



**DRAFT MINUTES OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL ASSEMBLY
HELD ON TUESDAY 26TH APRIL 2022 AT THE RUFUS CENTRE**

Present:

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)
Cllr J Dann
Cllr K Badham
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr J Daly
Cllr M Platt
Cllr B Meredith-Shaw
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr G Mackey
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr P Earles
Cllr A Lutley
Cllr H Hodges

Rob McGregor – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Corporate Services Manager & RFO
Stacie Lockey – Environmental Services Manager
Beverley Jones – Communications & Marketing Manager
Susan Eldred – Community Services Manager

Also present:

Cllr C Gomm & Cllr G Mackey – Central Beds Council (CBC) Ward Members

Dan Till – CBC Community Safety Team
Inspector Grant Maxted and Sergeant Dominic Tembey – Bedfordshire Police

Members of the public - 13

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Chacko (sabbatical leave) and Councillor Shaw (holiday).

2. MINUTES OF MEETING

Members received the minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held on 6th May 2022 as a true record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

No items.

4. PRESENTATION & ANNUAL REPORT OF FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

The Town Mayor welcomed residents and explained the format for this year was more informal. He would soon present the work of the Council over the past year and that he would hand over to the Chairman of the Corporate Services Committee to explain outcomes from the resident satisfaction survey.

The presentation included:

- The advantageous situation the Council was in with 17 Members, which went down to 15 during the pandemic. He explained the role was voluntary and included attending meetings and being present in the community.
- Civic events – this year had been different to previous years. The Town Mayor and Deputy Mayor had attended 26 events which was a privilege and had been useful from a networking perspective.
- Several meetings had been held with key service providers – the Police and Crime Commissioner, Bedfordshire Police, CBC and the NHS.
- Events – The Council had reviewed and made changes to the events programme in response to resident feedback including introducing the Family Fun Day and Christmas Lights.
- Fundraising – the Mayor's charities were MIND BLMK and Respite at Home Volunteers. Both did fantastic work and there had been a brilliant response from residents and local businesses with £4.5k being raised so far and more to follow at the upcoming 'Murder in the Chamber' event.

5. TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGY & RESIDENTS SURVEY FEEDBACK

- The priorities for each Committee within the Council's Strategy were shown on the presentation screen and the Mayor gave an overview of these, commenting on the following:
 - i) Community Services – heritage works and Parkland Management Plan for Manor Park, works to develop the Nature Park at Maulden Road, development of the Barclays frontage area, green spaces and increasing CCTV for the town.
 - ii) Business – Environmental audit of the Rufus Centre, creation of a Business Plan, installation of an accessible toilet (completed) and to implement an online booking system.

- iii) Corporate – Environmental audit, heritage content onto the website, business continuity planning, finalise leases for local organisations and use space at the Dance Studio.

Residents Survey

Following the strategy publication, the Council launched a consultation seeking residents' views. The intention was to compare outcomes with results from the Local Government Association's (LGA) survey. This survey was the first of its kind for the Council and would act as a benchmark for future years to see what improvements were required. The other aspect of the survey was to get specific views on issues impacting Flitwick, where questions invited respondents to provide commentary on matters such as how the Council may use the area outside Barclays.

Councillor Blazeby presented key statistics shown from survey respondents in comparison with the LGA's. These related to trust in the Council, women's safety at night and how easily residents could contact elected Members.

Residents were advised that there was a 'Chat to a Councillor' session arranged for the coming Saturday and the Mayor explained that the Council were keen to interact with residents in a variety of ways from a widespread location.

Survey outcomes would be looked at by Committees following the Annual Statutory Meeting on 17th May. Key issues highlighted in the survey were poor parking, drug use, dog fouling, litter, vandalism and graffiti.

Residents were advised of the work being done with other organisations for matters that were outside the remit of the Council.

The outcomes relating to what the community wanted the Council to spend more resources on were explained, including play parks, open spaces and support for local organisations/businesses.

6. CBC COMMUNITY SAFETY TEAM

Dan Till from CBC Community Safety Team talked about the following:

- The work relating to community safety
- Resources in the team
- Team differences
- Collaborative work done

7. BEDFORDSHIRE POLICE

Sergeant Dominic Tembey from Bedfordshire Police presented the following:

- Geographical area the team covered
- Staff structure and personnel
- Roles of a Community Officer with explanations

- Details of engagement events in the last three months
- Crime figures year on year
- Results for Ampthill and Flitwick
- Police Priority Setting Meetings at the Rufus Centre.
- Details of their new premises in The Hawthorns, Flitwick, which will mean more Police presence in the town.

8. RESOLUTION AND QUESTIONS

For the meeting to consider questions and resolutions affecting the Town, from Local Government Electors.

There were no questions.

