

CHATTERIS TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes Dated 3rd October 2023

2477

1 of 10

Minutes of the Meeting of Chatteris Town Council held on Tuesday 3rd October 2023 at the Council Chambers, 14 Church Lane, Chatteris.

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

107) Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence had been received from Cllrs V Joyce and A Keating.

108) 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 Cllr Selman declared an interest as a member of the WI, the Community Car Scheme and Midsummer Festival.

109) Open Forum

A member of the public and District Councillor C Marks were present. The member of the public said she was concerned about street cruising and the welfare of old people and children in Chatteris. She had written to Mr Kier Starmer and the Prime Minister about the problems and was making a weekly report. The member of the public said other towns and villages had traffic lights and speed bumps. She was particularly concerned about the speed of cars and motorbikes and the noise. One young man on a motorbike had been reckless as the children were coming out of school.

The Mayor said she had attended an event at Tesco's when the public were able to raise issues with the police and they had assured her they were keeping a special eye on Chatteris, with a particular emphasis on anti-social driving. The same message had come from a problem solving group meeting held in July when the police had confirmed the problems with motorbikes in Chatteris were very much on their radar.

The Mayor did assure the member of the public that she would ask the police to keep a special lookout for offending vehicles.

110) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Councillors requested amendments to the minutes of the meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 5th September 2023 as the list of those who gave apologies was incorrect. Cllrs A Keating and V Joyce were present but apologies had been submitted by Cllrs Carney and

Charrier in addition to Cllrs Benney and Selman. Following the amendments, the minutes were agreed as a true record and signed by the Mayor.

111) Matters Arising from the Minutes

Min 91) Bus: Cllr Murphy reported the bus had now moved from the High Street and was being parked outside Cromwell Community College. Cllr Selman said it had also been parked in Eastwood. Councillors queried if the buses were allowed in the town centre but Cllr Carney assured members they were exempt from weight limits. It was agreed the best course of action was to contact the bus company.

Min 90) Shuttle Bus: Cllr Carney had analysed the results of initial responses to the questionnaire about a bus service to Manea Railway Station and produced a graph for members. The most popular proposals were a service on Saturday mornings and off peak. Cllr Carney said the survey was still open and agreed to plug it again. In addition he would be producing a questionnaire based on Manea and would be meeting the chairman of FACT to discuss the next step forward. He was hoping to initially start a Saturday service to Manea. Cllr Charrier said word of mouth was the best way to get the message out. It was also suggested questionnaires should be put in the library.

112) Police Matters

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

“Local Police

The Clerk had reported problems with vehicles and motorcycles at the Little Acre Fen Pocket Park and surrounding droves. Sgt Arnold reported that vehicle nuisance in Chatteris had been an engagement priority since the 31st July and multiple cars and bikes had been seized or issued with S.59 warnings.

Sgt Arnold had warned vehicle nuisance might not be a priority in the next quarter but promised that the police would continue to pay particular attention to the Pocket Park.

Neighbourhood Alert

11,18 & 25/9/23: Latest news from the courts.

12 & 21/9/23: Information about rural crime prevention events due to be held on the 21st September and report on the meeting including information on how to stay up to date with what is going on in the area through Cambridgeshire Countryside Watch.

14/9/23: Invitation to those interested in a career in policing to attend a recruitment fair at police HQ on the 21st October.

21/9/23: Notification of Cambridgeshire Neighbourhood Watch Association’s AGM to be held on the 7th October at Cambridgeshire police headquarters.

2/10/23: October edition of Our News the Neighbourhood Watch newsletter.”

The Mayor said when she met with the police (and an FDC officer) outside Tesco’s, she asked what type of complaints they had received. The main concerns had been weeds in gulleys, potholes, parking, etc. The police had assured her there had been an increased presence in Chatteris and at least one drug dealer had been taken off the streets.

113) 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.

114) Financial Officer's Report

Members had before them a budgetary control statement for the Revenue (Precept) Account as at 26th September 2023 showing expenditure of £287,987.19 and income of £246,019.98 (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.

