

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 3rd September 2024

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Minutes of a meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 3rd September 2024 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

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

86) To Accept Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllr J Carney and the Financial Officer.

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

Cllrs Benney and Murphy declared an interest in all planning applications. Cllrs Charrier, Hay, Murphy and Siggee declared an interest as Trustees of the King Edward Centre and Cllr Ashley as an employee. Cllrs Ashley, Hay and Murphy declared an interest as trustees of 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.

88) Open Forum

There were 4 members of the public present along with Cllrs D Connor and C Marks and a representative of the press. The Mayor advised all those wishing to speak that they would have 5 minutes each.

The first resident lived on London Road and asked what was happening on the Tithe Farm land. He was aware it would be the site of a new housing development but said he had not been consulted about a new planning application.

Cllr Benney and the Clerk confirmed it was an archaeological dig and the Mayor said she had been asked about the drainage system in the area. Cllr Benney explained the site had outline planning permission for housing but would need reserved matters consent. The reserved matters application, giving details of the homes proposed, would go out to consultation.

The second person spoke about his late mother's bungalow in Waterfields. He claimed the tenant had not lived at the property for 2 years but was being paid benefits to live there. He needed to gain entry to the bungalow to check on the safety of the property but the tenant was not responding to his letters.

The Mayor said it was the landlord's responsibility to look after the property and the landlord had a right to entry but if this was not forthcoming she advised the gentleman to go down the legal route.

Cllr Connor said he was the Chairman of Fenland District Council's planning committee and he wished to give a whistlestop explanation of the planning system.

He explained that the Government had a big influence on planning. The District Council had a local plan, which was now about 10 years old, and it was hoped to publish a new plan in June 2025.

Cllr Connor said once a planning application had been validated it went out to consultation and consultees included local town and parish councils, Highways and drainage boards. Big applications took longer to determine.

If outline permission was granted a reserved matters plan was then needed. All plans would eventually result in an FDC planning officer giving a recommendation on whether it should be approved or refused. Some plans went to the Fenland Planning Committee and he encouraged all members of the committee to go on visits to the sites of the plans.

Cllr Connor had seen a town councillor's comments on Facebook about planning. He said all towns wanted open spaces but the Government insisted more and more homes had to be built so there would be less and less open spaces. Brownfield sites were now very rare in Fenland so green areas would have to be used.

He said some people on Facebook made horrible comments about the planning committee but he said it was difficult job and the committee had to listen to both sides of the story, take into account planning considerations and needed material reasons to turn down an application. He said if Highways and the drainage agent agreed to an application it was very difficult to turn it down, so the committee tried to get the best deal, including Section 106 payments. Cllr Connor said in his 5 years as chair of the planning committee he had never been offered anything and did not wish to be offered anything.

If the committee went against an officer recommendation and turned down an application, the applicant could go to appeal and if they won the Council would be liable for costs which could run into hundreds of thousands of pounds.

Cllr Connor urged all councillors to take advantage of planning training if it was offered. He said it was hoped FDC would shortly be making the offer. The Mayor also encouraged councillors to attend planning training as the planning regulations were continually changing.

Cllr Marks said he had been contacted by three families concerned that Chatteris was becoming a hotbed when it came to immigration. He said people who had lived in the town

for 30 years told him they no longer felt welcome or safe. They were worried about what was appearing on Facebook. Cllr Marks said if things continued they could get out of hand and he urged those responsible to tone it down.

The Mayor said Chatteris was a town which welcomed everyone and councillors should be careful and ensure they abided by the Code of Conduct.

89) Minutes of the Last Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on Tuesday 6th August 2024 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

90) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 76) Shuttle Bus: Cllr Carney had provided feedback on the trial bus service between Chatteris and Manea railway station. He said the trial on the 10th August failed thanks to the driver leaving Chatteris before the allotted time. A second bus ran on the 24th August but Cllr Carney had yet to hear how it went as the FACT Ops Manager was on holiday. He pointed out all new services took a time to get going and he had been contacted by a couple of people enquiring about future services.

