

WTC Meeting Thursday 18th April 2024

Disclaimer: These observations are **not** the 'official' minutes of the meeting, they are supplied by Whittlesey Town Council, normally (1) month following this meeting and can be viewed on their website. Decisions and Voting at this meeting may be ratified and confirmed at the following months meeting.

10 Councillors were present: Absent were, Cllr Laws and Ahmed.

19 Members of the Public were present.

There are by-elections being held in Whittlesey Northwest and St Mary's Whittlesey. 2 candidates were present as part of the public, Mr Singh and Mr Bibb.

As such WTC are under Pre-election rules, these comments are my own and in no way reflect any others.



Note : During the preceding week there had been a great deal of 'issues/complaints' made about postings on the Whittlesey Town Council Facebook©© site, which changed its name to the 'unofficial WTC site'.

This has been very well documented on Mr John Elworthy Twitter© and CambsNews© Website.

Complaints by 3 known persons have been dealt with under the rules and governance of Fenland District Council. More below.

Public Forum:



Mr Peter Bibb.

(Independent Candidate for Whittlesey St Marys Ward)

Read from a pre-prepared statement, commented, and complained about the WTC Facebook page, stating he and others had been blocked from using the site for no good reason. He remains blocked from whatever it may be called now - The 'unofficial WTC FB page'

He stated that the site/page had been used by the Conservative group to promote their own candidate and this was unfair and against purdah rules.

He asked that those responsible, make an apology on the same FB page, and the page closed until the by-elections are over. That in future only official communication should be used



Peter Bibb WTC 18-04-24 AUDIO.mp3

Mr Robert Boddington.

Commented and complained about the discussion that took place at the February WTC meeting, he was disappointed on what he had heard – a Councillor was interrupted no less than 3 times during a presentation.

Mr. Alan Bessant.

Commented on the Sport and Rifle Club lease and the fantastic engagement the club has to offer. Getting a short-term lease. Needs for facility to continue and be supported.

Steve Tierney. Wisbech Town/District/County Councillor.(spoke as a member of the public)

He wished the people of Whittlesey 'all the best' He stated that most have no knowledge of election law, he has been involved working within elections. He stated in his opinion no rules or laws were broken regarding purdah-pre-election /rules/laws.

Complaints would need to go to FDC's Conduct Committee process.

'These are the type of games that are played at election times' Mislead by journalists and bloggers.

Items for Discussion. (refer to agenda) (Not the full transcript s– highlights only)

Cllr Elisabeth Sennitt Clough

Read a prepared statement concerning The SaxonGate Residents Group's concerns of materials being used at the Churchfield Farm – near the Ralph Butcher Causeway .
([IBAA – Incinerator Bottom End Ash Aggregate](#))

The group highlighted the differing terminology of what is IBAA is - between the Environment Agency and Cambs CC. The Environment Agency (EA) – It appears Johnsons Aggregates the source of IBAA – Government Guidelines RPS247 should apply, the SaxonGate Group inform the Council that the EA looking at the site appears that the materials do not conform with RPS247.

They ask for a strong Duty-of-Care chain, with monitoring and enforcement to protect the environment. The use of IBAA without proper controls could have far reaching consequences on residents.

The proposal that Cllr ESC is proposing is that there needs to be a viable Duty-of-Care chain and common definition to avoid contamination risks.

WTC will write to FDC/Cambs CC and the EA.

Cllr Boden – Stated that there are circumstances where according to UK best practice IBAA may be able to be used. As far as the Churchfield Trailer Park is concerned – they clearly fail to follow the acceptable practice because there is no impermeable membrane covering them. Leaching into the watercourse is the danger.

Cllr Boden supports the motion, and stated he would come up for debate at the next meeting of FDC.

Cllr Gerstner (Declared interest of sitting on FDC Planning Committee)

Stated that on this particular application there was a lot conditions put on the approval.

Including Leachates, run-off water. The conditions have not been met – I actually contacted Mr Swain the Head of Planning Enforcement and asked him for an update on why none of the conditions had been met. It now gets complicated because some parts of the planning - very little come under FDC whilst other parts come under the EA. (permits to use the material).

