

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 2nd August 2022

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 2nd August 2022 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Councillors L Ashley (Mayor), A Hay (Deputy Mayor), I Benney, J Carney, A Gowler, W Haggata, P Murphy, F Newell, J Smith and I Taylor.

64) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Charrier and M Petrou and the Financial Officer.

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

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest in all planning matters as members of FDC's planning committee.

66) Open Forum

Three members of the public and a representative of the press were present at the meeting. The secretary of the Friends of Wenny Road Meadow, Ms Kirsty Patterson, said she wished to speak on the parish poll and Cllrs Benney and Murphy left the room for the duration of the item. Ms Patterson explained she was responsible for calling the poll

Ms Patterson said as a result of the poll, when 92% of people voted yes, she had six questions she wished to ask:

- 1) Do you agree the poll was administered correctly according to the law? *This was agreed.*
- 2) Do you acknowledge the result of the poll? *Yes, At this point Councillors pointed out only 12.9% of electors voted, just over 1,000 of the 8,393 eligible to vote.*
- 3) Do you accept that the poll was addressed to this Council? *No*
- 4) Do you recognise that the result of the yes vote is in direct contradiction to the stance taken by this Council on planning application F/YR21/0981/F?
- 5) As a direct result of the clear mandate of that poll will you change your position? *No*
- 6) If you are not happy to represent a mandate you have received then who do you represent? *Councillors pointed out 7 out of 8 people in Chatteris chose not to vote and said it was their duty to represent the whole town.*

Ms Patterson asked the Council to follow the mandate received as a result of the expensive poll. Cllr Carney pointed out Ms Patterson and Mr Weetman had been warned in advance, by FDC's electoral officer, that the poll was not binding.

A discussion took place on whether the turnout would have been greater had the polling stations been open for longer and the backlash which was feared by anyone opposing the Save Wenny Meadow campaign.

The Mayor read out the following prepared statement:

“Councillors are aware of this issue as they were copied in to correspondence between Mr Lawrence Weetman and the Clerk, correspondence which has apparently also appeared on a social media account.

The Clerk explained that under Standing Order 7a) “A resolution of the Council shall not be reversed within 6 months except either by a special motion, which requires written notice by at least six councillors to be given to the Proper Officer in accordance with standing order 9 below, or by a motion moved in pursuance of the recommendation of a committee/working group or sub-committee.”

Under Standing Order 9b) “No motion may be moved at a meeting unless it is included in the agenda and the mover has given written notice of its wording to the Proper Officer at least seven clear days before the meeting. Clear days do not include the day of the notice or the day of the meeting.” No motion had been received in time.

The Council stands by its unanimous decision, made on the 5th April 2022, to support the planning application. This will now be determined by Fenland District Council.

The Clerk did not require advice from CAPALC as she was well aware of the Standing Orders having written them following advice from NALC. She has over 20 years' experience as a Clerk and the recognised qualifications.

The Clerk and this Council object to comments questioning their integrity and professionalism. Comments have appeared on social media accusing councillors of criminal activities and misconduct. As a result should the Council decide to seek advice it will be on the subject of libel.”

Ms Patterson said she would keep coming back to meetings to try and change the minds of six councillors and suggested the Council could change its mind because new evidence had been received, namely a biodiversity report. The Clerk said there had been no re-consultation and the time period for submitting comments on the planning application had expired.

The members of the public left the meeting at this point and the representative of the press asked the Council if they would be taking action. The Mayor said the Council would be considering the accusatory statements which had been made before deciding.

It was agreed that should Ms Patterson attend future meetings the Council would listen to all her questions without commenting and then read out a statement.

67) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th July 2022 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

68) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 58) Bus Services: The Clerk reported that there had been a complaint after a member of the public and her children were not picked up by the bus to Cambridge on the 23rd July. The lady said she had turned up early for the bus and had waited at the East Park Street bus station. The Clerk had taken the matter to FACT who had explained that everyone had booked to be collected at Furrowfields car park and as a result the bus had not stopped at East Park Street. It was hoped there would be no similar difficulties in the future. The Clerk also reported that the Tesco's bus was due to start on the 5th August.

