



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Flitwick Town Council Meeting held on 19th April 2022 at 7:45pm at the Rufus Centre

Present:

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

Cllr C Gomm (CBC Ward Member)
Cllr R Wenham (Leader of CBC)

Also present:

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

Members of the public - 0

5230. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Councillor Mackey (family commitment) and Councillor Thompson (unwell).

The Chairman advised that Councillor Chacko had travelled abroad for family matters and would not be able to attend meetings until 30th July. The Council were asked to accept this sabbatical leave and it was approved.

5231. 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 – Cllr Earles declared an interest in item 10b - planning application CB/22/00571/VOC.

5232. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for the support he had received over the term, especially those who had supported the programme of civic events. He commented that it had been a good year for Flitwick.

Councillor Dann attended a charity fundraising event for the Need Project.

Councillors were reminded about writing to the Town Clerk regarding dispensations as per item 10d in the Standing Orders.

5233. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

1. The interchange scheme was still in line for completion in March 2023. The Project Manager was looking for ways to complete early.

2. The older person development for Steppingley Road was in pre-commencement stage. The relocation of the Council's Tractor Store to the Rufus Centre was complete. It was anticipated works on-site would commence at the end of April/beginning of May. The Project Manager was happy to attend a Council meeting to confirm plans and discuss challenges once contractors were on site.

The Chairman asked the Town Clerk to invite the Project Manager to an appropriate meeting.

Action: Town Clerk

3. CBC's current Highways contract ended March 2023, and the 7-year contract will be retendered. The exercise with potential bidders had begun with all being given a detailed specification. The tendering process was due to start in May.

Questions

Members asked for an update on the ticket barriers at the station. It was explained that the barriers had been jammed recently and there were no staff in the office to assist. Councillor Gomm would raise this with the station manager. Members asked for an update on the gate at the top of the bridge. The Town Clerk had not received any further correspondence and Councillor Gomm stated that he would try and debate this further. It was commented that fare evasion and crime in Flitwick had decreased since the gate had been there.

A Member expressed his thanks to Councillor Gomm for supporting the Council at the CBC DMC meeting regarding the crematorium application. There had been some debate about the cremator being gas or electric and Councillor Ghent had suggested lobbying CBC to look at an electric cremator which would fit with the sustainability aims of CBC. Members agreed this would also be in line with the Council's strategy. Councillor Gomm said he would support this.

5234. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5235. INVITED SPEAKER

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Wenham, Leader of CBC, to the meeting and explained that Councillor Wenham's visit was part of strengthening ties between FTC and CBC.

Councillor Wenham talked about the past strained relationship between CBC and the Town Council, which was not an unusual situation for town and parish Councils. He had been trying to engage more closely however accepted that the priorities may not always match up. He had spent time with 4 other larger Councils and wanted to do the same with Flitwick.

Councillor Wenham reported the following key priorities:

1. Sustainability plan – CBC were taking moves to improve the environment in an acceptable way for cleaner energy. This needed to be done in a sympathetic way for residents. Other forms of energy would be investigated. CBC were due to publish a new revised strategy for cycling and walking to fill gaps in footpaths and cycleways which would be backed by funding from New Homes Bonus and other streams.
2. The local plan for development – he mentioned the Government insisted CBC take a certain number of properties in the area although this was unpopular, otherwise their Planning powers would be removed. CBC had to manage this pressure alongside infrastructure concerns. With the local plan, CBC had more control over what developers did and could push back on proposals not included in the plan. He mentioned consultations coming up in the next couple of years. The Standard Method was being reviewed which would feed into the local plan review.
3. Council Tax – the rise implemented was below inflation. Councillor Wenham stressed the importance of being careful with expenditure as the cost-of-living crisis was going to hugely impact residents.

Questions

Residents' concern regarding the lack of infrastructure to cope with developments, in particular the health service was reported. Councillor Wenham stated this was a major issue here and across the country but emphasised that CBC's powers were only in influencing as they did not have a direct responsibility for primary healthcare. The NHS were in control but CBC were pleased Councillor Stock had been elected as Chair of the Overseeing Board for Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes (BLMK). A discussion took place regarding Section 106 contributions towards health hubs.

Councillor Wenham stated he wanted to be in a position where a health hub was funded for this area, but this would take a considerable amount of time. CBC were pushing for the CCG Strategy at Scrutiny Committee and increased professionals for primary care. It was explained that recruitment of Doctors and Nurses was a problem, and that CBC should continue to push the local MP.

Members commented that the Dunstable Health Hub had been part funded through CBC's capital programme and questioned if this could be possible for the Mid Beds Hub. Councillor Wenham explained that CBC had committed to assist with two Hubs, but the CCG were to fund the repayment of capital through rent. It was a difficult business case to make funding the Hubs. Members were informed that CBC's ability to borrow money without risking financial stability was problematic and that Councillor Wenham would not risk this. There was no growth deal following the change in personnel in the Secretary of State at DLUHC, but CBC would continue to look for all sources of funding.