115) Payment of Accounts

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

Barclays	Bank Charges	13.00
Clerk	Reim Mob phone re calls whilst in temp office	24.99
Clerk	Zoom Wasp Mileage reimbursement	42.53
Zen Internet	Oct-Nov Website	13.79
British Gas	Elec Bill Church Lane	81.72
British Gas	Gas Bill 1st floor Park Street	35.53
R J Warren	Gardening Services Pocket Park	264.38
R J Warren	Gardening Services Open Spaces	742.04
Chatteris In Bloom	CTC Grant & watering Grant	6,500.00
Cllr Hay	various civic events mileage Reim	43.65
Cllr Hay	various civic events mileage Reim	48.60
Chatteris Museum	CTC Grant	6,500.00
Thomas Quinn	Reim Elec bills Park Street	583.27
Fenland Fire Appliance	Fire Extinguishers & signs 2 Park street	985.80
British Gas	Gas bill Church Lane	18.57
Morton & Hall Consulting	Professional fees storage shed Park Street	600.00
Morton & Hall Consulting	Professional Fees Church Lane	4,320.00
Ward Gethin Archer	Legal Costs 1st floor Park Street Tenancy	1,320.00
Portal Planquest	Planning Permission to discharge conditions 14 Church Lane	180.00

		2480
Rasa Stankiene	Reim overpayment Allotment Rent	4 of 10 178.00
Onecom	Office phone bill	94.57
South Norfolk DC	Building control application Church Lane	612.00
Payroll	October Payroll	5,665.28
KEC	CTC annual grant	10,000.00
Rose Fire & Sec	Bi Annual service Church Lane	312.41
Rose Fire & Sec	Dual Com annual monitoring charges	516.00
PKF Littlejohn	External Auditors	1,008.00
PC OK	remote support re emails set up	80.00
R J Warren	Old Railway Hogging path final payment	7,016.00
Total		47,800.13

116) External Auditor's Report

- [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 2023
- [2] Members were advised that the Level of External Audit for 22/23 was a Level 4 – Intermediate Level Review as last year. This was because the Growing Fenland Grant Project for the Museum/Community Rooms has taken the expenditure over £200K. Members were advised that the audit may also be a Level 4 - Intermediate Level review next year as the Growing Fenland Grant Project for the Museum/Community Rooms was in its second phase and the income/expenditure was expected to be over 200K due to the works being carried out.
The grant income was received in 21/22 financial year but was not spent until 22/23.
- [3] Members noted that the audit report was 'clear', in that there were no matters that the auditor needed 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.
The Financial Officer provided the explanations and supporting evidence 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 displayed for a period of 14 days from 28th September 2023 and copies of the full Annual Return would be available. As with last year, it was proposed not to charge for copies.

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

117) Grants to Voluntary Organisations

Members were reminded that the Council's current policy was to consider grant applications at the April, July, October, and January meetings each year. 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**

There were separate approved budgets set in 2023/24 for the following: -

	£
Chatteris King Edward Centre – Staffing contribution	10,000
Chatteris Museum Trust	6,500
Chatteris Christmas Lights Committee	10,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom	5,500
Chatteris Junior Youth Service Provision	4,500
Chatteris Town in Bloom Paid Watering service	1,000
Summer Children's Fun	1,500
Summer Festival Contribution	5,000
Senior Youth Service Provision	5,400
Rural Citizen's Advice Bureau Face to Face Service	6,280

There was one application for a grant to be considered by members:

Organisation	Recommended Grant £
All Seasons Childrens Play	500

Members were advised that the group was a parent/carers and children/baby group which provided all types of support for both children and parents in the community.

The Grant request of £500 was approved by Councillors and would be used towards food, sensory and interactive play equipment & arts & crafts

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

118) Allotment Rents

Members had received 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 2024.

Expenditure on allotments to date is £1,442.33 in this financial year compared to a **budget of £4,500**. Anticipated additional costs will be £941 for water (based on meter readings and anticipated costs for water in the autumn) and £120 for clearance. The Council has also approved expenditure of £760.00 on new taps.

