

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 5th December 2023

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Minutes of the Meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 5th December 2023 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

Present: Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), L Ashley, A Gowler, V Joyce, P Murphy, S Selman, M Siggee and S Unwin.

150) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs I Benney, J Carney and A Charrier.

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

Cllr Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllr Unwin declared an interest as a member of In Bloom.

152) Open Forum

Cllr Charlie Marks was present but did not wish to speak. There were no other members of the public present and it was, therefore, agreed to move on to the next item on the agenda.

153) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 7th November 2023 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

154) Matters Arising from the Minutes

All matters arising from the minutes were on the agenda.

155) Police Matters

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

“Local Police

No information has been received from the local police.

Neighbourhood Alert

8/11 & 4/12/23: November and December editions of the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter Our News.

10/11/23: Fenland Neighbourhood Policing Team’s request for help with their Christmas gift appeal.

13/11/23: Notification that two Fenland neighbourhood policing officers were shortlisted at the Safer Cambridgeshire Annual Awards with PC Justin Bielawski picking up two trophies.

20/11/23: As part of Operation Calibre, advice on how to stop yourself becoming a victim of robbery.

22/11/23: Request for members of the public to report suspicious activity around ATM machines in a bid to avoid an increase in ram raids.

24/11/23: Information about the launch of Cambridgeshire's ATM Watch hosted by FDC.

26/11/23: Notification that 24 people have been jailed for robbery in 2023 for a combined total of 145 years in prison.

27/11/23: Notification of launch of Cambridgeshire Constabulary's third podcast series- Cambs Cops: Our Stories.

30/11/23: Advice on how to protect your car from thieves on frosty mornings.

30/11/23: Notification that the Neighbourhood team has reacted to one of the priorities highlighted by residents and has been patrolling schools issuing tickets or words of advice to those parked obstructively.

1/12/23: Notification of launch of month long campaign to crack down on drink and drug driving.

1/12/23: Invitation to complete a survey into cybercrime.

1/12/23: Warning about courier fraud scams after two recent cases in Cambridgeshire which resulted in victims losing a total of £14,000.

2/12/23: Information about launch of a campaign to encourage the public to report non-urgent crime online.

4/12/23: Notification there were eight arrests over the first weekend of the drink drive campaign.”

The Mayor said Sgt Arnold had organised a police liaison meeting for that evening so she was unable to attend. She had reminded Sgt Arnold that the first Tuesday of every month was a Chatteris Town Council meeting.

156) FDC, Street Scene, Section 106 and CCTV Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC and Street Scene updates (**copy attached**).

The other reports had not been received.

Cllr Selman said she had enjoyed her visit to the CCTV monitoring station and had been very impressed, particularly with the quality of the camera images which were much better than some of the grainy images from cameras at other locations. The Mayor said the Town Council paid a substantial amount towards the monitoring and maintenance of cameras but a visit to the station put things into perspective and Cllr Gowler said he did not realise just how much the cameras helped until he visited the station.

It was agreed the Clerk should write to the Monitoring Station Manager and thank him for giving councillors an insight into how the monitoring station operated and how the money paid by the Council was spent.

157) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 28th November 2023 showing expenditure of £364,281.55 and income of £392,945.49 (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.

Cllr Unwin asked about the AWP sinking fund and the Financial Officer and Clerk explained it was money held by the Council which would be requested by Cromwell Community College when the All Weather Pitch needed to be replaced.

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

158) Payment of Accounts

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

		£
CF Corporate	*Additional amount of £48 claimed. Added to this schedule	48.00
A Papworth F/O	Reim Mulled wine float	100.00
Payroll	Payroll December 23	8,455.16
Heathers Hedgehog Hostel	Grants vol organisation towards purchase of equipment	240.00
Chatteris Christmas Lights	Part grant vol organisations	5,000.00
British Gas	Elec bill Oct/Nov	81.52
Rose Fire & Security	Powering down works to Church Lane building, refurb related	273.38
Poppy Appeal	Remembrance wreath	20.00
Zen Internet	Dec-Jan Website	13.79
Barclays	Debit charges	20.50
ICO	Annual Renewal	35.00
Viking	Stationary	136.24
Citizen Advice	Quarter 2, face to face meetings	1,587.25

