



## FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of Flitwick Town Council Meeting held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2023 at 7:45pm at the Rufus Centre

Present:

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

Also present:

Cllr Gomm -	Ward Councillor
Cllr Bunyan -	Ward Councillor
Stacie Lockey -	Acting Town Clerk
Susan Eldred -	Community Services Manager
Beverley Jones -	Marketing & Communications Officer
Helen Glover -	Senior Finance Officer
Zoe Putwain -	Community Services Manager
Public - 1	

#### **5335. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received by Councillor Platt and Councillor Chako due to being unwell. Councillor Blazeby sent apologies due to family commitments, and Councillor Roberts due to work commitments.

It was **resolved** to accept the apologies as detailed above.

#### **5336. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

- (a)** No members declared Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item
- (b)** Cllr Earles declared a possible non-pecuniary interest in item number 13b due to a close relative living in the vicinity. The Chair asked Cllr Earles to write to the Acting Town Clerk to agree a dispensation on the subject for when it comes back to Council. However, as there was no voting on the item, no action was required for the meeting.

**5337. TOWN MAYORS ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor thanked the Community Services Manager and Officer for their work on the Flitwick Community Fridge. Members that joined the press photo on Friday 13<sup>th</sup> January, at the Rufus Centre to aid in promoting the new service, were also thanked. It was reported that three fridges worth of items had been cleared since the fridge opened. However, obtaining food donations proved to be more problematic than anticipated, with not all local retailers currently supporting the project. Volunteers had come forward from King's Church to support.

The Chair advised Members of the quiz on the 24<sup>th</sup> February in aid of the Town Mayors' charities and the Proud AF LGBT+ History Month Reception to be held at the Rufus Centre on 9<sup>th</sup> February. Members were informed that all Proud AF events were open to everybody. The information for the events would be forwarded to Members by the Acting Town Clerk.

Action: Acting Town Clerk

The Deputy Mayor informed members that she had attended the Flitwick Library 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and attended the Language Café supporting new community members from Ukraine at their Christmas party.

**5338. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS**

*Cllr Bunyan* confirmed the Step Free Access at Flitwick train station would be going ahead. Acknowledgement had been made to the avid supporters of the project.

There was still some snagging work to be completed at the transport interchange, and the size of the island would be reviewed.

*Cllr Gomm* informed Members that the development on Steppingley Road was running to schedule currently. The number of potholes that had arisen in the town was problematic, and priority would be given to the worst ones by CBC. It was also confirmed that compensation for any damage made to a vehicle through potholes would be available via an application on the CBC website.

*Cllr Bunyan* contributed to the information on potholes with the indication that the road under the railway bridge on Froghall Road needed more extensive work. However, that would require a road closure and, due to the position would mean a long diversion.

*The Chairman* added to the conversation drawing members attention to a later agenda item pertaining to the chicane near Steppingley Hospital.

*Cllr Mackey* shared support for the items mentioned by the other Ward Councillors but elected not to raise any further points.

**5339. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

*Ian Adams*, a Flitwick Resident with association at Kings Church addressed the Council in relation to the proposed cost increase from the precept of the suggested 13% at a time that the community were struggling with and questioned if it was a sensible way forward. Concern was raised as to whether Members had considered an increase below 10%, noting that CBC would not be increasing their precept this time. Mr Adams shared details of other groups that required a referendum to increase their contributions such as the PCC. Restraint was requested from Members when the budget proposals were discussed in the meeting.

Mr Adams raised other evidence in support of reducing the rise to the budget and suggestions included using reserves.

Acknowledgement was made to thank Councillors for their volunteer contributions and work in the community, such as the community fridge.

**5340. INVITED SPEAKER**

No invited speaker was requested to attend this meeting.

**5341. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

*Cllr Badham* discussed the police priorities that would look to be discussed in the next meeting, for the time frame of April to June. Confusion in relation to how the priorities could work with the different towns was still present due to the very varied places to be covered. The initial deadline had been extended from the 17<sup>th</sup> February to the 31<sup>st</sup> March.

It was confirmed that the Community Services Manager would meet with the police and that Cllr Badham would forward a relevant email to the Community Services Manager to be discussed.

*Action: Community Services Manager*

**5342. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. Members moved to exempt the approval of the Town Council Meeting minutes for the meeting that took place on **Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022**.
- b. Members deferred the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town Council Meeting, held on **Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023**, to the February Town Council meeting.

**5343. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Members had no matters arising from the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Monday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2022.
- b. There were no updates from Officers at this time with an Officer report later on the agenda.

**5344. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**a. Proposed Budget 2023 – 2024**

- i. Members noted the Chairmans report on the proposed budget for 2023 – 2024
- ii. Members considered the proposed budget for 2023 – 2024

Members considered the proposed budget and precept increase. The Town Mayor provided an overview including a background of the scrutiny process, an overview of decisions, amendments and an outline of costings and budget pressures forecast for 2023/24.

