

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 1st October 2024

2603

1 of 12

Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 1st October 2024 at The Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

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

109) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs I Benney, A Jones (formerly Charrier) and M Siggee and District Councillor C Marks.

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

Cllr Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications, the King Edward Centre and the Museum. Cllr Hay declared an interest in the King Edward Centre and the Museum. Cllrs Ashley and Joyce declared interests as employees of the King Edward Centre. Cllr Ashley declared an interest in the museum. Cllrs Ashley, Selman and Unwin declared an interest as members of the Festival committee and Cllr Unwin declared an interest as a member of Chatteris In Bloom and Cllr Selman as a driver for the Community Car scheme.

111) Open Forum

There were no members of the public present so councillors moved on to the next item on the agenda.

112) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 3rd September 2024 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

113) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 105) Forty Foot Road: The Mayor reminded members that she had been approached by a resident of the Forty Foot Road complaining about the number of large lorries using the road, sometimes until 1 or 2am. Many of the lorries were going to the Mepal anaerobic digester. The resident asked if there was anything that could be done to deter the lorries and if a traffic survey could be carried out. The Mayor had passed the concerns to County Highways who had established that under planning conditions lorries were able to access the anaerobic digester 24/7 carrying different loads, depending upon the season. The Highways Officer had asked FDC if those running the digester were complying with all the planning conditions but

had explained there was no way the lorries could be banned from using the Forty Foot Road. He did say that the County Council was looking to carry out traffic surveys across the County and he would add the Forty Foot Road to the list.

Min 103) Allens Yard: Cllr Selman suggested the residents of Allen's Yard should erect a sign stating something like "Entrance in Constant Use Do Not Park Across Entrance" and should ask the police to enforce the yellow lines. She said the lines could do with refreshing and suggested this was something the Town Council could do under Section 37. Doubts were expressed about the likelihood of the police enforcing the parking, even though there was a safety aspect with so many children using the shop. It was suggested the residents should take a photograph of repeat offenders' vehicles and keep reporting problems to the police.

114) Police Matters

The following information has been received from the police in the past month:

Neighbourhood Alerts

9/9/24: Latest edition of Neighbourhood Watch newsletter Our News.

10 & 17/9/24: Latest court news.

10/9/24: Thanks for completing the Neighbourhood Alert national survey.

15/9/24: Request from Fenland Community Safety Partnership to fill in a survey to highlight key areas of concern.

16/9/24: Notification that Fenland Community Safety Partnership was to hold a community safety event in March.

20/9/24: Warning about keyless car thefts.

30/9/24: Notification that there had been an increase in hare coursing following the wet weather.

It was agreed it would be helpful to try and get the police to a meeting, especially as there were problems with poor parking at various locations in the town. It was reported that a van was once again being parked at the junction of Clare Street and Huntingdon Road causing big problems for vehicles trying to leave Clare Street. The Clerk agreed to pass on the areas of concern to the police. The Mayor apologised for missing a meeting with the police but promised to pass on the confidential minutes from the meeting for distribution to all councillors.

115) FDC & Street Scene Updates

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

A report from the Street Scene officer said she had had problems tracing the ownership of the cut through from Birch Avenue to the footpath at the rear of the estate but had eventually established it was owned by FDC who would be maintaining it in future. Cllr Unwin said the cut through had always been maintained by FDC in the past.

116) Financial Officer’s Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 24th September 2024 showing expenditure of £359,588.69 and income of £300,634.25 (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.

117) Payment of Accounts

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

The Financial Officer said in September's schedule of payments, the payment to CfCorporate re photocopier lease should have been the increased cost of £11.02 and not the new full amount of £276.12, as the original amount of £265.10 was listed on the August schedule of payments. She also explained there was a long list of payments as many were carried over from August.

