

FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

**Minutes of the 51st Meeting of the Community Services Committee held on
3rd September 2019 at the Rufus Centre**

Present: Cllr K Badham (Chairman)
Cllrs R Coleman D Toinko J Blakeman J Dann

Cllrs A Lutley (Sub) M Halligan (Sub)
Cllr I Blazeby

In attendance: Amenities Officer, Amenities Assistant, Major Projects Officer
Community Services Officer
Two residents

Apologies for absence received: Cllr P Earles

580 Open Forum

Two members of the public attended following on from their request at the previous Community Services Meeting on the 6th August to seek permission to carry out metal detecting on Town Council Land. They had believed there would be a decision made at this meeting but were advised that it had been referred to Town Council on the 17th September and would be discussed then. They then left the meeting.

581 Declarations of Interest and Requests for Dispensation

There were none

582 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received and accepted from Cllr P Earles

583 Chairman's Announcements

There were none

584 Assistant Town Clerk's Report

The Amenities Assistant reported that as the Assistant Town Clerk had recently left the Council, she had attempted to update the report but didn't have it ready to distribute at the meeting. She was unsure which items had been completed and which were still pending but would have an updated list available in the near future which would be distributed to Committee Members in due course.

585 Play Areas/Open Space

a) The New Play Area at Millennium Park

The Amenities Assistant reported that there had been a series of issues with some of the play equipment at the new play area and there were currently two swing seats chained up and awaiting replacement parts. She said she was unhappy with the length of time it had taken for those parts to arrive as they had to be shipped over from Europe and she was also disappointed with the lack of response from the Contractor's Head of Installations to her request for

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someone to visit the site to provide reassurance and ensure all other fixings were secure. The fixings had now arrived and were due to be fitted by the end of the week.

Cllr Lutley asked if it was possible the problems could be due to vandalism and the Amenities Assistant said it was unlikely as the Contractor had already been in touch with a Safety Notice about the parts.

Cllr Toinko asked if these parts, which were small and universal could have been bought locally which would have greatly cut down the time the swings were out of action and the Amenities Assistant said she had considered this but decided against as it could have invalidated the warranty.

The Chairman requested a full review of all equipment by the contractors which the Amenities Assistant said she would arrange.

The Chairman produced an email that he had received that day from a visitor to the park about a foot injury they had sustained after standing on some kind of nail. It wasn't known whether it had come from one of the pieces of equipment or was random debris. The Amenities Assistant said she would respond to the email immediately and would ask the Grounds Team to investigate.

b) Skate Park Repairs

A report had been received from a young, responsible user of the skate park that the surface at the base of the bowl was badly eroded and rough and felt it was dangerous to use. The Amenities Assistant paid a visit to the skate park and took photographs. The surface had only recently been repaired in early 2018 after vandals lit a bonfire on it. Unfortunately this had occurred again, causing similar damage. The original manufacturers were contacted and had provided a quote for its repair. There were only a few other manufacturers of these particular concrete skate parks and they were based much further away.

It was **Recommended** that the quote from the original manufacturers be followed up. Vote: All in favour.

c) Drinking water fountains

The Chairman said the Council had been approached on several occasions asking if it would be possible for water fountains to be installed around Flitwick and suggested it was something to consider spending S106 monies on as he was acutely aware that these funds were due to expire shortly. Cllr Snape had shown him photos of examples and some of them looked fantastic with differing heights/levels suitable for adults, children and animals. They could be positioned next to areas such as The Hub or other open spaces. There followed a discussion on whether they could be targeted by vandals and although it couldn't be discounted, they were designed to be near enough vandal proof. It was also mentioned that there were schemes for local

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businesses to provide access to water for all but which could be problematic for the public having to ask for the water.

It was **Recommended** that the purchase of water fountains should be investigated and the findings be referred to Full Council. Vote: All in favour.

d) General

Cllr Toinko advised that he had been in correspondence with Prof Jim Harris of Soil Science at Cranfield University who had been trialling the use of wild flowers in grass verges. Cllr Tionko knew from residents' feedback that this was something that would be welcomed and suggested it could be considered by Members. Prof Harris had offered an invitation for any interested parties to visit him at Cranfield to look at examples there and had also offered to come and give a presentation to the Committee. The Members were keen for the latter and asked Cllr Toinko to facilitate this.