A discussion was held regarding S106 funding and the sometimes-anomalous titles given to funds, for example the community cohesion fund. Without knowing this information made it difficult to put proposals forward. Councillor Wenham said he would investigate this.

Members explained some of the results of the Council's residents survey and the interesting percentages shown against the national average. One outcome about women feeling safe after dark was discussed in detail and it was concerning that Flitwick's percentage was much below the average figures for feeling safe. Councillor Wenham was asked about extending CCTV provision and informed about the ongoing issues with streetlights not working. Councillor Wenham expressed concern at this statistic and hoped the Council had contacted the Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) about it. He added that CBC were currently putting in a new monitoring facility for CCTV and confirmed it might be possible to accept a Town Council camera. A Member explained that the main reason women feel unsafe is because of the lack of Police presence. The Council had a good meeting with the PCC however no further information had been received since. It was suggested for CBC to assist the Council in their communications with the PCC. A Member gave a particular shocking example of a case where a young woman was raped in the town and the unacceptable response by the Police following the incident. Councillor Wenham asked this Member to send him the details.

Councillor Dann left the meeting at 20:20

The CCTV camera enquiry would be forwarded to Councillor Dalgarno and Members advised that the recent purchase of the Barclays building provided an opportunity for more cameras. CBC could have the capacity to monitor these cameras within their control centre. The Town Clerk confirmed that he had spoken with a CBC Officer who had agreed Flitwick lacked CCTV and had agreed to investigate CCTV in line with the station interchange and Steppingley Road older people's development, however no further feedback had been received.

Councillor Dann re-entered the meeting at 20:23

Regarding streetlights not working, Councillor Wenham advised this had been discussed at CBC meeting however he had not yet received any answers. The Town Clerk agreed to send Councillor Wenham locations and numbers for the lights not working. It was confirmed that there was power linked up to the light columns.

Action: Town Clerk

Councillor Wenham was asked about social value elements to contracts specifically for the older person's development and the station interchange. Members were informed of CBC's social value policy and that there was a dedicated Officer in charge of this. Work had been undertaken with Redborne School, but the Council were invited to send ideas through to Councillor Dixon.

Members asked about extending the cycle lane from Flitwick to Center Parcs and they were informed that there would be plans for this as part of the crematorium application, although it was unknown if full funds were in place.

Members thanked Councillor Wenham for attending the meeting and he agreed to return in 6 months to 1 year.

Councillor Wenham and Councillor Gomm left the meeting at 20:33.

5236. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

There were none.

5237. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 15th March 2022**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

Members **adopted** the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 15th March 2022.

- b. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Planning Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 29th March 2022**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Members received and **approved** the resolutions and recommendations of the Planning Committee held on Tuesday 29th March 2022.

- c. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 12th April 2022**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Members received and **approved** the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 12th April 2022.

- d. Members noted the Planning Committee decisions on 29th March.

5238. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 15th March 2022.

The Town Clerk was asked if there had been an explanation provided as to why CBC had not invited the Council to their Development Management Committee regarding the crematorium planning application. This had led to the Council nearly missing out on an opportunity to speak about their objections at the meeting. This matter would be forwarded to Councillor Wenham.

Action: Town Clerk

- b. Members to receive any updates from Officers – no updates.

5239. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

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

- (i) RCF Summary - A copy of the current balance and project allocations for the RCF 2022-2023 had been circulated for Members to note.

The estimated year end figure was £119,880. It was commented that there was still a need to complete a capital allocation plan as part of the financial planning process.

- (ii) Members are asked to approve the £225 overspend for the Wildflowers RCF project.
It was noted that the overspend could not be covered in the revenue budget because the bill was on a single invoice, which cannot be separated into more than one code and this project was set up as an RCF code.

Members were advised that there was not a way of accounting for this through virement.

Members discussed the overspend and asked what would be done to ensure the Council was not in a similar situation in the future. The Corporate Services Manager (CSM) advised that this overspend and the following item were implemented before the Council approved the 5% margin for overspends and that every effort would be made in future to adhere to

project budgets. Officers would seek further approval if projects were likely to be overspent in future.

It was **resolved** to approve the £255 overspend for the wildflowers RCF project.

- (iii) **Members are asked to approve the £625 overspend for the Christmas Lights RCF project.**
The CSM apologised that the supporting paper for this item had not been circulated as mentioned on the agenda, which was an admin error. The CSM mentioned the key points from the supporting paper which had led to the overspend. This centred around the event growing since the RCF application had been made, the changes in the latest Covid guidance for public events and the offline conversations that had been held with some Members. It was also noted that the community wanted a larger event which Members supported. The Chairman pointed out that this approval could have been done under delegated authority.

