



**MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING  
HELD ON 28<sup>TH</sup> JUNE 2021  
AT 7:30PM AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

**Present**

Cllr A Snape  
Cllr J Dann  
Cllr A Lutley  
Cllr K Badham  
Cllr R Shaw  
Cllr D Toinko  
Cllr P Dodds  
Cllr J Roberts  
Cllr C Thompson  
Cllr J Gleave  
Cllr M Platt  
Cllr H Hodges  
Cllr A Chacko  
Cllr P Earles

Cllr I Blazeby (via virtual access)

Cllrs N Bunyan, C Gomm – Central Beds Ward Members

**Also present:**

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager  
Susan Eldred – Community Services Manager  
Members of the public - 3

**5114. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Mackey who had family commitments.

Apologies were received and accepted from Councillor Williams.

**5115. 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 – None.

**5116. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor thanked Members for agreeing to change the date for the meeting. This had been done to sign off the accounts by the deadline which had been delayed due to resourcing problems at the external accountancy provider.

Councillors held a minute silence to pay their respects to former Town Mayor and Councillor, Phillip Thompson who had sadly passed away. Phillip Thompson had served the community well over a number of years.

**5117. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS**

Central Beds Council (CBC) had been receiving complaints regarding grass cutting, which had suffered due to the pattern of weather recently. Extra staff had been employed and CBC were trying to catch up. A schedule for rural roads was being drawn up alongside the National Policy to leave wildflowers wherever possible.

Councillors Snape and Gleave had contacted Ward Members regarding the surveying work being undertaken in the field opposite the former Leisure Centre site. It was reported that CBC did not own the land but this site had been within the Local Plan since 2017. CBC were trying to establish who the owners were. Councillor Lutley believed the Duke of Bedford was the owner and Councillor Bunyan had heard of another family. The Chairman advised that some residents had written to Town Councillors to voice their concerns.

Councillor Gomm entered the meeting at this time.

Regarding the station interchange project, staff were likely to be on site at the end of August. The project had been out to tender and these applications were being evaluated. A new Project Manager, Nick Shaw, had been appointed and he estimated completion within quarter 1 of 2022. The step free access scheme was being worked on by Network Rail (NWR) under discussion with CBC but this would not coincide with the station interchange project. There were no details from Thameslink as to when the exit/entrances from the bridge would be re-opened if at all. The Project Manager was aware of the shortcomings and was pushing for progress. Councillors were advised that there would be temporary traffic lights within the town centre area from now until completion and the Project Manager would keep FTC updated. Councillor Dodds had been invited to attend discussions with the Project Manager.

**5118. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Jim Snook had attended regarding the agenda item relating to the lockdown car show. He advised that if anyone had any questions or queries, he was here to answer them. He hoped to help the Council to understand what was happening. The Chairman advised that there would be a discussion on this at the relevant time on agenda and that he would invite Mr Snook to speak if there were questions.

**5119. INVITED SPEAKER**

There was no invited speaker.

**5120. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Councillor Shaw asked the Ward Members if the step free access scheme would definitely not be incorporated into the station interchange project as this is what had been intended. Members were advised that the step free access scheme was not anything to do with CBC other than for information. The scheme was being drawn up by Network Rail (NWR) and was paid for by the Department for Transport. CBC's input was to oversee and co-ordinate with the interchange project. Councillor Shaw advised that a representative from CBC had stated that the projects would run parallel however CBC Ward Members stated this was only ever an aspiration but it was not possible. The CBC Ward Members commented that it would make sense however it was impossible to change NWR's mind. Members were advised that the installation of lifts should not cause too much disruption other than when the crane was in situ.

Councillor Badham asked for an update on the Police investigation into the graffiti vandalism at the skatepark. The Community Services Manager (CSM) advised that statements had been given from her and 4YP and the issue was being processed by the Investigation Team and the Hate Crime Unit. She anticipated action would be taken shortly.

