



## FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

### Minutes of Flitwick Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2023 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr A Snape – Chairman  
Cllr H Hodges  
Cllr J Gleave  
Cllr M Platt  
Cllr I Blazeby  
Cllr K Badham  
Cllr C Thompson  
Cllr R Wilsmore  
Cllr T Connell  
Cllr D Toinko  
Cllr T Parsons

Cllr H Townsend – Central Beds Ward Member  
Cllr I Adams – Central Beds Ward Member

Also present:

Stephanie Stanley – Town Clerk  
Stacie Lockey – Deputy Town Clerk  
5 members of the public

#### **5483. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies were received and accepted for Cllr Roberts and Cllr Harold (holiday), Cllr Meredith-Shaw (work) and Cllr Shaw (personal commitment).

#### **5484. 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 – Cllrs Blazeby and Toinko (items 7 and 12c – Share: Flitwick & Ampthill Trustees).

#### **5485. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor thanked Cllr Blazeby for chairing the June Council meeting whilst he was on holiday and the Deputy Mayor attended a family funeral.

The Town Mayor had attended the following Civic Events since the last meeting:

- Proud AF Pride Picnic in Ampthill with Cllr Meredith-Shaw – an amazing event with fantastic feedback from the community, which was covered by Look East
- Stotfold Mayor's Charity Quiz with Cllr Roberts and Cllr Blazeby
- Cllr Roberts attended the Bedfordshire Games
- Hosted the Community Coffee Morning in aid of the Town Mayor's charities – expressed thanks to Cllrs Thompson, Gleave, Roberts and Connell for their support

- Tibbs Dementia Foundation Music for Memory Group
- Proud AF Evening of Drag Entertainment
- Flitwick Bowls Club Open Day

3. Councillors and Ward Councillors have been invited to attend an evening at Flitwick Bowls Club for a bowling lesson and a game! More details would follow.

4. Thank you to the Community Services Team and volunteers for their efforts with the Community Fridge! Redistributed 9,600kgs of food during June with 0.16% food waste.

#### **5486. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS**

Ward Members asked if the Council had any questions about the report. The Chairman asked for an update on negotiations with bus companies and if there was a date for when they would be using the interchange. Cllr Townsend reported that another test was being arranged, and there were still some formalities to resolve before a date could be set.

#### **5487. Councillor Co-Option**

Members noted the supporting papers on the co-option. The Chairman explained that the Deputy Town Clerk had advertised the vacancy, and there was one candidate. The Chairman, Cllr Blazeby and Cllr Thompson had informally interviewed the candidate and a report had been circulated to members before the meeting.

It was **resolved** to co-opt Tim Parsons into the Office of Town Councillor for Flitwick Town Council in the East Ward.

Cllr Parsons read out and signed his Declaration of Acceptance of Office and took part in the rest of the meeting.

#### **5488. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

Mr Ian Cook attended the meeting to speak about item 12f – Step Free Access -Ticket Office Closures, giving an overview of his historical involvement in campaign for step-free access at Flitwick Station. Mr Cook explained why the suggested closure of the ticket office was detrimental and urged people to take part in the consultation because:

- Ticket Vending Machines (TVMs) were difficult to understand. Mr Cook gave an example of the difficulties with using different rail companies for one destination and showed how the system was disjointed.
- TVMs were not viable for people with sight issues/blindness because they did not have an audio feature.
- The TVMs at Flitwick Station are exposed to the elements meaning that there is no shelter for anyone using the machines in poor weather.
- Disabled passengers would take longer to get a ticket and may face delays getting help to board services – disabled passengers should not have to rely on pre-booked assistance service.

Mr Cook suggested that local Councils respond together about this as it would have a bigger impact. The Chairman advised that the Council would discuss the consultation at the relevant section on the agenda.

#### **5489. INVITED SPEAKER**

Representatives from Share: Flitwick & Ampthill gave a presentation on their charity, including how it started, donation statistics, information on their Repair Café events and learnings so far. The representatives explained the benefits they offer in terms of the environment and also the positive impact they have had on the cost-of-living crisis. Their

base was in the 'back room' of the Village Hall for 2 hours on a Saturday morning and explained that the charity needed more storage space and longer opening times to reach more people and save on room rental fees, which were expensive for a small charity.

