



**MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON 21st SEPTEMBER 2021
AT 7:30PM AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

Present

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

Cllr I Blazeby (via virtual access)

Cllr C Gomm – Central Beds Ward Member

Also present:

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager

5143. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Roberts (work commitments), Councillor Hodges (holiday) and Councillor Mackey (unwell). No apologies received from Councillor Williams.

5144. 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 – Councillor Chacko declared an interest in item 10d – Pre-Application Discussions - as he lived close to the site being discussed.

5145. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman thanked Councillors and staff for attending the BBQ on 10th September and commented that it was nice to see the Officers in a social setting and talk with others. This was something the Council could repeat next year.

The Chairman had attended the following civic events:

- Luton Mayor's Investiture

- Houghton Regis Town Mayor's Garden Party
- Dunstable Town Mayor's Civic Reception
- Lunch with Ampthill Town Mayor

There had been an invitation circulated to Members to meet with the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) on 11th October. The Chairman advised he had met the Deputy Chief Constable at a recent civic event and had extended an invite for a joint meeting with the Mayor of Ampthill. The PCC was also due to attend the Community Services meeting in November.

Two informal meetings had been held with Beds Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG) talking about healthcare provision, with representatives from Flitwick Surgery attending the second session. The Chairman gave an overview of each meeting and explained that they were helpful to understand the NHS's aims. There were still plans for the West Mid Beds Health Hub, but there was no capital funding for this, so progress would not be made for at least two years. It had been understood that the BLMK CCG would not be setting up rival services, but it was more about co-locating existing services which was attractive for recruiting new GPs. No changes were happening in the short term. The Chairman had attended with Councillors Roberts and Chacko. He had offered the healthcare providers the opportunity to see if any services could be relocated to the Rufus Centre using vacant space. Communication with residents was discussed, and the Surgery were due to have a page in the upcoming Flitwick Papers. The Chairman said he planned to continue the dialogue as the meetings were constructive; however the BLMK CCG and Flitwick Surgery were reluctant to hold another health forum meeting.

5146. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Councillor Gomm reported the following:

- Trial holes had been dug on verges in Steppingley Road which was to show anything that was below ground. There had been some traffic issues accommodating this, but the works were planned to finish at the end of the week.
- A contractor had been appointed for the station scheme, and a promotional board would go up. Start date would be given once the content for the scheme was known. It was hoped for this to begin before the end of October.
- Step free access at the station was being considered as a favourable action, and Highways were in consultation with Network Rail on this. Ward Members would ensure Flitwick had representation at the meetings, and dates would be circulated to the Town Clerk.
- The older people's housing scheme for Steppingley Road was out for tender with an anticipated 98 weeks for construction and a planned completion for 2023. Ward Members had raised the importance of a traffic plan being in place as this scheme would be under construction at the same time as the station works.
- Amended plans for the Aldi supermarket scheme had been submitted with consideration given to the recently updated Local Plan. Tesco had objected, and the applicant would respond. There were no known timescales at present.
- A leaflet had been distributed, or was on its way, to households about garden waste collections promoting a final collection between 18th – 30th October. Food waste would not be collected during this time. This all related to driver shortages. From 27th September, people did not need to book slots at waste centres.

Questions

Councillor Dodds explained that workmen had been expecting pedestrians to cross at the island near Tesco roundabout, and he had safety concerns for those in wheelchairs. The workmen had not assisted this person, and he asked if there were traffic management

options to control this situation and ensure public safety. Councillor Gomm appreciated the feedback and agreed to discuss this with the Project Manager.

Councillor Toinko asked if an assessment had been made about monitoring or reporting the total tonnage people had been taking to the waste centres by appointment only. He was also interested in the amounts that had been recycled in comparison to pre-appointment only arrangements. Councillor Gomm asked for Councillor Toinko to email his enquiry so that this could be directed to the Director for Waste.

Councillor Dann thought the service for garden waste collections needed to offer more flexibility than collecting two bags. He also raised a point about not assuming there would be traffic lights for the Steppingley Road Care Village development. Should traffic lights be used solely for developers' lorries, then this would be unacceptable as there was enough space on site. Councillor Gomm advised that the developers were aware of this, but he would request a traffic management meeting with representatives from the Town Council attending prior to the works starting. The Chairman advised that there had been vans parked opposite the bridleway for previous works, and this had caused traffic issues.

The Chairman commented on the road access gate to the station still being shut and no response or explanation had been given to date. Councillor Gomm commented that he had sent letters to Govia but would chase this matter up. It was agreed for the Town Clerk to send a letter about this matter.

Action: Town Clerk

5147. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

There were no members of public present.

5148. INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

5149. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Councillor Dodds referred to the paperwork circulated and commented that it mentioned the Planning meeting being available via online access however, this was not the case. The Chairman advised that the AV equipment did not work correctly and needed to be repaired.

Action: Town Clerk

Councillor Dann mentioned the selection process for a new Vicar at St Peter & St Paul's Church. He asked Members to let him know if they had any issues to raise.