Councillor Badham advised that the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) had replied to FTC via a thread on Facebook and asked if the Ward Members present had any update on the conversations that had been held. Councillor Bunyan advised that the PCC had informed him that he would be following it up. The Chairman mentioned that this incident had taken place nearly a month ago and there was photo evidence and names/addresses of the people involved therefore he was disappointed no action had been taken yet.

Councillor Badham advised that part of the graffiti included a swastika on a traffic island near to the War Memorial. He had reported it via Fix My Street on 8<sup>th</sup> June however did not receive a response until 21<sup>st</sup> June which stated it had been allocated to a team. Councillor Badham cleaned the graffiti off himself 6 days after. He asked if the Ward Members present agreed it was an inadequate response given the nature of the graffiti. The Ward Members commented that it was appalling and they both would have assisted Councillor Badham if they had been contacted by him. Councillor Bunyan advised that Fix My Street was an app and that CBC serviced a large area wider than just Flitwick, therefore responses took time.

Councillor Badham referred to the fact that he was an ally for the LGBT community and referred to the homophobic comments that had been deleted from the FTC and Focus on Flitwick (FoF) Facebook pages. These were deleted by the removal of the thread and he was disappointed that the supportive messages were not left visible. He advised it was important for the LGBT community to see the support. He asked if there could be a review of what was deleted from the FTC Facebook page.

*Action: Comms & Marketing Manager*

Councillor Badham had received many thank you messages on Facebook but advised that the Police response had been a disgrace. He said the response communicates to the community that the Police did not care. Councillor Badham advised that his post had received over 3000 engagements showing the sense of feeling.

Councillor Dodds advised that the junction at Harlington on the A5120 needed mowing and CBC Ward Members agreed to have a look the following day and take it up with the CBC Portfolio Holder.

The Chairman advised that he had hoped Councillor Mackey would be in attendance because he wanted to raise some concerns regarding social media. He advised on what the FTC social media policy aimed to do including the awareness of risks associated with engaging with the public as a Councillor. He had concerns about Focus on Flitwick (FoF) which Councillor Mackey had set up for his work as a Ward Councillor. Moderators regularly stated that FTC/CBC politics would be discussed. He mentioned the responsibility Councillors had and advised that sometimes opinions were presented as fact.

As an example, the Chairman mentioned when Councillor Mackey shared the FTC post regarding the mowing schedule, residents understandably mixed up with the CBC delays. This brought FTC into disrepute and the Public Realm Team were labelled as lazy. There were also comments about FTC 'sacking' a member of staff who looked after the burial ground which was untrue. The graffiti issue at the skatepark had prompted an unacceptable conversation leading to the page having comments that promoted homophobia and transphobia, with one member of the group arguing that it was

unacceptable for a Council to be advertising homosexuality. He explained that Section 28 was repealed in 2003, that this was a rainbow painted 'be kind' and that these comments were not acceptable in 2021.

A moderator of the page stated that FTC should invest more on youth services because not much was done in this area but that was untrue.

The Chairman planned to write to Councillor Mackey regarding all of the issues raised about FoF and would ask under which persona he was posting on the page because it was unclear to residents. He wanted to know if FTC content was being posted on there, how the page moderators would ensure a balanced debate and that inaccurate information was not passed off as fact. Four FTC Councillors were regularly defending the Council on the page. The Chairman added that he had met with a resident this week who thought posting on FoF meant she was reporting issues to the Council.

Some Members were not pleased that a few posts relating to FTC news went on FoF Facebook prior to the Council's official page. Councillor Dann believed this to be ungentlemanly. Councillor Dodds advised that it was more than just Councillor Mackey who did this and he asked for this to be addressed as a global rather than personal issue. Councillor Dodds referred to the fact that another Councillor publicised about the proposed development at Church Road showing that the issue was wider than just as being presented. Councillor Toinko advised that he had done that in response to the FoF post which had been posted by Councillor Mackey before the briefing had finished.

