

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 4th June 2024

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 4th June 2024 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

Present: I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Charrier, A Gowler, P Murphy, K Perrin, S Selman, M Siggee and S Unwin.

24) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Cllrs A Hay (Mayor) and V Joyce had sent apologies for absence.

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

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications. 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 Ashley as a trustee of the museum and member of the Festival committee and Cllr Murphy as a trustee of the museum and the King Edward Centre. Cllr Siggee declared an interest as a trustee of the King Edward Centre.

26) Open Forum

There were two members of the public and Cllr C Marks present. One of the members of the public was filming the meeting.

One resident reminded members that he had attended a Council meeting five years previously and spoke about nominating the Empress swimming pool as an Asset of Community Value. The nomination was agreed but was now being reviewed. The resident said the scheme was introduced in 2011 to help communities save facilities which were of community benefit. Fenland District Council, who considered the nominations, had agreed the nomination met the criteria after the nomination was supported by a petition signed by residents, the Town Council and Mr Steve Barclay MP.

The residents said as a result the charity, which ran the pool, signed a 15 year lease with the owners. He explained that if the owners decided to sell the pool the Save the Empress Pool group would have six weeks to say if they were interested in buying it and six months to raise the money. The owner would, however, be under no obligation to sell to them. The resident said the group had received a letter from the governors of Cromwell Community College pointing out the issues the school would face if the pool was to be sold; such as time and costs to travel to other pools and the impact on students. Glebelands had already faced issues with costs of transport because pupils were currently being transported to other pools as the Empress pool was closed.

The resident acknowledged the pool was not perfect and currently had issues but he pointed out FDC were not about to invest in a new pool for Chatteris so there was a need to save the existing facilities. He also pointed out the building was used as a store by the Christmas Lights group.

The Deputy Mayor said he did not wish to see the pool closed and he also explained the Asset of Community Value process, which included the need for the owner to notify FDC if they planned to sell. He asked if there was a plan on how to raise funds to purchase the pool.

The resident said there was no requirement to have a plan in place but he had recently helped to save a guide centre in another part of the country using the Community Ownership fund.

The Deputy Mayor reminded the resident that he had given him a copy of a survey for the building undertaken in 1999 which showed there were issues with the roof and trusses. The resident said he was happy to share that report with others and he understood the trustees were currently progressing with repairs that were needed for the pool to open again. Cllr Unwin said the chair of the trustees was looking for more volunteers to serve as trustees because he wanted to see the pool open again. She asked to see a copy of the survey.

Cllr Selman asked if the Asset of Community Value would fall by the wayside if the pool remained closed. The resident said if the pool was still closed at the time of the next review, he would not expect it to be listed again.

26) Asset of Community Value Consultation

The Deputy Mayor asked for the item to be moved up the agenda. The Town Council had been asked to provide comments on the request to continue to nominate the pool as an Asset of Community Value.

Members unanimously **agreed to support** the nomination.

(The two members of the public left the meeting).

27) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 7th May 2024 were agreed and signed by the Deputy Mayor after Cllr Selman requested one amendment to Min 7). Cllr Selman said she had not agreed to represent the Council as a trustee of the King Edward Centre. Members were asked to consider volunteering for the role.

28) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 22) Weeds: Cllr Unwin asked for an update on the weed spraying as the footpaths had still not been cleaned and she and other members of In Bloom had had to pull up weeds

before television cameras visited the town. She had also been told by a Highways Officer that there were no plans to spray the weeds. Cllr Marks was asked to comment as he had led the campaign for the restoration of spraying by the County Council. He explained it had been 'No Mow May' so the County Council had only sprayed near junctions for safety reasons or where there was an emergency. Cllr Murphy advised against anyone else spraying in case an animal was injured and Cllr Marks said he had had to warn someone strimming in Manea that he wasn't insured and he must leave it to the official contractors. Cllr Selman mentioned an overgrown, uneven path near Welly Wearers on the A142 and was advised to report it on the County Council website and Cllr Unwin asked if the Street Scene officer could inspect the premises in Victoria Street, formerly occupied by Age UK, as the frontage and rear yard were very untidy and there were odour issues. Cllr Gowler suggested reporting it to the environmental health department at FDC. Cllr Murphy said in the past shopkeepers helped to keep the footpath outside their shops clean and tidy but that no longer happened. Cllr Carney said he had been informed that Clarion was not going to be cutting grass in many areas. Cllr Murphy explained that FDC funded 16 cuts a year and Clarion just 12. There were also complaints about the state of the Salem Court building.

