

Flitwick Town Council Annual Report 2021/22



What's Inside...

- Mayor's Annual Overview
- Update on Strategy
- Our latest plans

Residents' Survey

- The biggest response we've ever had!
- How do we compare to the UK average?
- Key feedback on your concerns



Flitwick Town Council
The Rufus Centre
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MK45 1AH

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ABOUT YOUR COUNCIL

Your Town Councillors

Contact your Town Councillors via email: firstnamesurname@flitwick.gov.uk or call using the numbers below.

Ward	Name	Contact
E	Keith Badham	630868
W	Ian Blazeby	634585
E	Ashwin Chacko	07515 739026
W	Joe Daly	07983 212807
W	Jeremy Dann	713751
W	Patricia Earles	07929 638404
E	James Gleave	07958 350159
E	Howard Hodges	717778
E	Ann Lutley	712837
W	Gareth Mackey	712537
W	Becky Meredith-Shaw	07718923708
W	Martin Platt	713017
E	John Roberts	716360
E	Russ Shaw	07784 867921
W	Andy Snape	07590 572440
W	Dan Toinko	649992
W	Clare Thompson	07734 866479

Flitwick Town Councillors are all unpaid volunteers, who give their time freely to help develop the town for the benefit of all the people that live or work here or just visit the area.

Each Councillor serves on both the main Town Council as well as on at least one Committee. Each group generally meet at least once a month for approx. 1.5 - 2 hours per meeting.

We have also held 11 separate 'Chat to a Councillor' sessions in 2021/22 at various locations around the town.

FTC v CBC - Who does what?

Flitwick Town Council manage :

- Allotments
- Burial Ground
- Community Grants
- Environmental Improvements
- Events and Activities
- Manor Park
- Selected Play Areas, Parks & Open Spaces
- Resident Driven Projects
- The Rufus Centre
- The Rendezvous Café & Bar
- The Hub and Hub Car Park

Central Bedfordshire Council manage :

- Archives
- Amenity Areas
- Education
- Environmental Services
- Grants
- Grass Cutting
- Highways
- Industrial Estates
- Libraries
- Litter Clearance
- Planning
- Recreation & Leisure
- Refuse Collections
- Recycling
- Selected Play Areas, Parks & Open Spaces
- Social Services
- Street Lighting
- Trading Standards
- Traffic Management
- Youth Services

Dear Flitwick Residents,

It has been a great honour and privilege to serve our town as Town Mayor during the 2021/2022 civic year. As well as being the Chairman of the Council, the Mayor represents Flitwick at civic events across Bedfordshire and raises money for good causes.



The pandemic has understandably enforced another low-key year of civic events across the county, especially during 2021. That said, the Deputy Mayor and I have been proud to represent our town at 28 civic events during the past twelve months, attending events in Dunstable, Leighton-Linslade, Ampthill, Houghton-Regis, Luton, Sandy and Stotfold, as well as events hosted by the Lord Lieutenant of Bedfordshire (The Sovereign's representative in Bedfordshire) and the Chairman of Central Bedfordshire Council. Closer to home in Flitwick, our Civic Reception celebrated 110 Flitwick and Ampthill residents who had contributed to the community pandemic response.

This year, my fundraising activities have focused on raising money for two great local charities, Respite at Home Volunteers Mid Beds & Ivel Valley and Mind BLMK. Both charities make a difference to many people in need across our community. The highlight for me was the 'Councillors in the Stocks' event at the Family Fun Day! Thanks to the help and generosity of residents and local businesses, I have raised a total of £4,500 for charity, with additional funds expected from the 'Murder in the Chamber' events rescheduled to the end of May 2022.



We are lucky in Flitwick to have a group of motivated volunteer Town Councillors and Council staff who remain committed to delivering innovative services, facilities and events 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, and issues close to home such as the scale of new housebuilding and healthcare and infrastructure provision.

(Continued overleaf)

Mayor's Annual Overview (continued)

We have continued to modernise our ways of working, improving the visibility of decision-making, prioritisation and the delivery of projects, and championing financial transparency to ensure that you can see clearly where and on what money is being spent. A core part of this has been trying new ways of communication, including video blogging to give residents more insight into critical decisions and a further opportunity to see who represents the town. In addition, all Council meetings continue to be accessible to residents online.

Building on our 2021 – 2025 strategy process, the Council has concluded the 2021/2022 civic year with our first Annual Residents' Survey, benchmarking Flitwick against the national picture. We have used the insights and feedback gained from the survey to update our delivery plan, and you will find lots of information throughout the remainder of this report. Councillors and Council staff will use this information to inform future decision-making and ensure that we continue to deliver in line with the needs and wishes of Flitwick residents.