This would give an overall **expenditure of £3,263**, leaving £1,237 in the budget.

The expected income from allotment rents in the current financial year is £4,500 (matching the budget).

Current Rents

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

After the increase in allotment rents in the current financial year it is recommended that prices are frozen for 2024/25 as there is no justification for an increase.”

The Clerk said she was keen not to increase rents as the Allotments Association were doing all in their powers to persuade allotment holders to reduce their water usage and had even written a guide to keeping watering to a minimum, which had gone out with the rent letters.

Members **agreed** that rents should not be increased in 2024 and should remain at £35 for a full plot and £18 for a half at Honeysome Road and £26 for a plot at Queensway (where there was no water supply).

119) Growing Fenland Project Update

The Clerk updated members on the project. The builders had moved in to 14 Church Lane and had begun the refurbishment works. The store room at the rear was being decorated and shelved out so council files could be stored there, along with filing cabinets, etc. while the works were underway.

Once the files had been moved the Clerk and Financial Officer would be moving to the community room at 2 Park Street for the duration of the works, expected to take about six months. They had already begun preparing for the move as well as overseeing the works which were underway. Small meetings would be able to take place in the community room but from November main council meetings would be held in the King Edward Centre.

The Clerk had met with a representative of the accountants who seemed pleased with the new accommodation. Paperwork had been moved in and the accountants were just awaiting the delivery of new furniture and blinds before they moved in. They had paid three months' rent up front.

The Combined Authority had been updated on how the works were progressing and were pleased with progress. The project remained one of their star projects and the Financial Officer confirmed they were continuing to pay all invoices submitted for the works promptly.

The museum volunteers were working hard storing away all their items in their new home and preparing for two open days on the 7th and 14th October. They were also welcoming visitors from the uniformed organisations, such as the cubs and guides, two evenings a week.

120) Planning

Cllr Ashley (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Planning Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 26th September 2023 (copy **attached**).

Members ratified the group's recommendations on applications a) to i) as shown on the **appended** list and considered one further application. It was agreed to make the following recommendations to Fenland District Council:

- a) Recommend Refusal. Land outside the building line/boundary of Chatteris.
Concerns about access on a bend on a busy road; number of access points may have been reduced to two but number of vehicles generated by houses has not reduced. Not in new 30mph speed limit area.
- b) Support
- c) Already granted planning permission by FDC
- d) Support
- e) Reluctantly Support. Please note Highways concerns which are supported by the Town Council. The drove must be improved and maintained, it must be kept open at all times (as it is a public right of way) and no building materials should be stored on drove. The site should be regularly monitored. (Cllr Joyce abstained from the vote).
- f) Support, welcome economic development. Request Section 106 funding towards upgrading Slade End roundabout.
- g) Support
- h) Support
- i) Support
- j) Request tree officer inspects and councillors will support his recommendation.

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

Cllr Charrier (Chairman) presented the minutes of the Leisure and General Purposes Working Group meeting held on Tuesday 19th September 2023 (copy **attached**).

L20) FACT Bus services: The Clerk had written to Tesco's about a bench and B & M about a public toilet. She had yet to hear from B & M but the Tesco manager had said he would look into the idea of installing a bench and said customers were able to use a staff restroom. Cllr Ashley said she had been approached with the idea of organising a separate journey for residents of Barber Gardens who wished to use the Chatteris Runner to get to Tesco's. She was following up the idea.

L21) Skate Park Donation: The Clerk had approached MarketPlace for the contact details of a graffiti artist and had also run the idea by the FDC officer. The FDC officer was happy with the idea and MarketPlace were keen to get involved in the graffiti project but said they would have to work with a youth group before they organised an artist. Cllr Unwin said a core group of young people used the skatepark and it would be good to consult them.

The need to restore the mural at the underpass was also discussed and it was agreed someone would be needed to run the project. It was suggested B & M and Tesco's might help with costs or materials.

L23) Pavement Licence: Cllr Carney said he had taken up the business owner's case regarding the pavement licence and work was now underway to establish if the paved area was within the curtilage of The Old Bakery.