Members expressed regret at the need to implement a precept increase and voiced concerns about the financial impact for Flitwick residents on individual household expenses. Acknowledgement was made that the initial budget proposal indicated a required 28% increase. Members recognised they have a Duty of Care, and significant work had been completed to reduce this rise to 13.1%. Following further discussion, it was conceded that Officers and Members had explored all realistic options and concluded that

the rise was necessary to maintain service levels, realise community benefits and continue to conduct Council business throughout the next financial year. It was agreed that Members and Officers will continually seek efficiency savings, and opportunities to reduce expenditure and that there would be a focus on identifying external funding to deliver capital projects.

It was **resolved** to accept the proposed budget resulting in a precept increase of 13.1% to £1,001,205, equating to a Band D increase of £21.00 per annum or 11.8%.

*The member of the public left the meeting at 20.31*

**b. Residents Survey**

Members discussed the survey and the aims as well as the limited time scale for delivery due to the elections in May and the pre-election period beginning 13<sup>th</sup> March.

The following four suggestions were made –

- Adding a justification as to why we are collecting demographic data
- Amendment to question 11 to not say extremely or easy
- Question 18 to remove the line in relation to Barclays Bank
- Question 23 Widen the scope for the ethnic background categories in line with the 2021 census categories.

It was **resolved** to approve the residents survey with the amendments as detailed above.

*Action: Communication and Marketing Manager*

**c. Interim Internal Audit for the year ended 31 March 2023**

Members received and noted the first interim Audit Report for year- end 31<sup>st</sup> March 2023. Members were pleased to see a positive report.

It was **resolved** to accept the interim internal audit for year ended 31 March 2023.

**d. Environmental Working Group**

Members considered the proposal by Cllr Blazeby in relation to setting up an Environmental working group.

Members asked if there would be implications on resources and discussed the benefits of having a group of people focused on this topic solely rather than shared between the Councils committees. The Acting Town Clerk commented that if the group were to run similarly to the current Planning Improvement Working Group the requirement from staff would be minimal.

Members commented about the productivity of other areas with active working groups and the need to establish expectations at the start of any group to give awareness of limitations, especially considering the increased involvement of residents.

It was **resolved** for Cllr Blazeby to develop a detailed proposal on establishing an Environmental Working Group for further consideration at the March 2023 Town Council meeting.

**e. Calendar of Meeting Dates**

Members reviewed and discussed the new Calendar of Meeting dates that had been brought to the committee.

It was **resolved** to accept the revised Calendar of Meeting Dates 2023.

**f. Froghall Chicanes**

Members discussed both aspects of the speed precautions located on Froghall Road in terms of safety aspects of damaged road structures along with the requirement for them.

It was **resolved** to write to Central Bedfordshire Council and request a full review of the Chicanes on Froghall Road.

**g. Standing Orders**

Members were asked to review and discuss the standing orders corrections raised as follows

- Adoption date to be amended
- Page 9 Section Z, format numbering from 3x to 3y
- Change all references of Councillors of “Him” to “They” or “Their” if text is not bold.

It was **resolved** to adopt the Standing orders with the following corrections;

- Adoption date to be amended
- Page 9 Section Z, format numbering from 3x to 3y
- Change all references of Councillors of “Him” to “They” or “Their” if text is not bold.

*Action Acting Town Clerk*

**a. Planning – Responses to CBC including Officer Delegated Decisions**

Members noted the Planning Responses, including Delegated Decisions.

**b. Planning – CBC Decisions**

Members noted the CBC Decisions on Planning Applications.

**c. Delegated Authority Decision**

Members noted the following decisions made under Delegated Authority:

1. Public Realm Team Vehicle Leases

Two new vehicle leases for an Isuzu D-Max 1.9 Utility Single cab 4x4 Truck on a 60-month contract with a maintenance package at £376.16 per month per vehicle.

**d. Officers Updates**

Members noted the Officer update.

**e. Finance Reports Part 1**

Members noted the following finance reports:

- i) Whole Business Summary, Investments & Loans
- ii) Corporate Services Summary
- iii) Civic Expenses Summary
- iv) Community Services Summary
- v) Community Activities Summary
- vi) RCF Summary

OMEGA Reports:

- vii) Income & Expenditure (Corporate & Community)
- viii) Cashbook (CB1 & CB2) Transactions

ix) Bank Reconciliations (CB1 & CB2)

**5345. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

There were no members of the public present at this time.

**5346. EXEMPT ITEMS**

The following resolution was **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press are excluded whilst the following exempt item issue is discussed.

**a. Minutes and Recommendations of meeting**

Members **adopted** the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> December 2022.

**b. Avebury Update**

Members noted the progress report from Avebury.

**c. Finance Reports Part 2**

Members noted the finance reports.

**d. Cleaning Contract**

Members discussed the report.

It was **RESOLVED** to accept option 3 as detailed in the report.

**e. Town Clerk**

Members received an update in relation to the Town Clerk.

Pursuant to section 1(2) of the public bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960 Council **resolved** to exclude the public and press by reason of the confidential nature of the business about to be transacted.

Meeting ended at 21.45pm