586 Highways Issues/Infrastructure/Car Parking

a) Minutes of the Highways Meeting held on the 19th August

The minutes were noted and passed without comment.

b) General

The Amenities Assistant had been approached by the General Manager of Flitwick Lower School requesting the use of the Hub car park for parents and guardians to drop their children off for school should the road works not be completed in time for the start of the new school term. This would mean the caretaker opening the gate at the earlier time of 7.45am. Permission had been granted by the Members and the School was grateful for this.

The Amenities Assistant asked the Committee if this could perhaps be offered on a continual basis as although there was an arrangement already in place with Tesco for a "Park & Stride", the walk to the school gates would be shorter and would not involve the crossing of Coniston Rd. However it was pointed out by the Amenities Officer that the gate was intentionally not opened until the later time of 9am to deter commuter parking. It was also pointed out it could also inadvertently cause traffic build up from cars queuing to enter and exit the entrance in Dunstable Rd. The Chairman suggested that the earlier opening of the gates be monitored to see how it went following completion of the road works and if there signs that commuters were beginning to park there then the opening time would need to revert back to 9am.

Cllr Blakeman commented on the long rows of cars parked along Manor Way stretching as far back as Tennyson Rd. All agreed that it made it difficult for drivers to view around the sweeping bends and that some drivers took dangerous chances in speeding along that stretch not knowing if there was anyone coming in the opposite direction. The Amenities Assistant would take this to the next Highways Meeting in October to explore the possibility of

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introducing “creative traffic restrictions” solutions to deter inconsiderate parking.

587 Grounds Services and Flitwick Manor Park

a) Ground Services Report

The report was noted and passed without comment

b) Residents’ Driven Project at Manor Park.

The report was noted and passed without comment other than the Chairman said he knew the wood carver for the benches and had seen his work and it was of an excellent standard.

c) Parking Issues at Manor Park

Although this had been discussed at the last meeting and it had been decided that the Assistant Town Clerk would compose a letter to go on vehicle windscreens, the Chairman wished to further explore if there were any other options for stopping anyone other than Blue Badge holders from using the car park. It was agreed it was regrettable the Council could not enforce parking restrictions, but that it needed to do everything it could to follow the Planning Condition of ensuring only Blue Badge Holders could use the few parking spaces available. There followed a discussion with suggestions that included larger, bolder signage nearer the roadside. The Projects Co-Ordinator said that she felt there was scope to expand on the wording of the notice for the windscreens and that she would consider the text for this.

d) General

There were no further comments.

588 Allotments

**a) Minutes of the Allotment Liaison Committee Meeting held on the
19th August**

The Minutes were noted and passed without comment

b) General

It had been discussed at the ALC Meeting and mentioned in section 4.4 of the Minutes that any plots still available to rent at the very end of the year, (November and December *only*), could be offered to potential new tenants rent free for those two months only. This could be an incentive for these plots to be taken up sooner rather than later as tenants would be able to prepare the ground ready for the new year when the lease for the plot would become payable at the usual annual rate in January.

It was **Recommended** that the offering of rent free Allotments for November and December only be referred to Full Council for consideration.
Vote: All in favour

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589 Burial Ground

a) General

There was nothing to report

590 Community & Events

a) Community Services Officer's Report.

ii) **Upcoming Events.** The Community Services Officer reported that sales for the Magic Night on the 20th September had been poor and she had decided to lower the entry price which meant that the event would probably make a loss. Numbers for ticket sales for the Michael Jackson Tribute evening on the 11th October were also low.

There followed a discussion about cancellation rates.

Cllr Blazeby asked if a process was in place for making decisions on whether an event should be cancelled and at what stage before incurring further losses due to cancellation fees by the performer(s). The Community Services Officer said that terms relating to cancellation charges varied between the acts but the decision on whether to cancel or not was always brought to the Committee who would then take it to Full Council. The Chairman said that as cancellation charges were often time critical and the Committee meetings were monthly, this process was inflexible and felt that staff should have the ability to determine when to cancel an event themselves without bringing to the Committee. It was also suggested that cancellation charges could be negotiated with the acts before the booking was made.

Cllr Blazeby asked if it was usual to offer food at an event. The Community Services Officer said that not all of them provided food within the ticket price but for some events such as the Magic Night it was felt that this would help ticket sales and as the cost to provide hot food was minimal, it was felt the ticket price was excellent value for money. It was suggested that the type of food on offer eg hot food, be made clearer in the advertising.

The general subject of ticket pricing and sales would be discussed in more depth at the upcoming Working Party.

