

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 1st August 2023

2457

1 of 10

Minutes of the Meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 1st August 2023 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Charrier, P Murphy, S Selman and M Siggee.

65) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Gowler, A Keating, V Joyce and S Unwin.

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

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications, Cllrs Ashley and Selman declared an interest in Festival items and Cllrs Ashley and Hay declared an interest in museum items as trustee. Cllr Murphy was awaiting appointment as a museum trustee.

67) Open Forum

District Councillor C Marks was the only other person present and was welcomed to the meeting but did not wish to speak in Open Forum. It was, therefore, agreed to move on to the next item on the agenda.

68) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 4th July 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

69) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 57) Pocket Park & Pond: The Clerk reported that Frog Life had carried out major repairs to the pond at the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park. The pond had been scraped out and the contractors had found that plant roots had worked through the liner. The pond was then lined with a double layer of underlay before being covered by a new thicker liner and soil. The pond was then filled and was holding a good level of water. The Clerk showed members photographs of the before and after work and members were impressed by the improvements. Having inspected the pond that day the Clerk confirmed it was holding water. She also reported that Frog Life had paid for the repairs so there was no cost to the Council. Cllr Carney suggested it might not be wise to plant pond plants in future but it was agreed the water lilies offered by the Mayor should be suitable.

The Clerk had also informed the resident, who attended a Council meeting, that the Council would not be carrying out a feasibility study into buying, hiring or borrowing grass cutting

machinery for the park as the council's contractors would continue to care for the park. The gentleman had replied that he would be carrying out his own research.

Fens Reservoir: The Clerk had confirmed that two councillors wished to join the Fens Reservoir Community Liaison Group and the reservoir project team had stated invitations would soon be sent out to the first meeting. The Mayor asked the councillors attending the meeting to ask if the team were aware that there was a planning application to convert a barn, on the site of the proposed reservoir, into houses.

70) Police Matters

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

Local Police

The next meeting between Sgt Arnold and council leaders is due to be held in August.

Neighbourhood Alert

5 & 17/7/23: Latest court news.

6/7/23: Notification that cannabis worth over £3million was seized during raids in Cambridgeshire and Peterborough during Operation Mille, including a raid in Chatteris.

10 & 19/7/23: Call for parents of school age children to help stop hoax emergency calls during the school holidays and examples of real recordings of prank calls received by Cambridgeshire police.

12 & 25/7/23: Further calls for help to reach a fundraising goal for Neighbourhood Watch to carry out youth work.

17/7/23: Notification that officers visited construction sites across the county as part of ongoing efforts to combat modern slavery.

18/7/23: Warning about OTP (one-time passcode) scams.

20/7/23: Information about the Herbert Protocol which helps to find people with dementia when they go missing from home.

27/7/23: Request from Neighbourhood Watch to undertake two surveys so they can understand the reader's membership status with NW and shape their social media presence.

The Mayor said a meeting, due to be held between council leaders and Sgt Arnold in July, had been cancelled and rescheduled for Thursday 10th August. She would be attending.

71) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates

Members had before them the latest FDC and Street Scene reports (**copy attached**).

Cllr Murphy said he had an update on the footpath around Wenny Recreation Ground (the poor state of the path had been raised at the Leisure meeting). Cllr Murphy said FDC were aware of the state of the footpath having inspected about three weeks ago. There were also problems with a footpath in March and another in Wisbech so the Council was going to seek quotes for all three footpaths to be repaired as one lot.

The Mayor said she had accompanied Chatteris In Bloom members and the judges when they went round the town and everywhere looked really lovely. She thanked FDC staff for their help.

72) Financial Officer’s Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 25th July 2023 showing expenditure of £218,365.86 and income of £190,811.61 (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.

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

73) Payment of Accounts

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

Barclays	Bank Charges	11.50
Zen Internet	Website	13.79
Chatteris Museum	Reim Racking 2 Park Street	241.66
Booster Cushion Theatre	Summer Fun	384.00
Stripey Wipey	Summer Fun	255.00
Sammy Magic Magic	Summer Fun	175.00
Onecom	Phone bill	93.00
SSE Energy	10-month Elec bill 2 park street to inc. drying out using industrial blowers	2,084.61
Youths of Fenland	Junior Youth Club 1st term	1,166.00
Youths of Fenland	Well-being drop-in sessions for senior youths	1,025.20
Middle Level Commissioners	Fee re planning for proposed residential flats at Church Lane	340.00
Arco Iris	Band entertainment re summer festival	175.00
CTS	Supply & fit Texecom ricochet expander 2 Park Street	273.60
Chatteris Museum	Reim Archive boxes	71.92
Fran Orridge	Reim poster re Band for Summ Fest	14.40
JDK Fitness	Summ Fest entertainment	350.00
David J Richards	Printing summer fest programmes	1,141.00
Laura Dennis	DJ Entertainer re summer fest	75.00
Viking	Stationary	595.88
Wave	Water bill RHS allotments	239.02
Wave	Water bill LHS allotments	158.87
British Gas	Gas bill Church Lane	35.53
Wave	Water bill Church Lane	57.74
British Gas	Elec bill Church Lane	108.47
Middle Level Commissioners	Drainage rates Church Lane	171.41

