

**CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL
LEISURE AND GENERAL PURPOSES WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of a meeting held at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris, on Tuesday 11th February 2025

Present: Cllrs V Joyce (Chairman), L Ashley, S Selman, M Siggee and S Unwin.

L51 24/25 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Hay and A Jones.

L52 24/25 Speakers from the North Cambs Training Centre

Mr Stephen Buttriss, Consultant at the North Cambs Training Centre in Chatteris, and Mrs Louise Unwin, Head of the Centre, were welcomed to the meeting. They had been invited along to give councillors an insight into how the centre was performing, what was on offer and to discuss if there was any way the Town Council could help to promote the centre and ensure it was a success.

Mr Buttriss began by explaining he was part of the fantastic small team who ran the centre. The centre was part of the Eastern Education Group and relied heavily on the West Suffolk College at Bury St Edmunds for support to help them grow. For example, the West Suffolk College had recognised the problems with public transport and had provided the North Cambs Centre with an electric mini bus so students could be collected.

Mr Buttriss admitted there had been challenges on the apprenticeship side because businesses in Cambridgeshire were less engaging and had been sitting back, initially waiting to see the results of the general election and then wary of the impact of the increase in employers NI contributions. However, apprentice numbers were increasing but there was still a need to make employers aware of the college and what it could offer. Although the team was proactive there was a need to get more engagement with businesses. Mrs Unwin said it was a matter of building relationships with businesses over time.

The training centre's main business was engineering but it also ran other courses including HR, childcare, science and dentistry, said Mr Buttriss. The centre currently had about 60 apprentices each week. It employed two full time lecturers, but others come in for a day a week. Bespoke training could be organised if there was sufficient demand to make it profitable.

Cllr Ashley asked if there would be more opportunities for the training centre following the announcement that Neale Wade in March was closing its sixth form college. Mrs Unwin said she and Mr Buttriss were going into Neale Wade to talk about apprenticeships, which began at age 16, but other than that the centre's provision was 19+. The centre engaged with all the local secondary schools, including those in Huntingdonshire and Peterborough.

Cllr Joyce asked about electrical courses, Mrs Unwin said they could not provide electrical courses as the centre did not have a lecturer. Cllr Joyce also asked how the Town Council could help and councillors suggested businesses which might be worth approaching, including Fenland District Council, Clarion, Tivoli and the County Council. Cllr Selman suggested a promotional stall at the Midsummer Festival.

Mrs Unwin said numbers for adult education courses were gradually growing. The centre provided courses for maths, English, science and ESOL leading to qualifications equivalent to a GCSE. There were also welding classes and a floristry course leading to qualifications, as well as craft and IT courses. Many of the adult courses were fully funded and the idea was to upskill the attendees.

The centre had a number of open events planned to include one for apprentices, a jobs and well being fair and another for those looking to upskill or retrain for another career. Councillors suggested holding a promotional evening at a more central location, the King Edward Centre, similar to the open evenings which used to be held for evening classes. Mrs Unwin and Mr Buttriss agreed to pursue the idea.

Mr Buttriss and Mrs Unwin were thanked for attending the meeting and they offered to attend on a regular basis to keep the Council updated on progress.

L53 24/25 Any Matters Arising from the Last Meeting of the Group

L45: George Clare Surgery: As directed the Clerk had requested the minutes of the latest Patients Participation Group meeting and these had been received with a promise that she would be sent all future agendas and minutes so she could pass them on to Cllrs Benney, Gowler and Unwin. It was generally agreed that the surgery appeared to be operating well with appointments available and follow up consultations for those with long term conditions.
Defibrillator: The Community Defibrillators for Chatteris co-ordinator was due the following day to set up and security mark the new defibrillator and Cllr Joyce said he would then install it in the telephone kiosk.

Mural: The Clerk was still awaiting the new design for the mural.

L48: VE Day 80th: Cllr Joyce kindly agreed to light the beacon at the celebrations. The RBL had confirmed they would be holding a service earlier in the day.

L54 24/25 Little Acre Fen Pocket Park & Old Railway Line Updates

The Clerk had attended a meeting of FLAPP the previous evening when members had accepted the idea of a slide down the bund as a memorial to former Mayor Bill Haggata. They also agreed to a plaque stating the bund was Bill's Hill. New member Sandie was looking into the idea of a tunnel through an extended bund which children could crawl through. Members suggested the tunnel would need to be regularly cleansed. She was also giving FLAPP members lessons in how to prune the trees and the group had applied to Court Leet for a grant to cover the costs of pruning equipment, including a tripod ladder.

The group was also organising an Easter egg hunt and wildflower seeding day on April 12th.

The Clerk had spoken to the Council's contractors after complaints that the bins were always overflowing. They had admitted the bins had not been emptied on a regular basis over the Christmas/New Year period but said they were now back on track. The Clerk said it was no good emptying the bins too frequently as the bags were left out for collection by FDC and if they were left too long they were ripped apart by animals. Cllr Selman suggested the bags could be left in some form of metal container until they were collected by FDC. The Clerk agreed to look into the idea. The contractors had also identified the trees which had been infected with Ash dieback disease. Unfortunately one was a substantial tree. The trees would be replaced by spare saplings, including those growing on an allotment plot.

L54 24/25 Any Other Business

Fibre Network Cabinets: The Clerk said she was about to respond to an enquiry about a fibre network cabinet in London Road/Wood Street when she realised the Council was also being consulted on a further five cabinets, all in the Whitemill area. Members viewed the photographs and agreed to all the cabinets but said that those installing the cabinets should be required to reinstate the footpaths to their original condition. Cllr Ashley said when a similar cabinet was installed in St Peter's Drive the contractors had to return at least twice to repair the footpath as they left it in such a poor state. Cllr Siggee was also concerned that the cabinet in Wood Street would leave less than one metre width of footpath. It was agreed to request the cabinet be set back as far as possible and to require a thorough examination of the footpaths after installation to ensure there was no shoddy workmanship.

FACT Free bus: The driver of the FACT free bus around Chatteris had raised an issue with Cllr Ashley about the personal hygiene of some travellers on the bus. It was pointed out that the service for Barber Gardens residents was an extra service and with funds being depleted it was important to maintain the core service for as long as possible. It was, therefore, agreed that the Clerk should write to the manager of Barber Gardens informing her that the service on Friday afternoons would cease. It was agreed to direct her to the Tiger bus service. The Clerk had also received some posters for other FACT bus services which she would display on the public noticeboard.

Bobby Scheme: The Council had been asked for its views on the Bobby Scheme. Cllr Unwin said it was a good scheme, run by the police, which gave advice to elderly people about scam calls, the importance of locking doors and the importance of not letting strangers into their home. It was agreed that the organisers could be directed to the U3A, WIs and the Bricstan Cafe as the groups might benefit from a talk.

L55 24/15 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 11th March 2025.