5150. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a.** For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 20th July 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 20th July 2021 with one amendment: insert reasons for the apologies given.

- b.** For Members to receive and consider the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town council Meeting held on **Tuesday 3rd August 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 Extra Ordinary Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd August 2021 with one amendment from Councillor Toinko under Exempt.

- c. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 27th July 2021**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 27th July 2021 at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

- d. For Members to receive and consider resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 3rd August 2021**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd August 2021. It was noted that there was an application for the Rolling Capital Fund to consider later in the meeting.

- e. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 5th August 2021**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Planning Committee meeting held on Thursday 5th August 2021. The Chairman commented that the £10k budget for Planning was not presented on the financial reports, and this would be investigated the following day.

- f. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Services Committee meeting, held on **Thursday 12th August 2021**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Business Services Committee meeting held on Thursday 12th August 2021. Councillor Dann commented that the wording should relate to Signpost for item 1295b.

- g. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Corporate Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 24th August 2021**, this meeting was held via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions and recommendations of the Corporate Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 24th August 2021.

- h. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 26th August 2021**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions of the Planning Committee meeting held on Thursday 26th August 2021.

- i. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 7th September 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Councillor Thompson advised that items 891a and 895 were recommendations and not resolutions.

For item 892e – play equipment repairs – the Council needed to decide at this point regarding the application for the Rolling Capital Fund as it was not included on the relevant agenda item below.

It was **resolved** to accept the recommendation presented to accept quote C at a cost of £15,907.00 to replace play equipment within Station Road and Beaumont Road play areas to be funded by the Rolling Capital Fund.

Councillor Badham requested for item 892g – Airmen Memorial - to be amended to ensure the poem was correct and the poets name to be included.

Members noted the recommendations and resolutions of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on Tuesday 7th September 2021.

- j. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 14th September 2021**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Members noted the resolutions and recommendations of the Business Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 14th September 2021.

- k. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 16th September 2021**, this meeting is held at The Rufus Centre and via virtual access.

Councillor Toinko referred to item 2892 – Neighbourhood Plan Working Group – and noted that the Committee was looking to recruit volunteers from the community. He said Councillors had not been asked and that a Council resolution had not been made to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan yet. He asked why the community were needed for the feasibility plan, and no criteria had been set. He also mentioned that Officers had not made a recommendation for Councillors to agree, and there needed to be a discussion on the allocation of resources.

Councillor Dodds advised that Neighbourhood Plans were driven by the community and not dictated by the Council. The action from Planning was to investigate the feasibility of doing a Neighbourhood Plan, and part of the study would look at the willingness from the community to participate. If there was no willingness from the community there would be no reason to progress with a Neighbourhood Plan. He advised that any Councillor was welcome to join the Working Group. There was a guest speaker lined up who was from a similar sized Council who had been through the process.

The Chairman thanked Councillor Dodds for this explanation but asked to proceed with caution around how the promotion for this was undertaken.

Councillor Thompson mentioned that she and the Environmental Services Manager could assist with the process in explaining lessons learnt as part of the Green Spaces Engagement exercise.

It was **resolved** to amend the recommendation to read that the Council engages with the public to assess the feasibility of constructing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Councillor Dodds explained that for item 2889 – proposed 5G Mast – this was in a high point of town and the Committee were not objecting to the 5G aspect, but about the site location as Planning Committee wanted an alternative location investigated.

- l. Members are asked to note the Planning Committee decisions from 5th and 26th August, and 16th September 2021.

It was noted that Planning decisions for the three dates were not all circulated.

5151. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th July 2021.

Councillor Badham referred to item 5135 and asked if there was an update on the Chairman's discussions with Councillor Mackey regarding the Focus on Flitwick Facebook page. Similar problems with inaccuracies not being challenged were appearing on the site. The Chairman had no update.

- b. Minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 3rd August 2021.

No items.

- c. Members to receive any updates from Officers – no items.

5152. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Standing Orders**

It was **resolved** to adopt the circulated version of the Standing Orders circulated.

- b. **Rolling Capital Fund (RCF) Applications**

It was **resolved** to accept quote A for £858.00 for cleaning the War Memorial.

It was **resolved** to accept the Town Clerk's delegated authority to spend up to £16,000 to refurbish the former CBC offices plus rooms 20 and 22.

Councillor Dodds questioned the expenditure for refurbishments in relation to the Council's choice of suppliers and seeking three quotes. The Chairman explained that expenditure had not reached £25k for this financial year.

- c. **Joint Committee**

Members were informed that CBC were assessing how they engaged with Councils and part of that included a review of Joint Committees and their effectiveness. The Council had previously committed to trial the Joint Committee, but the dates needed to be amended to start the 6 month period from when the first meeting took place.

It was agreed for Officers to write to CBC requesting to trial a Joint Committee for Flitwick.