We are on the case from my perspective as it is in the ward I represent.

This needs to be unequivocally solved not in years, but in months, and if there needs to be enforcement we will push forward for that enforcement.

The motion was carried.

(Cllr Mayor did not vote for personal reasons) not that she was against it.

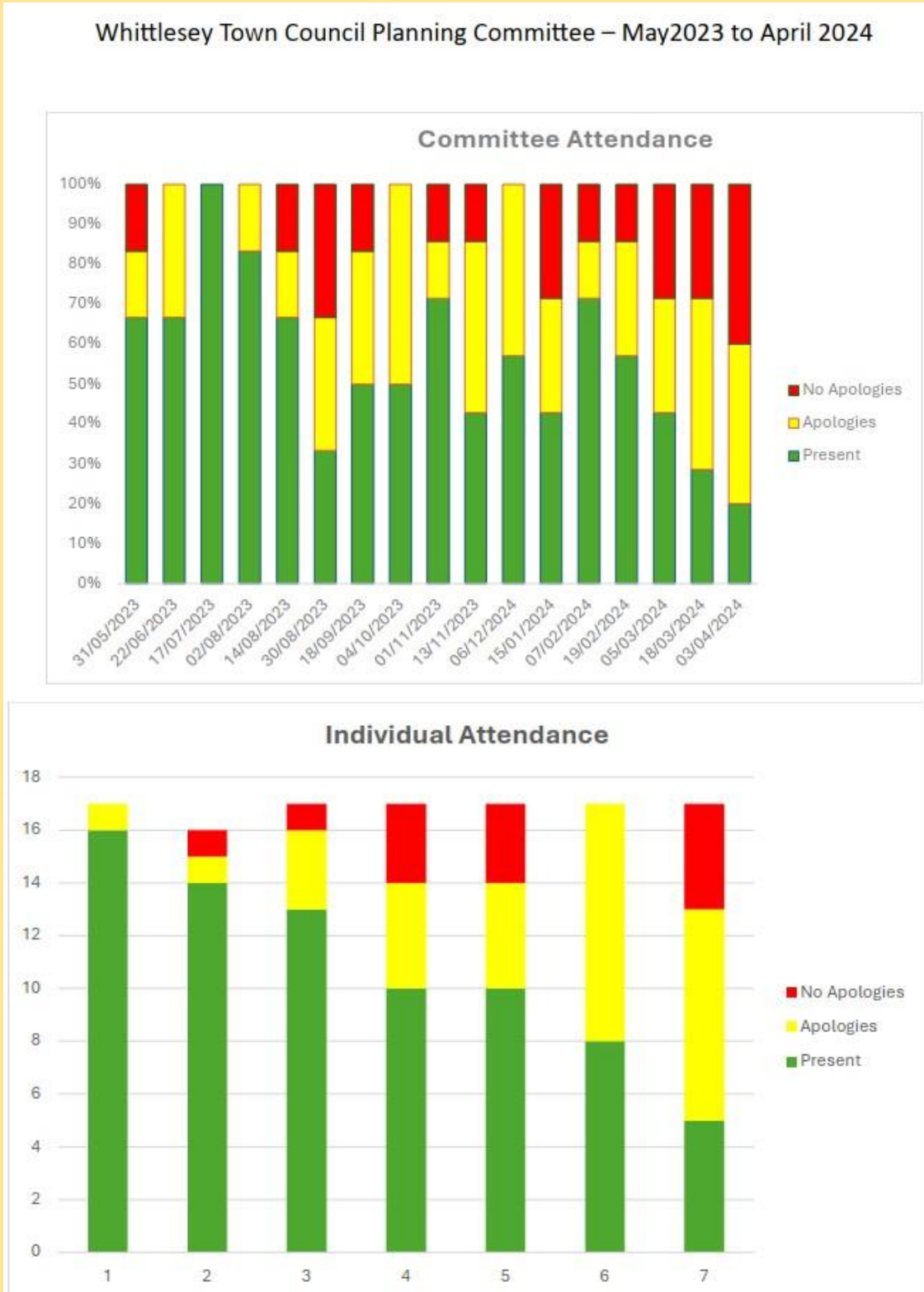
Cllr Wainwright. WTC Planning Committee, the attendance(s) at WTC Planning Committee meetings has been declining over a period of time on 3 occasions they were unable to continue discussions. On one occasion the Committee was not quorate.