L23) Plane Trees: Cllr Murphy reported that further surveys were being carried out into the works necessary to the Plane trees on the boundary of the cemetery. The costs of the works were likely to be significant.

122) Weed Spraying Issue

Cambridgeshire County Council had reacted to all the complaints about the decision to stop spraying roadside weeds by issuing a statement and then launching a review into the change in policy. Councils had been asked to complete a short survey on the views of local communities. Officers said the change to the road side weed management policy was designed to reduce the use of potentially harmful chemicals in the environment to help support nature recovery and to reduce operational costs.

A motion calling for a change to the new policy had been agreed by Fenland District Council and it was agreed to write and object to the new policy pointing out it was causing flooding issues, and damage to pathways and roads and was, therefore, a false economy.

Cllr Marks' petition calling for the new policy to be reconsidered had attracted 1,700 signatures but needed to reach 3,000. Cllr Unwin suggested putting a link to the petition on the Chatteris Discussion Page on Facebook.

The Mayor said the policy was due to be discussed by the County Council's Highways and Transport Committee in December.

123) LHI Scheme Ideas

The Clerk said she had registered an expression of interest in applying for a Local Highways Improvement Scheme in 24/25. She asked Councillors to consider schemes which could be put forward as the application process was likely to open in November.

The footpath from the training centre along the bypass was suggested because attendees were, as anticipated, trying to walk along the verge. However, it was possible the cost would be outside the remit of the LHI scheme.

Cllr Murphy suggested directional signs at the Slade End roundabout advising drivers which lane they should be in as they approached the roundabout (similar to the signs at roundabouts in Sutton and Ely). Cllr Benney suggested double yellow lines at the top of Eastwood as an overflow of cars from the leisure centre car park was creating problems.

The Clerk had received a reply to concerns about the lack of 30mph signs in Doddington Road. The Highways Officer had confirmed it was possible to install “New 30mph Speed Limit in Force” signs but they would have to be removed after three months and there would be an additional cost. The Clerk had asked for an indication of the additional cost.

124) Traffic Issues

Bridge Street Crossing: The Mayor had informed County Highways that the Town Council was happy with the proposed location for a crossing in Bridge Street (as agreed at the Planning Working Group meeting). The Highways Officer said the contractor would now finalise the designs and construction was provisionally scheduled for early in the New Year.

Repairs: The Clerk had reported the loss of an arched barrier at the junction of Eastwood and Eastbourne Road and the damaged railings at Jubilee Gardens and had been assured repair works would be carried out to both in the current financial year.

Surveys: Members had been asked to complete stakeholder surveys on the Highway Services contract delivered by Milestone for Cambridgeshire Highways and the streetlighting service delivered by Balfour Beatty.

Information: The latest roadworks and events information for Fenland had been received, as had the Highways Events diary for October which showed all planned road closures. In Chatteris these were for the Remembrance Sunday parade on the 12th November and the Christmas Lights Switch On scheduled for the 2nd December.

125) Correspondence

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

126) Reports

Cllr Unwin reported that Chatteris In Bloom had been very successful at the Anglia In Bloom awards. Chatteris had achieved gold again and was the winner for towns of its size and joint overall winner with Huntingdon. Other accolades included the best care home garden won by The Gables, a gold award for the Bramley House garden and silver gilt for the Cross Keys.

Cllr Unwin said In Bloom would now like to update the signs at the entrances to Chatteris to reflect the wins. Cllr Carney said he had tried to get new designs for entrance signs through County Highways a few years ago but they had blocked all suggestions. However, he agreed to try again.

It was agreed the Town Council should write and congratulate In Bloom on the wins.

Cllr Unwin said she had also been asked about Centrepoin. Cllr Murphy said the future of the publication had been discussed at the King Edward Centre Association AGM. Unfortunately, it had been agreed that it could not continue as there was so much work involved and no-one was prepared to do it.

127) Items for the Next Agenda

No items were put forward for the next agenda.

