

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Annual Town Meeting

### Minutes Dated 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019

Minutes of the Annual Town meeting held at the King Edward Centre, Railway Lane, Chatteris, on Friday 15<sup>th</sup> March 2019.

**Present:** Cllr W Haggata (Mayor), Cllr J Carney (Deputy Mayor), Cllr L Ashley, Cllr I Benney, Cllr A Carney, Cllr A Hay, Cllr F Newell, Cllr P Murphy, and Cllr J Smith. A large number of members of the public/electors were also present and councillors introduced themselves.

#### 1) Apologies for Absence

An apology for absence had been received from Mr Andrew Hay, Rotary Club and Bowls representative.

#### 2) Financial Report

The Financial Officer presented her Financial Report (**copy attached**) and invited questions. The Financial Report showed a total expenditure for the year 2018/19 of £191,648.63, as at the 12<sup>th</sup> March 2019, and total income of £193,958.74 for the same period.

The report contained details of the 2018/19 budget and the precept for 2019/20. The Financial Officer was pleased to announce that the precept budget of £151,000 was the same as last year and the effect for a Band D property was a reduction of 1.03% (-47p) due to a decrease in the tax base, balances being transferred from the general fund and no increase in the precept budget.

#### 3) Report of the Year's Activities

The Clerk presented her Annual Report of the Council's activities for the year ending April 30<sup>th</sup> 2018 (**copy attached**).

She stated some projects had made great strides whilst others had been thwarted. On the plus side there had been great progress on the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park, work was going well on the Growing Fenland – Chatteris masterplan, the youth club was more and more successful and Jacks had opened their first store in the country. On the negative side Barclays were set to close the last bank in Chatteris in May despite a 20 point letter explaining why the closure should not go ahead and ways to mitigate it and the County Council would not believe there was a need for a crossing outside Cromwell Community College despite a

request from pupils and plans to expand the college to create the first 4-18 years school in the county.

#### **4) Mayor's Report from Cllr Bill Haggata**

“This has been my 3<sup>rd</sup> year as Mayor of Chatteris and it is a great privilege and honour to have been so.

Last year I highlighted several projects that were in the pipeline for Chatteris e.g. the occupation of the other half of the Tesco building, half of which was taken up by Poundstretcher, now another part has been taken up by Jacks and this has increased the popularity of the site. It still leaves another 3000sqft left to fill, which we are very confident will soon be occupied. Looking to the future, the site has a great deal of potential for encouraging more business onto it and we are looking at every opportunity to capitalise on that.

Further developments include the Huntingdon Road assisted living building which is now well under way. I had the privilege of being asked to get the work under way by cutting the first sod of soil. When finished it will prove a good asset to Chatteris and improve the outlook of this area of Huntingdon Road, which for many years was a derelict, graffiti-blemished site.

The building of the addition to Cromwell College will commence soon with completion due in 2020, making this the only College in Cambridgeshire with the capacity to cope with ages from 4-18. Another example of Chatteris' potential for development.

Chatteris Town councillors are making strong representations for a Pelican crossing to be installed on Wenny Road outside the College. Earlier this year I attended Cromwell College to meet a delegation of students who presented me with a petition signed by several of them, requesting that a crossing be installed and I promised to do my best in getting this achieved.

Several other developments are also in the process or underway in Chatteris.

On the recreational side, the Pocket Park project, first mooted by Cllr James Carney (who along with Cllr Julie Smith, Joanna Melton and myself got the project off the ground supported by CTC), is now well under way. It has been landscaped, a foot/cycle path across the park installed and several trees, including the Queen's tree, have been planted by many volunteers. Several fruit trees of different varieties have been obtained and planted, work is progressing on the dipping pond and the building of a mound/ viewing area. Benches will also be installed. A Friends of the Pocket Park group (all volunteers) has been formed to look after and care for the future of the park. Thank you to them.

New planters, kindly made by the apprentices from Metalcraft, have now been mounted outside the Chatteris Town Council Chambers & Museum building. These compliment the magnificent Gas Lamp posts which adorn the entrance to the Museum and Council Chambers. A big thank you to Metalcraft who support Chatteris in many ways.

A picnic table has also been installed in the grounds of St Peter & St Pauls Church by Chatteris Town Council. The flag-stones that were removed from the driveway to entrance to the Church, when it was re surfaced, form the base; a great use of recycled material.

A new FACT bus service timetable has now been formulated which we hope will be more popular and used more extensively than the last service. Routes and times will soon be available. This has been made available due a great deal work and organisation by Cllr Ashley, Joanna Melton and myself. This service, which I mentioned last year, is being paid for by money made available from the fund given for the Tesco site, which we managed to clawback from FDC.

