

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 7th November 2023

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Minutes of the Meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 7th November 2023 at the King Edward Centre, King Edwards Road, Chatteris.

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

128) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs A Gowler and S Selman, who were representing the Council at a meeting about the new reservoir and A Keating, who was unwell. Cllr Benney sent apologies he would be a little late and arrived during agenda item 6) Police Matters. Cllr C Marks also sent apologies as he was at the reservoir meeting.

129) 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 Midsummer Festival and Cllrs Ashley and Hay declared an interest as museum trustees. It was agreed that apologies should only be submitted if an organisation/function was included on the agenda as there was always the opportunity to declare an interest throughout the meeting, if the need arose.

130) Open Forum

There were no members of the public present and it was, therefore agreed to move on to the next item on the agenda.

131) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 3rd October 2023 were agreed and signed by the Mayor as a correct record.

132) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 126) In Bloom: The Clerk had written a letter of congratulations to Chatteris In Bloom following their successes in the Anglia In Bloom contest.

Min 123) LHI: County Highways had installed a temporary sign in Doddington Road which read “New 30mph Speed Limit In Force”.

Min 125) CCTV Visit: Cllrs Ashley, Hay and Joyce had taken up the offer to visit the new CCTV control room and had been very impressed. Cllrs Selman and Unwin were disappointed they had been unable to make the dates and asked if it would be possible to organise another visit.

133) Police Matters

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

“Local Police

Information from the Fenland Community Safety Partnership about WhatsApp based Shopwatch schemes to help tackle shoplifting. Members have a copy of the letter and their views on launching such a scheme in Chatteris are sought.

Neighbourhood Alert

4/10/23: Notification that an investigation into a series of violent moped robberies was due to appear on national television.

5/10/23: Information about a Neighbourhood Alert annual national member survey.

20/10 & 3/11/23: Notification that dispersal orders covering the whole of Cambridgeshire would be in place those weekends in response to a planned car meet.

20/10/23: Notification that a man had been found guilty of the murder of a woman in Wisbech.

23/10/23: Information about a man who was jailed for life for murdering a father and son.

23/10/23: Notification about a police investigation into a robbery followed by a fatal road collision in Manea.

25/10/23: Information about neighbourhood officers being out in force to combat shoplifting and support businesses across the county during Safer Business Action Week.

25/10/23: Notification that there would be live tweeting about the work of the Cambridgeshire Constabulary emergency call handlers during #ControlRoomWeek.

27/10/23: Information about SimpliSafe’s guide to preventing burglars from targeting the outside of homes.

30/10/23: Invitation to take part in the annual Neighbourhood Watch crime and community survey.

30/10/23: Reminder about keeping safe during Hallowe’en and asking parents to ensure children only approach houses displaying lights/decorations.

31/10/23: Latest court news.

2/11/23: Request for motorists to ring 999 if they see forklifts or diggers being driven in the dead of night as they might be on their way to a ram raid.’

The Mayor said it had not been possible for Sgt Arnold to meet with Council leaders as he had been on holiday but a meeting was scheduled for December and in the meantime, he had asked for any problems to be emailed in. The Mayor said she had passed on information about a possible drugs deal. She mentioned a car and Cllr Unwin said the car had been witnessed driving very fast and erratically through town. It was suggested she try and record the number plate and pass the details to the police.

Councillors discussed the idea of a WhatsApp based Shopwatch scheme. It was agreed it might be a good idea if it was not abused but it was not the responsibility of the Town Council to set it up, that was down to the traders. Cllr Carney said there was a Facebook group Chatteris Business Network and suggested the details of the scheme should be passed to that group.

134) FDC, Street Scene, Section 106 and CCTV Updates

Members had received a copy of the latest FDC and Street Scene updates (**copy attached**). The other reports had not been received.

Members were pleased to note there had been no incidences of fly tipping in Chatteris. The Clerk said she had spoken to the FDC Street Scene officer about the land and overgrown trees at the Old Auction Yard fronting on to the High Street. After establishing the land was now owned by the Crown the officer had asked about works to the trees but the Crown would not agree to undertake any works. The Clerk said in the past an FDC officer had kindly agreed for the trees to be trimmed but Cllr Murphy said FDC would not be taking responsibility for any more trees. It was suggested the FDC Street Scene officer should write to the Crown Estates and warn them that she feared the trees were becoming unstable and remind them that if a tree fell on someone injuring that person, they would be responsible.

135) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 31st November 2023 showing expenditure of £316,657.00 and income of £358,806.75 (including a full year's precept income) compared with budgets, along with a bank reconciliation statement and a summary statement of reserves and funds balances.

The Financial Officer advised Members that she was concerned that she was having to withdraw and pay cash in, using her own bank account, for petty cash and small purchases and banking of allotment fees and summer festival takings.

She advised that this was not best practice and she was therefore was seeking approval to apply for a debit card linked to the council's bank account.

Councillors agreed that it was not best practice and gave approval to apply for a debit card linked to the Council's bank account.