Min 75) Disabled Parking Bay: The Mayor reported that County Highways had agreed that There would only be one disabled parking bay in West Street and this would be outside Number 20. The bay outside 24 had faded and was no longer operational.

Min 77) Growing Fenland Update: The Mayor said she had viewed the flats at 14 Church Lane and they were lovely and Cllr Gowler agreed that they were very impressive. The Clerk reported that the flats had been advertised to let by the estate agents one day, viewed the next and within 24 hours both had been snapped up at the advertised rental price of £1,000 a month. The Mayor thanked the Clerk, the Financial Officer and Cllr Benney for their hard work on the project. Cllr Benney pointed out the Council would get the income from the flats which would help to keep the council tax rate down while providing two new homes for people. The project had met all the Growing Fenland criteria as it had provided a new base for the museum, which was doing a fantastic job with more volunteers and more interest, and four new community Rooms. Cllr Selman suggested one of the rooms could be let out for hotdesking which was popular. The Clerk explained that the community rooms would be free to organisations providing a service for the people of Chatteris, such as CAB and doctors' outreach services, but there would be a charge for commercial use.

Mins 78 & 79) Pocket Park & Play Equipment: The Mayor asked about progress on a new bench for the Pocket Park and the release of Section 106 funds for new play equipment. On the former the Clerk said Community Payback had agreed to make a bench for the park and she was currently waiting on paperwork so Community Payback could carry out work around the town. She was also waiting for approval from Mr Phil Hughes for the release

of the Section 106 funds to spend on a new piece of play equipment at Furrowfields.

91) Police Matters

Members had received a copy of the latest report from the March neighbourhood policing team. It included information about action against drug use and supply across the sector and included details of an investigation into drug dealing in Chatteris which resulted in four arrests and the seizure of cash and electronic devices. The report said the current priorities for the team were anti-social behaviour across the sector's green spaces, drug use and supply in March and vehicle nuisance in Chatteris. Two reports of latest court news had also been received.

Cllr Selman asked the Mayor to request the attendance of the new PC or PCSO for Chatteris at a Council meeting.

92) FDC & Street Scene Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC and Street Scene updates (**copy attached**). The Clerk had received a copy of the presentation given at the last CCTV liaison group meeting. She was asked to forward it to members.

Members noted that dog fouling had increased along New Road. Cllr Ashley said it was a particular problem as children were returning to school and it was a school route. Cllr Murphy said FDC would clean up the area if asked.

Cllr Selman asked if there were enough dog bins and was assured all the bins could be used for dog faeces but there were a certain number of people who would not pick up their dog's faeces or dropped litter. Cllr Perrin said one person had helped to improve the problems with fouling by putting stickers next to piles which bore the words 'Shame on You'. Cllr Unwin said Street Pride found bags of dog faeces thrown in bushes, trees, etc.

The Mayor said she had reported overgrown gardens in the Ash Grove area and Clarion had taken action. Cllr Murphy said Clarion only cut green spaces 12 times a year while FDC cut 16 times a year. This led to complaints but Clarion did eventually get round to cutting green spaces. Cllr Unwin said the main problem for In Bloom was a private property in the centre of the town where the owners refused to clean up their outside spaces. It had been reported to the Street Scene officer. Cllr Murphy reported finding 30 tins and bottles in the greenery at the Jubilee Gardens and Cllr Unwin suggested using CCTV to help identify offenders and issue on the spot fines.

93) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 20th August 2024 showing expenditure of £300,545.72 and income of £299,225.36

(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.

94) Payment of Accounts

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

Payroll	August Payroll	5,946.71
Future Stars	Summer Fest Entertainer	50.00
Barclays	Debit charges	8.50
Viking	Stationary	187.00
Clerk	Reim Mayors tickets USAF Ball & curtain hooks for flats at Church Lane	126.80
SSE Energy	2 Park Street ground floor electricity	1,683.30
Chatteris Community Cinema	License re Mamma Mia showing	104.40
Clerk	Reim Curtains & Phone top up	164.00
Cf corporate	Photocopier lease	276.12
Shane Butler	Stripey Wipey Summer Fun	255.00
Zen Internet	Sept-Oct website	13.79
Ethos	Paper copier over contract allowance	0.37
Onecom	Phone bill	101.02
Task F Ltd	EPCs for 14a & 14b Church Lane	140.00
Total		9,057.01

Commenting on the payment to a Summer Fun entertainer, the Mayor said she had caught part of one of the shows and found it hilarious and the children were clearly thoroughly enjoying it. She said the show was worth every penny. The Clerk said for many children it was their first introduction to live entertainment.

