

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL
Annual Town Meeting
Minutes Dated 19th May 2017

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held at the King Edward Centre, Railway Lane, Chatteris, on Friday 19th May 2017.

Present: Cllr W Haggata (Mayor), Cllr J Carney (Deputy Mayor), Cllr L Ashley, Cllr J Burrow, Cllr A Hay, Cllr F Newell, Cllr P Murphy, and Cllr J Smith.
About 15 members of the public/electors were also present.

1) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Carney and K Patterson.

2) Financial Report

The Financial Officer presented the Financial Report as follows:

She said the total balances at the end of the year showed an increase of around £18,794

The main reasons for this were: -

Investment interest	£ 1,656
-Current interest rates available are poor (1.05%)	

Contributions to funds:-

Unspent balance of Gas Lamp Project grant (works)	£ 1,662
Unspent General Contingency budget	£ 3,749

Budget savings:-

Civic Expenses & Services	£ 685
Night Time Street Lighting	£ 5,313
Mowing Equipment	£ 500
Jointly Funded Schemes	£ 1,500
Gas Lamp Project (project Manager)	£ 1,484
Premises	£ 2,132
Miscellaneous	£ 113
	£ 11,727

The Financial Officer invited questions on the financial report but there were no questions.

3) Report of the Year's Activities

The Clerk had written a report of the Council's activities throughout the year (**copy attached**) which had also been distributed to those present.

The Clerk said the Council had continued to try and improve facilities and services for residents and with cuts to the budgets of the other councils it had fallen on the Town Council to keep services, such as the youth club, going. In addition the Council had given grants to a number of organisations in the town. On the projects front the Gas Lamps had finally been installed outside the Council Chambers and the Council was waiting to hear the result of grant applications for its next project – the creation of a Pocket Park at Little Acre Fen.

4) Mayor's Report

Cllr Haggata said it had been a privilege to represent Chatteris and the Town Council as Mayor for the past 12 months. Among the highlights had been a tour of the Metalcraft factory, a visit to RAF Alconbury, presenting prizes for the reading scheme at the library and a tour of Cromwell Community College. Whilst enjoying all duties, Cllr Haggata admitted he preferred the duties in Chatteris.

Cllr Haggata stressed the importance of retaining services at Doddington and Hinchbrooke Hospitals and warned that some services might be transferred from Hinchbrooke to Peterborough Hospital in future.

Cllr Haggata paid tribute to volunteers who worked in the background and said these were the people who kept Chatteris going and on the map. He said people did not always realise the work involved in organising such attractions as the Christmas Lights and In Bloom and he thanked all volunteers. He sent a plea to those who had considered volunteering to become involved in one of the many organisations in the town.

Cllr Haggata also pointed out that Town Councillors were volunteers and said anyone interested in the Council could come along to meetings on the first Tuesday of the month and raise issues during the Open Forum. He said council elections would be held in two years' time and invited anyone interested to put their name forward.

Moving on to the gas lamps project, Cllr Haggata said when the street lights were being replaced Cllr Smith had been keen to retain a couple of old gas lamps for future generations. With the help of ex-councillor Chris Howes a scheme was drawn up, grant money was obtained to refurbish the gas lamps and they had now been erected outside the Council Chambers and Museum and looked very good.

The Council was now looking at further projects which were achievable with funding. In addition to the Pocket Park, projects being considered were cycleways and a mooring on the Forty Foot river. Cllr Haggata said the Council was looking for ideas for projects and invited anyone with a "doable" project to put it forward for consideration.

Cllr Haggata concluded by thanking his wife Ruth for her support.

5) Reports from Fenland District and Cambridgeshire County Councils

Newly elected County Councillor for Chatteris, Cllr Hay presented the Fenland District Council report, as she is also a district councillor.

She spoke about the Council's decision to go paperless to save money, gave details of the number of visitors to the Chatteris Hub and the Fitness Centre in Chatteris, spoke about new initiatives at the South Fens Enterprise Park and the completion of 55 affordable homes in New Road, together with the adaptation of 20 homes to allow vulnerable and disabled residents to stay in their own properties.