It was **Recommended** that, as in the Michael Jackson Tribute Night, rather than waiting to take a decision to Full Council to cancel an event due to poor ticket sales with the risk of incurring higher cancellation costs, an indicative vote could be sought amongst Committee members by email. Vote: All in favour.

ii) **Proposed Youth Bike Meeting.** Following comments on social media about safety concerns with youths on bikes on roads around Flitwick, the Community Services Officer had spoken with 4YP who were aware of the problem and looking at ways of proactively combating this problem. Although she expected 4YP to take a lead on this, she would be working with them over the winter.

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iii) **Radios for events.** For the first time, radios fitted with ear pieces had been hired for marshalling at this year's Car Show and had been found to be much more user friendly and effective than the walkie-talkies used for past events. There followed a discussion about whether it would be more cost effective to buy rather than hire. The Community Services Officer had calculated that even with taking into account the cost of an operating licence and based on using them at four events, (carnival, dog show, car show, Christmas lights), the radios would pay for themselves within two years. There was money available in the budget and the quote presented to the Committee had been the most competitive.

It was **Recommended** the radios should be bought.
Vote: All in favour.

iv) **Garage Music Night.** The Community Services Officer had been in talks with a Garage Music promoter, "Back To Old School", about holding a "free trial" of a Garage Night at The Rufus Centre in March. The promoter was confident that tickets sales would reach 150 – 200. They would provide the acts and targeted promotion and would also be in charge of and keep ticket sales so initially the risk of low ticket sales would be theirs. The Council would promote it locally and would keep all bar profits. If it proved to be a success, the company would be willing for the Council to keep ticket sales for future events with the option of growing it into a bigger event like a festival. The Community Services Officer reassured the Members that measures would be put in place to keep noise levels down. After discussion, the Members had no objections for the event to go ahead.

v) **Films at Flitwick.** The new season of Films at Flitwick, which was due to start in September, had been postponed due to licensing issues. Numbers had remained low in the past because the current umbrella licence did not permit external advertising or charging people to see a film, (costs were covered by charging for refreshments), nor did it cover a wide choice of films that could be shown. Other licence providers with a wider range and more recent films were available but would be more expensive. The Community Services Officer pointed out that if she was able to advertise, numbers would increase and perhaps it could be turned into more of a family orientated event.

Cllr Blazeby suggested the Zonita Cinema in Ampthill be contacted to find out what licence they held as they were able to show more up to date films. He also reminded Members that there was an imminent vote for Resident Driven Projects that included a Flitwick Film Festival and it might be a good idea to have a preliminary discussion with Flitwick Library who had a digital film projector. It was agreed that this should be explored further.

vi) **Carnival Parade.** There were several reasons raised as to why a parade should not be included in next year's Carnival - the number of floats was dwindling, the organisation of the parade was staff intensive, especially at

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the outset and there had been issues with the road closures and co-ordination with the police.

The Amenities Officer said that to avoid a public outcry, it might be better to have a parade next year but make it widely known in advance that it could be the last.

A suggestion had been put forward by Cllr Blazeby to have an alternative "Wheelbarrow Parade" with both individuals and clubs & societies taking part. The Amenities Officer said that a combination of the floats and wheelbarrows could be considered and Cllr Dann then suggested that in addition to wheelbarrows, other decorated "wheels" could be included eg the boys on the bikes and skateboarders which would hopefully encourage them to integrate into the community.

The Amenities Officer said that if the parade was to expand in this way, there would be a need for more marshalls and a lack of available staff could be problematic. The Chairman said that from his participation on a local Facebook Group, Focus on Flitwick, he was aware there were several Flitwick residents volunteering their help with Christmas lights and that he was sure they would be willing to help with the Carnival too if asked. It was agreed that sharing of information with FoF should be encouraged. He also suggested the Carnival Arts Centre in Luton be contacted to ask for their advice in organising a walking parade. Cllr Toinko suggested that with regards to the youth cycling element of the parade, CBC, via 4YP, could also be consulted.

Cllr Toinko proposed the following should be contacted:- the CAC in Luton for advice, CBC/4YP for help in participating and Focus on Flitwick for volunteers help with marshalling. All agreed.

vii) **Other Events.** The Community Services Officer reported to the Members that after carrying out research on why Children's activities were not as popular as they were in the past, was that a) there was no longer enough FTC staff to provide in-house activities so outside companies were being used which meant ticket prices were more expensive and b) other Flitwick organisations such as the schools and churches and the Leisure Centre were now providing more activities themselves. However the recent Nerf Wars event had proved to be extremely popular and an adult version was now being considered.