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Warren Access	18/11 Cherry picker hire, Xmas Lights	456.00
Onecom	Oct/Nov phone bill	93.34
Red Skips 2 U	Skip Hire, Museum	250.00
Clerk	Reim sundries	130.92
Chatteris in Bloom	Calendars for Xmas party prizes	36.00
F/O	Xmas party Reim sundries	258.06
SLCC	Annual renewal	288.00
Ringway	Road closure management, Remembrance Day	1,500.00
F/O	Reim Petty Cash & Xmas Party sundries	128.33
JT Chambers	Valuation 2, Church Lane building contract	38,760.00
R J Warren	Little Acre gardening services	132.19
R J Warren	Open Spaces gardening services	742.04
Warren Access	25/11/23 Cherry picker hire, Xmas Lights	660.00
Total		59,445.72

**CF Corporate- new rate applied from November, listed on November schedule at old rate.
£48 difference see above.*

159) Draft Precept Budget 2024/25

The Financial Officer presented Members with a proposed draft precept budgetary control sheet for their consideration, comments and approval.

The draft budget proposed an increase of £2,500 to the precept, making the precept £172,500.00, an increase of 1.48%. The FO explained the impact this would have on a band D household was an increase of £0.04p per year (0.08%) based on the estimated tax base of 3446.

The annual precept for a Band D household would be estimated at £50.06 - currently £50.02. Members were advised that the proposed budget was made up of reduced budgets and small increases to others along with 3 new proposed budgets as listed below.

The budget also reflected many benefits to the residents of Chatteris and would not have an impact on the household precept, as it was proposed to take balances from the general fund.

(1) Financial Statement

As per SLCC advice, Members were warned they should consider projects which might require funding in the next financial year to ensure sufficient provision was included in the Precept budget.

Under the Local Government financial regulations any new project to be included in the Precept budget normally would require a written report.

(2) New Budgets

The new budgets proposed for the new financial year are listed below: -

- 1) Chatteris Christmas Lights Contractors costs – the Clerk had been advised that the Council might need to instruct a contractor in the future to erect and take down the Christmas Lights. This was due to H&S regulations being imposed by Cambs County Council. The Clerk had looked into the costings of these works by enquiring what other town councils had to pay and these costs were anything from £13,000 - £15,000.

Members were advised that this budget would be kept separately in a holding account and would be added to each year in preparation for when the new regulations were imposed. Members made it very clear they were not happy with the way Cambs County Council were imposing these new regulations, as the Christmas Lights Committee always ensured that electrical checks were carried out to comply with the H&S regulations. Cllrs Hay advised that she would speak to County regarding this.

- 2) Updating the Town Guide.
- 3) The purchase and installation of a new defibrillator in the old red phone box.

The Financial Officer asked Members if they were aware of any other projects which should be taken into consideration.

Cllr Unwin proposed a new budget for a mural, celebrating boxer Jordan Gill's achievements. She advised that it would be good to give him recognition of his success and show gratitude for all he had achieved and done for the town. Cllr Unwin said she would speak to Jordan to seek his permission for a mural to be painted, and if he agreed she would then look into the costings before January's meeting. An initial budget of £1,000 was proposed.

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

160) To Consider Purchase of Allotment Land at Queensway

Members had received the following report from the Clerk:

Background

In the spring of 2021 Chatteris Town Council took responsibility for six allotment plots at Queensway from Clarion Housing having signed a Licence to Occupy agreement. The land was given an open market value of £5,150 by a surveyor in June 2021.

At the August 2021 meeting of Chatteris Town Council it was resolved that the Town Council offer Clarion Housing £3,000 for the land.

Currently

The Council has now been approached by a solicitor working on behalf of Clarion Housing who has sent through documentation for the transfer and purchase of the two parcels of land (albeit inaccurately detailed in the Report on Title) which are shown on the attached plan.

Initially there was no purchase price included in the documentation and when the Clerk queried the price, she was originally told it was believed to be £3,000. Since then, she has received communication stating the cost is £1,500 per allotment. Again, the Clerk has queried this as that would make the total cost £9,000 but she suspects the price is £1,500 for each of the two parcels of land, making a total cost of £3,000.

There are a number of covenants covering the land, particularly with regards to rights of way, and the Clerk would recommend that the Council instruct solicitors to go through the paperwork before any sale price is agreed. This will, however, substantially add to costs.

Decision

Does the Council wish to instruct solicitors to look into the purchase of the two parcels of land at Queensway with a view to acquiring the land for the Town Council?

Please note that the Council is not bound by the decision of the previous Council as that decision was taken over six months ago.

The Clerk was asked about income from the land and said it currently brought in £156 a year in allotment rents. Members were astounded by the lackadaisical attitude of the solicitor and agreed there would be significant costs if they were to instruct solicitors. They agreed that it was the Council's duty to provide services and to keep the council tax down.