Cllr Hay said the CCTV cameras had helped to tackle anti-social driving and graffiti and she spoke about the work of the cleansing, rapid response and street scene teams. Maintenance carried out in Chatteris over the past 12 months included: repairs to the Jubilee Gardens clock, the re-gilding of the Church clock and cleaning and repairing the war memorial. FDC had also offered manual assistance with the Christmas lights and helped to organise and support the Midsummer Festival. Wenny Recreation Ground had been improved, including the addition of a skatepark, and new swings had been installed in Cricketers Way.

6) PowerPoint Presentation

Cllr Carney, Deputy Mayor, presented a PowerPoint presentation "Are YOU Interested in Chatteris?" (**paper copy attached**).

The presentation outlined the projects and work undertaken by the Council since last May. Cllr Carney elaborated on plans to re-open Horseway Lock to help with the plan to connect the Bedford Rivers with the Forty Foot and the plans to commemorate George Clare being awarded the Victoria Cross 100 years ago. He showed photographs of Little Acre Fen at the beginning of spring and the plans for the area. He also outlined previous Town Council achievements, ongoing schemes supported by the Council and current and future challenges.

7) Questions from the Public

Mr Paul Davies had a number of questions and comments. He began by pointing out it was impossible to get out of Chatteris in the evenings using public transport. There was one late bus from Peterborough but that only went as far as Wimblington, not to March. The Mayor promised to raise the issue at a future transport meeting.

Mr Davies suggested the empty half of the Tesco store could be used for a farmers' shop. The Mayor said the Council had been in continued contact with Tesco's who had assured them that Poundstretchers would open in the summer. He pointed out that after spending £20million on the project and with ongoing business rates to pay, Tesco were very anxious to see the other half of the shop let. He hoped that once open Poundstretcher would attract more businesses.

Mr Davies also complained that he was disturbed by a low sub level noise 24 hours a day and explained that he lived in Ash Grove.

He was assured that there would be an opening ceremony for the gas lamps project, told councillors he thought the opening of the waterways was “a brilliant idea” and said he hoped Hinchingsbrooke Hospital would not close as Peterborough Hospital was not well designed.

Mr Davies also pointed out it was very difficult to access Lloyds Chemist because they could not install a grab rail as they were in the Conservation area. It was pointed out this was raised in the Town Plan questionnaire as the automatic opening doors did not give time for many people to enter the shop. It was agreed the Conservation area should not limit people’s ability to get into buildings and Councillors agreed to ask someone from the Conservation team at FDC to attend a town council meeting so the issues could be raised.

8) Reports from Town Groups/Club

Mr Chris Savill, Chairman of the Christmas Lights Committee, thanked all volunteers for their help.

Mr Martin Lawrence, of Stainless Metalcraft, gave a brief history of the company and said it had been successful in winning the biggest contract in its 150 year history - a 10 year contract to manufacture containers to store nuclear waste. He said this was just the tip of the iceberg and there was a lot of investment in the company. Ten apprentices a year were being recruited and trained, the company had launched a community fund (Cllr Hay was thanked for sitting on the committee) and had been blown away by the amount of interest in the fund from clubs in the town. To date eight different organisations had received funding and apprentices had worked, and were due to work, on other projects in the town including the refurbishment of the war memorial railings.

Cllr Burrow asked if Metalcraft were planning another open day. Mr Lawrence explained it was not an annual event but he extended an invitation if councillors wished to visit.

Mr Ian Mason, Curator of Chatteris Museum, thanked the Town Council for its support of the museum and the three town council representatives on the Trustee board. He said there was a thrust towards encouraging tourism and he and Cllr Smith had encouraged those working on tourism in Fenland to include more details about Chatteris. He asked for any information about forthcoming events so these could be passed on and put on-line and in the magazine.

Mr Andrew Hay, of Chatteris Rotary Club, acknowledged that Chatteris In Bloom suffered from a lack of volunteers but he said the Rotary Club had been given 5,000 crocus bulbs as a result of their donation to a cancer charity and they wished to offer them to In Bloom. Cllr Smith, a member of In Bloom, thanked Rotary for the kind donation and assured Mr Hay that volunteers would be found to plant the bulbs.

