



**MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 16TH FEBRUARY 2021
AT 7:30PM VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

Present:

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)
Cllr M A Williams
Cllr K Badham
Cllr P Dodds
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr R Shaw
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr M Platt
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr D Toinko

Cllrs G Mackey, C Gomm & N Bunyan – Central Beds Ward Members

Also present:

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk
Members of the public - 4

5072. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillors Dann and Earles (both unwell).

5073. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive Statutory Declarations of Interests from Members in relation to:

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item - Councillors Roberts and Mackey declared an interest on item 12f ii) regarding Town Council Office Space.

5074. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman requested that Councillors send meeting apologies by email to the Chairman of meetings and copy in the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk.

The Chairman advised there were public present wishing to speak on the ARG policy and these would be taken under item 8b with Council's agreement. Members agreed to this as there was a relevant item under Matters Arising.

5075. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

The former Leisure Centre site consultation events for the Care Village development had been well attended virtually and the main feedback related to the building being imposing. Councillor Mackey advised that the artistic impressions were not giving a full view. Trees were not going to be removed.

Councillor Mackey had requested for more regular updates regarding the climate change emergency however Councillor Dixon (CBC) had responded to say these would be given annually.

Councillor Bunyan asked if the Town Council wanted to organise an Extraordinary Council meeting to discuss the Station Interchange and Steppingley Road Care Village projects as CBC Officers were willing to give updates. A discussion took place, but the Council decided this matter should be kept with the Planning Committee and other interested Councillors could attend. There was a meeting scheduled for 18th February where both projects were itemised on the agenda. Councillor Dodds advised that the project updates would be given bi-monthly at Planning.

Councillor Gomm entered the meeting at this time.

5076. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Heather Campbell had attended the meeting to speak as a Health & Beauty Industry representative in relation to the newly released ARG2 Policy from CBC. Since the previous meeting, she had attended several meetings with relevant Council representatives and MPs, had articles published and taken part in radio interviews. She had been feeling optimistic; however CBC published the ARG2 Policy online without any announcements and was disappointed with the contents. She gave her reasons, which included some exclusions for business owners. She asked why CBC were not following the discretion other local authorities were doing to help support those in her industry who were perhaps working from home salons and other similar circumstances that CBC were excluding.

Councillor Bunyan advised that the Leader of the Group Ms Campbell was a part of would be speaking at the CBC Overview & Scrutiny Committee and that it would be appropriate to wait until after this to see the outcome.

Former Councillor Michael Ashton had attended the meeting to say congratulations to the Rufus Centre for their efforts in facilitating the vaccination hub. He advised that it was well organised and staff were friendly. Mr Ashton wanted to thank the Council for the work they had been doing in response to the pandemic and to also publicly thank the staff who had published an article in Flitwick Papers promoting his newly created *Stroke Survivors, Partners & Carers Group*. Mr Aston also asked if the Council could give an update on the local organisations' leases.

The Chairman advised that the leases had been on hold whilst the Asset Review was carried out which was a significant undertaking. He mentioned that this matter was due to be discussed under the Exempt Section but advised that leases had been offered to the Royal British Legion and the Sea Cadets, but terms needed to be drafted. Officers were in contact with the Guides and relevant discussions were being held to sort out their lease, with an outcome expected shortly. The Chairman advised that this matter was a top priority for the Council and it was hoped the leases would be completed in time for the Annual Town Meeting.

Jon Culman asked if the Council had permission for utilising the space outside Barclays. He was informed that events were due to be held in the spring, which the Council hoped

would be a regular feature. Mr Culman asked if there were still plans for a market at the site and he was told there was no plans for this. The Chairman advised that big events had been cancelled for this year but the team were looking at ways to bring the community together after the pandemic.

The Deputy Town Clerk left the meeting at this time.

Mr Culman had noticed the application for the Station Road build and he wondered what the Council were doing regarding funding for the building. He also asked about what plans there were for Manor Park gates and the lake. The Chairman advised that there was a lot of work being done behind the scenes for Manor Park and there would be some proposals coming forward. Mr Culman asked if the new burial ground and country park site had been flooded in areas and what the Council would do about this for future burials. The Town Clerk had noticed an area of flooding and ground water issues were mentioned in the planning conditions which the Council would need to mitigate.

The Deputy Town Clerk re-entered the meeting at this time.

The Chairman advised that specialists had assessed the ground water.

Mr Ashton stated that when he was a Councillor, the Burial Ground was near to being full and asked for an update. The Chairman advised that regular updates on this were given at Community Services Committee and that there was enough space at the current burial ground.

5077. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Councillor Dodds advised that he had not yet had a response from Environmental Health regarding the late night working at Tesco. Councillor Mackey commented that he had contacted the relevant department at CBC and was waiting for a manager's response. Councillor Gomm commented on the difficulties CBC faced with communicating with Tesco and stated there were concerns that there were no negotiating powers.