69) Police Matters

Members had received the following report based on information received from the police in the past month:

Local Police

The next meeting between Neighbourhood Sergeant Joe Punton and council leaders will be held on the 3rd August 2022.

Neighbourhood Alert

6/7/22: Warning about a rise in motorbike thefts across the county and advice on how to secure mopeds, scooters and motorbikes.

11/7/22: Information about the launch of a Community Safety Charter to tackle crimes in public spaces. The scheme launched by Neighbourhood Watch asks people to sign up to the charter.

11, 18 & 25/7/22: Latest news from the courts.

12/7/22: Warning to motorists to be vigilant following a recent spate of thefts from vehicles.

12/7/22: Notification that over 12 million suspicious emails have been reported by the public. Suspicious text messages should be forwarded to 7726.

14/7/22: Invitation to the community safety event at Chatteris Library on 4th August.

18/7/22: Warning from the National Fraud Intelligence Bureau about scams where victims are targeted on WhatsApp by criminals pretending to be someone they know.

21/7/22: Appeal for help to find missing 13-year-old girl. Child was found safe and well.

27/7/22: Information about the launch of an intervention hub in Wisbech as part of the Safer Wisbech programme.

27/7/22: Warning about a courier fraud scam in Peterborough.

The Mayor asked if there were any issues councillors wished her to raise at the meeting. Cllr Haggata had already asked her to notify the police that attempts had been made to set a fire at Wenny field and the Mayor said she would also be raising the issue of illegal parking.

70) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates

Members had a copy of the latest FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates (**copy attached**). The Mayor said the council's contractor had seen a van filled with waste using the drove beside the Pocket Park and returning empty, presumably having dumped the vegetation in a field. Cllr Murphy pointed out it would be dumped on private land.

71) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26th July 2022 showing expenditure of £430,030.61 and income of £86,452.58 (includes a half year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

Cllr Hay queried why the figures were different on the Financial Statement to the figures on the Budgetary control sheets, other Members agreed that they needed clarification before they would approve the report.

The Financial Officer had given her apologies therefore wasn't at the meeting to give an explanation of the breakdown of figures. The Clerk advised Members that she would get the Financial Officer to clarify the figures on the report when she returned to the office.

The Financial Officer emailed Members on her return advising the breakdown of figures and explained that the financial statement figures were made up of the precept budget spend & income (Pages 1&2), reserve and funds, vat, sundry creditors & debtors spend & income (page3) of the Budget Control Sheet, Appendix A.

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

72) Payment of Accounts

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

Barclays	Bank Charges July 22	11.50
R J Warren	Gardening Services	1,025.24
AJGIBL Client NST	Building Insurance for 2 Park Street	371.37

Chatteris Parochial Church	Ukrainian Hub Grant	2335 5 of 10 442.00
Magpas	Grant Vol Organisation	500.00
Sammy Magic Magic	Summer Fun	175.00
Onecom	July phone bill	75.10
Booster Cushion	Summer Fun	360.00
JezO's Magic show	Summer Fun	240.00
Viking	Stationary Order	238.97
Wave	RHS Allotments water bill	203.52
Clerk	Reim Zoom & Allotment number stickers	22.98
Wave	LHS Allotments water bill	306.24
Wave	Council Offices water bill	48.93
David J Richards	Midsummer Festival Programmes printing	1,191.00
Warboys Somersham & Pidley Drainage Board	Drainage rates Allotments	123.64
Middle Level Commissioners	Drainage rates Allotments	157.36
CTC August Payroll HMRC Cambs Pension Clerk, F/O	Payroll August	5,416.58
Chatteris Car Scheme	Grant Vol Organisation	500.00
Chatteris Detachment Cambs Army Cadet Force	Grant Vol Organisation	475.00
Lovell & Ward	60% Grant funding Business premises refurb Growing Fenland Street Renaissance Fund	720.00
Curl up & Dye	60% Grant funding Business premises refurb Growing Fenland Street Renaissance Fund	1,038.00
T Payne & Co	60% Grant funding Business premises refurb Growing Fenland Street Renaissance Fund	1,224.00
Chatteris In Bloom Watering Services	Watering bill, remaining grant budget	1,059.00
Zen Internet	August -Sept 22 website	11.99

