April was Good Friday and it was, therefore, agreed to move the Annual Town Meeting to Friday 25th April.

The Deputy Mayor asked if it was necessary to hold an annual town meeting, pointing out it was often poorly attended and those who were present moaned about the council. The Clerk explained that by law an annual town meeting had to be held. The Deputy Mayor asked if it could be shortened in any way and suggested the agenda should be kept to a minimum. He also suggested it should be time limited to one hour. It was agreed not to organise a presentation but to simply have reports and questions from the public and to limit the meeting to one hour from 7pm to 8pm on the 25th April at the King Edward Centre.

179) Town Guide

Cllr Selman again appealed for help in distributing the town guide to every home in Chatteris. Although some had already gone out and the Army Cadets had kindly agreed to cover several streets, there were still large areas of the town which had to be covered. Cllr Unwin had been distributing guides from the garage and the Salvation Army had also been handing them out to customers at their charity shop. The Clerk said she had a list of areas which had been covered and councillors offered to distribute guides to some of the other streets.

Cllr Selman said three amendments to the guide were necessary and these would be included in the next edition of Village Scene.

180) LHI Update

The Clerk had received advice from a highways officer on the planned LHI application for the New Road junction on to the A142. The officer had suggested the installation of warning signs for the junction accompanied by corresponding SLOW road markings, a refresh of all road markings, possibly a directional sign for Chatteris on the A142 directing traffic towards New Road or village gateways. The original idea had been to reduce the speed limit on the A142 but the Clerk warned this was unlikely to get the backing of the County Council or the police, especially as data from the speed camera near the junction (which was being repaired) showed that when it was working compliance was good.

The Clerk said statistics showed there had been a number of injury accidents at the junction but no fatalities. Cllr Gowler had demonstrated there was public support for improved signage at the junction (and a reduction in the speed limit) as a Facebook post had been supported by about 800 people.

The Clerk suggested applying for funding for the warning signs, SLOW road markings and refreshment of all existing signs and this was **unanimously agreed** by members. The Clerk said she would submit the application for funding before the end of the week.

181) Traffic Issues

Disabled Persons Parking Bays: The Council had been asked for its views on two applications for the installation of disabled persons parking bays, one in Bridge Street and the other in Fairway. Cllr Ashley pointed out that the suggested site in Bridge Street was now part of the new zebra crossing, was on a corner and would exacerbate existing parking

problems. It was agreed the application should be opposed. Councillors had no objections to the suggested site in Fairway.

Orders: Notification had been received that the temporary prohibition of use order covering Footpath 14 (Wenny Road to the A142) had been granted and would come into operation on the 20th January. It was anticipated that the works would be carried out between the 20th and 24th January. A temporary prohibition of through traffic order had been granted for Huntingdon Road and would come into operation on the 7th January and it was anticipated the works would be carried out on that day. An application had been made for a road closure order covering Wenny Estate to allow resurfacing works on the carriageway. The order would start on the 1st February and the road would be closed as and when required. A chart showed the works were scheduled for the 17th March.

Capital programme: The slides from the meeting to explain the new Capital maintenance programme scoring system for highways schemes had been received. The Clerk had attended the start of the meeting and had discovered the amount required to carry out necessary repairs to roads in the Fens far exceeded the sum available for repairs to all the County's roads.

Events: Notification had been received of road works and events which would affect roads in Chatteris and the highways events diary for January.

182) Correspondence

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

183) Reports

Cllr Selman had submitted the minutes of the Fens Reservoir community liaison group meeting held on the 23rd October and had alerted the Clerk to an article in the Hunts Post which included the information that Anglian Water would be investing £350 million in the Fens reservoir development, in partnership with Cambridge Water.

184) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda. Cllr Selman gave apologies for the leisure meetings due to be held in March, May, June and September.

