

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 4th February 2025

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4th February 2025 at The Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Gowler, V Joyce, P Murphy, S Selman and S Unwin.

The meeting began with a minute's silence in memory of former Mayor and Councillor Bill Haggata, whose funeral had taken place that day.

185) Apologies for Absence

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

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

Cllr Benney declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllr Hay declared an interest in the Museum and the King Edward Centre. Cllr Murphy declared an interest in planning, the KEC and the Museum; Cllr Gowler the KEC; Cllr Unwin in In Bloom and Festival; Cllr Selman in Festival and the Community Car Scheme and Cllr Ashley in the KEC, Museum and Festival.

187) Open Forum

There was one member of the public and Cllr C Marks present. Both declined an invitation to speak in Open Forum.

188) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7th January 2025 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

189) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 167) Hotel Award: Cllr Unwin confirmed the owner of the hotel had now received his Gold In Bloom certificate.

Min 170) Council Vacancy: The Clerk said two people had been nominated to stand for election as a town councillor on the Slade Lode South Ward. They were Mr Jamie Eames and Ms Joanne Fuller-Gray. The election would take place on the 27th February.

190) Police Matters

Members had before them a report summarising Neighbourhood Alerts received in the past month. Many of the reports referred to an incident involving hare coursing, violent disorder, criminal damage and dangerous driving in several towns and villages (including Chatteris but particularly Manea) on the 25th January. The incident had resulted in thousands of pounds worth of damage to crops and had endangered lives. There had so far been 5 arrests in connection with the incident.

There had been no further information received from local police but members had been copied in to an email from Cambridgeshire Constabulary seeking information about the impact of a lack of safe driving by those using heavy farm machinery on the local community. Cllr Carney pointed out that the email mentioned drug and drink driving but not those using mobile phones while driving along major roads.

Cllr Gowler said Chatteris stood in solidarity with Manea in highlighting the events of the 25th January and tackling the police over a lack of action. He said Cllr Marks did an incredible job to organise a public meeting just two days later which was attended by the Chief Constable, the Police and Crime Commissioner and MP Steve Barclay as well as 300 concerned people (including Chatteris councillors). It was particularly incredible as the meeting was held at 4pm on a Monday.

Cllr Gowler said he believed the Chief Constable got the message and hopefully going forward there would be a greater police presence and a crime unit on standby for such events. He said he believed the police realised they had failed the local community. Cllr Unwin had given a heartfelt speech as she had been confronted by the perpetrators in the garage where she worked. Cllr Unwin admitted the incident had shaken her so badly that she would be retiring early. Cllr Carney said listening to those who spoke at the meeting, he was astounded by people's experiences.

191) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC, Street Scene and CCTV reports.

Cllr Hay said she had received a complaint about someone using Furrowfields Car Park to sell vehicles. She had passed the complaint to the portfolio holder at FDC.

Cllr Murphy said if the vehicles were taxed and insured, which they were, they had every right to be parked in the car park. He pointed out it would be very difficult to actually catch someone selling a car from the site. Cllr Selman suggested the business should be registered to a property.

192) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 28th January 2025 showing expenditure of £482,083.35 and income of £489,200.11

(this included a full year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

The Financial Officer advised Members that the Village Scene newsletter subscription was due for renewal. The cost was £660 per annum. Members were reminded that the Clerk put an article in every month, giving diary dates and details of weekly and monthly clubs. The FO pointed out there was a Civic Newsletter annual budget of £700 to cover the cost.