Warboys Somersham Pidley Drainage Board	Drainage rates Church Lane	2460 4 of 10 151.74
F/O	Reim Petty cash	86.36
CFCorporate	Photocopier lease	265.10
Lamps & Tubes Illuminations	Xmas Lights Cable & Festoon Harness	978.00
Payroll	August 23 Payroll	5,665.28
Red Skips 2 U Ltd	Skip hire museum	290.00
Cllr Carney	Reim mileage re CCTV meeting	18.45
R Leney	Sound system and announcements Sum/Fest	258.00
Wisbech Town Council	Mayor's charity afternoon Tea	40.00
Clerk	Reim Zoom & mileage	24.59
British Gas	Gas bill Church Lane	61.54
Cllr Hay	Reim mileage civic duties	19.35
Total		17,116.01

74) To Agree the Purchase of an Outbuilding for the Museum from Growing Fenland Funds

The Financial Officer advised members that the Museum needed more space to store its agricultural artefacts. It was proposed that a building next to the existing outdoor store would be a perfect solution to the problem.

The museum had sought three quotations for a steel building with doors on the front. The best value quotation came in at £16,043 + vat, this included 40mm insulation, delivery and erection.

Members were advised that there would be approximately £14,000 left in the removal budget from the Combined Authority grant and members agreed that this could be used towards the cost of the building. The additional costs to complete the project would be electrical works and planning permission consent. Cllr Hay advised that the museum would be able to contribute towards the cost.

The Financial Officer said the volunteers had worked hard and put in many man hours - packing up artefacts and documents, etc. at Church Lane and then erecting racking and unpacking boxes at the new museum. This had resulted in substantial savings on the removal costs.

Members were asked to consider approving the purchase of a new building to display and store the agricultural artefacts which were part of the history of the town. Funds to be taken from the surplus grant of the removal budget and contributions from the museum.

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

75) To Agree Purchase of Fire Fighting Equipment for 2 Park Street

The Clerk reported that quotations for fire extinguishers, signs, etc, had been sought after advice had been given by two companies on the fire equipment needed at 2 Park Street. The initial quotations had been expensive but after consultation with two former fire officers at the museum it had been agreed different fire extinguishers would be preferable and the locations of such equipment had been agreed, negating the need for portable stands. As a result new quotations had been sought and were awaited.

Members **agreed** that the Clerk and Financial Officer, in consultation with the Mayor, should be given authority to decide which company should be awarded the contract and the fire equipment ordered as a matter of urgency as at present the museum had two extinguishers on loan from 14 Church Lane.

76) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk reported that the Museum had moved into 2 Park Street and now had just a few articles to remove from 14 Church Lane. The Financial Officer was organising skips so unwanted items could be taken away. The following day the Clerk was meeting with the architect and the builder to look at snagging issues with the first floor and the community room at 2 Park Street so these could be resolved and that part of the building handed over. Planning permission was still outstanding for the gates.

The Financial Officer had been in contact with the Council's solicitor asking her to chase up the accountants as their offices were just days away from being ready for occupation but they had yet to sign a lease.

In the meantime the architect had drawn up the schedule of works for the new build and conversion works at 14 Church Lane and was seeking quotations from four builders. Two had already looked at the works and another was due to visit on the Thursday after the meeting. The hope was that there would be a minimal delay between works finishing at 2 Park Street and beginning at 14 Church Lane.

77) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 25th July 2023 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to j) (with the exception of e)) as shown on the **appended** list. They also considered e) and four further applications. It was agreed to make the following recommendations to Fenland District Council:

- a) No further comments
- b) Support

- c) Support
- d) Support
- e) Recommend Refusal, not in keeping with the area and will set a precedent.
- f) Object on the grounds it would be in the middle of the countryside on agricultural land and would not be in keeping with the local area.
- g) Object on the grounds that access is not good, no proper footpath, accessibility to local amenities very poor and public transport very limited.
- h) Support
- i) Support if tree officer is happy with works.
- j) Support
- k) Support
- l) Support
- m) Support
- n) Support works but not removal of tree as there is no reason given why tree needs to be felled.

78) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Charrier (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 18th July 2023 (**copy attached**).

L14) Shopping Basket: Cllr Charrier asked for any other ideas for the Section 106 shopping basket. Cllr Murphy mentioned the missing section of footpath along the A141 Fenland Way from the travellers' site to the Tesco's site which was due to be installed as part of the Womb Farm development. He was concerned that it might be forgotten and the Clerk agreed to ask FDC's planning department for an update.

L15) Defibrillator: Former councillor Mrs Julie Smith had confirmed the old phone box in Wood Street was an ideal location for a defibrillator but she said the power supply would need to be restored as the electricity supply was cut off before the box was handed over. She kindly offered to empty the box and re-paint it.

L15) Repairs/maintenance: Cllr Unwin's concerns about weeds on footpaths and roads in the town were discussed further and it was agreed to suspend the meeting to allow Cllr Marks to speak about the problem. Following complaints on the Manea Facebook page, Cllr Marks said he had contacted County Highways Manager, Mr Steve Nicholson, about all weeds along the kerbs and pavements asking when they would be sprayed. He was informed the County Council would not be carrying out any programmed chemical weed killing treatment except where it was part of a process, such as preparation for footway slurry works or carriageway re-surfacing. Mr Nicholson said only invasive weeds would be attended to and weed killer would be applied to highways locations on an identified risk based approach. Cllr Marks said it was his intention to ask why the works were not being carried out and where the money budgeted for such works had gone. He agreed to copy Cllr Hay into his emails so she could back him up and put a motion to the full county council.

Cllr Murphy said a Fenland officer had contacted County on several occasions but they were definitely not going to spray weeds. Cllr Murphy said FDC had carried out a little spraying but did not have the funds to carry out substantial works and the probation service had also helped but it was down to individuals to do the weeding outside their homes and businesses. Cllr Carney said the argument was that weed killer was harmful to the environment but it was pointed out there were safer alternatives to weed killing. Cllr Marks said he would be pointing out that all weeds were evasive.

79) Shuttle Bus Questionnaire

Members had received a copy of a draft questionnaire Cllr Carney had drawn up to ask residents their views on developing a shuttle bus between Chatteris and Manea station. Cllr Carney had sent the questionnaire to Chatteris Town Council and Manea Parish Council for comments and had also run it by the Chairman of FACT Mr Gary Christie. He said his aim was to draw up a Survey Monkey type questionnaire which could be shared on social media platforms.

The questionnaire asked:

- 1) Would you use a direct shuttle bus service to Manea railway station.
- 2) Which days of the week you would use it?
- 3) Why wouldn't you use the service
- 4) Which destinations would you travel to from Manea station?
- 5) As a regular train user which time of day would you normally depart from Manea?

At the meeting Cllr Carney asked for any suggestions on how the questionnaire could be improved and said in addition to putting the survey out on social media he would also print out some hard copies so these could be distributed and returned either to the councils or to himself.

The Mayor was keen to see a comment box after question one so people could explain why they would use the service. Cllr Murphy was concerned that residents might say they would use it and then fail to do so.

80) To Agree Levy for Poly Tunnels and Greenhouses at Allotments

Councillors had received the following report from the Clerk:

Introduction

Excess water usage at the Honeysome Road allotments continues to be a problem despite the relatively wet, cool summer.

It is a topic which has been discussed at length at Allotment Association meetings and has resulted in Association members posting a notice on their noticeboard asking allotment holders to:

Minimise water use;

Not to water between the hours of 11am and 4pm;

To use watering cans not hoses and to water plants not the ground;
Not to hog the taps.

Unfortunately, some allotment holders have been ignoring the notice and have continued to attach a hose pipe for long periods and, therefore, use excessive amounts of water.

One of the problems is that the number of greenhouses and particularly poly tunnels has increased significantly over recent years and these are not watered naturally when rain falls, many are watered via hose pipes.

The Clerk has looked in to various ideas for trying to reduce hosepipe use and has considered a complete ban (which may come in if water bills continue to rise) and the replacement of taps with dipping tanks (there are concerns that these would be damaged or abused by allotment holders).

One solution the Clerk is suggesting is a tax on poly tunnels and greenhouses. This could either come in the form of a tax per poly tunnel (difficult as they come in different sizes and someone could have two or three small tunnels while another has one large one) or per allotment (the favoured option).

Suggestions

A levy of £5 to £10 per allotment is introduced for those who have a greenhouse or a poly tunnel on their allotment.