The representatives asked the Council if they could assist with providing storage space in the form of an unused, existing container in the Rufus Centre car park and if there was scope to use the 'back end' section of the Stocksfield Room at the Rufus Centre for users of the scheme to pick up donations and provide a front entrance. The group wanted to open more than 2 hours to attract more people.

The Chairman suggested moving item 12c – SHARE: Flitwick & Ampthill – to this point in the meeting as it made sense following the presentation. This was agreed by Members.

Cllrs Toinko and Blazeby left the meeting at this time (20:17).

#### **Item 12c.**

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the container could be used for storage of SHARE items once the current life-expired equipment inside was taken away. It was agreed that some of the goods inside would need to be scrapped, and others might be useful to SHARE. The charity representatives offered help with clearing items from the container.

Cllr Gleave asked about the opportunity cost of SHARE having some of the Stocksfield Room space. The Chairman commented that he had been speaking with the new Business Manager, who had some ideas for this space in line with other building development, so SHARE's use of the Stocksfield Room would need to be temporary or they could use a different room. Members also commented on the impact this might have on football bookings and their access to facilities.

It was **resolved** to agree for SHARE: Flitwick & Ampthill to use the suggested container in the car park for storage with no rent and allow the charity to use a meeting room free of charge for their donation sessions. Officers would check if there was a lease/agreement required for the use of the container. The Deputy Town Clerk would contact SHARE.

*Action: Deputy Town Clerk*

Cllrs Toinko and Blazeby re-entered the meeting at this time (20:35).

#### **5490. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Cllr Hodges advised that he had written to the Conservative Party recently regarding the fact that Mid Bedfordshire had no representation at Westminster following MP Nadine Dorries' announcement that she was resigning. The MP had not yet formally resigned and Cllr Hodges asked members if they would be willing to support putting out a statement regarding the lack of representation.

Members had an extended discussion about the importance of having representation for the electorate and all felt strongly that the non-political nature of the Council needed to be preserved and protected. The Chairman suggested writing to Mrs Dorries at her office and publishing this letter; any communication needed to ensure that the Council were not seen to be endorsing any declared candidate. Cllr Wilsmore raised concern about how the public may perceive such a letter. Cllr Gleave advised the Council that there were standards that elected officials should follow.

As this was not an item for consideration on the agenda, the Chairman suggested that Officers drafted a letter to be sent by email to all Members summarising the key points discussed by members, highlighting the continuing lack of representation for Flitwick and Mid Bedfordshire residents but ensuring that the letter was non-political. Cllr Hodges agreed to send his draft statement to the Town Clerk. Members would be asked to approve the letter in writing using the Scheme of Delegations.

*Action: Town Clerk*

**5491. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town Council meeting held, on **Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre. **This item was moved to EXEMPT.**
- b. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre. **This item was moved to EXEMPT.**

**5492. MATTERS ARISING**

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 – none.
- b. Members to receive any updates from Officers – the Deputy Town Clerk advised that there were two work experience students assisting in the office that week.

**5493. OUTSIDE BODIES**

No reports.

**5494. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

**a. Responsible Finance Officer**

Members were asked to consider appointing Stephanie Stanley as the Responsible Finance Officer.

The Chairman asked for advice on whether the Deputy Town Clerk could cover this role in the RFO's absence. The Town Clerk thought it could be added to the Financial Regulations but would check this and report back.

*Action: Town Clerk*

It was **resolved** to appoint Stephanie Stanley as the Responsible Financial Officer.

**b. Nature Park**

At the June Community Services Committee, Members made the following resolution:

*It was resolved to accept the Officer Recommendations as follows –*

*H*

- 1. To consider the two options of the Masterplan (parking options) and consider the preferred option. (Appendix 1) with Option A elected.*
- 2. To proceed with utilising the Forest of Marston Vale Trust's 'Trees for Climate Scheme' for Flitwick Nature Park to assist with professional advice/planning and funding for delivery and ongoing management.*
- 3. To investigate costs for a Planning consultant to assist with the process of the planning application.*

*4. To submit a pre-app planning application to Central Bedfordshire Council for development of the Nature Park*

The Nature Park Working Group and Officers had met with the Forest of Marston Vale representatives to look more closely at the design elements of the masterplan (see supporting paperwork for finalised plan) to incorporate the 'Trees for Climate' scheme, and Members were asked to consider the finalised design.

It was agreed to defer this item to the next meeting at the request of the Deputy Town Clerk as there would be more amendments to the plan circulated that would affect grants.

