

# CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

## Minutes Dated 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023

2440

1 of 8

Minutes of the Meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

**Present:** Cllr I Benney (Deputy Mayor), L Ashley, J Carney, A Keating, P Murphy, M Siggee and S Unwin.

### 24) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Hay (Mayor), A Charrier, A Gowler and S Selman.

### 25) Co-Option of Councillor

Two candidates had applied to be co-opted on to the Council and after a secret ballot Mr Victor Joyce was duly elected and co-opted to fill the vacancy on the Council.

### 26) Declaration of Interest and Dispensations to Speak on Declarable Pecuniary Interest Items

Cllr Benney declared an interest in all planning matters as a member of FDC's planning committee and Cllr Murphy declared a possible interest in certain plans as a substitute member.

### 27) Open Forum

Cllr C Marks and a resident of Fairview Avenue were welcomed to the meeting.

The resident said he wished to put forward two constructive suggestions for the Little Acre Pocket Park. He said when the park was opened by Cllr Linda Ashley it was a beautiful park which could be used for picnics and school parties and only a small area was left uncut. The resident passed around photos of the park then and the park a few weeks previously when it was uncut and "looked unloved". The resident said he had contacted the Council about the state of the park and it took contractors 3 days to cut it back but two large areas had been left uncut. However an area used by birds had been cut down. The resident also complained that the pond had never had water in it since it was created. The resident said volunteers who looked after the park had re-wilded an area for the bees but he said the park had no direction and it might be helpful if users could contact the friends group.

The resident asked the Council to consider two suggestions:

- 1) Asking the Friends of the Park to provide the Council with a plan of what the park would look like in 5 years.

- 2) Carrying out a feasibility study to consider buying, hiring or borrowing an appropriate grass cutting machine and grass strimmer so the grass could be cut more regularly and before bank and school holidays. He offered to help with the feasibility study.

Cllr Ashley said the presence of the weed mallow at the Pocket Park had impressed the In Bloom judges in 2022 and had helped the Town to gain a gold award. She asked if the resident had volunteered to help the Friends of group as they were short of volunteers. She said contractors cut the area for the council but had been held up this year, mainly due to the wet conditions.

Cllr Carney reminded the resident that he had met with all 6 members of FLAPP who had explained how they helped at the park and held regular meetings (some at the park so they were working meetings) to discuss plans for the park. He said the only grass cutting equipment owned by the group was a small strimmer which was charged by a volunteer. Cllr Carney also reminded the resident that he had been shown the planned layout of the park, which had been guided by advice from park experts, and he had been invited to the FLAPP's next meeting. The resident suggested there should be better communication between FLAPP and the Council and Cllr Carney said he and the Clerk were both members of FLAPP.

Cllr Carney admitted the pond was often dry but he said water had collected in it, hence the need for a lifebuoy which he had installed. An expert had inspected the pond to see if there was a fault with the lining.

Cllr Unwin confirmed that In Bloom had gained a gold due to re-wilding and she urged more volunteers to help FLAPP.

The Deputy Mayor suggested the feasibility study could be considered by the Leisure Working Group but the Financial Officer warned that volunteers would not be covered by insurance or public liability to operate lawnmowers and powerful trimmers.

(Cllr Keating joined the meeting during this item).

## **28) Minutes of the Previous Meeting**

The minutes of the Annual Meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Deputy Mayor.

## **29) Matters Arising from the Minutes**

Min 11) FOI: Cllr Unwin asked why no funding had been set aside for Chatteris from the money held by FDC for economic development and sustainable growth. Cllr Benney advised her that Chatteris could put a scheme forward for funding. He also agreed to find out about the levelling up bid for the District and the Clerk gave an explanation of the Horizons fund. Cllr Benney also gave more information about the development planned for the land at the Elms which had been sold to Fenland Futures Ltd. He welcomed the fact it would be low density, high quality housing. Cllr Unwin was concerned about the dangers which would be created by traffic for the development accessing the site from St Martins Road. Cllr Benney said Highways had no objections but were opposed to an access to the site from the bypass. Cllr Unwin was also concerned about drainage and surface water flooding of the land and

said she hoped building control would keep an eye on levels of the buildings as there was a danger The Elms would end up in a valley between two developments on higher ground.

### 30) Police Matters

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

#### **Local Police**

There has yet to be a meeting between the new Council Chairmen/Mayors and Sgt Arnold. Members with any issues they wish to be raised at a meeting should contact the Mayor.