Councillor Badham commented that the moderators of FoF did not understand their responsibility and he was particularly annoyed by the lies about staff. He added that it was personal and worrying, referring back to a previous post that named a staff member and it took three days before moderators removed the comment. He thought the site had turned into a hive of hateful comments, inaccuracies and constant repetition on the cost of the Barclays frontage project. Councillor Badham advised that Councillor Bunyan handled himself with dignity but he was not seeing that from others.

Councillor Blazeby advised that the social media policy was clear and Councillors needed to ensure that at the end of their posts, there was a line stating that it was your view and not that of FTC. He asked what powers the Council had around addressing the issue with those who did not follow the policy. The Town Clerk advised that it was difficult to answer and that he would give it some thought. Members had been sent reminders regarding the use of disclaimers and most used them. The Town Clerk mentioned that the issue being discussed was common at other Councils too.

Councillor Bunyan mentioned that he thought FTC needed to make more use of their own page as FoF had taken over as the voice of Flitwick with a following of 7000 people.

Councillor Hodges asked if the Chairman would share the response he received after he raised it formally with Councillor Mackey and he advised that he would.

## **5121. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a.** For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members received and approved as a true record; the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 via virtual access with the following amendments: correct spelling of recommendations on page 7, Councillor Thompson, and Paul Cranmer's names, and remove track change on page 5.

- b. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Extraordinary Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Extraordinary Community Services Committee Meeting held on Monday 24<sup>th</sup> May at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access. Councillor Thompson advised there would be an update regarding the Family Fun Day at the meeting the following week.

- c. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> June 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

- d. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

- e. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members discussed the recommendation of opening a Public Sector Deposit Fund with CCLA. Councillor Dodds asked why there was not any supporting papers for this item and the Chairman explained the recommendation sheet had been circulated. Members were advised that a vote was required that evening regarding the recommendation.

It was **resolved** to:

1. To open a Public Sector Deposit Fund with CCLA.
2. To adopt the proposed Treasury Management Policy.
3. To delegate the Authority for the Town Clerk and Corporate Services Manager after consultation with Derek Kemp, make such investments and withdrawals as required in terms of the Treasury Management policy.

- f. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

There were no recommendations or resolutions for this meeting.

- g. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Planning Committee Meeting held on Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

- h. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Personnel Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

This item was discussed under Exempt. Members noted and made one amendment to the resolutions of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

**5122. MATTERS ARISING**

- a.** Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021 –

Councillor Toinko asked for an update regarding item 5108 – the street food licence for the Kebab van in Station Road. As Councillor Mackey was not in attendance, Councillor Badham read an email aloud to update Members. The business had appropriate licencing and an assessment of suitability following residents' complaints about the position of the van and waste arrangements would be undertaken.

Councillor Dann referred to the minutes where it was mentioned that the current Curate may take on the role of the Flitwick Combined Charities Trustee vacancy however her contract was coming to an end. Councillor Lutley confirmed that the constitution mentioned the Trustees needed to have 4 volunteers and the vicar therefore Members believed the position could remain open until a new vicar was in post.

- b.** Members to receive any updates from Officers – none.

**5123. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

- a. Joint Committee**

After a discussion at the Chairman's Group, it was agreed that this item was to be re-considered by the Council and the Town Clerk gave some background information on how Joint Committees worked. The terms shared in the supporting papers were supposed to be a trial for 12 months however it was assumed they had not been reviewed. A Joint Committee would be in line with the strategy set in terms of influencing CBC to ensure partnership working, making joint decisions, influencing the vitality of the town, discussion on key issues for the town and a medium to discuss significant projects. Key Officers from CBC would attend the meetings and a dedicated CBC Officer managed these Committees. All decisions would go through the usual Committee structure of both Councils.

Members asked several questions as there was a feeling of uncertainty and Councillors were unsure how it was different to when Ward Councillors attended Council meetings. Members were advised that the key aspect was that CBC Officers attended the Joint Committee meetings and that key issues relating to the town would be discussed there first. The Town Clerk used the example of the station project and how that would have been discussed at the Joint Committee from the outset and FTC could have influenced the plan.