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| Payroll | October Payroll | 7,722.43 |
| Barclays | Bank Charges | 8.50 |
| T Payne & Co | Letting & management fee 14A Church Lane | 367.20 |
| Clerk | Reim Sundries Re Church Lane & other | 483.97 |
| Cllr Hay | Reim civic duties mileage | 157.95 |
| KECCA | Summer Fun Hall hire | 127.00 |
| R J Warren | Little Acre Grass Cutting September | 269.66 |
| Youths of Fenland | Junior youth club service provision | 1,269.00 |
| S Gibb | Cleaning of 14 Church Lane and flats | 140.00 |
| CAPALC | Cllrs training course Cllr Selman | 50.00 |
| Street Arts Hire Ltd | Deposit for design re: bus stop mural | 180.00 |
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| Viking | Stationary order | 2606 4 of 12 176.70 |
| R J Warren | Gardening services Old Railway Line | 432.00 |
| R J Warren | Gardening services Parks August | 756.84 |
| RS of St George Huntingdon | Civic charity dinner Mayor | 70.00 |
| JS Electrical Cambridge Ltd | Test Xmas lights re: street furniture attachments | 456.00 |
| Chatteris Car Scheme | Grant to Voluntary Organisation | 500.00 |
| Magpas | Grant towards medical equipment | 492.00 |
| Relate | Grant towards family counselling service | 400.00 |
| R J Warren | Grass cutting service Little Acre August | 269.66 |
| Fenland fire | Service of fire appliances Park Street | 84.00 |
| Morton & Hall Consultants | Professional fees 14 Church Lane | 630.00 |
| R J Warren | Gardening services parks September | 756.84 |
| Youths of Fenland | Senior drop in well being café | 1,235.10 |
| Wave | Park Street water bill | 42.23 |
| EAAA | Donation re: memorial tablets for Cllrs | 100.00 |
| Onecom | 16/09/24 Phone bill | 100.37 |
| PKF Littlejohn | External Auditors Fees | 1,638.00 |
| Clerk | Reim Sundries Church Lane & other | 219.13 |
| Clerk | Reim Sundries Summer Festival | 22.39 |
| F/O | Reim Bins for Flats, Church Lane | 116.00 |

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| | | 2607 5 of 12 7,920.00 |
| JT Chambers Dev | Release of retention 50% Church Lane | |
| Lovell & Ward | Flat A completion of flooring | 1,733.50 |
| Lovell & Ward | Flat B completion of flooring | 1,530.00 |
| Arulandu Ltd t/a World of Flooring | Flooring for ground floor & stairs Church Lane | 8,592.00 |
| H&P Aerials Ltd | TV Aerials in Flats | 298.00 |
| JT Chambers Dev | Valuation 9 contract works Church Lane | 26,088.47 |
| JT Chambers Dev | External decorating Church Lane | 3,300.00 |
| B Gas | 14A gas bill | 97.51 |
| B Gas | 14B gas bill | 97.51 |
| Wisbech Town Council | Charity Mayors afternoon tea | 44.00 |
| Task F Ltd | EPC'S Flats | 140.00 |
| F/O | Reim Petty Cash | 132.78 |
| F/O | Reim mileage Church Lane offices storage prep re move | 41.04 |
| Mayor of Huntingdon | Black tie dinner charity night Mayor | 75.00 |
| Total | | 69,362.78 |

118) External Auditor's Report 2023/24

[1] Members had before them a copy of the External Auditor's (PKF Littlejohn) report and a copy of the Notice of Conclusion of audit for the year end 31st March 2024

[2] Members were advised that the Level of External Audit for 23/24 was a Level 4 – Intermediate Level Review as last year. This was because the Growing Fenland Grant Project for the Museum/Community Rooms had taken the expenditure over £200K.

[3] Members noted that the audit report was ‘clear’, in that there were no matters that the auditor wished to draw to the Council’s attention.

The Financial Officer advised Members that although the Audit came back clear, she had to provide an in-depth detailed explanation to the Auditor as last year. All variance explanations had to be supported numerically.

This additional detailed information was required to meet the level 4 review criteria.

The Financial Officer provided the explanations and supporting evidence as required which was duly approved by the auditor.

