

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 6th February 2024

2518

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Minutes of the meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 6th February 2024 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

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

196) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs I Benney and A Charrier. Cllr C Marks also sent apologies.

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

Cllr Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications and as a trustee of the museum. Cllr Unwin declared an interest as a member of In Bloom and the Midsummer Festival committee, Cllr Selman as a driver for the Community Car scheme and Chairman of the Festival committee, Cllr Hay as a trustee of the museum and Cllr Ashley as a trustee of the museum and member of the Festival committee.

198) Open Forum

There was one member of the public present but he declined the invitation to speak.

199) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 9th January 2024 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

200) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 176) Manea Fire Station: Members were informed that the meeting of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group on the 13th February would be open to all councillors as Assistant Chief Fire Officer Jon Anderson and Area Commander Stuart Smith would be attending the meeting to discuss the proposed closures of Manea and Sutton fire stations. Cllr Gowler said he had been in attendance when fire chiefs had attended the Manea Parish Council meeting and he had voiced his concerns about the proposals from Chatteris' point of view. Cllr Carney gave his apologies for the meeting on the 13th but informed members that the recruitment freeze for retained fire fighters at Manea fire station had been lifted. He said the Manea crew were trained to run a water tanker so were particularly useful in the summer months. Members had received copies of letters, giving the reasons for the proposed closures, sent out by Mr Anderson and Chief Fire Officer Chris Strickland.

Min 180) Allotment Rent: Cllr Murphy asked if the outstanding allotment rent had been collected. The Clerk said she was still trying to locate the allotment holder.

Min 190) Shuttle Bus Survey: Cllr Carney said he had met with the Chairman and Operations Manager of FACT and they were very keen to trial a bus service from Chatteris to Manea Railway Station on Saturdays. The Mayor pointed out that the Mayor of the Combined Authority was proposing to introduce a bus from Wisbech to Chatteris taking in March and Manea as part of his plans to improve bus services (which would raise the levy on the council tax from £12 to £36). Cllr Carney said that bus would take forever while the FACT bus would be direct and would be demand led.

Min 182) Christmas Lights: The Clerk said she had been copied in to continued correspondence between Christmas Lights Committee members and lighting officers at Cambridgeshire County Council. She had also met with two lights committee members to discuss the way forward. There were continued concerns about attaching fittings to the lampposts. As a result, the Clerk had requested a quotation from a company who would work with the Christmas Lights Committee volunteers and help to put up and take down all the lights which were attached to lampposts. The Clerk had also had to inform the In Bloom committee that they could no longer attach their hanging baskets to the lampposts. Cllr Unwin was particularly upset by the decision and the Mayor said she could take her concerns to the full County Council or the portfolio holder and agreed to furnish contact details.

Weed Killing: Cllr Selman had passed on a BBC news report which stated that Cambridgeshire County Council was to restart its chemical weed killing programme after admitting it did not get the policy right. Members welcomed the news and the Mayor paid tribute to Cllr Marks who had created an online petition calling for weed spraying to be reinstated.

Min 180) Financial Officer's Report. The Financial Officer said it would be possible to use some of the repairs budget towards the cost of electrical works to 14 Church Lane and commented that the Combined Authority had been very good at speedily re-imbursing the Town Council's claims.

201) Police Matters

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

Local Police

The Clerk had reported continuing issues with drug taking at the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park, in particular the drug paraphernalia that was left behind. She asked if the area could be monitored and said councillors had mentioned mobile CCTV cameras or drones. Sgt Chris Arnold agreed to ask officers to include the park in their patrols but said the crimes did not reach the threshold for the use of drones or cameras.

The Clerk had received another complaint from a resident of London Road about the speed of cars along London Road (which he claimed were in excess of 70mph) and the popping and banging noises from speeding converted cars. He claimed the cars were being converted in Chatteris. The resident said the police had been contacted many times but had not visited and

he called on the Council to bring the problems to the attention of the police and ask why nothing was being done.

Neighbourhood Alert

9/1/24: Details of a new true crime podcast which gives an insight into the world of a 999 call handler.

11/1/24: New appeal for help in trying to solve the murder of pensioner Una Crown in Wisbech 11 years ago.

15/1/24: Reminder about the Fenland Community Safety Partnership event which was held at the King Edward Centre on the 19th January.

16/1/24: Newsletter from the March neighbourhood policing team which said the team had been focusing on three main areas. The first was illegal parking around primary schools and 19 tickets had been issued in Chatteris; the second was drug use and supply, arrests included one for drug driving and possession of cannabis in London Road, Chatteris, and the issuing of a notice to prevent others from using premises in Quaker Way for drug consumption; the third was speeding, no checks had been carried out in Chatteris.

