



## Flitwick Town Council Precept Report 2022/2023

Town Councillors and Council Staff are working hard to focus and prioritise the services we provide in response to both the changing needs and wishes of our community and the severe economic pressures which continue to affect our operations.

Last year we continued to modernise our ways of working, improving project visibility and management and embracing new technology to enable better communication with and greater accessibility by residents. We've also continued to champion financial transparency and accountability to ensure you can see clearly where and on what money is being spent.

We've improved community involvement in our key decision making by seeking and acting on feedback given as part of our 'Strategy' and 'Green Space' consultations, as well as our recent acquisition of 3 Station Road currently occupied by Barclays. We welcome your frank and honest input and greater active involvement in decision making.

Above all, as Councillors, we are committed to delivering services and facilities that are affordable and valued by the people of Flitwick. As residents ourselves, we share concerns about the broader state of the economy, the continued impact of the pandemic and the very real pressure facing UK residents' living standards.

Like most organisations, Flitwick Town Council has been exposed to additional financial pressures and an increased risk to our operations caused by the pandemic. Our staff have remained flexible and highly committed to our community throughout the pandemic, rising to the challenge and making things happen, often at short notice.

### The Rufus Centre

Our hospitality and rented office & conference space at the Rufus Centre is operated commercially. Historically, these activities have consistently delivered a profit over many years, which has enabled the expansion of our core council services and has reduced the financial burden on you as taxpayers.

The serviced office space has thankfully continued to see high occupancy during the pandemic. However, the events and conferencing side of the business has significantly reduced. Our new Rendezvous Café & Bar venture has successfully delivered a profit and provided a valued meeting place for residents.

We are confident that the Rufus Centre will deliver an operating profit of over £76,500 in the 2022/2023 financial year, and the Council remains committed to developing the business further. That said, while the commercial operation gives a very welcome source of funding, it also exposes the Council to significant risks faced by few other towns and parishes.



## Financial Planning for the year ahead

Recognising the impact of the pandemic on our community, the Council froze our portion of the Council Tax for the 2021/2022 financial year. But while Councillors are very aware of the growing financial pressures on households, we also have a responsibility to the community to ensure that Flitwick Town Council remains on a firm financial footing.

We are faced with a 1.25% increase in employers national insurance contributions (£4,699) to cover the UK Government's Health & Social Care Levy<sup>1</sup>. We must fund a 1% increase in employers pension contributions (£8,413). Finally, we must budget for a public sector cost of living pay increase of up to 3% (£18,209), meaning that our additional staff costs this year are expected to amount to £31,321.

## Precept for 2022/2023

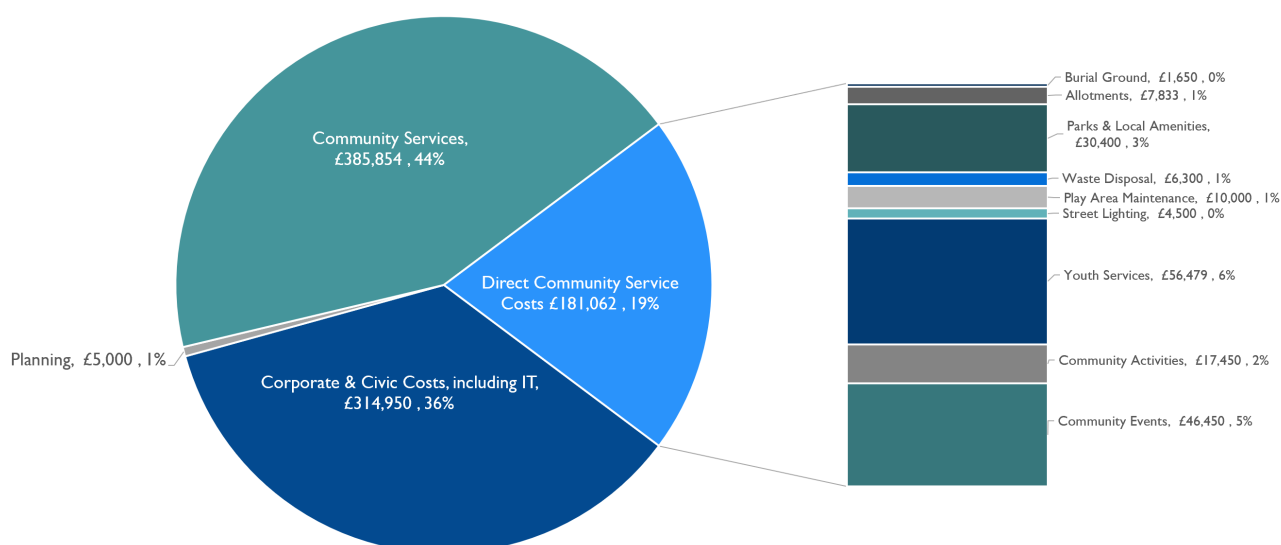
Considering all of this, Councillors have decided that the precept for 2022/2023 will increase overall by 3.67% from £854,243 to £885,564 to fund these increased staffing costs. For a Band D household, this will be calculated as a 3.88% increase and is equivalent to £6.64 per year or 13 pence per week.