It was **resolved** to approve the £625 overspend for the Christmas Lights RCF project.

b. Planning Application – Land to rear of Hilldene Close CB/22/00571/VOC

Members were unclear as to why Block B was being moved. Members commented that the deadline for comments had passed, and they were advised that the ESM had asked for an extension.

A Member asked how long planning permission was valid for and it was confirmed that it was usually valid for 5 years and the rules meant that development needed to have started within this time.

c. Corporate Risk Management Scheme

Feedback from the previous meeting had been incorporated into the circulated document.

It was **resolved** to approve the revised Corporate Risk Management Scheme circulated with one comment added to include compliance with law, equalities and environmental acts.

d. Scheme of Delegations Review

Planning

An extended discussion took place for this item, particularly in relation to the two process options mentioned in the report. All Members agreed that the Council needed to remain transparent but there were differing views about engaging with developers prior to the public consultation stage. Some Members explained that at the recent planning training, the trainer had explained that it was essential to engage with developers prior to consultation as the Council had no ability to influence developments during the later stages. Members discussed that the Planning Improvement Group would consist of Councillors and residents so access to the applications for interested residents would be there and open to scrutiny.

Councillor Roberts left the meeting at 20:52.

A Member explained the difference between process 1 and process 2, one being more streamlined than the other, and how once a formal application was received, most of the work was complete with money being spent on plans.

Councillor Roberts re-entered the meeting at 20:56.

Members discussed how the Council was reactive to planning applications currently which had little benefit.

Councillor Platt left the meeting at 20:57.

Some Members asked about the timings for the process and had reservations about only 2-3 residents engaging with applications through the suggested Group.

Councillor Platt re-entered the meeting at 21:00.

Members agreed that public attendance at Planning Committee was higher than other Committees and this needed consideration. A Member was unsure how applications would be deemed minor or major, and felt that there was value in residents being listened to through the current process, even if there was limited influence on developments. For these reasons (and others), this Member suggested that Process 2 be undertaken.

It was agreed that:

- Councillors needed to know more about the National Planning Policy, which would require bringing in the expertise.
- There would be no budget for the Group.
- There would be a website page dedicated to Planning.
- Councillors would need to be trained in Planning.
- The Group would not be exempt.
- Criteria would be set for Officers to follow.

It was **resolved** to remove Planning from the Council's list of Committees.

It was **resolved** to establish a new Planning Improvement Group, reporting directly to the Town Council.

It was **resolved** to agree the proposed make-up of the Planning Improvement Group to be up to 8 Councillors who have undertaken the most recent training, together with additional training, regarding planning processes, alongside up to 8 Flitwick residents.

It was **resolved** to agree the outline Terms of Reference for the Planning Improvement Group shown in Appendix 1.

It was **resolved** to agree a draft Planning Policy Guidelines document which will be finalised through discussion by the Group and then adopted by the Town Council for use by Officers to aid positioning of their delegated response to applications shown in Appendix 2.

It was **resolved** to agree the delegation of responses to the listed range of CBC Planning Applications for Flitwick be processed directly by Officers through Process 1.

It was **resolved** to create dedicated Planning pages on the FTC website, including a lay persons guide to allowable planning objections, the contact details of Councillors who have undertaken Planning Training and a direct link to the CBC Planning Portal. The promotion of the regular CBC Planning Application lists on FTC Social Media channels, alongside links to the FTC website Planning Pages and the CBC Planning Portal.

It was **resolved** to agree the removal of current delegated responsibilities from the Scheme of Delegation 2020 shown in Appendix 4.

It was **resolved** to redistribute selected previous Planning Committee responsibilities to relevant Full Town Council (shown in Appendix 5) or Community Services management (shown in Appendix 5 and 6).

Business, Corporate & Community Services

Members discussed the report.

It was **resolved** to:

- Approve the amalgamation of Corporate Services and Business Services as presented in the report.
- Create a Business Improvement & Development Board with delegated authority as presented in the report.

- Approve the additional elements of the Community Services Committee under the scheme of delegation as presented in the report.

e. Standing Orders for Contracts - Review

Members were asked to adopt the Standing Orders for Contracts document circulated which highlighted revisions suggested from the Business Services Committee in blue font.

The CSM left the meeting at 21:27.

It was **resolved** to adopt the revised Standing Orders for Contracts document circulated.

5240. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Councillor Attendance 2021-2022

Members noted the Councillor Attendance Record 2021-2022.

b. Public Consultation – Proposed Residential Development at Land Off Steppingley Road

Members noted the circulated copy of an email received and a leaflet relating to Land Off Steppingley Road. It was agreed for the ESM to contact the developer to see if the Council could hold an informal meeting with Planning trained Members present regarding this matter.

c. Neighbourhood Plan Working Group

Members noted the report from the Neighbourhood Working Group.

5241. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5242. 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.

No items.

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.