We are fortunate to have a strong community spirit in Flitwick, and Councillors and staff look forward to working together with residents to help build on this further in 2022.



Cllr Andy Snape

Town Mayor 2021-2022



The Residents' Survey - what you told us...

Thanks to the hundreds of residents that took the time to complete the first Annual Residents' Survey recently. We really appreciate your feedback.

Many of the questions we asked will be used to benchmark the Town Council's performance against a national quarterly residents survey that is undertaken by the Local Government Association. Many other questions covered specific services or issues that we face locally. We also asked for your views on environmental and investment priorities, your views on the potential use of the area we purchased adjacent to the War Memorial, and provided the opportunity for you to share with us other things you felt it was important that we were aware of.



Much of the information that we learned from the new survey is incorporated into this Annual Report, but we will also make the high-level findings available on the FTC website soon.

If you can't wait to find out more, scan the QR code opposite for access to the main findings now.

Our main priorities for 2022/2023...

Following the adoption of the Flitwick Town Council Strategy in summer 2021, we are making headway in most areas. To ensure that we keep on track, each of our Committees declared their own key priorities for the next 12 months. Scan the QR codes below to learn more about the full 4 year strategy, or alternatively just our main priorities for the next year.

READ THE STRATEGY...



SEE OUR PRIORITIES...



Back to Nature in 2022

The much anticipated creation of a 'nature' park on the land owned by FTC at Maulden Road is finally starting to take shape. We have approached design consultants who specialise in sustainable conservation and have asked them to come up with initial landscaping proposals.

Resident comments about their preferred use of this specific area of the town will be used to help shape the eventual proposal. The final design will be shared with residents before the work starts, hopefully before the end of 2022.

This development is fully funded with grants from a number of national organisations, rather than directly via FTC Council Tax.

Local groups and organisations have worked with FTC to plant trees and hedgerow as part of the Queen's Green Canopy tree planting initiative, and the wildflower areas planted in 2021 continue to flourish.



Café Society... at the Rendezvous

The Rendezvous Café & Bar at the Rufus Centre opened in November 2020 and has proved increasingly popular with residents that filled in the survey - approx **44%** have used it. Less than **2%** of residents feel dissatisfied with how we currently run the new facility.

Our 'Friday Nights@Rendezvous' trial events have given us a lot to think about as we look to extend the use of the Café into the evenings now the COVID restrictions of the last two years have finally dropped away. If you have any suggestions for evening events you'd like to see, let us know at events@flitwick.gov.uk

We are intending to trial opening for 'Sunday Brunch' later in the year following many requests by Café customers.

Increasing visits at peak times have sometimes resulted in capacity issues in the Café, so in the last couple of months we have invested in additional matching tables and chairs in order to try and avoid disappointing hungry residents. We have also upgraded the outdoor seats and benches that proved so popular last summer.

Based on the number of drinks served in the last 12 months we believe we have served over 27,000 customers during the last 12 months. In case you are curious the most popular items are Jacket Potatoes, Crispy Chicken Wraps and Omelettes, with a slice of cake as a dessert.



RENDEZVOUS

Café & Bar

Friday Nights @Rendezvous

Join us for a special Bottomless Friday!

Doors open 6.30pm
Event from 7pm to Midnight

27th May - Free Flow Friday
Two Course Meal, DJ & Bottomless Drinks*

* Drinks include: Gin, Vodka, Beer, Prosecco & Soft Drinks.
Tickets £25pp (includes Beef Burger/Vegetable Burger with Fries & a Dessert)

Follow our socials to stay in the know of all upcoming events

[@RufusCentreTC](#)
[@Rendezvous-Cafe-Bar](#)
[@Rendezvous_cafe_bar](#)

The Rufus Centre, Steppingly Road, Flitwick, Bedfordshire, MK45 1AH
01525 631905 www.therufuscentre.co.uk events@therufuscentre.co.uk

Rufus Centre refurbishment...

The impact of the pandemic on the rented office space at the Rufus Centre has been significant, with a major reduction in the income that would normally subsidise other services that FTC provide. Many multi-room tenants terminated their leases, including CBC and the NHS. However, the use of the Lockyer Suite as a local Vaccination Centre did partly make up for the loss of other income.



As more rooms became available, rather than just leave them empty, the Council decided to use the opportunity to refurbish the vacant space, costing around £50k. In many cases, rooms had not changed in the last 20 years! Thankfully, new tenants are gradually signing up and the long term rented space is well on the way to being filled again.