Cllr Benny proposed that the Financial Officer should also apply for a credit card to be linked to the Town Council's bank account. The Financial Officer advised that she would apply for both cards.

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

136) Payment of Accounts

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

Warren Access	Cherry Picker Hire Xmas Lights 21/101/23	456.00
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Warren Access	Cherry Picker Hire Xmas Lights 4/11/23	456.00
Viking	Stationary	76.01
CFCorporate	Photocopier lease Q Nov	265.10
King Edward Centre	Summer Fun Room Hire	86.00
J T Chambers	Repair manhole cover, fix new tap at Museum, 2 Park Street	498.00
J T Chambers	Electric gates Museum	5,700.00
RJ Warren	Supply & Fix new Benches Old Railway Line	360.00
RJ Warren	Supply & install concrete bollard Old Railway Line	180.00
Rose Fire & Security	Replace smoke detector units and call out re refurb	557.69
All Seasons Childrens Play	Grant Vol Org	500.00
J T Chambers	Valuation 1, phase 2, council offices	26,220.00
South Norfolk DC	Building Control Inspection fees Council offices	408.00
Steven Taylor	Asbestos removal council offices	350.00
Red Skips 2 U	Skip hire for tree cuttings, Museum	290.00
Mayor K French	Charity event tickets	80.00
Payroll	November Payroll	7,079.30
Viking	Stationary	143.26
J Melton Clerk	Reim Zoom & Sundries	63.64
J Melton Clerk	Reim sundries	145.60
Michael Turner Cain	Allotment Gate Repair	83.76
Project Timber Ltd	Storage Museum	3,299.40
Zen Internet	Nov-Dec Website	13.79
Onecom	Office phone bill	94.85
Petty Cash	Cash	96.61
PC OK	WIFI Adaptor	16.00
Wave	LHS of allotments water bill	116.30

		2491
Wave	RHS of allotments water bill	5 of 9 123.42
Wave	Council offices water bill	54.63
British Gas	Elec Bill council offices	81.01
British Gas	Gas Bill 2 Park Street	35.53
Viking	Stationary	112.69
The Mayor of Huntingdon Fundraising	Charity event tickets	30.00
A Papworth F/O	Reim refreshments meeting	13.68
Sandra Gibb	Cleaning 2 Park Street offices	31.25
R Papworth	Reim mileage office move	94.50
Barclays	Charges	8.50
Warren Access	Cherry Picker hire Xmas Lights 28/10/23	456.00
A Papworth F/O	Reim petty cash	65.85
R J Warren	Little Acre Grass cutting	264.38
R J Warren	Grass cutting service open spaces	742.04
Total		49,748.79

137) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Heathers Hedgehog Hostel

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 **2023/24** was **£4,500**

Members were advised that a grant application had been received from a charity which provided care, treatment and protection for hedgehogs that needed rescue, care and attention because of sickness, environmental factors, maltreatment, or poor circumstances. Their main aim was to rehabilitate the hedgehogs and to release them back into their natural habitat. The purpose of the grant application was to purchase a larger sized incubator which would house a litter of hoglets or an adult hog. They also needed to replace their existing microscope.

The cost of an incubator was £793.00 and the cost of a microscope £240.00

The Financial Officer recommended a grant of £240 which would pay for the new microscope. Cllr Hay asked the Financial Officer to make the charity aware of the Metalcraft Community Grant Fund.

A grant of £240 was approved by a majority vote.

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

138) To Consider Purchase of Allotment Land at Queensway & to Decide Whether to Appoint a Solicitor

The Clerk had been contacted by a solicitor from London who had been instructed to progress the sale of two parcels of land at Queensway, currently owned by Clarion, to the Town Council. It had been over two years since this was first mentioned and the Clerk had made it clear that she would need a firm decision from the Town Council if they wished to proceed with the purchase and if they wished to appoint solicitors. The land was currently being used as six allotments which were administered by the Clerk under a licence from Clarion.

The Clerk said she had yet to receive all the paperwork required for the sale to go ahead, the Report on Title was incorrect as it mentioned land between 169 and 171 Queensway when it should have read between 169 and 171 New Road and she had yet to receive a firm price. She had been expecting more paperwork ahead of the meeting but that had not been forthcoming so she was unable to make a recommendation on whether the Council should approve the sale and should consider appointing a solicitor. She did have concerns about covenants and rights of way which might affect future use of the land.

Members agreed that the item should be postponed to the December meeting to allow time for the queries to be answered.

139) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk updated members on works to 14 Church Lane. She said works were progressing apace internally with the refiguration of the rooms, both upstairs and downstairs, well underway. There would be additional costs involved as building control required more sound insulation between the ground floor and the first floor flat but this would be covered by the contingency built into the project costs.

There would also be further costs as tests had revealed that the flat roof at the rear, which was to be built on, was not solid concrete; it was concrete beams. The architect and the builder were looking into solutions to overcome the issue.

140) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 31st October 2023 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to h) as shown on the **appended** list and returned the applications to Fenland District Council marked as follows:

- a) Support
- b) Noted
- c) Noted
- d) Support
- e) Support
- f) Support
- g) Request FDC tree officer visits site to give independent verdict as councillors are concerned by the plans to fell three trees.
- h) Support

The Clerk said two planning applications for Chatteris would be decided at the FDC Planning Committee meeting on the 15th November. The application to erect 9 dwellings at 14-16 Wenny Road was recommended for approval and the plan for 6 dwellings at land south east of Highfield Lodge, Doddington Road, was recommended for refusal., These recommendations were in line with the Town Council's recommendations.

141) Leisure and General Purposes Working Group Meeting Report & Recommendations

Cllr Ashley (Deputy Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 17th October 2023 (**copy attached**).

L26) FACT Bus: Cllr Ashley said she and the Clerk would be meeting with the two drivers of the Friday Runner bus on 10th November to discuss the service and to look at possible changes to pick up points. They would then report back to the next Leisure Working Group meeting. The Clerk reported that the bus to Cambridge would run weekly on a Saturday up until Christmas and there would also be a bus on Wednesday 13th December.

L26 & L30) Cemetery: Cllr Murphy said only a few people had moaned about the Plane trees being felled at the cemetery. It was hoped the felling works would ensure the remaining two trees survived. The FDC Open Spaces manager had confirmed that the cut through from Farriers Gate to Hunters Close and the Southampton Place alleyway were due to be cut and members confirmed these cuts had taken place. However, with regards to the rear of the cemetery it was up to homeowners to cut back the vegetation on the boundary line if it was becoming an issue.

L29) Old Telephone Kiosk: Cllr Siggee said he had checked the cables to the telephone kiosk and they were dead, the supply had been cut off. He said he had made brief enquiries into restoring the electricity supply and this was likely to be around £1,500. It was agreed to look again at possible uses for the telephone kiosk.

L30: Queensway: The Clerk had received confirmation that the green area at Queensway had been cut and was due for another cut.

142) Remembrance Sunday Arrangements

Members had received the following report:

“Chatteris Town Council is now responsible for organising the road closures for Remembrance Sunday.

Timings

The parade will muster at Furrowfields car park at 2.30pm on Sunday 12th November 2023 and will the parade along the High Street to the war memorial in Market Hill where a wreath laying ceremony will take place followed by a service in the Parish Church at 3pm.

Arrangements

The Clerk has successfully applied for a temporary road closure order from Cambridgeshire County Council and has put up all the necessary notices. She has also arranged for Ringways to carry out the road closures and will be supervising on the day.

A risk assessment has been drawn up and the Council’s insurance company has been informed.

The Royal British Legion will be responsible for organising the parade on the day and the wreath laying ceremony. Several local dignitaries are expected, including MP Mr Steve Barclay, the High Sherrif and the Deputy Lieutenant and there will also be representatives of the armed forces.

All Councillors are encouraged to take part in the parade and observe the wreath laying ceremony.”

Cllr Carney said Mr Barclay was no longer able to attend and he would be laying the MP’s wreath. The Deputy Mayor Cllr Benney would be laying the Town Council wreath.

143) Date of January Meeting

The Financial Officer had asked if the date of the January meeting could be moved from the 2nd to the 9th January 2024 and this was agreed.

144) Changes to Postal and Proxy Voting

Members had received a copy of an email from the Elections department at Fenland District Council advising them that the Elections Act 2022 had introduced a raft of changes to voting and elections. Proxy votes would have to contain a National Insurance Number and their eligibility would be checked after 3 years with a 5 yearly signature refresh. Proxy voters would only be allowed to vote on behalf of up to 4 electors. Postal votes would only be valid for 3 years.

145) LHI Applications

The Clerk had been notified that the LHI application window had been opened and all applications had to be in by the 12th January 2024. To assist with the application the Clerk

was attending an on-line question and answer session with County Highways on the 9th November.

Members were asked for their ideas for schemes. The Mayor said complex schemes such as footpaths and build outs would be scored by members and non-complex by officers. The Clerk warned that any scheme would need to demonstrate local backing and the support of the County Councillor (the Mayor).

Although the Council's main issue was the footpath from the training centre along the bypass, members acknowledged that the cost would be outside the remit of the LHI scheme. Cllr Benney said the time to ask for the footpath would be when the land behind the training centre was developed.

The Mayor suggested double yellow lines would be helpful in Wood Street and West Street and Cllr Unwin was concerned about cars parking on the roundabout at Wenny Estate at school times but members agreed to go with Cllr Benney's suggestion of double yellow lines from the junction of Wood Street and Eastwood to the entrance to the leisure centre. He said parking in that area created traffic hazards, particularly for cars trying to exit the leisure centre car park.

146) Traffic Issues

Closure: Notification had been received that the Forty Foot Bank Road would be closed from the junction with Doddington Road to the junction with Puddock Road from the 15th January 2024 to the 15th March to allow the replacement of 3.5kms of water main at Swingbrow.

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

147) Correspondence

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

CAB: The Mayor and Cllr Ashley said they would be attending the Citizens Advice Rural Cambs AGM on the 29th November.

148) Reports

There were no reports.

149) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