Action: Town Clerk

- d. **Pre-Application Discussions**

The Chairman explained that the Town Clerk regularly received consultation enquiries from developers regarding land in the Local Plan and for sites outside the Local Plan. Residents were becoming increasingly wary of development in the area due to obvious infrastructure concerns that come with more housing. Officers were requesting a steer from the Council about how to engage with developers whilst ensuring transparency in the public domain. An extended discussion took place where Members shared their views. There were particular comments relating to:

- Not having private meetings
- Being cautious not to comment on developments or planned developments until the applications are considered by the Planning Committee or Council as this could jeopardise the Consultee position
- Having Councillor training on exemptions for greenbelt sites to be correctly informed

- For Councillors to only attend meetings with an Officer present for sites that were within the Local Plan as a public meeting
- Be aware of previous instances where the Council have engaged with developers, but comments were not taken on board with the application
- The Town Clerk agreed to send a legal topic note round regarding predetermination
- Not a good use of Officer time to meet with developers
- Not to have any meetings with developers enquiring about sites not included in the Local Plan

It was agreed to write to Pigeon Investment Management to reject their proposal to meet with the Council and state that consideration would be given to any Planning application that came in.

e. Civic Reception

The Chairman introduced this item as it originated from a discussion at Business Services. The intention was to have a celebration for the volunteers who assisted during the pandemic. Usually, a Civic event would be funded from the Town Mayor's allowance however, as it would be predominantly residents attending, the Council were asked to consider funding part or all the anticipated costs. There was a concern that if the event was solely funded by the Mayor's Allowance, then there would not be any funding remaining to attend other Civic events.

Further cost savings were to be done to bring the expenditure down, including a different band and reducing the buffet costs.

Councillor Badham raised concern as he believed the list of people to invite would be endless. He felt that people volunteered to help (not to be thanked) and he saw this as a waste of money. He suggested an online 'thank you' instead.

Other Councillors were in favour of progressing with the event as the volunteers assisted with public safety and an online 'thank you' were sometimes lost.

It was **resolved** to fund £860 from reserves for the Civic Reception event on 16th October.

f. Community Governance Review

Leighton Linlade Town Council had requested this Governance Review and Members were asked if they wanted to look at their governance, perhaps including Ward Boundaries or to reduce the number of Councillors. Some Councillors thought that the number of electorates was linked to the number of Members required. There was also a discussion around altering or renaming the two wards in Flitwick.

It was **resolved** to set up a Working Group to consider the Governance Review with the following Councillors: Dann, Toinko, Lutley and Shaw.

g. Kingsmoor Lower School – Consultation

It was **resolved** to approve the proposed age range for Kingsmoor Lower School from 3 – 9 to 2 – 9 years.

5153. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Rural Market Towns Group

Members noted that the Council had now completed the free trial for the Rural Market Towns Group with SMT staff attending seminars and news bulletins. Members noted that the staff team did not feel it was worthwhile to subscribe as a paid member of the Group.

b. Maulden Neighbourhood Plan Consultation

This item was noted.

c. Temporary Closure – (Flitwick: Footpath No 18)

This item was noted.

5154. Public Open Session

There were no members of the public present.

It was **resolved** to move items 13a and 13b into the public section of the meeting to discuss proposed land developments as this was in line with the Council's strategy aims.

5155 Land Proposal

Members noted that the Town Clerk was required to put this proposal to Council as he had received a formal approach. After discussion, it was agreed to reinforce that the Council had made a decision not to commercially develop this area on Station Road. This area was not in the Local Plan for residential development. Members also discussed that the Leisure Centre and Tennis Club already in place were good and the proposed scheme was extremely exclusive. It was discussed that Station Road was a well-used site by residents.

It was **resolved** to write back to the developer declining their proposal and to reinforce that the Station Road was not going to be commercially developed and would be retained as green space.

5156 Steppingley Road

- (i) Members noted the report circulated from the Town Clerk, which clarified the legal position regarding housing developments. The Town Clerk advised that the preferred route for the sale of the land would be to promote the site via an agent but that the Council set criteria and a specification for developers to follow.

Members were keen for specific criteria, such as energy efficient homes. It was suggested that the tendering process include a brief and to look at the feedback from the strategy to work out what would be best and bring this back to the Council to consider.

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to report back on setting criteria for developers to follow regarding selling Steppingley Road land. Consideration would be given to strategy feedback comments.

5157. 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.

13c) Decision Update & Barclays Bank Documents

It was **resolved** to ratify the decision to use delegated authority for the Town Clerk to instruct solicitors to proceed with carrying out legal searches for the purchase of the Barclays Bank building and for the Council to fund up to £5,000 abortive costs should the sale fall through.

It was **resolved** to accept the contract and lease paperwork circulated.

13d) Community Safety Plan – for consideration

13e) Valuation cost – for consideration

It was **resolved** to approve expenditure of £2,225+VAT for surveyor fees required for office space, community buildings and to calculate re-build costs of the Barclays Bank building.

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.