[4] Members were advised that to comply with the Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 the Notice of Conclusion of Audit, which detailed the rights of public inspection in line with the statutory requirements, along with Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the Annual Return would be on display for a period of 14 days from 23rd September 2024 and copies of the full Annual Return were available for purchase by any person upon payment of a reasonable fee. As last year, it was not proposed to charge for copies.

It was **RESOLVED** that the External Audit report for 2023/24 be approved.

119) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

[1] Members were reminded that budget limitations meant that grants given by the Council were an expression of support for an organisation and were not at a level where, on their own, they could sustain a group’s financial viability.

[2] The approved budget for grants in **2024/25** was **£4,500**. The budget spend to date was £2,892. Budget spend available £1,608.

Members were advised that there would be an additional £1,000 available in the budget as the Boxing Club grant would be taken from the 23/24 budget.

[3] Applications for consideration by Members at the meeting were scheduled, with recommendations, as listed below: -

a) The Anglian Players -Grant towards set up costs for a 2-year immersive theatre project cost £300.

b) Birch & Bees (Home Education group in Chatteris)- A grant request of £547.50 had been received to go towards the cost of room hire in the Library and the King Edward Centre. The Financial Officer proposed a grant of £300, Cllr Perrin proposed a higher grant to cover the cost of hiring a room at the King Edward Centre as he felt it was an important service. A grant was approved of £460 to be paid directly to the King Edward Centre.

c) Chatteris Cricket Club- Grant towards a ball stopping net and fixing materials £300.

d) Camsar (Specialist search team to find vulnerable missing people). - Grant towards an All-Terrain Vehicle project £300.

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

120) Allotment Rents 25/26

Members considered the following report from the Clerk:

‘Rent levels for the Council’s 132 allotments at Honeysome Road and 6 at Queensway have to be set one year in advance. As allotment rents are collected in October it is now time to set the allotment rents for 2025.

In 2023/24 income from the allotments was £4,760 and expenditure amounted to £3,874.76. Allotments should not make a profit for the Council but equally they should not run at a loss.

There is little justification for a large increase in allotment rents but anticipated works in the next 12 months include the replacement of a gate, improvements to the taps, road repairs and dyke clearance so a small increase is justified.

Current Rents are:Honeysome Road

£35 for a full allotment for a full year

£20 for a full allotment for 6 months

£18 for a half plot for a full year

£10 for a half plot for 6 months

Queensway

£26 a year for a plot

Recommendation

It is recommended that the costs of a half plot and the plots at Queensway remain the same but the price of a full allotment is increased to **£36** a year with the six month cost remaining at £20.’

Members **agreed** to the recommended rent levels.

121) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk reported that the tenant had moved into flat 14a Church Lane and the tenants were waiting to move into 14b but this was dependent on the Building Control certificate. The Clerk, Financial Officer and the architect had all been chasing the certificate for a couple of weeks and had, they believed, supplied all the information required by Building Control, but they were still withholding the certificate.

The Financial Officer and the Clerk had been busy sorting the store rooms and purchasing equipment ready for their move from the temporary office to the new offices at 14 Church Lane. The wi-fi was due to be installed the coming Thursday and the plan was to move all furniture and office equipment over the following Tuesday. The Financial Officer said she had met both tenants of the flats on the Sunday and they seemed very nice. There had already been interest in the community rooms.

122) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 24th September 2024 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to e) (as shown on the **appended list**) and considered seven further applications. It was agreed to return the planning applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Recommend Refusal, access problems have not been sorted. The drove is a public right of way which is just 3.2m at its widest point (and that width is not maintained) and the passing places suggested are in private ownership. The by-way is well used by walkers, cyclists and horses, more traffic will create an additional hazard for those users. This is piecemeal development and represents over development in the countryside. It will visually impact on existing houses and there are potential flooding issues. (Cllr Joyce took no part in the vote).
- b) Support
- c) Withdrawn
- d) Recommend Refusal. This application is premature as the width of the byway has still not been agreed. As it stands the application fails to overcome access problems as there is still no guarantee that the road shown can be delivered. Have other options to access the site been considered? There are also concerns about the impact of more cars on West Street which has existing traffic problems.
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Support
- h) Noted
- i) Noted and request promised replacement Oak tree is planted in Chatteris. Also request tree officer examines all remaining trees in the area and any works that need to be undertaken are carried out as a matter of urgency to preserve the remaining trees.
- j) Support
- k) Rec Refusal, development is an encroachment into the countryside, there are no paths proposed and no infrastructure. There are also concerns about more vehicles using the access on to a busy, fast road.
- l) Support