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

193) Payment of Accounts

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

Payroll	February Payroll	6,117.90
Zen Internet	Annual renewal domain name & monthly website Feb-March	32.98
Barclays	Bank Charges Dec-Jan	8.50
Bgas	Final Electricity bill, 14B Church Lane	46.35
S Gibb	Jan Office Cleaning	28.00
F/O	Reim 2 x Office Diaries & Jigsaws	21.00
Clerk	Reim SumUp Card reader	82.80
KECCA	Grant for Birch & Bees room hire at the KEC	460.00
SSE Energy	Final Electricity bill, 2 Park Street ground floor	518.41
Wave	LHS Allotments water bill	228.43
Wave	RHS Allotments water bill	191.57
David J Richards	Town Guides printing	3,977.19
Christian Jennings t/a The Comic Book Entertainer	Deposit for Summer Festival booking	127.50
Cambs Acre	Membership renewal	65.00

Barclays	Bank Charges Nov-Dec	2647 4 of 9 8.50
Zen Internet	Website Dec-Jan	13.79
T Payne & Co	Management Fees for 14A Jan & February	144.00
T Payne & Co	Management Fees for 14B Jan & February	144.00
T Payne & Co	Letting fee & Management fee for 14B Nov	367.20
Bgas	Electricity bills for Sept-Jan, Church Lane offices	241.18
Bgas	First Electricity bill, 2 Park Street ground floor	283.79
Bgas	Gas bills Church Lane offices Oct-Jan	1,253.44
Chatteris Town Football Club	Grant Vol Org for pitch drainage	500.00
Wave	2 Park Street Water bill	72.54
The Christmas Decorators	Contractors install & takedown Xmas Lights	1,992.00
F/O Cash	Reim Petty Cash	78.77
Clerk	Reim Festival Quiz prizes & Civic photo frames	58.94
R J Warren	Gardening Services	756.84
Onecom	Phone Bill	127.14
Mayday	Photocopier printing	52.96
Warren Access	Platform hire Xmas Lights	330.00
Warren Access	Lorry Platform hire Xmas Lights	660.00
Wave	Church Lane Council Offices water bill	33.87
Total		19,024.59

194) To Consider Memorial for Former Mayor Bill Haggata

The Clerk suggested the Pocket Park would be the ideal location for a memorial to former councillor Haggata as he had been actively involved in developing the park during his time as Mayor. He had been particularly keen to see the grass bund built as high as possible so children had the opportunity to stand on the top and then run down a hill. It had led to the bund being called Bill's Hill. It was agreed a plaque to that effect should go on the top of the bund and Cllr Selman suggested installing a slide for children down the bund. The Clerk said she would discuss the idea with FLAPP, who had also suggested a memorial tree, and they would make the decision. This was agreed.

195) Planning

Cllrs Benney and Marks left the room while the planning applications were discussed. The Mayor reminded members that no decisions could be made on planning applications at the planning meeting held on the 28th January as the meeting was not quorate. She stressed the importance of attending meetings, especially as it was necessary to hold working group meetings to meet the 3-week time limit for commenting on applications.

Cllr Joyce pointed out FDC often went against recommendations put forward by the Town Council. The Mayor stressed the importance of putting in recommendations and backing those recommendations with strong planning reasons as it was more likely the Council's voice would be listened to. Cllr Unwin pointed out the Council's concerns were often on highways grounds and the safety of local people and said the council should represent the local community. The Mayor said it was also important to let residents know that the Town Council was a consultee, it did not make the decisions.

Members considered the five applications before them (**as shown on the appended list**) and it was agreed to return the applications to FDC marked as follows:

- a) Support but don't agree with planting scheme. Trees already removed from site should be replaced with native trees not shrubs and non-native trees.
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support
- e) Support

The Clerk reported that the outline application for a self-build dwelling on garden land at Honeybank, Second Drove, Swingbrow, would be considered by FDC's planning committee the following day. The recommendation was to refuse. The Town Council had supported the application.

The Clerk had forwarded a complaint from a councillor to enforcement at FDC. The councillor had complained that wooden windows and a door at the lodge at Meeks Cemetery had been replaced by double glazed, plastic units. FDC had confirmed the lodge was Grade II listed and said the case had been referred to the conservation officer.

The Council had been invited to comment on plans to install a cabinet for a fibre network build on London Road near the junction with Wood Street. Members had no objections to the proposal.

The Clerk said the Council had been invited to take part in a consultation on the proposed 2025 revision of the Local Validation List for planning applications for the County Council's own developments and for waste developments.