Our budget review for 2022/23 has already identified cost savings that should hopefully fund all other known cost pressures. We will continue to look for further economies and efficiency savings rather than reducing our reserves.

The recent acquisition of the property at 3 Station Road, currently occupied by Barclays, is self-funding and has not impacted this decision.

## Our Service Delivery Plans for the year ahead

We are budgeting to spend £886,866 on service delivery predominantly funded from council tax, with 66% or £556,916 of our spending focused on Community Services and broken down as follows:



<sup>1</sup> As a principal authority, Central Bedfordshire Council is exempt from the UK Government's Health & Social Care Levy.

We plan to deliver an expanded range of community activities and events, including the Over 60's Lunch Club and our popular Youth Club based at The Hub. The free Flitwick Fun Day will return, this time on 11<sup>th</sup> June, as will the Christmas Lights Switch On outside Barclays, with both events being bigger and better. We'll also organise Skate Competitions at the Skate Park and plan to arrange artisan markets on our land outside Barclays.

Complementing our own events, we will continue to directly support community-organised events such as the Car Show and the Halloween Trail and support local charities and organisations through our Community Grants scheme.

Finally, the Council will continue to financially support the Scouts, Guides, Sea Cadets and Royal British Legion by providing land at a peppercorn rent and free or subsidised meeting space for many local groups and charities at the Rufus Centre.

### **Funding new projects and services**

We are allocating a further £94,255 to our Rolling Capital Fund, which is used to fund investments in new projects and services.

Projects already planned for the 2022/2023 financial year include:

- Heritage works at Manor Park to rebuild and restore the original gates and bridge and other improvements to the Park as part of the management plan.
- Re-wilding the land next to Maulden Road (financed by FTC and SI06 money) will begin in the autumn and provide residents with access to even more attractive green space.
- A further £22,000 investment in new playground equipment (in addition to the existing £15,800 investment announced in October 2021).
- Investments in the forecourt outside Barclays to develop this space for community use.
- Provision of electric vehicle charging points at the Rufus Centre and the Village Hall
- Further investments in the Rufus Centre, including replacing the 20-year-old gas boilers to reduce our environmental impact and energy bill further.



We know that any level of increase to taxes is never welcome, but we hope you'll understand the reasons for this decision and see this as a worthwhile investment in our community.

We are fortunate to have a strong community spirit in Flitwick, and we look forward to working together with residents to help build on this further in 2022. On behalf of your Councillors and the Staff at Flitwick Town Council, I wish you and your families a belated Happy New Year and a prosperous 2022.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'A. Snape'. The signature is stylized with a large initial 'A' and a cursive 'Snape'.

**Cllr Andy Snape**  
*Town Mayor 2021-2022*