The meetings would be held quarterly but extraordinary meetings could be called in between. CBC were not minded to alter the terms of reference.

Members asked about the fact that Planning issues would not be discussed and they were informed that this was because Town Councils were already consultees for the CBC process.

The Town Clerk gave examples of how the Joint Committee had worked well at Biggleswade, including the step free access and the decluttering of the town centre.

Councillor Toinko raised a range of questions including his confusion about the step free access at Biggleswade as he believed this was a Department of Transport Scheme and



that the MP had been the main driver. He also mentioned how Town Councils were filling the service gaps, such as the provision of holiday meals for children that FTC facilitated. He was concerned about the lack of focus on the environment in the terms of reference and the mention of private clubs.

Some Members were not keen on only 3 Councillors being in attendance.

Some Members agreed that it was better to work together and that the partnership working between FTC/CBC was not effective at the moment so it was proposed to have a temporary trial.

It was **resolved** to trial the Joint Committee with the commitment of reviewing how it worked at the January 2022 Council meeting.

**b. Finance**

The Chairman explained that the Council meeting had been delayed to facilitate the sign off of the previous year's accounts and that it was a statutory requirement to do this prior to the end of June. He voiced his displeasure and requested for this to be communicated to the accountant. It was explained that the accounts also needed to be independently audited and for Members to see the draft accounts with two weeks' notice prior to approval. He added that Business Services Committee should have been able to scrutinise the figures as part of our checks and balances.

- a) To receive and agree the Governance Statement 2020/21

It was **resolved** to agree the Governance Statement for 2020/21.

- b) To receive and agree the Financial Statements for 2020/21

Members discussed the statement and asked for some amendments to the assets page:

- Remove burial ground under construction
- Insert the Dance Studio, Station Road land, Country Park and Hetley House.
- Amend the list of Councillors

The Chairman explained that most Earmarked Reserves were set to 0 as the funds had been moved to the Rolling Capital Fund in accordance with the changes mid-year to our capital management programme.

Councillor Dodds advised that the separation of the business side and social responsibility had not been reflected in the accounts. The Chairman explained that there was no requirement to split these as they were a legal document and from a business perspective, it was best practice not to declare income from the business due to commercial sensitivity.

The Chairman had checked the figures and he was comfortable with them. Councillors asked questions about approving the accounts apart from making amendments to the sections raised above otherwise the Council could receive a qualification from the external auditor if this was not done at the meeting.

It was **resolved** to agree the financial statements 2020/21 under the proviso that the amendments discussed at the meeting were actioned and the revised document was circulated to Councillors the following day.

- c) To receive and agree the Annual Return 2020/21

It was **resolved** to agree the Annual Return for 2020/21.

Councillor Hodges left the meeting at this time.

**b. Town Mayor Allowance**

Members were asked to consider donating the remaining funds from 2020-21 budget for the Town Mayor's Allowance £2,000 to the charities and to note that donations received for the same period were £609.92.

The Chairman advised that the previous Town Mayor's preference was to pay the remaining funds from the 2020-21 Town Mayor's Allowance budget but this needed to be approved by Council. The other option was to pay the previous Town Mayor the funds but this would be taxable. Councillor Dann advised that the spend should have been approved within the same financial year however he had not been made aware of this. The charities were the Need Project and the Domestic Violence service within the charity Victim Support.

It was **resolved** to donate the remaining funds from the Town Mayor's Allowance budget (£2,000) from 2020-21 to the Need project and the Domestic Violence service within the victim support charity.

**d. Flitwick Town Council Strategy**

Members were asked to note the resident feedback on the FTC Strategy and adopt a final version.

Members noted the good level of response from the consultation on the strategy. The feedback had been discussed in detail at Corporate Services. The main messages were that the public did not understand the different roles of FTC and CBC therefore it was agreed to make more effort to clarify this. The Comms & Marketing plan looked to address this issue which would hopefully counteract the negative misconceptions on social media. It was agreed for each Committee to reflect on the responses relevant to their own remits.