The Clerk said thanks to extensive negotiations with SSE, the Financial Officer had saved the Council about £800 on the original electricity bill.

95) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

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.

The approved budget for grants in **2024/25** was **£4,500**. The budget spend to date was £1,500. Budget spend available £3,000

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

Chatteris Community Car Scheme -Grant towards running costs £500

Magpas Air Ambulance- Grant towards purchase of vital medical equipment £492

Relate- Grant towards counselling services for Chatteris residents £400.

Members spoke about the invaluable services provided by the Community Car Scheme and MAGPAs and agreed it was also important to support Relate. They also agreed it was a good idea to offer Relate the use of one of the new community rooms.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the grants approved. (Cllr Selman did not vote on the grant for the Community Car Scheme)

96) Photocopier Lease Renewal approval

Members were advised that the Council Offices photocopier lease was due for renewal on the 15th November 2024.

The Financial Officer had obtained two like for like quotations for Members consideration.

The Quotations were as follows: -

Existing Provider- Quarterly cost £187.39- 5-year agreement

New Proposed Provider- Quarterly cost £195.00 -5-year agreement

Members were advised that the current service provider's quotation was £7.61 per quarter cheaper than the other quotation received, however the service they had provided over the last 5 years had not been acceptable.

The photocopier had never been serviced and when it had broken down it had taken weeks for it to be looked at and then further delays in waiting for parts to come.

The proposed new company advised that they would service the machine once a year and do a same day/next day call out. This would be written in to the agreement.

They had also advised that they would assign the Council with an Account Manager who would deal directly with officers as a first point of contact.

Members were advised that it would be best value to change the supplier and it was recommended that the new company's quotation of £195 per quarter over a 5-year agreement be approved.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the new provider's quotation be accepted with the proviso that the machine would be serviced annually.

97) To Consider Quotations for Trees Survey

The Clerk informed members that the last survey of trees on town council-owned land had taken place three and a half years ago and a new survey was, therefore, needed to meet insurance requirements.

The Clerk had sought quotes from three companies and had asked for and received quotes based on the existing report. When she had visited the Old Railway Line footpath on the Monday she had discovered that the number of trees along the Old Railway Line which needed to be surveyed had leapt from about 20/30 to 80 as trees had matured. There were other semi mature trees which would need to be examined in future.

She had, therefore, asked if there would be an alteration to the figures provided as there were more trees and she was awaiting that information.

To save time, members agreed to give the Clerk the authority to accept the lowest quote.

Cllr Unwin asked about putting Tree Preservation Orders on trees owned by the Council, in particular the memorial trees in the pocket park. The Mayor said she hoped the Council would not decide to take down a tree before getting advice from the tree officer.

Cllr Murphy said FDC owned over 6,000 trees and the costs of works to trees were substantial so he advised the Town Council to prune its trees on a regular basis.

98) External Auditor's Report

The report had failed to arrive so it was agreed to defer the item to the next meeting.

99) To Agree Quotes for Mural, to Cut Old Railway Line Footpath & for Town Guide

Mural: The Clerk had asked the artist tasked with creating a mural in the bus shelter in East Park Street if it could include all three famous boxers from Chatteris - Eric Boon, Dave Boy Green and Jordan Gill. This had been agreed but the new price was £1,000 to £1,350, while the original agreed price was £1,000. Cllr Unwin suggested it might be better to put the mural on the side of a building but members were adamant it should not go on a private building but should go on the wall of the public bus shelter. They **agreed** to the new quotation of £1,000 to £1,350 plus VAT.