17/1/24: Fraud warning for anyone approached to buy gold bullion or jewellery on behalf of someone else. All such incidents should be reported to the police.

17/1/24: Latest court news, including information about a repeat Fenland shoplifter being sent to prison.

23/1/24: Notification that Cambridge police have put up posters at bus stops to warn people about the dangers of a new scam which involves QR codes.

26/1/24: Notification that Cambridgeshire Constabulary received 184 Sarah's Law applications in 2023. Sarah's Law is also known as the Child Sex Offender Disclosure Scheme.

5/2/24: February edition of Our News, the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter.`

202) FDC, Street Scene and CCTV Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC and Street Scene updates (**copy attached**). They had also received a comprehensive report from the CCTV monitoring team covering the period of October to December 2023. CCTV Manager Mr Aaron Locks said reports would now be issued quarterly as this would allow for a "deeper dive into the role and services provided by CCTV".

203) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 30th January 2024 showing expenditure of £524,862.39 and income of £490,357.18 (includes full 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.

204) Payment of Accounts

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

(Bacs payment of 118.19 was listed on January 2024 schedule of payments. This payment was not claimed by B Gas as it was carried forward to the Oct-Nov 23 bill, amount £323.42).

Avanti	Road Closure Management Xmas Lights switch on	2,322.00
Whittlesey Town Council	Mayors Charity Event	80.00
CfCorporate	Photocopier lease	265.10
British Gas	Elec Bill Church Lane	22.91
Wave	Water Bill Church Lane	72.70
R J Warren	Gardening Services	742.04
Cllr Hay	Mileage Expenses Civic	18.00
Payroll	February 24 Payroll	5,946.71
British Gas	Gas Bill Church Lane	267.08
Warren Access	13/01/24 Cherry Picker hire Xmas Lights	330.00
S Gibb	Cleaning Xmas Party	56.25
Viking	Stationary	192.06
Barclays	Debit Charges	8.50
Hanson Buildings	Balance of Steel Building Museum	10,100.00
Clerk	Reim Sundries	110.59
RCAB	Face to Face Q3	1,587.25

J T Chambers	Valuation 3 Council Offices	2522 5 of 10 47,880.00
King Edward Centre	Booking for Allotments meeting	21.50
Warren Access	Vat element of insurance claim reimbursement	214.80
Wave	Water Bill Park Street	380.58
F/O	Petty Cash Reim	68.51
Total		70,686.58

205) To Agree Cost of Memorial for Former Councillor Florence Newell

The Clerk said she had been advised to seek quotes for a semi-mature Fastigate Beech tree as this would be a suitable memorial tree and would complement the Oak tree planted at the pocket part in memory of former councillor Rosemary Stimson.

The Clerk had contacted two local companies for quotes and both had quoted for a 20/25cm girth tree, The first quoted £498 plus £45 delivery and the second quoted £395 with free delivery as it was a memorial tree.

Members **agreed** to accept the second quotation (£395) and the Clerk said she would put the tree on order and ask the Council's contractors and FLAPP members to help with the planting. She would then arrange a memorial plaque and Cllr Newell's family would be invited to the unveiling.

206) To Agree Costs of Youth Services for 2024/25

Members were reminded that at the January full council meeting they asked the Financial Officer to have a meeting with the Youth Leaders to discuss how the cost of each session could be reduced, so that the sessions could run weekly within the budget.

The attendance for both sessions had increased and a third youth worker had been appointed to each session, as the leaders needed to comply with health and safety ratio requirements.

The Financial Officer and the Clerk had a meeting with the Youth Leaders to discuss options. Quotations for 2024/25 for the provision of each youth service were then received.

The quotations for 2024/25 were based on a weekly provision for both senior and junior clubs. The Youth Leader advised that the term time for 2024/25 equated to a 40-week service provision. But the Financial Officer advised Members that according to Cromwell's term time dates there were only 38 weeks and not 40 weeks within the financial year.

The Financial Officer advised that even at 38 weeks it would take the junior youth club over its budget, however the Wellbeing Café (senior youth provision) would be under budget.

She proposed to Members that if the youth session was reduced to 2.5 hours instead of 3 hours, this would reduce the annual cost and by using the under spent budget of the Well-Being Cafe it would mean that the overspend on the youth service provision would be just £64. This overspend could be taken from the Summer Fun budget or General Fund.