Ethos CF Corporate Finance	Quarterly Lease Photocopier	2336 6 of 10 255.53
Total		16,192.95

73) Planning

Cllr Haggata (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 26th July 2022 (**copy attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to g) and i) and j) (as shown on the **appended list**) and considered h) and four further applications. It was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- b) Support (Cllr Gowler declared an interest)
- c) Fully Support
- d) Support
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Support (a plan would have been useful)
- h) Support
- i) Noted
- j) Support
- k) Recommend Refusal, over development of site
- l) Support
- m) Support
- n) Support, welcome new business in Chatteris

74) Growing Fenland Update

The Clerk reported that the registration of the Council as owner of the freehold property, Bank House, 2 Park Street, had been completed and she had received a copy of the Title Information Document.

In addition she had received 7 pages of legal documents asking the Council to enter into the unilateral obligation with Fenland District Council to the effect that as owner of "The Surgery", 14 Church Lane, Chatteris, the Council agreed to: "continue to use The Surgery as the Chatteris Museum, until the museum can be carried on at the site which is the subject of the Development."

The Clerk had indicated she would sign the document, which was required by FDC before they would issue planning permission for the extension and conversion of 14 Church Lane, if the words 2 Park Street, Chatteris, were inserted after the word site and the entry F/YR21/1094/F after the word Development.

She warned the Town Council was facing a bill of at least £500 from FDC for the cost of the contract.

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The Clerk also reported that she had shown a representative of the Council's fire alarm company around 2 Park Street so he could submit an estimate for the cost of installing a fire alarm system, security system and external CCTV cameras. The estimate would be helpful if the Council was able to apply for more grant aid. Three quotes for the work would be sought and the representative had suggested it would be most cost effective if the alarm systems were installed whilst the building work was ongoing.

Cllr Benney requested the following item (agenda item 21) be brought forward and it was **agreed** to consider Minute 75) **In Committee** due to the confidential and sensitive nature of the information to be discussed.

75) To Consider Quotations for Conversion and Renovation Works to 2 Park Street

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Having considered the two quotations members agreed that the quotation from Company A represented Best Value and unanimously **resolved that Company A – J T Chambers (Developments) Ltd should be awarded the contract.**

At this point the meeting returned to a public meeting.

76) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

As Cllr Charrier was not present the Mayor presented the minutes of the Leisure working group meeting held on Tuesday 19th July 2022 (**copy attached**).

L27) Cemetery: The Clerk had received a reply from FDC's Open Spaces Manager Mr Simon Bell who had promised to visit the old part of the cemetery with FDC's contractors to look at carrying out some works to the overgrowth. However he warned substantial works would cost in the high thousands and this was not possible.

L22) Crime Prevention: FDC had responded to a request about undertaking measures to protect ATMs by explaining that the County Council would have to be approached as the proposed works were on highways land. The Clerk had briefly noted an email from the safety partnership team at FDC regarding protecting ATMs which asked for the location of ATMs in Chatteris. It was agreed there were just four – two at the garages, one outside the Post Office and one in Tesco's. Cllr Benney said there were no plans to replace the ATM at Nisa.

77) Doddington Road LHI Scheme Proposals

Members had received a copy of the proposed design drawings for the Doddington Road LHI scheme. Members were asked to review the drawing and let the highways officer know if they were happy for him to go ahead and obtain a road safety audit for the scheme. They had

also received an estimated timeline for the project which showed the scheme being delivered within the period of 17th February to 9th June.

Members **unanimously agreed** to the drawings and said it was a good plan accompanied by a very polite letter.

78) Request from Doddington Parish Council re: A141

The Mayor had received an email from the Chairman of Doddington Parish Council, Cllr Ruth Hufton, asking if Chatteris would join with Doddington and Wimblington to mount a joint effort to get average speed cameras, or some other speed deterrent, along the A141 between Chatteris and Wimblington.

