

MARCH TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting of March Town Council held on 9 January 2023 held in The Skoulding Suite at March Town Hall commencing at 7.15pm.

Present	Councillor	K French MW Purser	Town Mayor Deputy Town Mayor
	Councillors	DW Connor C Elkin R Johnson	SR Court J French RF Skoulding
	Cambridgeshire County Councillor	J Gowing	
	Town Clerk Assistant Town Clerk		S Lemmon S Taylor
	Fenland District Council		Matt Wright, Phil Hughes
	Public		37

142 Apologies

Apologies were received from Councillors Donnelly, Jack, Tustin and White.

143 Broad Street Project Update

Matt Wright and Phil Hughes from Fenland District Council attended the meeting to update Councillors with regard to developments around the FHSF programme further to a written report submitted to The Clerk on 3 January and circulated to Councillors on 3 January.

Work on the Market Place had commenced today, as planned.

The 3 planning applications relating to the Fountain and toilets were expected to be heard by FDC's Planning Committee in February.

There would be a replacement toilet block following the proposed demolition of the existing provision – to include Changing Places facilities for the disabled. Plans for new toilets were being drawn up and should be available in April in order for the requisite planning application to be made.

Broad Street would remain open for the duration of works with traffic measures in place, the most severe of which would be during the 1st month of the Cadent [gas] works commencing on 14 February.

Temporary Taxi ranks were proposed for Mill View, near Sainsbury. 2 additional disabled parking bays would be available and a temporary bus stop would be located in Broad Street during the 2nd phase of the Cadent works.

An e-petition to prevent the demolition of the toilets had only received 197 of a necessary 500 signatures.

Cllr Skoulding expressed concerns about the layout of the Market Place car park with the square-on bays and queried whether zebra crossings and the railings on the corner of Broad Street and Dartford Road would be retained.

Messrs Wright and Hughes would make enquiries about the retention of the railings erected at the spot of a fatality some years ago.

Cllr Skoulding highlighted concerns regarding letters not being sent by the FDC Planning Department to all shopkeepers and business owners. FDC officers stressed that the planning department should be contacted directly in relation to this. Due to the design of the new road layout, this area would, of course, be widened with a larger turning area at the site of the roundabout, so it would no longer be a blind corner.

Cllr J French demanded that the installation of replacement toilets be prioritised so that the time the town would be without public toilets would be reduced to the bare minimum and asked Mr Hughes to make timely arrangements with regard to the return of the original central part of the fountain (or a replacement sourced).

Mr Hughes confirmed that the fountain, if moved as planned, would have a water supply and there would be a commemorative slab in the public realm area explaining the history of the fountain.

Cllr J French insisted that the improvements to the West End Park mooring, whilst technically falling outside the project, should also be addressed urgently. Mr Hughes advised that a briefing paper would be going to FDC Cabinet at some point in the future.

Messrs Wright and Hughes stressed that all aspects of the scheme had passed risk assessments and safety audits.

In addition to gas works being undertaken by Cadent, Anglian Water was carrying out work in the coming weeks so that there will be no further digging up of the roads except in the event of emergencies. Cllr J French requested that if any further [unscheduled] works were required to be done that these would be at FDC's expense. Additionally, confirmation and reassurance was sought that should any damage be caused to the bridge (as a result of the temporary lifting of the weight limit in order for plant to access Broad Street), that the contractors would be fully responsible for the cost and carrying out of any and all repairs.

144 Public Participation

4 members of the public had registered to speak at the meeting. Since they all wished to speak in connection with the Broad Street Project, the Chairman exercised her right to change the order of motions appearing on the agenda so that Public Participation be moved up from agenda item 5 to 3 to follow the update provide by Messrs Wright and Hughes.

Members of the public that had registered to speak were Mrs Linda Butler, Mrs Jennifer Lawler, Joanne Brazell and Mrs Gill Richmond.

(Ms Brazell did not, however, attend the meeting).

Speakers raised concerns about the lack of consultation in relation to the proposals, congestion, possible vandalism of the fountain, bus turning points, inaccessibility of the town for disabled visitors/residents and lack of parking in the town (exacerbated by removal of existing parking spaces) and the potential for zebra crossings to impede the flow of traffic

through the town. They shared concern that there would be fewer visitors to the town centre due to lack of parking and closure of local businesses would result. Speakers were sceptical of the ability of the roundabout (used to facilitate traffic flow) to compensate for a reduction in the number of lanes of traffic. Officers asserted that the town centre would be entirely crippled in 10 years' time without a roundabout in place.

FDC officers and Cllrs French and Gowing explained to members of the public that the reduction of 2 lanes to 1 northbound in Broad Street (without doubt a major bone of contention for residents) was a County Council led initiative and the County Council is neither required to consult nor seek planning permission. This was outside the control of either FDC or MTC.