9. OPEN FORUM – MATTERS RELATING TO FLITWICK

A resident asked about Council policies relating to disabilities in Flitwick. He thanked the Council for the newly installed accessible toilet facility at the Rufus Centre. He was informed that accessibility was in mind for all aspects of Council work, including the parking spaces at the Rufus Centre and any renovation works. The Mayor explained that the Council were horrified to be informed that the toilet in the Rufus Centre had not been compliant and the facility was now of the highest specification, including left and right-hand transfer. Pedestrian access had been explored previously in the town and the station access remained a problem. There was no policy on accessibility, but there was work to be done to walkways/access to pavements, overhangs on hedges etc., which CBC had started. The resident mentioned that able bodied individuals were making decisions on behalf of the disabled community and he said he would be happy to advise on any matters.

A resident complimented the Council on the work they were doing. He asked about planning as he felt developments were a key issue for the town in that several were either happening or due to happen. The Council were asked about their thoughts on this and the process that occurred to input on applications. The resident mentioned the impact on the town's infrastructure, e.g., GP surgeries and schools. Residents were advised that the Council had been thinking about planning in depth recently since some external training had taken place which focussed on how applications were dealt with as consultees. Historically, the Council had not engaged with developers due to perception concerns however last week, the Council voted to amend their approach to Planning.

An overview of the previous process including commenting on applications and speaking at Development Management Committee meetings was explained. The Chairman of Planning explained that the Council needed to engage with the system more proactively in their approach to engaging with developers in order to mitigate the impact. Engaging with developers did not mean support, however, to engage with them earlier would be of benefit to Flitwick and would include resident participation through a Planning

Improvement Group. Members explained the importance of remaining transparent regarding discussions with developers.

The main difference in the process related to not waiting until the application arrived. The Planning Improvement Group would positively affect the outcomes of applications and work closely with CBC on how they construct and review the Local Plan. The Council would create a page on the website dedicated to planning applications received and post regular updates on social media.

The resident who asked the question was keen to be involved in the Planning Improvement Group as he had experience in this subject.

The Council would continue to consider major applications.

A resident asked if the Council were supporting the local Action Group regarding the CBC crematorium application. Members advised that the Council had taken legal advice and had decided not to progress with this. Residents were informed that only Steppingley Parish Council could initiate a Judicial Review and that the Council had been advised that the chance of success was low. The cost to contribute to this was significant and the Council did not consider this the best use of taxpayer money considering the low likelihood of having a positive outcome. However, the Council were lobbying for an electric crematorium in relation to CBC's policy, and this had been raised with the Leader of CBC at the previous Council meeting.

A resident referred to an unpleasant smell coming from the lake in Manor Park and asked about the Council's plans (and estimated timescales) in relation to sorting this issue. The Chairman of the Community Services Committee explained that the new management plan for the site was near completion and the next stage was due to begin afterwards. As this was a heritage site, there were many restrictions. Members were unsure if the lake was included within the next stage or later, however the Council were waiting for a response from an external body due in October in relation to the order and scope of works. Residents were informed that there had not been a hydrology survey undertaken previously, however, this would be completed in the planned works. Residents were reassured that the lake works were a priority and there were several accessible grants the Council could apply for once the Plan was in place. The resident explained that leaving the lake as it was would make the smell worse and have higher cost implications to resolve. Members reinforced the Grade II listed park status. This resident had further questions but decided to raise these at the 'Chat to a Councillor' session at the weekend.

A resident commented that the approach to planning seemed to be a positive step forward.

A resident commented on the need for CCTV in the area and referred to the presentation from the Safer Central team and the Police about CCTV being monitored 24/7. The Town Mayor advised that conversations had been

taking place with CBC whereby the Council would link into their system and explained that this would be high up on the list to fund as part of the capital plan.

A resident asked if plans were being discussed should Barclays not renew their lease and also suggested making the area out the front more user-friendly incorporating benches, bins etc. The Town Mayor advised that the Community Services Committee had been tasked to discuss this.

A resident introduced himself as a researcher and stated he was interested in the survey feedback. He asked about the sample size, number of respondents and their age, backgrounds etc. The Chairman of the Corporate Services Committee explained the channels available to access the Council, including the website and social media, as well as the public being able to attend Council and Committee meetings. Residents were advised that there were 239 respondents to the survey which was available to all in the community. Demographical information was sourced, and the Councillors explained that the intention was to seek views from as many residents as possible.

A resident asked if parking facilities in Kings Road near the bank could be made disabled parking. This resident was informed that there was not any parking in Kings Road however Members understood some residents chose to park on the raised kerb area near the cash machines. Members agreed to investigate disabled parking provision in the area and mentioned the parking challenges in the East Ward of the town.

A resident asked who was responsible for watering the new trees. Members explained that it would depend on which organisations owned the sites the trees were on, but that the Council's Public Realm Team were watering the ones on Council owned sites. The resident commented that the trees were fabulous.

The meeting closed at 21:48.