



**MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON
16th NOVEMBER 2021
AT 7:30PM AT THE RUFUS CENTRE & VIA VIRTUAL ACCESS**

Present

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)
Cllr J Dann
Cllr P Dodds
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr P Earles
Cllr K Badham
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr R Shaw
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr M Platt
Cllr I Blazeby (via virtual access)
Cllr J Roberts (via virtual access)

Cllr N Bunyan – Central Beds Ward Member

Also present:

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

5169. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Chacko (work commitments) and Councillor Williams (unwell).

5170. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

- (a)** Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.

Cllr Platt entered the meeting at this time.

- (b)** Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Councillors Earles and Lutley declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 8b – Corporate Services resolutions and recommendations from 26th October 2021 in relation to the decision circulated on the Village Hall Car Park Licence Agreement.

5171. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor thanked those who had supported the Royal British Legion selling poppies at Tesco.

The Town Clerk (TC) and his team were thanked for delivering on two big projects – the purchase of the Barclays Bank building and on securing a Christmas tree. The Chairman was excited to reveal the tree lit up at the Lights Switch On event and gave special thanks to the TC and the Community Services Manager (CSM) for their efforts.

The Town Mayor had attended the following events/engagements:

- Hogspot meeting with Residents
- Meeting with Hugh Jackson (Chairman of Steppingley Parish Council) – this was to build relationships between the two authorities
- Luton & Bedfordshire Community Awards Evening hosted by Community Interest Luton
- Remembrance Sunday – there were record numbers of Councillors in attendance
- Respite at Home Volunteers AGM at the Rufus Centre

Councillors were advised that the Project Manager for the Transport Interchange Scheme was due to attend the Community Services meeting in December. Members were advised to attend this meeting to be informed of the project in readiness to answer questions from residents.

5172. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Councillor Bunyan mentioned the following:

- He congratulated the Council on the turnout at Remembrance Sunday
- He thanked FTC for delivering on the Christmas tree for the town
- He said the interchange project would be challenging but had received assurances that the CBC communications would be good for road closures, traffic lights, signage etc. to keep people informed of what was happening and when.
- He asked for an update on the Joint Committee progress and the TC advised he needed to speak to the CBC Officer about this
- The crematorium application would be received soon
- The works to the bridge in Greenfield Road would mean difficulties for residents
- There were a significant number of lamp columns not working in the town and he asked Councillors to send him the numbers to chase this at CBC. Councillor Platt handed him a list of the columns that were out.

Councillor Mackey reported the following:

- Ward Members were due to have a briefing in two weeks' time about the Highways Annual Plan and he hoped that Flitwick would see more investment than last year
- He had spoken to Cllr Stock regarding the Joint Committee who was under the impression that CBC were waiting for a Business Plan from FTC^[AS1]

Questions

- Councillor Badham referred to the benchmarking report from CBC and commented

that the survey questions breached their own rules regarding the Equality & Diversity Policy – e.g., the exclusion of many in the community by requesting if people were male/female/prefer not to answer. CBC regularly broke equality and diversity rules on their website too. Councillor Bunyan agreed to investigate this and report back.

- The Chairman asked for an update on the Ward Members' progress on sorting the lamp column issues in the town centre and emphasised the importance of this because of safety concerns highlighted by residents and the Lights Switch On was fast approaching. Several lights were not working, especially around the central roundabout. Councillor Mackey advised that this issue had been escalated and mentioned several times, but he would chase this again. The Community Services Manager had emailed the Head of CBC Highways to attempt to sort this out. She added that these had been reported last year but nothing had been done. Councillor Bunyan mentioned that there may be a rule where if three lights in a row were not working then this was classed as an emergency but he needed to check this.
- The Chairman asked for an update on the licencing discussion from the previous month relating to the kebab van as actions had been taken by the TC and Ward Councillors. The TC had contacted both the licencing and environmental departments at CBC but there had been no response.

Councillor Bunyan left the meeting at this time.