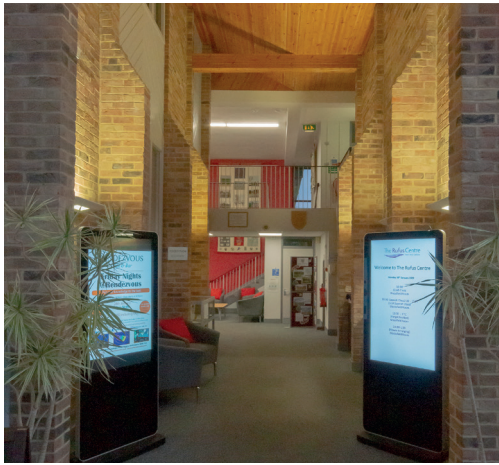
Many rooms that were normally offered for short-term rental have also been given a much needed make-over both cosmetically and technically.

Main Council and Committee meetings have been moved from the rarely used Council Chamber (which has now been converted to much needed office space for FTC staff) into the Davis Suite, which is now kitted out with the latest streaming and audio-visual equipment. This allows greater access for residents to join us in-person or on-line.



Another area that has been considerably improved are the many toilets in the Rufus Centre, including - at last - a suitable 'disabled' facility, that has been long over due.

The Residents' Survey showed that over **55%** of respondents had visited the Rufus Centre in the last year. Over **37%** were very or fairly satisfied with how FTC run the Rufus Centre (**32%** 'Don't know' and **27%** 'neither satisfied or dissatisfied').



Supporting local organisations...

Flitwick Town Council works with many local organisations to ensure that they are able to develop and grow within the town.

Much of our support may go un-noticed if you aren't directly involved with the organisations concerned.

FTC has for many decades provided the Scouts, Guides, Sea Cadets and the Royal British Legion with the land that their buildings sit on. This has been provided at 'peppercorn' rents of around **£5/year**, per organisation. This low cost ground rent - equivalent to £7,000 (2022) in real terms - allows each individual organisation to use their space as they need and then to let out any that is unused at low-cost to other groups, raising much needed funds.



At the Rufus Centre, many local community groups, as well as national charitable organisations, either use meeting rooms for free or at greatly subsidised rates. In the last 12 months this has included Flittabus; U3A; Bedfordshire Scouts; Girl Guides; Patch Perfect; Dominoes Group; Beaumont Court Resident's Association; Healthwatch; Home Start; Macintyre; Mind BLMK; Alzheimer's Society and St John's Ambulance.

If you are looking at setting up a local community group and need space to meet, contact our Community Services Manager, to see if we can help you out by emailing susaneldred@flitwick.gov.uk or call 01525 631900.

The Residents' Survey showed that over **42%** of respondents felt that we should provide 'Far More/More' Resources for local organisations. So, we will look to ways in which we can achieve your wishes.

Community Grants

FTC also offer a range of Community Grants, twice yearly, to organisations that apply looking for financial support. The most recent funding round in April 2022 allocated funds to Food Extra Food Bank; Flitwick Golden Age Group; SHARE: Flitwick and Ampthill, and Stepping Stones. There will be another funding round in the autumn to allocate the remaining money from the £10k annual budget.

Barclays and our new community space...

The purchase, last autumn, by Flitwick Town Council, of the building currently rented by Barclays Bank (as well as the land between the building itself and the War Memorial), provides a huge opportunity for greater community use and involvement.

The cost of purchasing the area, that was previously privately owned, is 'cost neutral' as the mortgage is currently covered by the annual rental paid by Barclays. While there is a break in the lease on the building in 2024, it is our primary intent to encourage the bank to stay in the town, for as long as possible. If however, any of the space becomes vacant we will be looking into possible alternative uses or tenants.

As we now own the site, we no longer need to seek permission every time we try and use the area. Accordingly, we are now looking to improve the general look and feel of the area in order that it becomes a site for more regular events and markets, as well as an area to sit and relax and pass the time of day.

We have already added the necessary permanent electricity supplies needed to support third party use by market vendors and food stalls.

We are now looking to create additional landscaping for the area based on the many, many suggestions you provided in the Residents' Survey. These included the need for permanent seating (not deckchairs!), some waste bins, more greenery, the creation of some shaded areas and the possibility of permanent lighting and the added security that could be provided by installing CCTV.

Our Community Services Committee will pull together some proposals in the next few months which will then be costed, before we consult on any proposed final designs.





The last 12 months have seen the successful introduction of a couple of new local events - The Scarecrow Festival and the Front Garden Competition. The Scarecrow Festival will return this year with a Platinum Jubilee theme, hopefully bigger and better than ever!