The Mayor said she had reported unauthorised works to Blackmill Drove to the Definitive Maps team who had passed the issue to the Rights of Way officer. (The Clerk had spoken to the Highways officer who had also passed the issue to the Rights of Way officer). Cllr Joyce had tackled the digger driver who was clearing foliage and revealing the dyke and had been informed the dyke was to be piped. It was believed these works were an attempt to widen the drove but the person who had ordered the works did not own the drove. It belonged to the County Council. The Mayor said the works had resulted in an existing drainage pipe being blocked by mud.

123) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Meeting Report and Recommendations

Cllr Joyce presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 17th September 2024 (**copy attached**).

L20 Meeting with Surgery representatives: A discussion took place on the meeting with the George Clare Surgery representatives. Cllr Gowler said he had then attended an on-line meeting of the Patients Participation Group which had been chaired by the practice manager. He felt the meeting should have been chaired by a patient representative and had asked for a copy of the constitution. Cllr Joyce explained to Cllr Perrin that the surgery representatives had been invited to a Leisure and General Purposes working group meeting because it was not open to the public. It was believed the doctors would not have attended a public meeting and there would not have been the opportunity, or the time, for a full and frank discussion at a full council meeting.

L25 Splash Pad: Cllr Murphy said a splashpad had been installed at Wisbech park. It had been very expensive to install and the running costs were very high as the water had to be regularly tested. It was also abused by people urinating on it and washing in the water. FDC had helped to get funding for the attraction but the running costs were met by Wisbech Town Council. Cllr Murphy said that Splash pad was on public display but if one was installed at Wenny Recreation Ground it would be largely hidden, leading to even more problems. He advised Cllr Unwin to speak to the Clerk of Wisbech Town Council about the costs.

L27 Interpretation Board: Cllr Unwin said all the interpretation boards were popular and the one in the Parish Church grounds should be replaced. The Clerk said the one outside the library had been changed and now contained an up-to-date map of the town.

124) To Agree Wording of Disclaimer and Council's Press and Social Media Policy

Members had received the following report:

“Several members have suggested there should be a disclaimer on the Council's website and Facebook page.

Based on the advice available and the council's existing policies, I would suggest the wording is as follows:

‘Chatteris Town Council is a democratic body that abides by the collective decision of its members. All members have the opportunity to put forward their views and to vote when required to do so. Once a decision has been made all councillors should then respect that decision. Under the Code of Conduct a Councillor must not bring their role or the local authority into disrepute.

Views put out on social media by individual councillors are not the views of the Council, unless it is specifically stated that the views have been agreed by the Council. The Council condemns any discrimination based on ethnicity, age, sex or disability. The Council wishes to

disassociate itself from any discriminatory or bullying comments issued by an elected member.’

Members **agreed** the wording was ideal and the disclaimer should be published.

They had also received a copy of the Council’s Press and Social Media Policy, which was adopted in 2015. Members were asked to consider if the policy needed updating.

125) LHI Application

New Scheme: Four schemes had been considered for the Town Council’s 2025/26 LHI application. All were fully discussed at the Planning Working Group meeting and it had unanimously **been agreed** to recommend that a scheme for the A142 - to include improvements to the New Road junction on the A142 Isle of Ely Way, a reduction in the speed limit and improved signage - be put forward.

The Mayor asked members to ratify the decision and the recommendation was passed by a majority of members. The Clerk said she would now submit an expression of interest in the LHI scheme.