The matter had been discussed by Doddington PC following all the accidents on that section of road. Doddington Councillors were also concerned about unsatisfactory repairs to one part of the road, following a fire, where it was alleged one of the cars lost control.

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Cllr Hufton suggested a working group of the leaders of the three councils, a police representative and County Councillor Dave Connor. The Mayor suggested Cllr Hay should also be present.

The Mayor and Cllr Hay said they were happy to attend a meeting. Cllr Murphy said the recent three accidents were nothing to do with the road which was a good road and he was completely opposed to a 50mph speed limit between Chatteris and March. The Mayor and Cllr Ashley agreed there was no need for a 50mph limit but suggested average speed cameras for 60mph. Cllr Benney agreed it was not the road's fault it was the motorists. Cllrs Gowler and Haggata said they would prefer to see average speed cameras on the A142.

It was agreed that there was no harm in Cllrs Ashley and Hay attending a meeting. It was also agreed that accident data giving dates, times and locations should be obtained from the County Council ahead of any meeting.

79) Emails & Letters

In Bloom: An email had been received from the Chairman of In Bloom thanking the Council for all their help and support, not just financial but the use of the Chambers and attending on judging days. It was agreed a letter should be sent congratulating In Bloom on this year's lovely display.

Pocket Park: A letter had been received criticising the state of the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park and claiming it was not being maintained properly. The letter was accompanied by photographs showing the park covered in weeds and stating it was not possible to use it for picnics or ball games. The letter asked for the grass cutting programme to be managed better and for weed killer to be used followed by re-grassing the area.

The Mayor pointed out the park had not been designed for ball games and there was a picnic table for picnics which had just been repaired, again, as someone set fire to it with what appeared to be a disposable barbecue. When the In Bloom judges visited the park they had been blown away by how stunning it looked as it was covered by the purple flowers of mallow and they were delighted it had attracted so many bees and other wildlife.

The Clerk admitted the mallow had taken over but it thrived in the hot, dry conditions being experienced unlike the grass. She said the plan was to try and kill off the mallow and re-seed but this would not be possible until the winter when it would hopefully rain, allowing the grass seed to grow.

Dock Road: A resident of Dock Road had written about his concerns that there were no street lights along the road which was dangerous for local residents in the winter months. He was also concerned there were no speed limit signs as it was a busy road and the traffic sped along the road with no concern for residents or children.

Cllr Hay was in favour of installing one street light and agreed it was not safe for children and residents using the footpaths at night. However Cllr Gowler said it was not the Town Council's responsibility to provide street lighting and if the Council provided a street light in Dock Road residents would demand street lights in other parts of the town. Cllr Smith agreed.

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The Mayor said the Council had looked into the cost of providing solar lights at that location but had rejected the idea.

Cllr Murphy reminded members there would be on-going maintenance costs for any light. It was agreed to write back and state that whilst the Council had sympathy with the residents the current situation was as a result of piecemeal development and it was the County Council's or FDC's responsibility to provide street lights. It was also agreed to suggest a light could be privately funded by the residents and to pass the email to Highways.

80) Traffic Issues

Temporary Orders: Official notices had been received temporarily prohibiting waiting in part of the High Street between 17th and 19th August and prohibiting through traffic on various roads, including the road to Doddington, from the 1st August.

Reports: The latest roadworks and events information for Fenland had been received along with TMC incident report for June and the Highways events diary for July and August.

Magazine: The latest copy of the Way to Go magazine, published by the road safety education team at the County Council, had also been received.

81) Correspondence

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

Combined Authority: Members noted that a further £347 had been allocated by the Combined Authority to the North Cambridgeshire Training Centre in Chatteris. It was explained this was to carry out works to the Huntingdon Road roundabout. Members were concerned that there was currently no footpath to the centre and agreed this was a necessity. The Clerk was asked to ascertain if there were any plans for a footpath and to check the conditions of the

original planning application as a footpath had been requested. It was also agreed to push for the footpath.

82) Reports

There were no reports.

83) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.