The Chairman suggested having an Open Session for future events at the next Committee meeting.

Cllr Blazeby pointed out that the research carried out on events hadn't included those for approximately one third of Flitwick residents namely adult couples with or without children and adult singles and that this needed to be addressed.

viii) **Flitwick Market.** The Community Services Officer asked if it was possible for an FTC stall to be set up every Friday to promote events and sell tickets, to provide general information on regular activities and provide recycling and waste bags. The cost would be £10.00. Cllr Dann suggested it

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could also provide an opportunity for Councillors to use the stall as a surgery.

It was **Recommended** an FTC stall be set up every Friday at the market. Vote: all in favour.

g) Remembrance Parade

The Chairman said that as this subject was a Civic Event it fell under Corporate Services Committee, (according to the Handbook), however the reason he had brought it to Community Services was that he had heard absolutely nothing about this year's event and was aware that FTC staff already had several events to deal with in October/November. He had been led to believe the Royal British Legion as a whole had sent out a dictate to Councils that they, the councils, should be the chief organisers and he wondered if any other Members or staff had been advised as such by the Flitwick RBL. The Community Services Officer confirmed that a briefing meeting had been arranged with the RBL on the 11th September.

The Chairman felt that this was unsatisfactory as a council as it didn't give FTC staff much time to organise it and that clarification was needed from the Town Mayor as to who should be organising this. Cllr Blazeby said he didn't recall the Remembrance Parade ever being discussed at Corporate Services and certainly not during his two years as Chair of the Committee. However he would be happy to bring it up at the next meeting and propose it be transferred to Community Services where he believed it belonged.

h) Christmas Lights

The Chairman said that as Tesco were offering a much smaller space in their car park this year, that the area outside Barclays Bank would be in the middle of road works and that the Village Hall area had been disregarded due to prohibitively extra expense, there was very little choice in where the Switching on of the Lights could be held. He felt there were two options: either do not to have a Switch-on event at all or take up the Swan PH offer of holding a smaller scale event in their car park. There would not be a tree or fairground rides but there would still be space for a small selection of stalls to make it feel like a community event. Also Ex-Cllr Sheehan had offered his services as MC which was warmly welcomed.

Cllr Ryan Proposed to go ahead with the offer from The Swan PH and hold a small switch-on event there. All in favour.

591 Community Safety

a) Floodlighting and CCTV at Skate Park.

Cllr Snape was in discussion with the CCTV company about extending CCTV coverage to include the Skate Park and install more cameras on a new lighting column there. The Amenities Assistant said she had spoken

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with the street lighting company who had refurbished the street lamps in Chapel Rd and who were due to remove the old lamp column in the new play area. Before they could provide a quote for a new column at the Skate Park they needed to know how the power would be sourced. Cllr Snape would be asked for more information on this.

The Amenities Assistant said she had also discussed with this company the future for the two floodlights situated between the Hub car park and the edge of the old skate park. Both were not working and one was beyond repair. She asked the Members if they felt there was still a need for lighting in this area.

After a brief discussion, It was agreed that a) that Cllr Snape and Amenities Assistant should continue to investigate the erection of a lighting column and CCTV cameras at the Skate Park and b) both lamps at the Hub Car park be brought back to working order.

b) General.

Cllr Dann asked if it was correct that the Landowner's permission had been sought to hold a rave on his estate the previous weekend which had caused so much upset with residents due to its lengthy duration and the noise disturbance. As the landowner was the Duke of Bedford he very much doubted it and wondered if CBC and the police could be approached for advice on what, if anything, FTC can do as a whole to prevent this happening again.

At this point an extension to the meeting was requested by the Chairman and it was agreed.

592 Questions

a) Cllr Blazeby commented that the Action Log had once again not been circulated and said he hoped to receive it shortly.

Confidential Section

In accordance with Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings Act), the public and press be excluded for Items 14 to 16 in view of the confidential nature of the information to be discussed relating to financial and contractual negotiations and questions.

593 Memorial Request

It was **Recommended** that the proposed request be refused. However under the circumstances the Council would donate the fee to the chosen charity once payment had been received.

Vote: six in favour, one abstention.

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At this point the meeting was extended.

594 To Receive and Note the Community Services Budget for July.

This was received and noted.

595 Questions

There were none.

Meeting finished at 9.46pm

Signed.....
Chairman