Cllr Wainwright circulated a chart of attendances over a period of time to highlight the problem, He did not name Councillors who had not attended.

The number of times Councillors failed to attend without giving apologies.

He felt that it was a disservice to the residents of Whittlesey..

Below two charts that highlight the somewhat poor attendance of WTC Planning Committee.



Councillors are not named, but are given a number - #7 has the worst attendance.

Cllr Gerstner I concur with Cllr Boden, I received a number of complaints after the last planning meeting, which had to be cancelled because it was not quorate, two members of the public attended the meeting that may have wanted to speak on planning matters, and I use the word – that we as a council are being ‘disrespectful’ to those members of the public who come in their own time, to listen, and give their views at meetings – the sooner this committee is sorted out the better.

Cllr Boden We used to have a situation where one Councillor from each ward was represented or a substitute. It wasn’t too bad when we had 7 wards, now we have only 6. There will be a problem of filling 7 or 8 positions. Another issues is the size of the wards.

Council Communications.

(RG Note – This has been raised again, primarily due to the recent issues/concerns and complaints surrounding postings made on the Whittlesey Town Council Facebook© Page.) There is an article written by Mr John Elworthy on the CambsNews© Website and postings on his X (Twitter©) site. Read 11th April <https://www.cambsnews.co.uk/>)

Cllr Dorling. Refers back to the Council meeting July last year, I expressed concerns about communications from WTC and asked who managed overall control of content, following the introduction of the official FB page of WTC, recently amended to an ‘unofficial’ and private group, recently the facility has posted party politically messages contrary to the standard set in the House of Commons briefing on the 8th April 2024.

He went on to question locked out accounts, **Cllr Arman** confirmed the administrators do not block anyone from the group. I proposed a meeting to discuss communications, seconded by **Cllr Wainwright**. The chair suggested the item would pass onto the Community Projects and then onto Finance & Policy – When will this occur.

We need to know whether we have an ‘official’ or an ‘unofficial’ WTC FB page.
Who will independently administer and challenge compliance concerns.

Cllr Gerstner Thank you – I have had no communication with Mr Bibb in what I am about to say, I thank Cllr Tierney for his input this evening from the public forum.

I propose that ‘**If**’ WTC want an official FB page, then the Clerk should be the moderator and only official Town Council business or community events should be posted.

This would leave the ‘unofficial’ WTC FB page to do as it wishes and post on how it sees fit.

Cllr Boden Has concerns, putting it mildly about FB pages particularly to do with the potential for individuals to be blocked for what-ever reason which he found to be inappropriate for an official Council FB page. Our Clerk has made it clear on more than one occasion at meetings of the Council and elsewhere that No Facebook page, no communication method can be ‘official’ without it being done through the Clerk – and by law the Clerk has to control things. FB is a very different beast from a Website, FB has to be very reactive if it is to be effective. He (Cllr Boden) doesn’t think it is actually going to be appropriate to have an official FB page because it would place too great a burden upon the Clerk. Refer to the next F&P Meeting.

Cllr Gerstner The confusion from last May when this group was set up – I personally thought it was the Councils FB page as to the bulk members of the public, it never said then it was the ‘unofficial’ FB page – the name changed – I am happy with that I am not knocking it. It is the perception since last May until now recently all others thought it was the official WTC FB page and that’s where the confusion comes to the members of the public, they don’t know any different to what we were led to believe, we’ve had some clarification now which is fine. As I said before that ‘If’ WTC wants an official FB page we can move forward with it at another meeting and another time – I am very pleased that members of the public are here to listen to both our challenges and their concerns.