Members **unanimously agreed** that the Clerk should inform Clarion's solicitors that Chatteris Town Council was no longer interested in purchasing the land but was happy to continue to administer the land under licence and would take charge of the land if it was gifted by Clarion.

161) CCTV Service Level Agreement

Members were advised that the current Service Level Agreement (SLA) the Town Council had with Fenland District Council - for the provision and maintenance of the CCTV cameras in the Town - was due for renewal on the 31st March 2024.

The current SLA with FDC, agreed by the Town Council on the 1st December 2020 (Minute161), was an annual contribution of £21,270, to include the 5 town centre cameras and the additional camera located at Wenny Rec in Chatteris, for the three-year period to 31st March 2024.

The Financial Officer reminded Members that funding was essential and the CCTV system needed sustainable financial resources to exist and move forward. In this respect FDC proposed that the Town Council would continue their support of the CCTV system by funding the town centre cameras and the Wenny Rec camera under a new SLA from April 2024 to March 2027 at an annual figure of £21,220 which would remain fixed with no increase during the length of the agreement.

This was £50 per annum cheaper than the present SLA.

Members were advised that the principle of the original scheme was that the overall system was a partnership and that the town centre cameras were locally funded, this proposal would be in keeping with this principle.

Cllrs Ashley, Hay, Gowler and Selman and the Clerk, had recently visited the operations room and been really impressed with how the CCTV operations team worked. To this end members fully supported the renewal of the CCTV SLA contract for another 3 years.

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

162) Planning

Cllr Gowler (Vice Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 28th November 2023 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to c), e) and g) as shown on the **appended** list. The discussed applications d) and f) and one further application h) and agreed to return the applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support, the area has been an eye sore for many years
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support in principle development of the site but members are concerned about the density and do not agree to 70 dwellings. They are concerned about the impact on surrounding roads, in particular West Street and the junction of West Street and Huntingdon Road, and the greater loss of green space and biodiversity. If the development does go ahead request that screening trees are planted behind all the

existing bungalows in that part of West Street and Chatteris residents get first refusal on the new homes, especially the rental properties.

- e) Support
- f) Support (Cllrs Joyce and Siggee declared an interest)
- g) Support
- h) Recommend Refusal, over development and not in keeping with the local area.

163) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk and the Financial Officer updated members on progress to works to 14 Church Lane. Unfortunately, the architect had decided it would not be safe to build on to the existing flat roof, as it was concrete strips rather than the expected solid concrete pad, and had stated it should be removed and replaced with joists and floorboards. This would result in additional costs and an extension to the project time. The work to remove the roof was now underway but was a difficult and lengthy process. The new storeroom had been emptied by the Clerk and the Financial Officer and it had been difficult to find dry and secure places to store all the paperwork and items which had been moved to the storeroom when works began. The good news was that the flat conversion was progressing well.

164) Manea Fire Station Closure Proposal

The Clerk had received a letter from the Clerk to Manea Parish Council regarding Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Fire Authority's plans to close three fire stations in the County – Manea, Sutton and Kimbolton. Fire Officer Reece Fenn had warned Manea Parish Council that the proposed closure of the Manea station would have severe implications for the operation of Chatteris Fire Station. Not only would Chatteris have to provide cover for Manea, it would also have to cover Sutton, Ely and March in the event of a major incident, which would leave both Chatteris and Manea without emergency cover.

In a large rural area with poor roads and communications this would be an unacceptable level of service. Manea Parish Council called on Chatteris Town Council to write to the Fire Authority and MP Mr Steve Barclay objecting to the proposals.

The Mayor suspended Standing Orders to allow Cllr Marks to speak on the issue. He said he had already spoken to Mr Barclay who was speaking to the Minister for the Fire Service. Cllr Marks said there had been claims that closure of the three stations would only put an extra four minutes on a call out in the count but he pointed out if Chatteris fire crew were elsewhere Manea would not be covered. In addition, Chatteris and Manea fire stations supported Ramsey with a water carrier.

Cllr Marks said there would be a number of meetings on the issue and he was happy to invite along a representative of Chatteris Town Council. The changes were due to come into effect in July 2024 and there was already an embargo on training. Cllr Murphy, a former retained fire fighter, said Manea station had been saved 30 years ago. He pointed out Chatteris was back up for nearly every town in the area due to its central location and the crew were called out so many times it was nearly a full time job. Cllr Gowler said if Manea was closed there was the potential for a huge area not to be covered. Cllr Marks added that Chatteris and Manea were growth areas

and the retained firemen made sure nights and weekend call outs were always covered. Cllr Gowler said he and Cllr Carney would be supporting Manea in the fight to save the fire station.