29) Police Matters

Members had received a report based on information received from the police in the past month.

Local Police

Members had received a copy of the May newsletter from the March neighbourhood team.

Neighbourhood Alerts

7/5/24: Appeal for help in identifying two men in connection with a burglary at a flat in Wisbech.

7/5 & 3/6/24: May and June editions of Our News, the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter.

8/15/21/28/5/24: Latest court news.

9/5/24: Notification that there were police patrols of the green areas in March, Doddington and Chatteris on the Bank Holiday weekend.

10/5/24: Warning to WhatsApp group chat members that they could be targeted by criminals.

14/5/24: Information about a drugs raid in Chatteris which led to 3 arrests and £70,000 in cash and firearms ammunition being seized.

16/5/24: Details about free workshops for older drivers being organised by the fire service.

22/5/24: Update on the data breach relating to the Neighbourhood Watch scheme management tools.

24/5/24: Round-up of actions by the night shift response team.

3/6/24: At the beginning of national Volunteers' Week, thanks from the Chief Constable and the Police and Crime Commissioner to those who help the police for no financial reward and the launch of a recruitment campaign for Specials.

30) FDC and Street Scene Updates

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

Cllr Murphy warned fellow councillors about the dangers of putting batteries in general rubbish bins. He said the number of fires in refuse lorries was increasing. There had been a recent incident in a nearly new vehicle which was fortunately spotted in time but all the rubbish had to be taken off the lorry and the fire brigade called before the rubbish could be cleared up again. He advised there were recycling bins for batteries in supermarkets. Cllr Unwin suggested putting the message out on Facebook on a regular basis.

31) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 28th May 2024 showing expenditure of £139,877.74 income of £160,519.09 (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.

32) Internal Auditors Report

Members had before them the completed Internal Auditors report for year ending 2023/24.

The Financial Officer advised Members that the auditor had no issues to report to the Council for this financial year and that all financial matters were dealt with effectively in accordance with the accounts and audit regulations.

Members were advised that the Notice of Public Rights and Publication of Unaudited Annual Governance & Accountability Return should be published during a period of 30 working days to include the first 10 working days of July.

The Financial Officer confirmed that these notices would be announced on the 6th June 2024 and published from 10th June -19th July 2024 inclusive in accordance with the audit regulations 2015.

Members were advised that The Internal Auditor briefly touched on the 2025/26 budget and advised the Financial Officer that the general fund balances should not be used when preparing the budget and Precept as balances needed to be replenished.

33) Consideration and Approval of Annual Governance Statement Part 1 (AGAR 2023/24)

Members were reminded that the Annual Governance Statement set out the assurances, that Members were required to attest to in Section 1 of the AGAR 2023/24, together with qualification of each section to enable the Council to provide the required assurance over the signatures of the Mayor and the Clerk.

This was considered and approved by Members in advance of the Accounting Statements (section 2 of the AGAR) and minuted accordingly.

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

34) Accounting Statements and Annual Return (Part 2 AGAR 2023/24)

1) Introduction

Members were advised that the purpose of the report was to recommend approval of the Final Accounts for 2023/24 and to deal with the content of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return otherwise referred to as the (AGAR) for the year to the 31st March 2024, due to be submitted to the External Auditors (Littlejohn) and published on the Town Council's website by the 1st July 2024.

2) Type of Audit

The Financial Officer advised the audit for 23/24 was a section 4 Intermediate Review. This type of review included additional documents to be completed and checked by the Internal and External Auditor.

Members were reminded that the section 4 intermediate review was required because the total income and total expenditure for 2023/24 exceeded £200,000. This was due to the Growing Fenland Project. The Financial Officer advised that once the Growing Fenland project was completed the income/expenditure figures would then reflect the type of audit required.