#### **Neighbourhood Alert**

22/5/23: Latest court news.

23/5/23: Advice on how to secure an email account.

23/5/23: Notification that two teenage girls have been banned from March following persistent anti-social behaviour.

24/5/23: Invitation to sign up to the Neighbourhood Watch Community Safety Charter.

26/5/23: Information about the Armed Forces and Veterans Hub which meets at Cassanos in March.

29/5/23: Invitation to attend a briefing/training session about county lines drug dealing and cuckooing, to be held at Hampton, Peterborough, on 10<sup>th</sup> June from 11am.'

Cllr Ashley said Sgt Arnold was due to have a meeting with Council leaders any day and Cllr Benney said he would attend the meeting as Cllr Hay was on holiday. Cllr Ashley also said Cllr Arnold was aware of the problems with motorcycles at the Pocket Park and along the Old Railway Line. Cllr Unwin said many filled up with petrol on Saturday and Sunday mornings.

### 31) FDC, Street Scene, Section 106 and CCTV Updates

Members had a copy of the latest reports which were noted (**copy attached**).

CCTV: Cllr Benney was concerned with the CCTV figures, which showed just six incidents and one arrest in three months, and asked if the cost of supporting the CCTV cameras was justified. When he had run a shop the cameras had never helped to solve one incident. He did, however, admit the cameras produced good quality images.

Cllr Unwin said she believed the cameras were a deterrent and were necessary with the lack of policing. Occasionally vandals were caught due to the cameras and she feared mindless vandalism would increase if the cameras were removed. Cllr Carney said he would be attending the CCTV partnership meeting on the 29<sup>th</sup> June. He feared that the level of service had decreased since the monitoring station was transferred to Peterborough. Fenland CCTV had previously been held up as a model CCTV scheme. Cllr Carney asked for any questions he could raise at the meeting.

Open Spaces: Cllr Murphy said the wet spring meant FDC's contractors had had problems with their grass cutting machinery as they often sank on the water-logged ground. The Clerk said there had been the same difficulties at the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park.

### 32) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 25<sup>th</sup> May 2023 showing expenditure of £94,422.77 and income of £103,917.16 (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.

### 33) Internal Auditor's Report

Members had before them copies of the Internal Auditor's Report and his signed certificate of the Annual Return for the year end 31st March 2023.

Members noted that the Auditor had no issues to report to Council for this financial year.

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

### 34) Reinvestment of Council Assets

Members were advised that the Council's investment with Nationwide Building Society (£85,000 at 0.80%) would mature on the 24<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

Nationwide had advised a new reinvestment interest rate of 2.75% for a 1-year fixed term. The rate offered was very comparable to other high street financial institutions (rates offered ranged from 1.54%, 2.11%, 2.58% to 3%).

The Financial Officer advised Members that she was confident the cash flow for the Growing Fenland project was kept under control as reimbursement of funds were claimed monthly and paid promptly by the CPCA.

On that basis she recommended that the full £85,000 should be reinvested and advised members that if the funds were needed then the investment monies could be drawn down, albeit with a loss of interest.

Also, members were advised that by rolling over the investment at Nationwide, administration costs would be kept to a minimum. In the meantime, the funds were protected under the FSCS whilst earning interest.

It was **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the reinvestment of the £85,000 at 2.75% for 1 year with Nationwide Building Society was approved.

### 35) Payment of Accounts

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

Onecom	May Phone Bill	93.67
World of Flooring	1st fix flooring completed 2 Park Street	12375.05
CTS Security	Completion of Security, Fire & CCTV new system to 2 Park Street	12870.00
Fenland Portal Planning fee	Planning permission fee re Church Lane	180.00
Fran Orridge	Reim: Deposit for band booking Summer Festival	50.00
J T Chambers	Valuation 8 works to 2 Park Street	22,344.00
Clerk	Reim: Zoom & Sundries re: S/Fest	151.01
R J Warren	Gardening services	742.04
R J Warren	Little Acre gardening services	132.19
Chatteris Museum	Reim: boxes purchase for move	113.37
Zen Internet	Jun-July 23 website	13.79
Ramsey Town Council	Mayors Charity dinner	120.00
British Gas	Gas bill	248.24
I Mason	Reim: Flapp Sundries	17.50
Ethos	Additional copies re photocopier lease	11.47
M Saunders	Internal Audit completed	350.00
Barclays	Bank Charges	8.50
Payroll	Payroll May 23	5,665.28
<b>Total</b>		<b>55,486.11</b>

### 36) Planning

Cllr Linda Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 (copy **attached**).