5173. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5174. INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

5175. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Councillor Dodds referred to the Government's increased threat level and asked what measures were being taken in Flitwick, particularly for the Lights Switch On event, in response to a possible attack. The Councillors were advised that FTC would need to be guided by CBC on this as they were responsible for emergency planning. The SAG team had been notified of the event.

Councillor Badham noted that some comments on social media following Remembrance Sunday had accused the Council of blocking the names on the airmen memorial. These comments had been removed but a resident had contacted him about it that day and it had been damaging. He asked the Councillors if they knew where this information had come from as he was concerned that misinformation was being communicated to residents. He mentioned contacting the Monitoring Officer as a possibility.

The Chairman commented that he had seen a post on another Facebook page about

decisions made relating to the Carnival after the Community Services meeting which included misinformation that did not reflect decisions or discussion on the night. This information was in the public domain prior to minutes being published on the website and there were no members of the public at the meeting. He asked Members to abide by the Code of Conduct. Councillors agreed that minutes needed to be carefully worded. Councillor Blazeby advised that Chairmen had a responsibility to agree the position on matters prior to posting content on social media, which was quicker than the production of meeting minutes.

Councillor Thompson asked why the late sheet items had been included for this meeting as the information did not appear urgent and Councillors needed time to read the papers having only received the papers that day. Members were advised that the internal audit was not urgent, but the acceptance of the external audit papers could not wait until January.

5176. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a.** For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 19th October 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 19th October 2021 with two amendments:

Item 5161 – insert Cllr Badham’s question regarding an update on the kebab van licence.
Item 5164a i) – insert comment regarding the surface to be reinstated to yellow stones after the Christmas tree had been installed outside Barclays Bank.

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

Members noted the resolution from the Corporate Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 26th October 2021. As the Committee had made an application to the Rolling Capital Fund for the purchase of notice boards, this would be altered to a recommendation on the sheet and Members would consider this under the relevant agenda item later in the meeting.

- c.** For Members to receive and consider resolutions and recommendations of the Planning Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 28th October 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 28th October 2021.

- d.** For Members to receive and consider resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 2nd November 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 2nd November 2021.

- e. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Services Committee Meeting, held on **Thursday 11th November 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 11th November 2021.

- f. Members are asked to note the Planning committee decisions from **28th October 2021**.

Members noted the Planning decisions from 28th October 2021.

5177. MATTERS ARISING

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

Councillor Dodds referred to item 5164a ii) – Christmas Lights Event – and asked if the market stalls would be limited. Members were advised that the team were hoping for 20 stalls. The Chairman advised that this had been delegated to the TC to sort and the TC advised that the SMT were due to discuss the event the following day.

K Mason (resident) joined the meeting via virtual access at this time.

Councillor Dann mentioned that there were still vaccination hub signs up for the Rufus Centre, including one against the temporary bus stop in Steppingley Road. Councillor Mackey agreed to sort this out.

Councillor Badham asked the TC for an update on the Joint Committee. The TC had reported earlier that he needed to speak with the CBC Officer concerned to track progress.

Councillor Badham asked if there was any update on setting criteria for selling land on Steppingley Road that was in the Town Council's ownership as previously discussed. Members were informed that the TC hoped to set up an informal meeting before Christmas regarding this with a speaker to advise the Council on this. Recommendations from this meeting could go to the Council for approval.

The Chairman and Vice Chairman of Planning were due to attend a meeting regarding another area of land in Steppingley Road – the field opposite the Rufus Centre. It was discussed that residents were concerned about developments for this site as surveyors had been seen in this field. Councillor Dodds mentioned that highways assessments would be required from this area in preparation for the Care Village development on the former Leisure Centre site and this did not relate to the field earmarked in the Local Plan. Councillor Thompson commented that there were three sites being discussed for Steppingley Road and asked for the minutes to be explicit to explain the different areas. The matter was complicated by the fact that there were two sites in the Local Plan on Steppingley Road – one owned by the Town Council and the other was not.

5178. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Fees and the Reigate Agreement

Members noted the report circulated which explained the position of the fees for the burial ground, pitch hire and allotments.

