



**MINUTES OF THE EXTRAORDINARY FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 3RD AUGUST 2021
AT 7PM AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

Present

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

Cllr H Hodges (via virtual access)

Also present:

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager
Members of the public - 0

5140. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Mackey who was unwell.

5141. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None declared.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – None declared.

5142. 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) Building Proposal

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.

PINK PAPER ITEMS

5142. EXEMPT

4a) Building Proposal

The Chairman advised that the meeting had been called to discuss the Barclays building and frontage proposal. The resolution at the previous meeting had been for a structural survey to be undertaken and the report for this had been circulated that day. The Chairman apologised for the late delivery of the report but stated it was always going to be a tight deadline.

The Chairman gave further background, including that the Town Clerk had applied for a public works loan and additional funding would be required via General Reserves to fund the project. A consultation exercise had been undertaken online, the Mayor and Deputy Mayor had done a promotional video for residents and there had also been a Chat to a Councillor session at Tesco on 24th July. There had been a lot of positive resident feedback received. It was hoped that a response to the loan application would be received the following day.

The Chairman requested for Members to follow Standing Orders.

Councillor Blazeby asked for clarification on the boundary lines as there was a disparity between what was publicised by the estate agents and the plan. He raised the following points:

- Barclays as the tenants were liable for repairs and maintenance.
- £13,500 was an initial small cost for the surveyor's immediate action points.
- £120k had been invested in the Rufus Centre the previous year which made the initial costs seem small.
- A small risk taking on the lease and he felt there was more risk associated with tenants at the Rufus Centre.
- Requested for Councillor's names to be recorded in the vote as this was a momentous vote.

Councillor Dodds referred to the report, and commented:

- The tenant was liable but that the Council had not yet seen the lease and therefore did not know fine details.
- There would be no return for the initial three years and expenditure would increase should Barclays vacate.
- Surveyor had said they could not check on parts of the building which could be serious.
- Some works identified would not be part of maintenance and that it would be down to the Council to fix as they were associated with the asset.
- He questioned the viability of purchasing the property.

The Town Clerk advised that he had not seen the lease due to the tight timescales, but the agent had seen it. A lease review had not been commissioned.

Councillor Toinko provided some statistical information by referring to the Officer's report circulated, to show that the purchase would generate profit. He mentioned that there was not anything significant within the report other than budgeting for £15,000 after 10 years for the roof repairs.

Members generally accepted that the building was old and therefore issues were going to arise. The Chairman was in favour of putting an offer in for the property, but that conversations would need to be had with Barclays (like the current conversations being held with the Dance Studio lease holder) about complying with the lease terms.

Councillor Thompson commented that there was not anything substantially challenging within the report circulated and that the retention of the prime community space was important for her.

Councillor Hodges asked who was responsible for the insurance (owner or tenant) and Members requested information on this. The Chairman believed this would be established as part of the conveyancing process.

Councillor Dann asked what leverage the Council would have to ensure Barclays undertook the requirements set out pending any sale. He questioned whether the current owner could force Barclays to catch up with outstanding maintenance and repairs. The Town Clerk advised that the lease terms would allow for any new owner to pursue this. Councillor Dann questioned if the current owner had done much to chase the outstanding issues considering she did not live locally, and Members were informed that there was no current information on this matter.

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to offer the guide price advertised to purchase the Barclays Bank building and frontage at the agreed ratios of £800,000 from a public works loan and £50,000 from General Reserves.

Vote:

13 in favour – Cllrs Snape, Thompson, Blazeby, Earles, Platt, Toinko, Badham, Shaw, Chacko, Gleave, Roberts, Dann and Lutley

2 against – Cllrs Dodds and Williams

Cllr Hodges was unable to vote due to attending the meeting via virtual access