She said the In Bloom judging would take place on the 5th July and everyone would be pulling out all the stops to ensure Chatteris looked spruce and weed free. She praised FDC for

all their support over the last few months. She said the volunteers had noticed a tremendous difference in the help from FDC and this had helped to make the town look bright and tidy. She also thanked Cllr Murphy, the portfolio holder at FDC. She stressed In Bloom was a team effort with everyone working together to make Chatteris look better.

Mr Barry Payne, of the Friends of Chatteris Library, thanked the Town Council for their financial support for the very successful Chatterjam event which was held in the spring. He said over 350 people and several well know authors attended. Unfortunately the person who ran the event had now left the library service. Cllr Smith passed on thanks to the Friends of the Library as without their support the event would not have gone ahead.

Mrs Helen Wootton thanked those who ran Chatteris Community Cinema. Cllr Carney said the Saturday evening screenings were always well supported but unfortunately turnout for the afternoon children's film was historically low and the group was considering whether to continue with the afternoon screenings. Unfortunately children wanted the most up to date films and it was not possible to hire and show these films.

9) Update on the Town Plan Questionnaire

Mr Andy Smith, Chairman of the Community Plan Team for the new Town Plan, was welcomed to the meeting. He explained that a small group, independent of the Town Council, had been working on a community led town plan. The group was trying to draw up a plan taking into account the wishes of the public. Once published the plan would inform the Town Council about the perceived priorities of Chatteris residents.

As part of the process a questionnaire had been sent to every home in Chatteris (4,800) and about 500 had been returned, which was a significant percentage. In addition the group had the views of 370 young people in the town.

Mr Smith said the group had a rich set of data about what people thought about living in Chatteris and how things could develop. The questionnaire looked at nine broad areas and the group had now begun work on analysing the data.

The questionnaire asked what people thought about the Council – broadly they had a positive view of the Town Council although more information was needed on the Council's activities but there was a less positive view of the district and county councils.

On transport only about 28% of those who replied used public transport. Crime and community safety questions revealed Chatteris was an incredibly safe town but the fear of crime was an issue and there were many comments.

On health there were concerns about the sustainability of the doctors' surgery given the rising population of Chatteris. The lack of an NHS dentist in Chatteris was also an issue.

When it came to the environment people welcomed places to walk but did not like walking in dog's faeces. A question about social activities revealed the range of activities on offer was

amazingly diverse and broad but there was a call for more clubs and societies in the evenings and a desire for academic adult education.

Shops and local services were perceived as really important. Access to shops was raised and the importance of a vibrant retail environment. Mr Smith said there were contradictions; people liked living in Chatteris because it was a quiet, small, friendly town but equally they wished to see a department store, different shops, an alternative supermarket to Aldi and more restaurants, etc. Mr Smith pointed out the opportunities for such facilities would only come with development but more people said they did not like development than welcomed it. He said people were not keen on having so many takeaways in the town.

On local media, residents really valued Centrepoint and had a real desire to know what was going on. There was a need for on-line and hard copy information. Residents were annoyed that they often did not get the Fenland Citizen and when they did there was no Chatteris news in it.

The questionnaires revealed most people worked outside Chatteris and were pessimistic about getting a comparable job in the town.

Mr Smith said the team still had the young people's survey to analyse but by the end of the summer they hoped to have a written report which would have a list of possible actions – short, medium and long term. He thanked the team and said it had been really interesting. He also said it was a good example of the Council facilitating something but not controlling it.

Mr Smith confirmed the Town Plan would be a public document.

Mr Savill said they distributed the same number of envelopes requesting funds for the Christmas lights and had a similar number of returns. He asked where all the volunteers were in Chatteris. It was pointed out there appeared to be a nucleus of volunteers and although there were different groups it was the same volunteers on different groups.

The Mayor thanked Mr Smith for his update and everyone for attending the meeting and he invited everyone to stay behind and chat over a cup of tea or coffee.