196) Growing Fenland Project & Opening Event Updates

The Clerk said any issues which arose with the flats at 14 Church Lane and the offices at 2 Park Street were quickly dealt with by officers. The good news was that the tenant of 14a had signed up to stay on for another year.

The Mayor said there had been a good response to invitations to attend her cheese and wine evening to mark the re-opening of the council chambers and the opening of the community rooms. The Lord Lieutenant, representatives of the Combined Authority and the Chairman of FDC had all agreed to attend. The only thing she did not know was how many town councillors would be attending and councillors were asked to confirm if they would be there and if they were bringing a plus one.

The Mayor said the council's officers and Cllr Unwin would be doing most of the work to prepare for the event.

197) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Ashley presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on the 14th January 2025 (**copy attached**).

L45) Defibrillator: Cllr Selman said the Community Defibrillators for Chatteris co-ordinator knew that as soon as she had inspected and security marked the Council's newly purchased defibrillator it could be installed in the telephone kiosk. Cllr Joyce said he would mend the door of the kiosk.

L45) Mural: Unfortunately the artist had yet to begin work on the mural as he had discovered he had designed the mural for a different shaped bus shelter and needed to amend his design. The Clerk was awaiting the amended mural and would then seek agreement for the new design.

L45) George Clare Surgery: Cllr Unwin said she had been unable to attend the patients participation group meeting due to ill health but equally she had not received an agenda or information about the meeting. It was agreed the Clerk should write to the surgery expressing disappointment that councillors were not informed about the meeting and asking in future for the date of the meeting and an agenda to be forwarded to the Clerk.

L47) Consultation: It was agreed that the Council should respond to the Consultation on Strengthening The Standards and Conduct Framework for Local Authorities as agreed by the Leisure working group and the Clerk should complete the online questionnaire accordingly.

Members again welcomed the plans to introduce powers of suspension and disqualification to back up the Code of Conduct.

The Mayor said before being elected as a councillor she had been an independent member of the Standards Panel and it was laughable what actions could be taken if there was a serious breach of the Code of Conduct, it was basically just a slap of the wrist. She said the proposed sanctions could not come quick enough.

Cllr Gowler said the conduct of a councillor in the past had been totally unacceptable and he hoped the proposals would stop it happening again. Cllr Benney said on the other side it was so easy for people to make complaints about councillors and he hoped the proposals would also protect councillors who were the subject of complaints. What was needed was an efficient and fair process. Cllr Selman asked about training and was told that it was not compulsory for councillors to undertake training but it was good practice.

L49) Lampposts: As requested the Clerk had enquired if the heritage lampposts were under threat due to the County Council's latest street lights scheme. She was assured by the Strategic Projects Manager that the LED lantern project was to replace lanterns on the County's functioning street lighting columns with new energy efficient LED lanterns. The project did not include the changing of heritage style lanterns. Members had received a copy of the paperwork justifying the replacement of light bulbs with more energy efficient bulbs. Cllr Joyce said they had started replacing the bulbs in the streets around his home and they were terrible, they gave out so little light. Cllr Marks, who had drawn the Council's attention to the project at the last meeting, said he would forward a reply he had received in response to a letter criticising the project. He said the aim was to replace as many lights as possible in the county and the County Council claimed said there should be little difference in light output but the new bulbs would save money and the environment. Unfortunately there was no set limit on how bright lights had to be and there was a definite reduction in light output.

198) Traffic Issues

LHI: The Clerk confirmed she had submitted the LHI application on time.

Disabled Parking Bays: Members were advised that following the concerns they raised about the proposed disabled parking bay in Bridge Street, the County Council had acknowledged that due to the recently installed zebra crossing and on safety grounds (due to hatched road markings) it would not be possible to install a bay in that location.

Two further applications for bays had been received. Members had no objections to the proposed bay outside 13 South Park Street but were opposed to a bay outside 105 New Road. They pointed out it was on the junction of New Road and St Pauls Drive and questioned if it was legal to park so close to a junction, especially as it would restrict visibility for cars leaving St Paul's Drive and would exacerbate an existing problem. It was also suggested that the applicant could neither drive or owned a car.