Members agreed that the Financial Officer should finalise the figures with the Youth Leader to provide a 2.5-hour session for 38 weeks with 2 session workers or 3 when required.

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

206) Council Vacancy – Decision on Whether to Issue Polling Cards

Following the resignation of Cllr Alice Keating, a vacancy had been declared on the Slade Lode South ward of the Town Council. The Clerk had informed Fenland District Council of the vacancy and they had issued the necessary notice. The Clerk had subsequently been informed that an election had been called on the ward and would take place on the 14th March 2024. The Clerk was awaiting the notices calling for nominations which she would be displaying on the 8th February. There had been some interest in the vacancy with two people asking for information on the election.

The elections officer at Fenland District Council had informed the Clerk that the cost of the election was likely to be in the region of at least £5,000 and it would cost about an additional £700 for polling cards.

Although it was a small ward, the Clerk advised members that polling cards were likely to be beneficial to ensure electors were aware of the election. In the past local newspapers had helped to get the message out but as these were now mainly on-line it was down to social media and posters to inform electors and there was no guarantee these would be seen.

Members **agreed** to cover the cost of polling cards, likely to be about £700, for the election.

207) To Agree Works to Allotments

The Clerk advised members that the rental income from the allotments had exceeded expectations in the current financial year, with a total of £4,742 being collected.

An article in the January edition of the Clerks and Councils Direct magazine, by the legal adviser for the National Allotments Association, had reminded the Clerk of a clause under the Allotment Act 1950 which stated that the level of rent ‘must be a “reasonable” amount’.

The article also stated: “It is important that all of the funds from the collected rents are being re-invested into the allotment site and not being used to prop up other areas for the council. Any excessive profits from the rent would likely show that the rent is set unreasonably high.”

The Clerk told members that the total expenditure on the allotments to date in the current financial year was £2,981 with two further water bills to come, which were expected to be at

the most £200. This would bring the total to £3,181 meaning income would exceed expenditure by £1,561.

Mindful of the under expenditure, the Clerk asked Allotments Association members for a list of repairs and maintenance needed in order of priority.

Top of the list was clearing the dyke and culvert between Honeysome Road and the north side allotments. This was followed by repairing the taps, repairing the roadways and repairing the gate on the south side.

Quotations were sought from the Council's contractors for the dyke, roadways and gate repairs and a plumber would be asked to carry out the tap repairs when the water was turned back on in the spring

The costs were:

Clearing dyke	£costs awaited
Repairing taps	£200 (estimated)
Repairing Roads	£700
Repairing Gate	£320

The Clerk recommended that she worked down the list within the budget available. This was **agreed** by a majority of councillors.

208) Planning

Councillors considered planning applications a) to e) (as shown on the **appended** list) and agreed to return the applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Noted
- c) Support
- d) Recommend Refusal, access problems have not been sorted. Access is still inadequate; councillors do not believe there is sufficient land to create the passing places as ditches must be maintained. There is also the question of the impact of extra traffic on Blackmill Drove – an unmade road - surely 9 properties require a made up road? This is piecemeal development and represents over development in the open countryside. There are also potential flooding problems. (Cllrs Hay and Joyce declared an interest and did not take part in the decision making process).
- e) Support

The Clerk also updated members on the latest planning decisions from Fenland District Council. The following had all been granted planning permission:

Extension to 2 Treeway;

Extension to 84 Bridge Street;

Demolition of a building within a conservation area at building north of 109 High Street;

Reserved matters application relating to detailed matters of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale of plot 1 (construction of 3-storey, 7-bed dwelling) at land north west of 24 Willey Terrace.

209) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk reported that the extension to 14 Church Lane was now under construction. She and the Financial Officer had met with the electrician and the building contractor to discuss power points, radiators, etc, and had decided that the most efficient form of heating for the ground floor would be a return to gas central heating. A new boiler would be installed along with new radiators and pipework, which could be hidden in the ceilings. A quotation had been sought from the plumber and the sum was just under £2,000 more than the allowance for heating in the building works quotation. It had, therefore, been agreed and the plumbing works were under way.

The Financial Officer said the additional costs could be met from the contingencies budget. There were concerns that there was to be no air conditioning but officers assured members it would be possible to purchase a mobile unit if needed.

The Financial Officer had drawn up a spreadsheet showing expenditure on both the Museum and 14 Church Lane projects to date and the amount remaining in the budget. She and the Clerk had then met with officers from the Combined Authority to discuss progress, hold ups and likely completion dates.