Old Railway Line: The Clerk had received complaints that the Old Railway Line footpath was almost impassable from its junction with the Pocket Park to the border with Somersham parish. She said the County Council were duty bound to cut it twice a year but the first cut was early in the season and it was unlikely there would be another cut until the end of the season. Since it was the Town Council's responsibility she had requested a quotation from the Council's contractors to cut the footpath to a width of approximately 3m. The cost was £720 plus VAT. Members **agreed** to the cost of the cut, with the funding to come from the Old Railway Line/Pocket Park budget.

Town Guide: The Clerk said all the information for the new town guide was currently with the local printers who had been responsible for producing previous editions of the guide. They had quoted a price of £2,994.45 to print 8,000 copies of the guide at the current size of 32 pages. The Clerk warned it was likely that more pages would be needed and the printer had warned the cost of print was going up. As the quote was above £1,000 the Clerk had sought a quote from another copy to print the guide. This was £2,131 but did not include design costs. The Clerk pointed out the local printer had the templates for the guide and had also drawn up the map in the centre. She said the design costs were likely to be significant for another company as they would be starting from scratch. Members **agreed** to accept the quote from the local printer.

100) Growing Fenland Project Update

Members asked when it would be possible to return to the Council Chambers for meetings. The Clerk said the chamber was now ready having been cleaned that very day and in the rest of the building the flooring was being laid the week beginning 9th September so the move back would begin later in the month. It would be possible to hold the leisure meeting on the 17th September at 14 Church Lane. The tenants for the flats would also begin moving in later in the month. Final invoices were being sorted.

The Clerk had obtained three quotations for painting and repairing windows on the exterior of the building and members had agreed, via email, to go with the lowest quote of £2,740 plus VAT.

101) Planning

Cllr Ashley, Chairman of the Planning Working Group, presented the plans. There were three applications which required a decision and comments had already been submitted for plan b) (**as shown on the appended list**). It was agreed to return the applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Unable to make a recommendation as no documents visible on-line.
- b) Support
- c) Support as it has been demonstrated that there are no mitigating measures that can be taken. However, request that a replacement tree is planted (if necessary in a different location) and urgent works are undertaken to other similar trees in the area to prevent more trees being lost.
- d) Support

The Clerk said an appeal had been made to the Secretary of State against Fenland District Council's non-determination of an application - to erect 9 dwellings and the formation of new accesses at 14-16 Wenny Road – within the designated time period.

The Clerk also updated members on the latest planning decisions from Fenland District Council.

The application to fell an Oak tree covered by a TPO at 16 Bridle Close had been refused. It had been decided the replacement of wooden sash windows to UPVC and conversion of a car port to additional living accommodation at 2 Church Lane required permission and a Certificate of Lawfulness was not sufficient.

The following applications were approved:

Removal of condition 2 (archaeology) relating to planning permissions granted for the conversion of the Former Coach House, London Road, to a 3-bed dwelling and Fortrey House, 22 London Road, to a 5-bed dwelling.

Change of use of 6 agricultural units to B2 and/or B8 use (storage and distribution) at Nightlayer Leek Company Limited, Dean Drove.

Single-storey rear extension and conversion of garage to living accommodation at 37 Southampton Place.

Change of use of offices to 1 dwelling at 6 West Park Street.

Variation of conditions relating to planning permission F/YR20/0795/LB (part change of use of existing buildings to three additional dwellings and erection of 2 dwellings) at 11-13A and land east of 3-11A High Street.

Replacement of 3 existing antennas and relocation of 2 antennas to a max height of 21.5m at Chatteris Water Tower, Eastwood.

Works to 2 Lime trees, 1 Oak tree, 1 Hazel tree and 1 Maple tree within a conservation area at 15 New Road.

102) Meeting with Representatives of George Clare Surgery

The Clerk had arranged for representatives of the George Clare Surgery to attend the Leisure Working Group meeting on the 17th September at 7pm. All councillors were welcome to attend the meeting.

Two doctors and the Practice Manager would be in attendance and the Clerk asked to be notified of any questions Councillors wished to raise ahead of the meeting so the representatives could be prepared. They had already sent in a list of subjects they would be covering. The Mayor stressed her wish to keep a good relationship with the surgery.