Cllr Wainwright I would like to speak on the issue of confusion, which I was confused by. When it was set up (WTC FB page) it declared itself to be such, I was joined to the page by one of the administrators without myself asking for it. When all of a sudden it was used for party political purposes for campaigning came as a bit of a shock. Before I could take any decisive action, I found I had also been blocked from it.

The Pathway Church is also blocked from it for some reason.
If Councillors around the table are confused the general public must be even more confused.

The proposal after some debate/discussion in front of the 19 public, that this be put to the Finance & Policy Committee at their next meeting and brought back to full council – the subject being an ‘official Facebook page.

Cllr Dorling What is going to happen in the meantime to the remains of the ‘unofficial FB page.

Cllr Mockett This is currently being discussed at FDC so we can’t comment.
We will let you know how that goes.

Cllr Gerstner I have taken no part in any FB I remained completely away from it. However I was sent screenshots. On behalf of residents who had contacted me. I had communication with Paul Medd the Chief Executive of FDC and my questions to him was had ‘Correct Due Diligence and Governance’ been applied to the complaints that had been made.
He confirmed that they had been.

Vote to be put to F&P unanimous.

Other Business.

Within the financial documents, the cost of election(s), the last By-election for Whittlesey Northwest cost in the region of £8,000.

WTC cash position was a healthy position.

The expected cost of the May 02nd By-Election(s) in Whittlesey is in the region of £5,000 to

£6,000 - shared costs for the Police & Crime Commissioner election.
More postal votes will cost Council more money.
Whittlesey Town Council are in a strong financial position.

Date of next meeting: Thursday 23rd May 2024

It is the annual Parish meeting which starts at 18:00

The Mayor will presenting cheques to her chosen charities from 17:30

After the meeting had concluded, I stated to Cllr Boden that we should be very proud as a Council to be in such a good financial position, through diligence and prudence and at the same time supporting many events and organisations locally.
Hundreds of Councils would like to be in our position.



ARMED FORCES WEEKEND
WHITTLESEY 2024
29th -30th JUNE

In the town Centre
Live Bands - Living History
Market - Hot Food - Bar
& LOTS LOTS MORE

Logos for: COMMUNITY FUND, MUSIC MEDIA, Whittlesey Town Council, Pathway Church, Whittlesey, Pondersbridge & Cootes, CLARION FUTURES

To find out 'who' your Councillor is – please go to the [Whittlesey Town Council Website](http://www.whittleseytowncouncil.gov.uk).

www.whittleseytowncouncil.gov.uk

Go to the top Tab Bar – Council Matters Scroll down to Current Councillors or Find My Councillors. Contact details are then shown for your Councillor in your area.



I am **Roy Gerstner** the only Councillor in Whittlesey who makes regular reports on Council, Public and Community Group meetings. I am aware that some Councillors post on Social Media.

I have done so for more than 13+ years both as a member of the public and as a Town Councillor.

I have made 7,500+ postings on this site.

I had over 4,000,000 hits on this site.

I have been elected as the **Independent** Fenland District Councillor for The South Ward of Whittlesey along with Cllr Mrs Kay Mayor (Conservative).

I have been elected as an **Independent** Whittlesey Town Councillor for the South Ward of Whittlesey South along with Cllr Diana Dickinson (Conservative)

Primarily I report on Council meetings & business (Both at FDC & WTC) to keep the electorate informed on both what I am actively involved with and in part other interests that I believe the electorate within Whittlesey & District may also wish to be informed.

My Web-Blog is community based and I report and comment on many events, meetings and subjects.

I occasionally make a mistake and more than happy to correct if it pointed out to me.

If you have any issues or concerns outside of the Whittlesey South, you are welcome in the first instance to contact your own local Councillor.

If you contact me – I am more than happy to forward it to them. **e&oe** ©Roy Gerstner.

If you have a generic issue or wish to make a comment, I am more than happy to publish or promote any community events – (subject to meeting publishing criteria).

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FRG 2022