Councillor Toinko raised several comments:

- He was surprised and disappointed with the update regarding the climate change emergency declared by CBC and that this would only be reviewed annually. He believed the subject of climate needed to be within all councillors' remits at CBC.
- He referred to the update Ward Members gave on the trees at the Steppingley Road Care Village Development and asked if the retention of trees included the cherry trees near the entrance.
- He commented that it would have been helpful if the Ward Members' suggestion of an Extraordinary Meeting had been sent in writing.

Councillor Mackey suggested that Councillor Toinko should attend the upcoming Planning Committee meeting to get an answer on his cherry trees question. Councillor Mackey commented that if the information received was not sufficient, he would be happy to take this forward with CBC. Councillor Mackey advised that the Ward Members did not feel written reports were the right course of action and stated he would be happy for the Town Clerk to circulate the Ward Members' reasons for this. The Chairman requested that the Town Clerk share the email with Members.

Action: Town Clerk

Councillor Blazeby advised that the detail of the Care Village Development would not be known until the second part of the Planning application is done, which would include the trees on site. Councillor Dodds questioned why CBC never tell residents what full projects

include. The development was also being carried out by two companies – CBC's Development Company and another.

5078. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 19th January 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members received and approved as a true record; the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 19th January 2021 via virtual access.

- b. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Personnel Committee Meeting, held on **Monday 25th January 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access (**Chairman will move this item to Exempt**).

Members noted the **resolutions** of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on **Monday 25th January 2021** via virtual access.

- c. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 26th January 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members received and approved the **recommendations** of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 26th January 2021** via virtual access.

- d. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 28th January 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members noted the **resolutions** of the Planning Committee Meeting held on **Thursday 28th January 2021** via virtual access.

- e. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 2nd February 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members noted the **resolutions** of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on **Tuesday 2nd February 2021** via virtual access.

- f. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 11th February 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members noted the **resolutions** of the Business Services Committee Meeting held on **Thursday 11th February 2021** via virtual access.

- g. Members are asked to note the Planning Committee decisions from 28th January 2021.

Members noted the Planning Committee decisions from 28th January 2021.

Councillor Gomm advised that the East/West Rail Company had £760m from the Government and a consultation was coming up for the Bedford to Cambridge route. He asked if the Council would like to attend a joint meeting with Ampthill Town Council to hear a presentation from the East/West Rail Company and this was agreed.

Action: Councillor Gomm to progress

Councillor Shaw commented that there was a campaign to protect rural England and raised concern about the level of house building associated with the Oxford-Cambridge Arc in North Bedfordshire and the associated destruction of wildlife and green space. The campaigners supported the southern route for East/West Rail which had a significantly lower impact. He believed it was important to understand CBC's input.

5079. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 19th January 2021.

Councillor Dodds asked for an update on the approved contractors list and he was advised there was no update at this time.

Councillor Badham asked for the figure breakdown on the ARG grants from Councillor Mackey. Councillor Mackey advised that these were expected on 18th February.

- b. Members to receive any updates from Officers: **Response to the request for a letter to be sent to CBC on the Restrictions Grants** (see supporting papers).

Members noted the response letter from CBC.

Councillor Mackey advised that the Ward Members were disappointed with the draft policy in terms of the income support exclusions. The number of professions eligible were widened but they felt the exclusions were worse than ARG1. Councillor Mackey reminded Members that the policy was a draft document and he would be addressing the amounts and exclusions as CBC had just followed the basic Government advice. He said discussions were to follow.

Councillor Badham expressed his opinions on the letter and stated it did not follow Government policy. He took objection to some of the phrases used in the letter because he found them insulting to the businesses and individuals most affected by the exclusions. He knew of people who had not received a reply from the CBC team working on this and was delighted that Ward Members would take this policy query forward. Councillor Mackey would be asking the Leader to encourage staff to engage faster and he was disappointed to hear some members of the public had not received a response at all. Ms Campbell advised that she had only received an acknowledgement and not a response to her application.

It was **resolved** for Councillor Badham to assist the Town Clerk with writing another response to CBC on the restrictions grant.

Action: Councillor Badham/Town Clerk

Councillor Mackey offered to relay any Members' comments on this if they sent him the information.

5080. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Annual Town Meeting**

Members were asked to consider holding an Annual Town Meeting (ATM) via Zoom in April and to discuss whether there will be a focus on the environment (as per previous arrangements for the 2020 meeting, which was cancelled due to Covid-19).

Councillor Blazeby asked if the ATM needed to be held in April and he was informed that there it was necessary prior to the 7th May due to Government rules.

Councillor Toinko suggested moving the environmental focus into each of the Chairmen's Reports and believed significant progress had been made on projects since the last ATM so this should be the Council's main focus.

Councillor Dodds asked about purdah implications of holding the meeting close to the election and he was advised that the Annual Statutory Meeting would be held after the election.