Allotment rents have to be fixed one year in advance and it would, therefore, probably be wise to give a year's warning of the charge and to include notification that the levy will be introduced in October 2024 in this year's allotments rent letter – which goes out at the end of September.'

Members agreed those with poly tunnels should be encouraged to harvest water from their tunnels and everyone should be encouraged to try and collect as much water as possible. The Clerk said she had looked into the idea of cattle troughs, with a ballcock system, so watering cans could be filled and it was agreed this might work.

It was agreed that at present allotment holders should be encouraged to collect and store water and warned that if water usage did not decrease a levy for poly tunnels and greenhouses would have to come in.

81) Summer Fun Report

The Clerk said the first Summer Fun show, organised and financed by the Town Council, had gone ahead and had been very popular with between 80 and 100 people (children and accompanying adults) enjoying the Booster Cushion Theatre production.

Cllr Charrier had attended the performance with her two boys and said it was "absolutely fantastic" with all the children engaged with the show. She confirmed it was really busy and there was standing room only at the back of the room.

The Clerk said she had been concerned as all publicity (apart from posters) had been through social media or through the schools' e-newsletters rather than the usual leaflets but thanks to

Cllrs Ashley, Carney and Charrier helping to promote the shows the numbers attending had been as high, or higher, than usual. Unfortunately, due to an administrative error there would only be three shows in 2023, instead of the usual four. The remaining two shows would be on the 11th and 18th August.

82) Traffic Issues

Crossings: The Mayor had chased the two new promised crossings in the town (in Bridge Street and East Park Street) and had received feedback from County Highways that both crossings were being developed as a package and this was in progress. The programme was currently at the preliminary design stage and at the next stage of detailed design there would be local engagement and a review of the plans.

Park Street: The Mayor said she had been contacted by a resident of Huntingdon Road concerned about two RTAs in Park Street and asking about speed cameras in the area and a 25mph speed limit. Cllr Hay pointed out the first “accident” had in fact been a sudden death and said she would reply stating it was impossible to speed in Park Street due to the parked cars and on-coming traffic and there was no 25mph speed limit on Britain’s roads. She said she would also mention that the Town Council had been opposed to a blanket 20mph speed limit throughout the town.

Cllr Selman mentioned a speeding car in Eastwood and was advised to pass the number plate on to the police and report the motorist to his employers.

Doddington Road: Cllr Ashley had spoken to Cllr Gowler who had been approached by residents in Doddington Road and Curf and Willey Terraces about motorists failing to abide by the new 30mph speed limit in the area. Coming into town some motorists leaving the 40mph limit and entering the 30 failed to slow down and overtook vehicles doing 30. Cllr Ashley’s suggested the MVAS should return to that location to remind motorists and members agreed. There were also concerns that those leaving the Slade End roundabout and entering Doddington Road were failing to do 30mph as there were no speed signs. Cllr Marks said there were 30mph signs on two approaches to the roundabout but not on the approach from town. There had been a similar problem in Manea and he had been advised that if cars were coming from a 30mph zone there was no need for a sign. It was agreed the Clerk should approach Highways and ask for a sign or a reminder that motorists were entering a new 30mph speed limit.

RTPI: The Highways officer had accepted the Town Council’s suggestion there was no need for Real Time Passenger Information signs in Chatteris but had ignored the Council’s request for an alternative footpath.

Temporary Orders: The Clerk reminded members that works would begin on resurfacing the A141 Fenland Way on the 7th August and were expected to take a month. The road would be closed from 8pm each evening until 6am the next day. Members pointed out that Tesco’s opened until 11pm and asked how the store would be accessed. Notification had also been received that grip cutting works to assist water draining from the carriageway would be carried out in Doddington Road.

Invitation: An invitation to attend a traffic management course on 5th September had been received.

Events: Notification had been received of road works and events which would affect roads in Chatteris, the TMC incident report for July and the highways events diary for August.

83) Correspondence

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

84) Reports

Cllr Ashley said the green at Queensway was looking like a hay field as it had not been cut in 2023. Cllr Joyce had received complaints and he had taken photographs of the mess which Cllr Ashley had passed on to the Street Scene officer. The Clerk had also passed the photos to an officer at Clarion Housing after it was established that Clarion, not FDC, were responsible for cutting the field.

Clarion had responded to the Street Scene officer stating it was a trial to try and encourage wildlife in the area by making it a meadow. Clarion claimed residents had been in favour of the idea and they had received no complaints. Members agreed this was not acceptable as the seeds from weeds would be affecting dogs walked on the land and it was impossible to use the green area.

The Mayor said she would send the photographs to a director at Clarion asking how the area had been allowed to get in such a state.

85) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.