They had also asked about the possibility of money set aside for another project, which looked in doubt, being used for a different community project (an extension to the King Edward Centre). They were told the enquiry was premature as plans for the other project were still on-going.

However, the Combined Authority officers made the very helpful suggestion that Chatteris Town Council could apply for funding for the extension using the Growing Fenland project as evidence that the Council could deliver projects. The application could state the museum and the conversion of 14 Church Lane to Council Chambers and community rooms were phases one and two of a project to deliver community space in Chatteris and phase three was the extension to the King Edward Centre. The Town Council officers had begun to explore funding opportunities.

The Mayor said at a meeting of the Museum Trustees it had been reported that the museum was having problems with damp and condensation. It was believed this was due to Fenland District Council's conservation officer not permitting the replacement of the damp proof course. CTC officers said they would be pointing the problems out to the architect when they met with him on the 8th and would ask if it was worth seeking the new conservation officer's views of the problem and likely solutions.

210) Leisure and 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 16th January 2024 (**copy attached**).

L42 Old Telephone Kiosk: Members agreed to request the £5,000 held by FDC in Section 106 funds be released and used to purchase two defibrillators, one for the old telephone kiosk in Wood Street and the other to be positioned at the cemetery.

L43) Annual Town Meeting: Cllr Carney kindly offered to help Cllr Ashley with the PowerPoint presentation. It was agreed it should only be a short presentation.

L44) .Gov emails: The Clerk asked members why they had experienced problems setting up their .Gov email addresses. Cllr Selman's computer suggested it was a virus, Cllr Siggee's would not recognise his password and concerns were also expressed about the compatibility with phones. The Clerk said she would pass the concerns on.

211) Centrepoint Replacement – To Consider Advertising in Magazine

The Clerk said many people complained that following the demise of Centrepoint they had no idea what was going on in Chatteris and she agreed with Cllr Selman that a solution would be to take out advertising space in the Chatteris Scene magazine. Members had a list of costs for advertising in the magazine which was delivered free to 7,000 homes and businesses in Chatteris.

The Financial Officer had confirmed there was still money in the budget for Centrepoint which could be directed towards an advertisement.

The Clerk suggested running a trial by taking out a full page advert for a year and inviting people to let either herself or Cllr Ashley, at the King Edward Centre, know about any diary dates or ongoing meeting dates. It was hoped once the advert went out the first time it would encourage people to send in dates which would be added to the list and updated every month. This would also encourage people to keep the Chatteris Scene publication.

Members **agreed** to take out a full page advert in Street Scene for a year to be used as a community diary. The cost would be £660 plus VAT.

212) LHI Update

The Clerk had submitted the application for LHI funding for signs on the A141 Fenland Way warning of pedestrians crossing. She thanked Cllr Carney for quickly organising a Facebook poll asking if residents would support the scheme. A total of 393 had supported the idea with

8 against and this had allowed the application form to be completed showing support for the scheme.

After the submission, a resident had written in requesting a toucan crossing at the Claire Street crossing point and a reduction in the speed limit to 40mph for safety reasons. The resident pointed out there had been one fatal and three near fatal accidents on the road due to the speed and cars travelling in excess of the 60mph speed limit. He said 60mph was now too fast for the road. Members acknowledged the emails but the application had gone in.

213) Traffic Issues

20mph Signs: The Clerk said she had been informed that one of the 20mph, school time, warning signs was not working and the other was intermittently faulty. After contacting the County Council, she was informed that the signs were the responsibility of Chatteris Town Council as they had been installed under an LHI scheme. The Clerk had been given details of a company who could repair the signs and was attempting to get a response to her request for a quotation for the repairs. Cllr Siggee asked if there had been any recent roadworks in the area which could have affected the signs.

Damage: Cllr Unwin reported that the weight restriction sign at the junction of Huntingdon Road and West Park Street had been subjected to graffiti and it was no longer possible to read it. As a result more lorries were going through the centre of the town. The Clerk agreed to report the problem.

Traffic Orders: Notification had been received that there would be micro asphalt works to the carriageway in Fairview Avenue, Fairview Crescent, Fairview Drive and Fairview Gardens sometime between the 1st March 2024 and the 30th September 2024.

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

214) Correspondence

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

Request: Members discussed the request from the museum to be allowed to rent out the museum to a paranormal group. A majority gave the plan the go ahead if the Council's buildings insurance covered any damage.

215) Reports

There were no reports.

216) Items for the Next Agenda

The Mayor gave apologies for the next meeting.