3) Annual Governance Statement (See Separately under Agenda Item No 11)

This set out the assurances that Members were required to attest to in Section 1 of the AGAR, together with qualification of each section to enable the Council to provide the required assurance over the signatures of the Mayor and the Clerk.

This was considered and approved (Min 34) in advance of the Accounting Statements.

4) The Accounting Statements (Section 2 of the AGAR 2023/24)

Members were advised that in accordance with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015, the Financial Officer certified and signed the document in advance of the Council meeting and The Mayor signed the document after approval by Council at the said meeting as required (Min35). The Accounting Statement was required to be approved after the approval of the Annual Governance Statement. The minute reference recorded for both reflected this accordingly.

Statement of Accounts

- a) Members had before them the detailed Statement of Accounts.
- b) The Financial Officer asked Members to note The **Reserves & Holding Accounts** (as detailed in the statement of Reserves and funds) showing a combined balance of £207,445.85. Members were reminded that, there was £50,000 earmarked for the Growing Fenland match funding which would be taken from the Leisure

- Facilities Reserve account once the Combined Authority's full grant had been claimed.
- c) The Internal Auditor advised that any holding accounts with nil or small balances should be closed and funds transferred into the general fund.
 - d) Members were advised that the **General Fund** balance decreased by £13,917. The reason for this was that funds were transferred from the general fund instead of increasing the Precept figure by a significant amount.
 - e) The Internal Auditor advised that moving forward, the general fund should not be used to form part of the budget whilst its balances were so low.
 - f) Members had a copy of the year end bank reconciliation included in the statement of accounts.

Internal Auditor's Report

The Internal Auditor's Report was approved (See separately under Agenda item 32).

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

35) Reinvestment of Council Assets

Nationwide Building Society Business 1 Year Fixed Rate Saver Maturity

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Nationwide Building Society (£85,000 at 2.75%) would mature on the 27th June 2024.

Nationwide had advised a new reinvestment interest rate of 4.25% for a 1-year fixed term (estimated interest for the year £3,612.50) and 4.80% for a 6 months fixed term (estimated interest for the 6 months 2,040.00).

The Financial Officer made Members aware when making their decision that there was a possibility that interest rates might fall in the coming year. The short-term fixed account was offering a higher interest rate, this would appear to indicate that there might be a fall in interest rates.

The rates offered were very comparable to other high street financial institutions (rates offered ranged from 1.50%, 2.11%, 3.50% to 3.60%).

Virgin Money offered 5.05% for a 1 year fixed with no withdrawal and no closure terms. TSB offered 5% to business current account holders only.

The Financial Officer recommended that the full £85,000 should be reinvested with Nationwide and advised Members that if the funds were required for the Growing Fenland project, then the investment monies could be drawn down, albeit with a loss of interest.

Members were advised that by rolling over the investment at Nationwide, administration costs and time would be kept to a minimum.

Members asked about other investment accounts (not on the high street) that were offering competitive interest rates. The Financial Officer advised that as the funds being invested were

public money, she needed to be 100% certain that the funds invested would be protected under the FSCS scheme. Also, as a Local Authority the Council was very limited to types of investment that dealt with Local Authority investment. The amount of administration time spent doing additional research and paperwork would outweigh the small amount of interest earned.

The Financial Officer did advise that she would look in to Chase Manhattan as proposed by a Member for future reinvestments.

Members were reminded that the funds with the Nationwide Building Society were protected under the FSCS whilst earning interest.

Members decided that although the Nationwide 1 yr. fixed had a lower interest rate than the 6 months fixed rate, it would make more sense to reinvest in the 1 year fixed and save on the Financial Officer's admin time and costs of having to go through a comparison exercise again in 6 months' time.

It was **RESOLVED** that the £85,000 be reinvested on maturity with the Nationwide Building Society Business 1 year fixed at 4.25%. The report was noted and approved.