I have also asked questions at meetings with Mayor James Palmer, of the Combined Cambridge and Peterborough authority, regarding the poor state of the bus transport timetable serving Chatteris and regarding Stagecoach and franchising.

Big progress has been made on the recommendations made in the Chatteris Town Plan, which was compiled by a team of volunteers led by Mr Andy Smith. More on this will follow later. A new Town Guide is being made available thanks to the hard work of Cllr Julie Smith and Cllr Kirsty Patterson.

The Growing Chatteris / Growing Fenland Plan is also in the process of being put together. This is a very exciting project and we are all looking forward to hearing about it from the team at Metro Dynamics. When the team from Metro Dynamics have completed their consultation and presented their findings to Chatteris Town Council and the Masterplan team, it will be for Chatteris Town Councillors, Fenland DC and the Combined Authority to consider the proposals put forward and decide if, when and how they progress them?

As Mayor I have been involved in many meetings, they are listed here but there are too many to mention them all.

As Mayor I wish to thank all my fellow Councillors for all the time they give in working to hopefully make Chatteris a better place to live, develop and do business in. Working together, agreeing and disagreeing, as a team we strive to come up with the right solutions.

My sincere thanks to Chatteris Town Clerk Joanna Melton, for all the behind the scenes work she is involved in, and the Proper Financial Officer Angela Papworth for all the work they both do in keeping Chatteris on the right track and for all their advice and help to me enabling me to perform as Mayor for the 3<sup>rd</sup> year running.

Finally thank you to my wife Ruth, the Mayoress, for all her support and accompanying me.

## **5) Reports from Cambridgeshire County Council and Fenland District Council**

Cllr Anne Hay gave the following report about Cambridgeshire County Council:

“Over the past two years at County we have been pressing Central Government for fairer funding to enable us to deliver good quality services to our residents. At the moment Shire

County Councils receive approximately £292 per resident less than Councils in London and £166 less per head than Metropolitan Boroughs. It is hoped that by the end of this year Central Government will have finished their review and have put in place a new formula which should increase the amount received by Shire Counties from Central Government.

At the moment 80% of the County's budget is spent on adult social care and children's services. This continues to increase year on year partly due to an ageing population and high numbers of people who are discharged from hospital needing a care package.

The number of children in care continues to increase and has increased from 686 in September 2017 to 769, as of yesterday. A lot of work is being done to attract more foster carers and I would urge anyone interested in becoming a foster carer to contact the Children's Team at County.

The County Council has committed more money to repairing and maintaining the roads in our county, particularly those in rural areas, which had been left to deteriorate for too long. We now have four machines, known as Dragon Catchers, each of which is capable of repairing 400 potholes a week.

As a County we are constantly looking at all the services we provide to ensure that where savings can be made, without compromising services, that we do so. Shared services with Peterborough is but one example of where savings have been made.

The County Council is also moving out of Shire Hall in Cambridge to Alconbury in 2020/21. This will provide savings of approximately £46 million over 30 years, money which can be used to support the services we provide for our residents. This move is not just about saving money however as staff will be redeployed throughout the county with the aim of bringing services closer to the communities they serve.

I would like to finish off with the aims of the County Council:

- 1) Developing the local economy for the benefit of all.
- 2) Helping people to live independent and healthy lives.
- 3) Supporting and protecting vulnerable people."

Cllr Ian Benney gave the report about Fenland District Council. He said the good news was that FDC would not be raising their portion of the Council Tax in 2019/20. The Council felt it could make more savings instead of raising the Council tax.

A new Fenland Local Transport Plan was looking at connectivity between the villages and towns and was considering rail and bus links.

There had been a problem with anti-social behaviour at Furrowfields Car Park and to counter this FDC had installed speed bumps, parking bay strips and was looking at changing the entrance to stop cars racing in and out of the car park.

Cllr Benney said he was Chairman of the Growing Fenland – Chatteris Masterplan team as he was very interested in what happened in Chatteris. He believed the Masterplan project was the best opportunity Chatteris had to see something good coming to the town and was the best opportunity for economic growth. The Combined Authority had money in the pot for the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough area and Cllr Benney believed Chatteris should benefit from that pot. The consultants Metro Dynamics were being paid £50,000 to produce the report but the Combined Authority would use that report to decide how their money should be spent.

Cllr Benney was keen to see further development on the ‘Tesco’s’ site and he mentioned hotel and pub chains who might be interested in building on the site. He also spoke about the need for more small industrial units in the town and urged the Combined Authority to set up a training centre in Chatteris to support Metalcraft and other traders. He said the idea was currently being explored by the Combined Authority.