103) LHI Application

The Clerk had been notified that the current year's LHI applications would not be determined until October. As yet there had been no request for LHI applications for 2025/26 but Councillors had been asked to consider suitable schemes.

Cllr Perrin said he had been approached by residents of Dock Road as it was not adopted and had no street lights. As a result it was very dark at nights and this led to concerns about safety for pedestrians, burglary and drug dealing. The road led to industrial estates so HGVs regularly used it and in places residents had to step off the footpath into the road. There were also problems with speeding. The residents were asking for help to solve the problem and 32 residents had signed a petition requesting street lighting for the prevention of accidents and the security of residents and schoolchildren.

Cllr Perrin said his second request was for a speed reduction scheme for Station Street and Station Road. In addition to problems with speeding and the dangers to pedestrians, there were also concerns for the safety of those using the Willows nursery and there were reports of drug dealing in the area. On this occasion 59 people had signed a petition calling for the speed reduction scheme.

The Mayor said the Town Council had looked into the idea of installing lighting in Dock Road, because the County Council and Fenland District Council had refused to do so, but it had been rejected. Cllr Gowler said while the Town Council had sympathised with the residents they would be responsible for running costs and maintenance and there were fears this would open a can of worms and residents of other roads would also demand street lighting. At present the Town Council was not responsible for any street lighting in the town. The Mayor said she was pursuing the idea of installing a 20mph speed limit flashing sign at school times in Station Street and had also requested a zebra crossing for children making their way to Kingsfield School.

Cllr Siggee said another scheme worth consideration was parking restrictions at the junction of Allens Yard and Wenny Road as it was an accident waiting to happen with cars illegally parked and schoolchildren crossing the road without taking due care.

Cllr Gowler suggested having a special meeting to discuss all the ideas for an LHI project in detail. He said he wished to put forward a scheme to slow the traffic on the A142 between the Slade End roundabout and the Wenny Road turning. The Mayor reminded members she had also been approached about signs at George Way. Cllr Benney said the residents could pay for the signs and it was also pointed out that the police were unlikely to enforce the signs.

The Clerk warned that any scheme put forward to the LHI bidding process would need to demonstrate support from local people. The Town Council could put forward just one scheme each year. It was agreed there were four possible schemes: the A142, Station Street/Station Road, Dock Road and Allens Yard. Members were asked to work on demonstrating support for the schemes they were putting forward.

104) CPCA Bus Franchising Consultation

Members had received a copy of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Combined Authority bus franchising consultation which included details of how to complete the consultation online or attend a stakeholder event.

105) Traffic Issues

Planned Works: Notification had been received that Wenny Estate road would be re-surfaced on the 26th September and Fairview Gardens, Avenue, Crescent and Drive would also be re-surfaced that day and the following day. There was also a temporary traffic order application to close Wenny Estate with the junction of Wenny Road on the 28th October. Members were concerned because it appeared that the road would be re-surfaced one month and dug up again the following month. The Clerk agreed to make enquiries. Notification had also been received that Station Street would be closed between its junction with Railway Lane and the junction with Market Hill to facilitate meter exchange works on the 9th September.

List: Members had received a copy of an update from Cambridgeshire Highways giving details of a new online interactive list of local schemes of work. A link to the list was included.

Complaints: The Mayor said she had been contacted by a resident who lived along the Forty Foot road concerned about the number of lorries using the road to access the anaerobic digester. Cllr Marks pointed out it was a seasonal problem. Cllr Unwin was keen to see trailers carrying maize to the digester covered by nets. Cllr Ashley said Highways had looked into the damage caused by U-fibre when they laid cables along newly re-surfaced pavements.

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

106) Correspondence

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

107) Reports

Cllr Unwin informed members that Chatteris In Bloom would find out the results of the 2024 judging that Friday (6th September). Members wished the group good luck.

108) Items for the Next Agenda

Cllr Unwin asked if the idea of a splash pad could be added to the agenda for the Leisure Working Group meeting.