Pathway: The Council had received an email from a resident asking if a footpath could be provided from the London Road junction with Stocking Drove to Seasons Garden Centre. The email pointed out that people either had to walk on uneven grass near a ditch or on the road with cars dodging around them. Cllr Ashley said the restoration of the footpath had been requested by the Town Council when the planning application for a garden centre was

submitted but it was missed off. It was agreed to write to the County Council and request the restoration of the footpath. Cllr Carney pointed out that the County Council had a policy of encouraging people to cycle or walk everywhere.

20mph: The Council had received notification that the 2025/26 20mph funding programme was open for applications. There was a resounding no to the idea of applying for funding from councillors.

Orders: Notification had been received that the temporary traffic orders covering Wenny Estate and Huntingdon Road had been approved as had the Definitive Map Modification Order covering Public Byway Open to All Traffic No.22 Chatteris (part of West Street and Blackmill Drove). The Order recorded that the width of the Public Byway varied between 17.4 and 6 metres as shown on a map.

Highways Stakeholder: Following the Highways Stakeholder Briefing about the County Council's Capital Maintenance Prioritisation Process, the Clerk had received an email giving responses to questions asked during the session. Of interest was the fact that parishes would not have to submit proposals each year, if they were not successful in the first year of funding, as all schemes identified would remain on the list for consideration. However, there would be an invitation to add schemes to the list once a year. Highways faults should continue to be reported in the usual way via the County Council's website.

Works: A list of sites selected for carriageway surface treatment works in 2025/26 had been received. There were no sites listed in Chatteris.

Roadworks: The latest lists of planned road works in Fenland had been received, along with the February list of events affecting the Highways in the County and the TMC report for December.

199) Correspondence

Members had a list of correspondence received since the last meeting (**copy attached**). The Clerk drew members attention to the copy of a letter received from Anglian Water which thanked the Town Council for its responses to the Fens Reservoir Phase 2 consultation and the Scoping Opinion consultation. Anglian Water's had sent comprehensive responses to points raised by the Council. Although no promises were made Anglian Water had agreed to look at ideas such as underpasses and a roundabout, The Clerk said it was unusual for an organisation to produce such an in-depth analysis of points raised.

200) Reports

Old Auction Yard: Cllr Unwin reported that In Bloom had serious concerns about the trees in the Old Auction Yard, located on the parcel of land fronting on to the High Street. The branches of the trees extended over neighbouring properties and into the road and trees were badly in need of pruning but no-one would take responsibility as they were on Crown Estate land. In Bloom had managed to get one particularly dangerous branch removed but all the trees required attention. Cllr Unwin pointed out In Bloom had a duty of care to its volunteers and was concerned about tidying up the site. Cllr Murphy said the trees just had to be left as

Crown Estates would not do anything. It was agreed the Town Council should write to Crown Estates and ask them to take action.

King Edward Centre: Cllr Benney said the planning application had been submitted for an extension to the King Edward Centre and he had asked an officer at FDC to chase up the validation as there was a tight timescale to deliver the project. Cllr Selman asked about the plan and Cllr Benney explained that FDC had some money left over from the CPCA which had been earmarked for another project in March. But that project had not gone ahead and an oven ready project was required. The idea of extending the KEC had already been explored and it was agreed the money should be allocated to the KEC extension. The Clerk said the project was being costed while the planning process was underway. It was agreed an extension to the KEC would be an asset to Chatteris.

Eastwood: Cllr Benney said residents of Eastwood had been complaining about vans blocking the entrance to the estate while building works were underway. He said there had been three accidents in the area, involving cars pulling out of the leisure centre car park, and he believed double yellow lines might be the answer. He suggested either an LHI bid could be considered for 2026/27 or the residents could pay for the scheme which could cover the whole estate. Cllr Selman said give way signs were needed at the top of the leisure centre spur road.

201) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.