Over **52%** of residents completing the Residents Survey had attended at least one event in the last year.

We will also continue to support community led events like the Flitwick Lockdown Car Show and the Halloween Trail, both using the interactive maps on our website and where appropriate free use of Council space.

Last year's free Family Fun Day - a more traditional family orientated event than our previous carnival - was a real crowd puller. This year a similar event will be held on Millenium Park on Saturday 11th June 2022 (see back page for more details).

One unforgettable evening in late 2021 was the Christmas Lights Switch On, at the newly acquired space in front of Barclays. If you didn't make it, you can relive it by scanning the QR code below.





The Hub, near Tesco, remains the Council's most hidden asset. Only **6.4%** of residents who completed the survey have visited it in the last 12 months.

Perhaps not surprising if you aren't aware of the Youth Services that FTC fund, not because it's a requirement - that rests with Central Beds Council - but because we believe it's important to provide support for young people of all ages, particularly if they don't attend, or can't afford to be a member of, the 'badged' organisations, whom we support in other ways.



We employ an organisation called 4YP to deliver a range of weekly clubs on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays - including children between years 5 - 9. Through this work we reach approximately 80-100 children every week.

The Hub is used as our 'youth activities' base, as well as the adjacent Millennium Park. We have recently added new signage to give the Hub greater visibility. Hopefully more residents will have an opportunity to visit this great facility.

We are also working hard with other organisations to increase the daytime use of the building, which was originally a public toilet! Thankfully the interior has been much changed over the years and was upgraded in the summer of 2021 (£44k). A new front door, new carpeting, new pool and air hockey tables, new TV's, new sofas, tables and chairs, as well as a complete repaint.

Join Councillor Clare Thompson on a tour of the fab new interior, by scanning the QR code below. It really is bigger on the inside!



Improving key green spaces in Flitwick

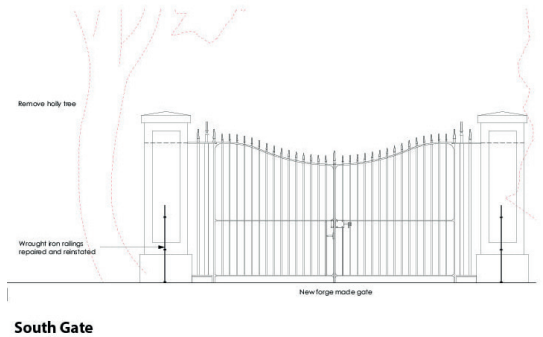
One area highlighted in the Residents' Survey was the great use that residents make of the local parks and playground areas.

Over **84%** of the survey respondents had used at least one of the green spaces in the Town in the last year with nearly half using a Play Park. Green spaces generally were the area that most residents (**13.7%**) felt that we should provide 'far more resources' for.

Planned Manor Park Improvements Underway

We've already started the planned restoration to the South Gate (opposite Flitvale), the ornamental bridge in the arboretum, as well as reinstating a footpath from the South Gate to the main entrance.

Two new bridges are being created which will enable better circular walkways.



New Play Park Equipment, A Youth Shelter and Outdoor Gyms

This year we have invested in refurbishing the play park areas at Beaumont Court and Station Road (£16k), adding a Youth Shelter (£8.4k) near the Basketball Hoops area on Millennium Park and providing outdoor gym equipment at both Millennium Park and Hinksley Road (£11k).



More places to sit and relax...

We've also added new benches in both Millennium Park and its play area (£5.2k).



Your concerns, are our concerns...

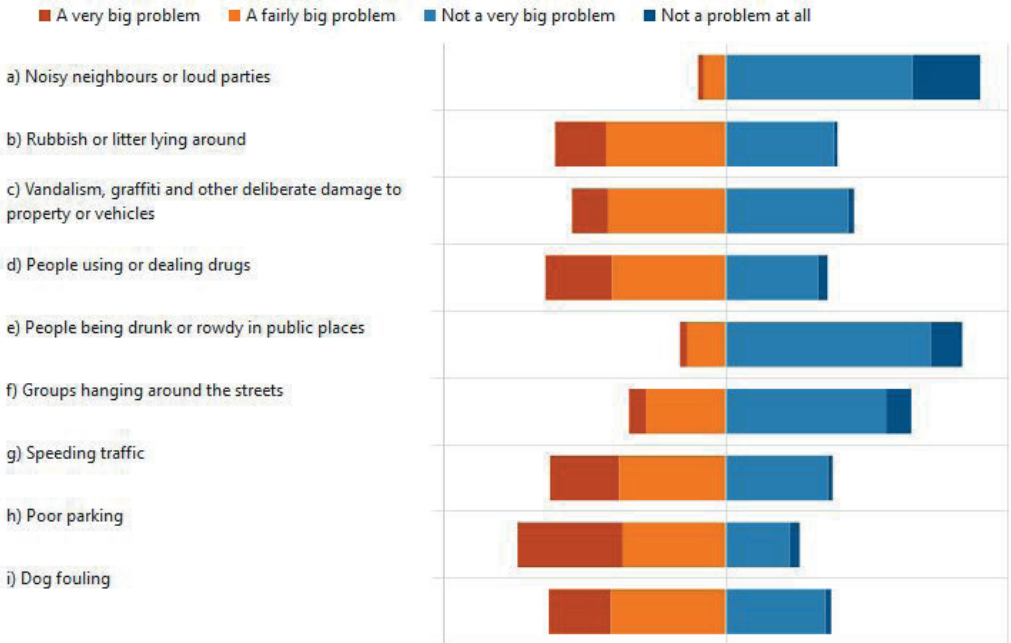
We wanted to use the first Annual Residents' Survey to get a feel for the comparative concern residents have about commonly raised issues.