## **6) Questions from the Public**

- 1) A lot of effort seems to be put into out of town development, what effort is being made for the centre of the town where there are empty shops?

*Cllr Benney said he sympathised and said the answer was to sort out the parking as the town centre was often congested. One of the ideas in the Masterplan was to clear cars from the centre of the town. He suggested an hours free parking and then the ability to move cars on.*

*Cllr Haggata assured those present that the Council was concerned about the state of the shops but too much retail space was a nationwide problem.*

*Another member of the public pointed out local residents did not support the High Street shops.*

- 2) Why is there inconsistencies on planning applications between FDC and the Town Council?

*Cllr Benney explained the Town Council are merely consultees on planning applications, FDC’s officers or planning committee made the decisions bearing in mind local and national plans and planning rules.*

- 3) The shop next to my shop in the High Street has not been looked after and my shop suffers as a result of that shop’s neglect. Why doesn’t the Council take action?

*Cllr Hay said she had raised the issue with FDC but there was only so much that could be done as the shop was in private ownership.*

- 4) Why doesn’t the street cleaning machine visit Chatteris?

*It was pointed out a lot of people helped to keep the streets clean by picking up rubbish, including Cllr Murphy and Street Pride volunteers. They enhanced the work*

*undertaken by FDC. Another member of the public pointed out the Council did not drop the rubbish that was down to residents.*

- 5) Where will the Wenny Road crossing go as the road is dangerous due to the speed of vehicles?

*Councillors said the exact location had yet to be agreed as the County Council still had to agree to the idea of a crossing but it would be outside Cromwell.*

- 6) When is there going to be a footpath between Jacks and Doddington Road as you often see people walking along the grass verge?

*That is a Highways issue. The Mayor has been pressing for such a footpath. Cllr Murphy pointed out if further development went ahead on the Jack's site the developer could be asked to include the footpath as part of the development.*

*Cllr Hay said she and Cllr Smith had asked the County Council to tidy up the roundabout near Jacks, ahead of the Royal visit by HRH Princess Anne, as it was such an eyesore. She was hopeful action would be taken as workmen had obviously been out to look at it.*

- 7) If the 50 houses are allowed at Fairbairn Way it will mean an increase in the volume of traffic along London Road which is already horrific and will it lead to the provision of a second GP surgery?

*Councillors explained that Dr Szekely had said the problem was not lack of accommodation it was the difficulty in attracting GPs. The NHS would be consulted and if they felt there was a need for an increase in GP provision money could be requested from the development. Cllr Hay said the planning application would be decided by FDC's planning committee.*

## **7) Community/Town Plan Progress Report**

The Mayor told the meeting the Council had been working on action points raised in the community/town plan throughout the year. He had mentioned several of the achievements in his Mayor's report and others were noted in the Annual Report. Unfortunately there was not time to go through all the actions but he and Cllr Carney wished to highlight work which has been carried out in response to issues raised under the headings of Transport and The Environment.

On transport, he had met with County Officers to discuss a new Fenland Transport Strategy. At that meeting he had stressed the importance of improved public transport. In addition the Council had agreed to join forces with neighbouring parishes to fight for a better bus service between Chatteris and Ely and the Growing Fenland presentation would mention a push for better public transport.

The Masterplan presentation would also refer to a drive for safe cycle routes and whilst on cycling the Council had agreed, if required, to help fund the Bikeability scheme for primary school children. The FACT bus service to Ely on a Saturday would be re-launched soon with a new timetable and there were also plans to run a bus to St Ives on market day.

Following an approach by the Town Council, Mick George had put up signs asking lorries entering London Road to slow down to 20mph.

Cllr Haggata said Councillors did consider a proposal for a one way system through the centre of the town but rejected the idea, as they had done in the past, because it was felt Railway Lane would be unable to cope with the additional traffic.

Cllr Carney began his presentation by asking those present to look at the exhibition about the development of the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park. He spoke about the development of the park and said it was brilliant to see such enthusiasm for the project as had been witnessed at the family tree planting day when representatives of many organisations turned up to help plant trees donated by local residents. A Friends of group had now been set up and hoped to be able to attract external funding for the project.

Cllr Carney also spoke about how the Town Council had helped FDC in the development of the meadow area at the rear of the Parish Church and helped the County Council to create a new footpath, Chatteris 32, through the spinney at Wenny Recreation Ground and the rear of The Elms.

He said the plan was to help Fenland District Council (and enforcers Kingdom Services) tackle the problem of dog fouling by launching a Green Dog Walkers scheme in May and the Council regularly reported fouling hotspots to FDC.