Councillor Toinko asked for guidance on dispensations as he was an allotment holder and the TC advised that Members had been sent correspondence about this along with a form following the recent Community Services meeting. Members were informed that dispensation would be approved for this matter.

It was **resolved** to review fees at the Community Services Committee in May 2022 where Members would consider fees on a case-by-case basis for football pitch hire and burials for 2023/24 and allotment rents for 2024/25.

b. Rolling Capital Fund Applications

Members were asked to approve the following Committee application to the Rolling Capital Fund (RCF):

- i) Corporate Services – to purchase classic aluminium noticeboards at proposed locations at a cost of £620+VAT (Option B presented)

The Chairman updated Members about a conversation that occurred at the recent Business Services meeting regarding allocations to the RCF. The budgets committed for this fund were different to the revenue budget in that Officers could not overspend and if they required more project funding, a request needed to be made to Members to approve this. He noted that there were currently overspends that needed to be dealt with in the future.

It was **resolved** to approve the purchase of classic aluminium noticeboards at proposed locations in the town at a cost of £620+VAT from the RCF.

Youth Provision 2022

A discussion was held about the requirement to put the youth work service out to tender. Members were informed that the current contractors and two other organisations could quote for the work. The Chairman advised that Officers write a set specification, and it was a requirement for the companies to demonstrate how they would deliver the service required. Officers would need to allocate weight against pricing and quality to assess the tenders. It was agreed for the tendering process to be advertised widely.

It was **resolved** to go out to tender for Flitwick's youth provision, entering a three-year contract with a supplier from April 2022. The youth provision would be delivered from the Hub with support from FTC.

c. Calendar of Meetings 2022

Members considered the proposed meeting dates for 2022 which had been revised following discussion at the previous meeting.

Officers were asked why there were question marks against some dates in August and the Chairman mentioned that he had been discussing the idea with TC about potentially having a Council meeting to progress all business in August and December rather than having

individual Committee meetings (except for Planning).

Members discussed that Planning was held every three weeks to tie in with CBC's cycle for considering applications.

It was **resolved** to approve the circulated calendar of meeting dates for 2022 with two amendments: alter the Planning Committee date shown currently for 2nd June (this was an extra Bank Holiday) and revert to 7:45pm start time for meetings as previously agreed from January 2022 onwards.

Mr Snook entered meeting at this time.

d. Lightshow – Barclays Bank

A resident was seeking permission to hold a laser lightshow from the roof of Barclays Bank. The Community Services Manager provided a verbal report to explain the request. The resident was seeking approval from the Council for this display to take place within the next couple of months. Approval would also be required from Barclays as tenants. The organisers had previously had good feedback from the domestic shows they had done, and they were requesting permission to do this on a bigger scale.

Members discussed this at length, raising several questions in relation to what the display would be like and matters around health and safety concerning a building the Council had only recently purchased. Members were informed that the ladder to reach the roof was unsuitable/unsafe and the Council requested for a full review on this, and adequate repairs were required before considering applications of this nature. Members were concerned that the Health & Safety Executive would judge the Council as being liable if anything went wrong because they were the landlords, and the Council had a duty of care to consider. Other concerns were discussed, such as any medical impacts on residents, the suggestion to possibly conduct wildlife assessments and understand any light pollution considerations. The Community Services Manager stated that the lasers would be in the sky rather than within eye line, and that the lights would be moving at a slow pace. A Member referenced the fact that the purchase had been worked on from a commercial basis without tenants being approached for community events. The Council needed to consider the impact of these applications on the building's tenants.

Some Members were not prepared to vote on a verbal request and asked for more detail in a written report to make an informed decision. It was also suggested for Members to see a video recording of the type of display to give a better sense of the request. It was agreed that Members were not necessarily against the request however more detail was required.

It was agreed for the Community Services Manager to check with the SAG team and to notify the organisers about the ladder. No vote took place on this item because of the discussions detailed above.