We will now investigate the best way of trying to make improvements, either by making changes ourselves to services we control, or by influencing other third party organisations if they deliver the service locally e.g. CBC, The Police, Health England.

This is what you told us:

17. Thinking about Flitwick, how much of a problem do you think each of the following are....

[More Details](#)



We will now look at each of the different areas and will task the relevant Committees to try and make some headway on improvements over the next year.

The Residents' Survey also gave us far more clarity on the areas that you believe that we should look to support, either with funding or greater resources.

Scan the QR code to learn more.



Trying to improve our communication...

One area of the Residents' Survey that highlights an area that the Council needs to do better is our communication:

5. Overall, how well informed do you think Flitwick Town Council keeps residents about the services and benefits it provides?

[More Details](#)

Very well informed	39
Fairly well informed	104
Not very well informed	78
Not well informed at all	12



We currently deliver our own Town Council newsletter 'Flitwick Papers' quarterly to each of the 6,000 households in the town.

We also manage two websites - Flitwick Town Council and The Rufus Centre, as well as regular posting on a range of different social media channels - Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

We have also reviewed our online and social media footprint to increase the number of regular posts that we make (Over 1,300 during the last year), as well as creating more images and, for the first time, video content (16 separate videos), which has hopefully been more engaging.

Over the last 12 months we have increased both likes and followers on all the various sites that we operate. We've increased our following on our more popular Facebook channels by **+15%** FTC now 3,790, **+22%** Rufus Centre up to 1,765, and **+36%** for the Rendevous Café & Bar currently 651.

Shortly, we will be replacing many of the physical noticeboards that currently exist around the town which have seen better days.

We are also looking to add new boards in a wider range of locations, to better reflect the increased areas of housing that have been developed over the last 5 years.

The bigger and more robust weatherproof display cases offer more space to provide a greater and better range of information about activities and events.

Flitwick Papers

Spring 2022

What's Inside...

- Community Grants
- Easter Egg Trail
- Resident Driven Projects
- Manor Park Heritage Works

What's On...

- Lionel Richie Tribute Night: Saturday 23rd April
- Platinum Jubilee Afternoon Tea: Friday 3rd June
- Flitwick Family Fun Day: Saturday 11th June

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Despite all being volunteer Councillors, we are all first and foremost residents of Flitwick. Many of us have lived here for many years, and some have moved in more recently.

We all want to see the town improve and will do our best to involve residents in developing services and events which they will value.

Our new Annual Residents' Survey will help us keep track of exactly how you think we are doing. Here is some of the first scoring:

2. Overall, how satisfied or dissatisfied are you with the way Flitwick Town Council runs things?

[More Details](#)

Very satisfied	25
Fairly satisfied	110
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	60
Fairly dissatisfied	30
Very dissatisfied	8



4. To what extent do you think Flitwick Town Council acts on the concerns of local residents?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

A great deal	23
A fair amount	127
Not very much	75
Not at all	8



10. How much do you trust Flitwick Town Council?

[More Details](#)

[Insights](#)

A great deal	24
A fair amount	128
Not very much	71
Not at all	10





FLITWICK FAMILY FUN DAY

SATURDAY 11th June 2022

MILLENNIUM PARK

12 noon - 10pm

FREE Traditional Fun Fair (12 noon-8pm)

FREE Outdoor Cinema



FREE Popcorn

Food Court

Live Music

Stalls



Thank you to our sponsors :



Organised by Flitwick Town Council

For more information: 01525 631900 or events@flitwick.gov.uk



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