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

- a) Support
- b) Support
- c) Support
- d) Support
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Support

### **37) Growing Fenland Project Update**

The Financial Officer had already informed members that the Combined Authority was promptly paying claims for the museum project so the Town Council was being re-imbursed for settled invoices.

The Clerk said the project was still progressing well. The museum part of the building was virtually complete as the floorings had gone in and minor painting and repair works were being completed. Works were continuing to the offices and community room but should soon be complete, as should the outside store.

The Clerk had shown representatives of the accountants firm around the offices and they seemed keen to return asap. This could only happen once a lease had been signed and fortunately, after much chasing by the Financial Officer and the Clerk, this had finally been sent by the Council's solicitor to the accountants. A response was awaited.

For new members, Cllr Benney explained that the income from renting the offices to the accountants would help to pay for the running costs of the museum and the plan was to also create one, possibly two, flats above the Council Chambers to also bring in an income and help towards the Council's running costs. The Financial Officer said £1,000,050 had been committed to the two projects by the Combined Authority. The figure had started at £771,000. Other projects in other towns had not gone ahead so Chatteris Town Council had been able to access extra funds. Money from the Growing Fenland project fund had also gone to the town renaissance scheme, computers for community use at the new training centre and a civil parking enforcement scheme being drawn up by FDC.  
(Cllr Carney left the meeting at this point).

### **38) Dates of Council Meetings**

The dates of full Council meetings for the 2023/24 were duly noted as follows:  
Tuesdays 16<sup>th</sup> May 2023, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2023, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2023, 1st August 2023, 5<sup>th</sup> September 2023, 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2023, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023, 5<sup>th</sup> December 2023, 2<sup>nd</sup> January 2024, 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024, 5<sup>th</sup> March 2024, 2<sup>nd</sup> April 2024.

### 39) Court Hearing Decision

The Clerk reminded members that they had agreed that she should pursue through the courts the re-payment of a deposit paid by the Council for a band to perform at the Platinum Jubilee concert in Chatteris.

The Queen tribute band's promoter had cancelled at the last moment and had failed to return the deposit paid to him of £300. The court considered email evidence submitted by the Clerk which showed that the promoter had cancelled the event and it had not been cancelled by the Council, as the promoter had tried to claim. He provided no evidence.

The court ruled in the Council's favour and ordered that the defendant pay the £300 plus the Council's court fees of £62.00 by the 3<sup>rd</sup> May. To date no money had been received.

### 40) Midsummer Festival Update

Members had a copy of a press release issued by Fenland District Council giving information about the numerous activities which would take place at the Midsummer Festival.

The Clerk asked councillors, who were not already committed to the Festival, for their help as volunteers over the weekend. Cllr Keating kindly offered to help. The Clerk said the final committee meeting before the Festival would be held on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> June.

### 41) Traffic Issues

Highways Works: Notification had been received of carriageway resurfacing works to be carried out on Fenland Way overnight from the 7<sup>th</sup> August to 8<sup>th</sup> September; gripfibre works to Doddington Road on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> June and road closures were already in position for water connection works in Huntingdon Road and would move to London Road on the 13<sup>th</sup> June.

Remembrance: A reminder had been received that it was now the Town Council's duty to organise the Remembrance Sunday parade and inviting applications for Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders.

Chapter 8: An invitation to apply for Chapter 8 training had also been received enabling people to help with temporary road closures for running events such as carnivals and Remembrance Sunday. Cllr Siggee warned it was very complicated training and there was a considerable liability involved not to mention the cost of all the signs needed.

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

### 42) Correspondence

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

Email: The Clerk reported difficulties with the current email account thanks to a change in policy from BT, hence the plan to go over to a .gov email account. All members would receive a .gov.uk email address.

Order: It was agreed the Leisure Working Group should complete the FDC consultation on extending the Dog Control Public Space Protection Order.

#### **43) Reports**

The Clerk reported she was becoming increasingly frustrated by the contractors' failure to complete the extension to the Old Railway Line Footpath built up surface. It was many months since the work began and there had been no excuse for the continued delays as the weather had improved. Councillors agreed it was frustrating and agreed the contractor should be given to the end of the month to complete the task. Cllr Ashley also reported the top end of the Railway Line was in need of tidying and cutting back.

#### **44) Items for the Next Agenda**

No items were put forward for the next agenda.