Members requested for the TC to look at the impact on the Scheme of Delegations for Committees with regards to the purchase of the Barclays Bank building. It was unclear if items like this were for community services or other committees. It was agreed for the TC to give initial advice on this via email.

e. AGAR 20-21 Audited and completion

This, and the following item, were included as part of a Late Sheet for the meeting. Members discussed their dissatisfaction at receiving the audit paperwork on the day of the

meeting which had not left adequate time to read the information. The Members referred to their due diligence for this matter and asked for advice from the TC about the impact it would have if this item was not signed off at the meeting.

Members were informed that not signing the audited AGAR papers would have an affect on the external audit the following year. The figures had already been signed off and this paperwork was relating to the completion.

It was **resolved** to approve the annual return, year end 31st March 2021 and the external auditor's certificate and report.

f. Internal Audit Report 2021-22

This item was deferred to the January Council meeting.

5179. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Access Gate to Flitwick Railway Station

Members noted the letter received from Govia Thameslink Railway regarding the access gate to Flitwick Railway Station.

An extended discussion took place and Members voiced their dissatisfaction relating to the content of the letter. It was suggested that the reasoning given was using well-meaning advice from the Samaritans to cover up the real reason of loss of revenue. Some Members commented on the choice of language used and how the terminology was outdated in relation to people taking their own lives. It was suggested to write back to explain that the response was unacceptable for the reasons given above, and to mention that the security fencing was not appropriate, especially considering the upcoming investment as part of the transport interchange project to replace the security fencing with railings. Some Members believed that this gate needed to be staffed during peak hours as per the previous commitment but recognised the value of having the gate closed at night.

Other Members did not agree with this and stated that Govia Thameslink Railway were entitled to protect their revenue as a business. One Member explained that the Department of Transport inflicted rules on Govia Thameslink Railway relating to protecting revenue. Some Members thought that the gate being shut protected the community from people travelling to Flitwick without paying to cause anti-social behaviour. It was commented that it was unrealistic to expect additional staffing at the gate and on the platforms. A Member raised concern that the railway company were prioritising profits over public safety.

Members discussed step-free access at this point. It was discussed that the car park adjacent to the station could not be used to provide step-free access as a local business owner currently holds the lease for this site, and not the Council. Councillor Mackey reported that Network Rail declined to pursue this option as part of the station interchange scheme.

It was **resolved** to write back to Govia Thameslink Railway in response to the letter received explaining a variety of reasons why the reply was unacceptable. This related to the use of inappropriate language and the prioritisation of profits over public safety. It was agreed for a copy of this letter to be sent to the local MP and to publicise the Council's reasons for pursuing this in the form of a statement.

Action Town Clerk

b. Benchmarking Survey Central Bedfordshire Council

Members were advised that Central Bedfordshire Council would be carrying out a refresh of the benchmarking studies carried out in 2018. The refresh was part of the same contract and will provide Central Bedfordshire Council and Flitwick Town Council with a before and after Covid view of how the Town centre has adapted. A Survey would be published in November 2021 and attached to the meeting agenda was a copy of the survey questions.

Members made several observations including pointing out that the questions were biased towards specific answers. It appeared that CBC knew what they were going to do, and Members felt this was a similar situation to the consultation done for the Church Road development. The Chairman commented that it was frustrating to not be trialling the Joint Committee as this could have influenced the production of this survey.

A discussion took place regarding the dates and scope of the survey's circulation. Members were advised that it was likely for the survey to be made available online however the TC would investigate if this would include paper copies or not. The TC would email Councillors an update on this.

c. Barclays Building Purchase

Members noted the circulated costs to date for the Barclays Building purchase. The Chairman explained that minutes from exempt discussions regarding this matter would now be made available to the public.

d. Steppingley Road Land Sale

Members had already had an update earlier in the meeting regarding this item to say that that the TC was arranging an informal meeting to discuss criteria for the land sale.

5180. Public Open Session

It was noted on Teams chat that a resident commented on the positive news relating to the town's Christmas tree.

5181. 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 Staff- Christmas Celebration – for consideration

It was **resolved** to include a line in the revenue budget each year to for the staff Christmas meal.

It was **resolved** to approve £750 expenditure for this year's staff Christmas meal.

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.