36) Payment of Accounts

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

Fenland Sparta ABC	Grant to Voluntary Organisation	1,000.00
Payroll	June Payroll	6,710.13
Viking	Stationary	97.10
Midland Ent & Management Agency	Summer Festival Entertainment	1,422.00
The Gangsters	Summer Festival Entertainment	1,200.00
Morton & Hall	14 Church Lane Refurb Consultants	3,382.80
Onecom	Phone Bill	100.37
Zen Internet	June-website	13.79
Warren Access	Elec Tests/Learning	480.00

		2566
Barclays Bank	Debit charges	8 of 12 8.50
M Saunders	Internal Audit	350.00
SSE Energy	Elec Bill 2 Park Street Museum	749.80
Viking	Stationary	176.16
British Gas	Elec Bill 14 Church Lane	18.91
Ethos	Additional printing	8.50
Wave	2 Park Street Water Bill	85.98
Mousy Brown	Summer Festival Entertainment	600.00
Clerk	Reim Summer Fest sundries, top up office phone, Zoom, wrist support	349.21
J T Chambers Dev	Val 7 Phase 2 Museum & Community Rooms	53,580.00
South Norfolk DC	Building Regs Inspection Church Lane	408.00
Viking	Stationary	186.56
R J Warren	Little Acre grass cutting service	269.66
R J Warren	Open Spaces gardening services	756.84
British Gas	Elec Bill	18.70
Total		71,973.01

37) Allotment Repairs

The Clerk reported that the gate at the south side allotments in Honeysome Road was currently very difficult to move and lock and was in need of repair. There was an urgent need for the work to be carried out as there had recently been a spate of thefts at the allotments. The Clerk had received two quotations from the Council's contractors; the first was to repair the gate and cement its post back in place but the weight of the gate was likely to mean this would only be a temporary measure and there would be problems in the future. The other option was to replace the gate with a second-hand gate which was split in two and could be chained and locked shut in the middle. This would be easier to manoeuvre and should last longer. The cost of repairs to the existing gate would be £300 and the cost of the new gate £500.

Members **agreed** to the purchase and installation of the split gate at a cost of £500.

38) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk updated members on the works to 14 Church Lane. She said building works were now progressing at a pace and the flats were nearing completion so she had already obtained two quotes for flooring and window coverings and would be meeting a third contractor the following day. Councillors asked if they could view the works and the Clerk agreed to arrange a visit.

The Financial Officer said the project appeared to be on track to be delivered within budget despite the additional costs of the roof.

The Deputy Mayor said the projects in Chatteris met the criteria set down by the Combined Authority and the project was being delivered. In fact, as Chatteris was delivering the project it had obtained additional funding which had originally been set aside for other towns. It was also the gift that kept giving as the project would bring in rental income from one office and two flats. He described it as a fantastic project and said Chatteris had excelled. The Financial Officer reminded members that the project would also deliver four community rooms. The new museum was praised and Cllr Ashley said the Mayor and Deputy Mayor of the Combined Authority were very impressed when they visited.

39) Planning

Before leaving the room, Cllr Benney informed members that Persimmon Homes would be installing the footpath along the A141 Fenland Way as agreed under the planning conditions for their development at Womb Farm. There had been difficulties as part of the land needed for the original footpath plan was owned by someone else. As a result, the footpath had had to be re-designed. However, Cllr Benney said he had been assured that as soon as Persimmon Homes received permission for the social housing on the site the footpath would go in.

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 28th May 2024 (**copy attached**). (Cllrs Benney and Marks left the room while the plans were discussed).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to d) (as shown on the **appended list**), agreed to add further wording to d) and considered three further applications. It was agreed to submit the following comments on the planning applications to Fenland District Council:

- a) Support
- b) Noted. Members are most concerned that in the planning obligations there is no mention of the extension of the pathway along the A141 Fenland Way which was agreed as a planning gain. Since this development is well underway the infrastructure for the footpath should have gone in and members are concerned that it will be forgotten.
- 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. Members are also concerned about the drainage arrangements and potential for flooding. If approved request mini roundabout at junction of West Street and Huntingdon Road and Section 106 contribution towards outdoor leisure facilities.
- e) Noted
- f) Recommend Refusal. Loss of biodiversity. No proof that tree is causing any problems, tree is a long way from the house which was piled when it was built. Felling tree could cause even more damage. Tree is covered by a TPO for a reason. Agree to works to manage tree but not to felling. If felled tree must be replaced.
- g) Support

The Clerk informed members that the application for a nursing home/dementia care facility at land west of Dean Cottage, Iretons Way had been withdrawn.

40) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Report & Recommendations

L6) D-Day Commemorations: The Clerk ran through the arrangements for the D-Day commemorations. Cllr Ashley agreed to stand in for the Mayor and Deputy Mayor at the Royal British Legion service to take place at 11am on the 6th June. In the evening proceedings would begin with the church bells being rung from 8pm to 8.30pm, at 8.30pm the Community Choir would be singing a selection of songs including numbers from the 1940s and patriotic songs. At 9pm Cllr Gowler would read out the Town Criers citation and this would be followed by the Royal British Legion leading a minute's silence in memory of the fallen, the dipping of standards and prayers from the Vicar. At 9.15pm Cllr Joyce would

light the beacon and the Clerk and Cllr Unwin would undertake fire-fighting duties if embers fell from the beacon.

L8) Defibrillators: Cllr Selman was concerned that many of the defibrillators in the town were not registered with the emergency services.

L8) Eastwood Building Plot: The Deputy Mayor confirmed there had been problems with cables across the site and there was uncertainty over which cables were still live. These had now been moved and building on the site was underway.

41) Pre-Election Period Guidance for Members

Members had copies of the pre-election guidance for councillors issued by NALC and FDC. The guidelines gave details of restrictions on decision making and publicity during the pre-election period.

42) Midsummer Festival Update

Cllr Selman, Chairman of the Festival committee, said plans were progressing well for Festival weekend on the 22nd and 23rd June and any offers of help over the weekend would be greatly appreciated.

The Clerk gave out copies of the programme for the weekend. Saturday's programme included the walking parade (on the theme of Movies), performances by drummers, Chatteris and Manea Brass Band, dance and theatre groups, Dangerous Steve and DJ David 'Sir Reggae' Freestone. The day would end with the Party in the Park headlined by The Gangsters ska group.

Plans for Sunday included a dog show, the always popular colour fun run, a tug of war competition, water fights and ending with a family disco with a foam canon.

43) Traffic Issues

Updates: The Mayor had forwarded information she had received on the progress of Highways projects. These were the implementation of a 20mph zone at Wenny Road for Cromwell Community College, the implementation of a 20mph zone in Burnsfield Street/Station Street for Kingsfield Primary School, an investigation into a proposed new footpath in Prospect Way, an investigation into options to improve cycling from Chatteris to Doddington and improvements to bus stops (completed). Councillors pointed out that there was already a 20mph zone at school times in Wenny Road and cars in Burnsfield Street were already travelling at less than 20mph as the road was so congested.

Members noted the new zebra crossings in Bridge Street and East Park Street were now complete and operating.

Temporary Traffic Orders: The following temporary prohibition of traffic orders had been received: High Street closed from 15th to 17th July for new water connection; London Road closed from 9th to 11th July for new water connection; Blackmill Drove closed from 15th to 24th July for new water connection; Stocking Drove closed 3rd to 5th June for carriageway

repairs; Eden Crescent closed for drainage maintenance works estimated construction date at end of September 2024.

Courses: Notification had been received that the County Council was running two Lantra Traffic Management for Community Events courses on the 25th July and 3rd September. A presentation had also been received giving advice on organising road closures for Remembrance Events.

Road works: The latest lists of planned road works in Fenland had been received, along with a list of events affecting the Highways in the County and the Traffic Management statistics for April 2024.

44) Correspondence

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

FACT Bus: Cllr Ashley requested the new timetable for the FACT bus go on the Council's website and in Chatteris Scene.

Illegal Encampment: Cllr Marks said FDC had carried out an aerial survey and had identified a number of illegal encampments at Horseway. There had been confirmation that Anglian Water would not be purchasing any of the land for the reservoir. He was hopeful that FDC would now be able to move quickly and start legal proceedings to remove the illegal buildings.

New Reservoir: Cllr Ashley confirmed that the next public consultation session for the new reservoir would be held during the daytime at the King Edward Centre on the 17th June and there would also be a consultation event in the Bricstan Room on the 10th July.

45) Reports

There were no reports.

46) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.