Councillor Hodges re-entered the meeting at this time.

It was **resolved** to accept the strategy document circulated.

**e. Lockdown Car Show**

The Chairman read out the resolution from the previous meeting where this item had been discussed. Councillor Dodds had written to the Town Clerk to ask for this matter to be re-considered however he wished to remove himself from this if the event had not been granted SAG approval.

Mr Snook (resident) was invited to speak and advised that he had submitted all necessary documentation to CBC and updated areas of his plan that needed work. He was waiting to hear from CBC regarding any further changes.

Mr Snook advised that the previous request had not been explained properly and that the 'walkabout' feel was always going to be there. He wanted to link two areas with a walkway across Millennium Park from Flitwick Lower School to the Village Hall car park.

The Community Services Manager advised that any event without SAG approval should not go ahead. If an accident were to happen the organiser would be liable for large fines and could be treated as a criminal offence. Members were not keen to approve the event without SAG approval.

Members asked about the area of the Park that Mr Snook wanted to use as the plan showed vehicles on a similar area to the newly planted wildflowers. Mr Snook advised it would not be on the wildflower area and that there would only be 10-20 vehicles.

An extended discussion took place regarding the event.



It was **resolved** to accept the Lockdown Car Show event and allow access to the Millennium Park providing a valid SAG approval was in place.

## 10f **Health Services**

The Chairman commented on the recurring theme within the public's complaints regarding the inadequate health services. He had met with the Town Mayor of Ampthill, Cllr Smith, who was also a Ward Councillor and they had discussed holding a public forum similar to what the Council facilitated in 2018. He, Councillor Roberts and Councillor Smith would be meeting representatives from the Beds Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) for a private meeting to discuss healthcare provision for Flitwick, Ampthill and Steppingley. The Chairman said the idea was to collate issues raised by all FTC Councillors and lobby CBC to hold an event later in the year.

Councillor Badham advised that the previous public meeting of this kind had been held at the Rufus Centre and representatives from the local Surgery and Healthwatch were in attendance. He advised no Ward Councillors came which had been disappointing because many residents' questions were for them to answer. He asked for CBC Ward Councillors and Officers to be invited from the outset.

Councillor Chacko provided some interesting figures which needed to be discussed. The number of registered patients with Flitwick Surgery had a ratio of 2,700 people per 1 GP, which was much higher than the National average of 2,000. Within the local vicinity, there were only 3 surgeries, which was overwhelming. The Chairman suggested for Councillor Chacko to attend the private meeting.

It was agreed that the Davis Suite was not a large enough room and for Officers to look at using the Lockyer Suite. The Chairman thought the meeting would have been held online but that an in-person meeting could be possible.

It was **resolved** for Councillors Snape, Chacko and Roberts to meet with representatives from the BCCG at a private meeting with some Members of Ampthill Town Council and Steppingley Town Council to discuss healthcare provision for the area. Views from other FTC Councillors would be gathered to be presented at the meeting. Officers would engage with relevant healthcare providers for a public meeting to be held in the Autumn (date to be arranged).

## 5124. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

- a. Members noted the Planning Committee decisions from 3<sup>rd</sup> June and 23 June 2021.

## 5125. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No items.

The Community Services Manager and Ward Councillors left the meeting at this time.

## 5126. **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.

### 13a) **Minutes and Recommendations of Meetings**

Members noted and made one amendment to the resolutions of the Personnel Committee Meeting held on Thursday 24<sup>th</sup> June 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

13b) Councillor/Staff Team Build BBQ- for consideration

It was **resolved** to hold a Councillor/Staff Team Build BBQ on the basis that Councillors paid for their food and drinks. Staff would be allocated a voucher for a limited number of drinks, after which they would pay for their own. A date would be agreed once Lockdown rules were lifted.

13c) Building Opportunity – for consideration

It was **resolved** to task the Town Clerk to investigate the building opportunity and come back to the next Council meeting with a recommendation.

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.