It was **agreed** that Chatteris Town Council would write objecting to the proposals to close Manea fire station.

165) Leisure & General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

Cllr Ashley (Deputy Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 21st November 2023 (**copy attached**).

L35) FACT Bus: Members had a copy of a draft letter to the manager of Barber's Gardens. The Clerk admitted she was not happy with the draft, especially the suggestion the service could be cut or operate on a different day. Cllr Ashley said the drivers had now suggested moving the service to pick up at 2pm from Barbers Gardens on a Friday and return from Tesco's at 3pm. This would allow the Chatteris Runner service to continue running without disruption. It was agreed this should be suggested to the home along with the request for the manager to observe the behaviour of the residents on the bus. Cllr Ashley said she and the Clerk would be looking at the Runner timetable with a view to altering pick up points and would put the suggestions to FACT.

L36) Old Telephone Kiosk: The Clerk had obtained a second quote for a defibrillator which did not need power. The company had stated they had installed 350 such devices and they worked well. It was cheaper than re-installing electricity and significantly cheaper than solar power which did not work well. The matter would be discussed again by the Leisure Working Group.

L38) Letter re: Arts Council Funding: As requested the Clerk had written a lengthy letter to Cllr Sennitt Clough outlining all the ways MarketPlace had worked with and helped Chatteris Midsummer Festival. Cllr Sennitt Clough had replied thanking her for such a detailed response and claiming she had not been able to contact the Clerk for inclusion in the original letter as the Clerk had been on holiday.

166) To Agree New Equality and Diversity Policy

The Clerk said the Council's existing Equal Opportunities Policy was out of date so she asked members to approve a new Equality and Diversity Policy based on a template from NALC (the National Association of Local Councils). This was **agreed**.

167) LHI Scheme Application

The Clerk had attended training on applying for LHI funding and warned members that the suggested scheme for double yellow lines at the junction of Wood Street and Eastwood was very unlikely to be successful as there was no proof of local support and no accident record in the area.

The Mayor, who served on the County Council panel determining applications, agreed and had a copy of the criteria for marking such schemes. She pointed out that there were always applications which were unsuccessful as applications well exceeded the funding available and it was important to only submit an application if there was a real need.

Members then discussed the crossing from the end of Clare Street over the bypass (Fenland Way) to the footpath outside Stainless Metalcraft. Many pedestrians and cyclists crossed the bypass at this point and it was not safe as there was no official zebra crossing, just a dropped kerb. It was agreed a zebra crossing was not feasible but members were in favour of applying for signs to warn motorists that people were crossing at that point. The Clerk said the scheme was more likely to find favour as there had been a fatal accident in the area.

168) Traffic Issues

Re-painting: A resident of Station Street had requested the double yellow lines near the Working Men's Club be re-painted as motorists were continually double-parking and parking on the footpath. He also requested renewal of the parking notices stating it was a 2 hour waiting limit. Cllr Gowler also asked the Clerk to make another request for the markings at the junction of Station Street and Burnsfield Street to be renewed as cars were parking on no parking areas.

Bus Stops: Notification had been received that eight bus stops in Chatteris were to be remarketed to denote the zones for the bus to stop. This did not include East Park Street.

Road Closures: Notification had been received on the 1st December that part of New Road would be closed from the 30th November. Councillors were concerned that residents had not been informed and delivery vehicles were driving on the pavement to get round the closure. The Mayor said it was an emergency closure for gas main repairs. Notification had also been received that Langwood Hill Drove would be closed for four days from the 18th December during the hours of 9.30am to 3.30pm to allow for carriageway patching ahead of surface treatment works in 2024. Notice had also been received of a temporary closure of part of Stocking Drove in November for emergency water main repair works.

Road sweeper: Cllr Siggee was concerned that, following a visit from the road sweeper, paths had been left with a slippery surface as leaves were not removed.

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

169) Correspondence

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

Cllr Marks addressed the Council to inform members that an officer was looking to take enforcement action against caravans which had been installed on plots of land which had been sold off at the end of New Road (which was located in Manea parish).

170) Reports

Members had a copy of Cllr Selman's report of the first meeting of the Fens Reservoir Community Liaison Group held on the 7th November.

171) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.