Councillor Blazeby requested for the ATM date to be in late April so that work could be done on the corporate strategy prior to the meeting. Councillor Toinko asked if the date could be left open in case legislation allowed for the meeting to be held later in the year.

It was **resolved** to organise a virtual ATM on Zoom, at a later point in the year than prior to 7th May (if possible) under Government rules.

b. Statutory Declaration

Members were asked to consider agreeing to the submission of a Statutory Declaration to Central Beds Council relating to land at Flitwick Leisure Centre. The supporting papers contained a draft version of the Declaration and a report explaining the background and context of this matter.

The Chairman gave some additional background on this and Members discussed the matter in detail. Members asked if there was an alternative way in which the bridge project could progress, and they were informed that the CBC Legal Team would give advice on this if the Council did not agree to the Declaration. Councillor Mackey admitted that he had not thought about the potential conflict of interest this matter was for him as a CBC Ward Member. Councillor Mackey also stated that he would expect CBC to indemnify him from legal recourse should there be a future problem related to the declaration.

It was **resolved** for Councillor Mackey not to make the Statutory Declaration regarding the ditch ownership being FTC's in the land transfer (2014) as there was insufficient Land Registry/legal documentation evidence.

c. Rural Market Town Group

Members considered becoming a member of the Rural Market Town Group and were in favour of utilising the free trial opportunity to see what benefits there were to become a member. It was thought it could assist with the Oxford Cambridge Arc and an Officer would be asked to report back prior to September.

It was **resolved** for the Council to take up the free trial opportunity for the Rural Market Town Group with a view to an Officer reporting back to the Council on its appropriateness for FTC in advance of making payment to become a member.

5081 ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Planning Approval

Members noted that the planning application CB/19/01652/FULL for land south of Station Road has been approved with conditions.

b. Councillor Surgeries/Public Enquiries Feedback

Members noted that there are no further updates since the previous Council meeting.

Councillor Surgeries on Zoom have been arranged for 19th February and 24th February with two Members hosting each. Going forward, there will be one virtual Surgery per month until restrictions allow for in-person sessions. Currently, there are no Surgeries

being held at Flitwick Market because it is a non-essential stall. Councillor Williams stated that she was still attending Flitwick Market each Friday to hold her regular surgery. The Chairman reminded members that Council cannot endorse or advertise any face to face surgeries because of Coronavirus restrictions.

Councillor Mackey agreed to host the Surgery with Councillor Thompson on 19th February as the Mayor was unwell.

Councillor Dodds referred to the Hornes End Road bridleway issue on the feedback form and explained that a resident who used a mobility scooter was unable to use the bridleway – this issue had been taken up by Ward Members and Councillor Mackey advised that more information on this would be presented at the next Highways meeting.

5082. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Ashton requested for a link to the next Council meeting to be sent to him.

Action: Deputy Town Clerk

Ms Campbell thanked the Council for their support and advised Councillors that she had plans to set up a community group in Flitwick which helped homeless people and asked how she could link up with the community services team. Councillor Badham advised that this was in hand.

Mr Culman explained that he should have raised the issues regarding Manor Park at this point in the meeting rather than earlier and the Chairman explained the new agendas allowed two opportunities for the public to speak at meetings.

5083. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution will be **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

12a) Personnel Committee Resolutions & Recommendations

Members noted the **resolutions** of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on **Monday 25th January 2021** via virtual access.

12b) Local Organisation Lease – for consideration

Members discussed the report and associated paperwork circulated.

It was **resolved** to insert a clause into the local organisation leases to allow the Council the option to charge rent based on the annual rental income achieved by each organisation, with an expected rebate of said monies being made as part of the current Community grants process, subject to the properties being adequately maintained to an agreed specification.

It was **resolved** to offer the local organisation discussed a 15-year lease on the understanding that the terms are to be decided.

It was **resolved** to instruct the Property Lawyer to work on drawing up draft leases for three local organisations up to the value of £5,500, which would also accommodate for any amendments above the quoted fee.

It was **resolved** for the Council to start maintaining the area of unregistered land nearby.

12c) Local Organisation Proposal – for consideration

Members discussed the proposal.

It was **resolved** to agree in principle to the revised proposal, but they were not in favour of one element of the plan.

12d) Asset Review Update – for information

There were no updates on outstanding matters of the Asset Review.

12e) Corporate Strategy – for consideration

Members discussed that Corporate Services Committee had recommended this item for Full Council to consider.

It was **resolved** to progress with the online workshops with a view to producing a Corporate Strategy at a cost of £4,500+VAT+expenses.

12f) Town Council Office Space – for consideration

Members discussed the reports circulated and considered the proposal.

It was **resolved** to accept moving Council and Committee meetings into the Davis Suite and to not have a dedicated Council Chamber at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to surrender the lease for the FTC Library Office with a view to receiving a significant Statutory Compensation Payment and benefit from subsequent annual savings on a space that is no longer required by FTC.

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolve** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Meeting closed at 9:51pm