Mr Hughes stressed to speakers that the MATS had taken into account the future growth of the town. Considerable development and increases in both dwellings (and therefore cars) were planned for the town. The future face of the High Street, not just in March, but all towns, was changing. The Scheme was designed to future proof the town against further decay.

Cllr J French informed those present about plans for a Northern Link Road around the town which would take the pressure off the town centre in years to come.

145 Police Update

Minutes of the Police Liaison meeting held on 7 December 2022 were circulated to Councillors on 14 December 2022. The date of the next meeting is not yet known.

146 Planning Applications

Because of their position on the Fenland District Council Planning and Development Committee and their commitment to Paragraph 28 of the Fenland District Council Code of Conduct, Councillors Connor, J French and Purser declare a permanent personal interest and take no part in discussions relating to planning matters.

It is also noted that, due to his involvement in the building industry, Councillor Skoulding does not take part in any discussions relating to planning issues.

*Application
Number*

*Name and address of applicant, details of application,
and recommendation of March Town Council*

F/YR22/1334/TRTPO

Mr Gocke, 111 Knights End Road, March.
Works to 1 x Ash tree covered by TPO 8/1970 at 111 Knights End Road, March.
Received: 19 December 2022
This application has been **withdrawn**.
Withdrawal Noted

F/YR22/1371/F

Mr Patrick Wilkinson, 1 Wigstones Road, March
Erect a 2-storey side extension to existing dwelling involving the demolition of existing dwelling at 1 Wigstones Road, March.

Received: 19 December 2022

Reply by: 9 January 2023

Recommendation; Approval

F/YR22/1386/F

Eastwood RVL March Ltd, c/o agent; Zoe Tozer, Savills, 33 Margaret Street, London.

Erect 9 x industrial units (B2/B8 use), the formation of an access and associated landscaping, and provision of car and cycle parking at Land South of March Trading Estate, Westry Avenue, March.

Received: 19 December 2022

Reply by: 9 January 2023

Recommendation; Approval

147 Minutes of Meetings

The following Minutes were agreed and signed by the Mayor:

5 December 2022 – Main Council Meeting

19 December 2022 – Planning Sub-Committee

148 Matters Arising

Re Main Council Meeting 5 December 2022

Minute 132

A letter containing precept information for the local elections on 4 May 2023 had been received from FDC on 23 December 2022. Based on their election costings there has been no need to adjust our budget.

There are also no changes to the estimated net Council Tax base of 6,763.

Minute 133

CCC had confirmed that we can apply for a number of double yellow line applications in a single application.

The deadline for submission of LHI applications had been confirmed as Friday 6 January 2023 at 5pm. Since MTC was not able to make a resolution in respect of schemes until 9 January, MTC has been unable to submit any applications in time for the 2023/2024 round.

Minute 138 [confidential item]

The Clerk submitted an application to list the Collingwoods Car Park as an “Asset of Community Value” on Monday 19 December 2022.

Minute 139

Town Clerk Jury Service – following an appeal submitted on 7 December 2022, it was confirmed on 20 December that the Clerk could be excused from service on this occasion.

149 Budget Ratification

Since there had been no changes to the estimated Council Tax base and election costings had now been received from FDC which were in line with our own estimate, the budget (and precept) was duly and unanimously ratified.

150 LHI Application Process

Cllrs Connor and J French were unhappy that the County Council had not extended the deadline for submissions of applications, notwithstanding conversations between Cllr Connor and County Council Highways Officers. It was disappointing, although hoped that the schemes MTC wished to be delivered (predominantly double yellow lining) could hopefully be secured via the MATS Walking and Cycling Scheme and CPE. Funding was available and could therefore be achieved at zero cost to MTC.

151 Cambridgeshire County Council Update

The Clerk reported that all email updates are being circulated on a daily basis.

Cllr J French confirmed that pothole repairs had been completed on the A141 (outside Hostmoor) as well as on the flyover.

With regard to recent news in relation to recycling and the discontinuation of the furniture collection (upholstered domestic seating) and bulky waste service, Cambridgeshire County Council had known about this since August but had taken no action. This is being investigated, but thanks to Cllrs Count and Gowing, this has now been sorted and a service has been resumed to overcome the risk of increased fly-tipping.

Pleasingly, works were due to commence on 31 January in Sycamore Close, an area that suffers regular flooding. The constant flooding and threat of flooding has been devastating for residents of the Close for many years.

152 Fenland District Council Update

Cllr J French advised that the Clerk had today circulated an email to Councillors today about the March Walking and Cycling Map. Cllr French had sought quotes from Simon Bell (FDC) for additional seating to be installed near the proposed BMX track on West End Park as well as upgraded CCTV cameras at the site. There was a possibility of grant funding (up to £6,000) from The Burnt House Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. It was resolved that the Clerk should submit a bid for funding once costings were received (motion proposed by Cllr J French, seconded by Cllr Skoulding).

153 Schedule of Accounts

The Schedule of Accounts, as circulated, was agreed.

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 9:15 pm.

Councillor K French6 February 2023
Mayor of March.