The Council had also paid for new litter bins to be installed (in London Road, Doddington Road and at the rear of the Church) and had requested a map showing the location of all litter bins in Chatteris so areas lacking bins could be identified. Added to that the Council had run Summer Fen events in the King Edward Centre during the summer holidays and had launched a new Facebook page.

Cllr Carney said Cllr Smith had created a leaflet promoting Chatteris, which was funded by the Town Council, and a new town guide would shortly be launched.

In addition to giving out almost £3,000 in small grants to local organisations, the Town Council gave major grants to the Christmas Lights, In Bloom (including payment for a contractor to water the plants), the Museum and the King Edward Centre. The Council also financially supported two reading schemes.

The Mayor said Chatteris now had two good museums, one of which was unique to Chatteris – a police firearms museum.

## **8) Verbal Reports from Town Groups/Clubs**

Mr Chris Savill, Chairman of the Christmas Lights Committee, said one of their main helpers for the past 10 years, Mr Dave Jackson, of Jackson's Transport, was unable to help in 2019 so that was the group's main teleporter gone. He asked those present if they knew of anyone with a teleporter who was prepared to give up 12 to 14 days a year to help put up and take

down the lights, to contact him. He said if this was not possible the group would have to train someone to use a hoist and would have to hire in the machinery at a cost.

Cllr Hay, speaking as a member of Chatteris Town Bowls Club, said the club had an open day the 20<sup>th</sup> April when everyone was welcome to come along and try the sport ahead of the start of the season in May. She said the club was in need of more members.

Mr Ted Croucher, of Community Defibrillators for Chatteris, said the group was committed to raising money for defibrillators in the town. With the help of U3A, Stainless Metalcraft, other local businesses and people who had supported the fund raising events they had raised the money for a defibrillator which was to go on the wall of the osteopaths. Another five were needed in the town so fund raising would continue.

With this in mind the group had applied to Jacks Supports for financial help but heard nothing. The group had now learned that a company in Staffordshire had received £250 for defibrillators from Jacks with the potential of receiving a further £500. Mr Croucher was concerned that there was no guarantee that the money would be spent on defibrillators for Chatteris.

## **9) Chatteris Masterplan Interim Report & Question & Answer Session**

Mr Daniel Timms, of Metro Dynamics consultants, was welcomed to the meeting by the Mayor and gave a Powerpoint presentation on the Growing Fenland Masterplan interim report for Chatteris.

He began by explaining the background to the project and said the aim of the Masterplan was to signal to the Combined Authority what was important to Chatteris. He said it was obvious Chatteris was a very committed community and spoke about the strengths of the town.

A vision for the town had been drawn up and centre of the vision was that Chatteris was an **aspirational community**. The vision had been broken down into four ambitions:

- 1) Creating opportunities
- 2) Revitalising the High Street
- 3) Connecting the community to the rest of Cambridgeshire
- 4) Promoting the community to the wider world

On ambition 1 Mr Timms spoke about plans for an Advanced Manufacturing Launchpad which would develop new training facilities, bring supply chain businesses on-site, expand current operations and create opportunities for partnership with other Chatteris businesses. Ambition 2 would include better car and bike parking management, smart totem signs, on-street wi-fi and looking at alternative ideas for the use of the retail space which was no longer required. *The audience said there were already signs around the town, which had been installed when regeneration took place, and called for the opportunity to be able to buy*



*items in the town centre (although it was pointed out people did not support local businesses). There was support for an alternative use for the over-supply of retail space. The idea of moving the market from its current location to allow for more stalls was debated but Cllr Murphy said there was little interest in the pitches from market traders. There was a call for the young people of the town to be consulted about what they wanted as there were so many youngsters hanging around the streets and there was hidden deprivation in the town. A member of the audience pointed out the young people had been fully consulted about the town/community plan.*

Ambition 3 put forward the ideas of installing electric vehicle charging infrastructure and establishing a community car club using electric cars. It also mentioned new cycle infrastructure such as making the Old Railway Line footpath a cycle path and extending the cycle path from Sutton to Chatteris.

On ambition 4 the idea of promoting Chatteris Outdoors as a theme was explored including the promotion of existing assets such as local waterways (including opening up Horseway Lock), the countryside and recreational activities such as sky diving, cycling and walking. Mr Timms also suggested a new online digital platform for Chatteris and a new community festival.

Mr Timms stressed none of the ideas put forward were set in stone and he asked people to fill in a questionnaire about the presentation. He was thanked for attending.

The evening concluded with home-made refreshments and a chance to chat to councillors.