2024/25 application: The Mayor was delighted to announce that the Council’s LHI application to install pedestrians crossing warning signs on the A141 had been successful. There had been a total of 9 non-complex schemes submitted in Fenland, only 6 had been successful and the Chatteris application had come third.

126) Fenland Infrastructure Delivery Plan Requirements

The Council’s comments had been sought on Fenland District Council’s Infrastructure Delivery Plan. It was agreed to discuss the plan at the Planning Working Group meeting.

127) Traffic Issues

Updates: The Mayor had received updates on several road projects being considered by the County Council, as part of the Delivering Transport Strategy Aims Programme.

- 1) Project underway to design and implement a localised 20mph zone in Wenny Road around Cromwell Community College.
- 2) Investigation of options to improve cycling from Chatteris to Doddington Road. Options being considered are a road cycle lane or a shared use path on one side of Bridge Street to roundabout, re-aligning the roundabout to provide a safe crossing and consider a signalled crossing. Professional services contract has been awarded and options and feasibility study to be undertaken.
- 3) Investigation of new footpath in Prospect Way to provide a continuous footway including Dock Road and Short Nightlayer’s Drove. Professional contract has been awarded and options and feasibility study to be undertaken.

- 4) Explore potential for 20mph school zone in Burnsfield Street/Station Street. Project is nearing end of design stage with aim of sending for costings in October.

Cllrs Ashley and Perrin said there were also problems outside the nursery in Station Road thanks to cars parking on blind corners and cars parking up all day making it difficult for parents delivering and collecting children. This led to a dangerous situation.

The Orchards: Councillors had received a letter from a resident of The Orchards complaining about cars parking down the road, on pavements and blocking driveways during the school run. The resident said parents had a bad attitude when asked to move their vehicles and he called on the Council to take action. The Mayor suggested the Clerk should write back saying it was not the responsibility of the Town Council but residents did have the option of paying for double yellow lines and a traffic order themselves and the Council would support a private application to the County Council.

Planned Works: Notification had been received that the planned re-surfacing works for Wenny Estate would now be delayed until March 2025 because Anglian Water planned to dig up the road from 21st to 30th October 2024 for sewer repair works (the Town Council had highlighted the plan to dig up the road less than a month after it was due to be repaired!). There had also been a delay to the planned works for Eden Crescent as further investigations were required. The asphalt works at Fairview had now been put back to the 12th & 13th October.

Survey: The Council had been invited, by the County Council, to complete surveys into the Highways Services contract and the Street Lighting contract.

Course: An invitation had been received to attend a Lantra Traffic Management of Community Events course at Bassingbourn on the 16th October.

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.

128) Correspondence

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

Meals on Wheels: It was agreed to invite the manager of the CAMMs Meals on Wheels charity to attend the next Leisure Working Group meeting to discuss the work of the charity in Chatteris.

Japanese Knotweed: Cllr Carney said he had looked into the Japanese knotweed problem in the High Street. The planning department at Fenland District Council were aware of the problem and took steps to solve the issue when planning permission for a development was granted. It was, however, a progressive problem which was being monitored and it was now a civic matter.

120) Reports

The Mayor said she had been approached by the Assistant Manager of the company building 50 social housing homes at the site off Fairbairn Way. He had explained that the company liked to give something back to the community and had asked for information on any volunteer groups they could support. The Mayor had already mentioned the schools, the scouts, Heathers Hedgehogs, the Pocket Park, In Bloom, the Christmas Lights and the King Edward Centre. It was suggested the priority should be the extension to the King Edward Centre as this would aid the pre-school and many other groups in the town. Cllr Selman suggested a questionnaire to find out any problems with loneliness in the town. Cllr Unwin said the Christmas Lights would be celebrating 40 years next year and needed to update their electrical installations. Cllr Perrin said Heathers Hedgehogs were looking for more indoor space if anyone had any ideas.

In Bloom: Cllr Unwin was delighted to report that Chatteris In Bloom had once again been awarded gold in the East Anglia In Bloom competition. Councillors sent their congratulations.

121) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.