Cllr Thompson asked why this agenda item was under items for consideration when the resolution had been made. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the plan was recent with a more detailed design. It was agreed for the plan to be on the next Community Services Committee agenda if it was ready in time after ongoing discussions, but if not, it would come back to the next Council meeting.

Cllr Hodges mentioned an area on the plan that he believed to be populated by skylarks, a threatened species. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that specialists had indicated a more appropriate alternative area for skylarks, and this was part of the reason the plans were on hold.

**c. SHARE: Flitwick & Ampthill**

Discussed above.

**d. Environmental Improvement Working Group**

Cllr Toinko, Chairman of the Environmental Working Group, gave an update, including that several residents had been in contact with him following the recruitment advert that was published. Cllr Toinko had endeavoured to meet with each of the interested people and at these meetings, he had spoken to them about tasks that had been transferred to the Group from community services, as well as identifying prospective aspirations. The names of the people on the agenda were keen to join and wanted to make a difference. Some of the people wanting to join the Group also had useful contacts for volunteers.

Cllr Badham asked if there was a procedure to remove members if required and stressed the importance of clarifying what powers the Group had. He added that Working Groups needed to be 'managed'. Cllr Blazeby commented that it was in the Terms of Reference for the Group to make recommendations to Council for decision making. The Group would have debates and put forward proposals to Council. Officers agreed to look at all Terms of Reference documents for Working Groups to ensure there was a procedure for removing members if required.

It was **resolved** to co-opt the following residents onto the Environmental Working Group: Neil Coles, Maureen Gilmour, Sue Livens, Sophie-Louise Luxton and George Wheelhouse.

**e. Rufus Office Space Refurbishment**

Cllr Gleave asked if clients were lined up to take on the vacant offices. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that one room had been filled and show round appointments were taking place for the remaining room.

It was **resolved** to accept the application for £7,780.00 from the RCF to refurbish tenant office rooms 3 & 17 in line with other refurbished offices to include a new carpet, a suspended ceiling with LED lights and paintwork.

**f. Step Free Access – Ticket Office Closures**

Members were asked to consider formally responding to the ticket office consultation.  
<https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/publicconsultation>

The Chairman advised that he had met with Ian Cook, who had spoken under the Public Open Session regarding the consultation on Flitwick Station Ticket Office closure. He summarised Mr Cook's views, particularly on accessibility.

Cllr Thompson commented that she felt the Council should write a statement however asked for the wording to be carefully thought out, ensuring that the response related to the facts in the consultation proposal only. She mentioned that the consultation proposed keeping the station manned but agreed that the service and resources needed protecting. The Chairman commented that the proposal would leave an inappropriate retail environment that was predominantly open to the elements and detrimental to many user groups and staff. Decision-makers hadn't considered the impact on different users. Cllr Gleave wondered if there could be opportunities for community groups to use the space, similar to that of Ridgemont Station.

Officers were asked to summarise Members' views and submit the key points as a response to the consultation on behalf of the Council.

*Action: Town Clerk*

## **5495. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

### **a. Finance Reports Part 1**

Members were asked to note the following finance reports:

- i) Flitwick Town Council Summary, Investments & Loans - noted
- ii) Corporate Services Summary - noted
- iii) Civic Expenses Summary - noted
- iv) RCF & Grant Funding Review - noted
- v) Bank Reconciliations - noted

OMEGA Reports:

- vi) Income & Expenditure (Corporate & Community) - noted
- vii) Cashbook (CB1 & CB2) Transactions June 2023 - noted

### **b. Delegated Authority Decision**

Members noted the following decisions made under Delegate Authority:

1. To replace the deployable CCTV camera at a cost of £906.72 allocated from the Rolling Capital Fund.

Members were advised that the camera had not been covered by insurance because it would not be worth it once the excess had been paid, resulting in an increased premium next year. A Member was unsure where the camera had been situated and it was explained that it had overlooked the temporary compound area on the Rufus Centre field.

2. Approve expenditure of up to £3,000 allocated from the Rolling Capital Fund to instruct a Planning Consultant to carry out the Planning process for Flitwick Nature Park.

### **c. Key Priorities**

Members noted the updated key priorities. Cllr Thompson questioned some of the closed tasks, and the Deputy Town Clerk agreed to update the plan, e.g. to keep the Proud AF

task live. It was agreed that some of the tasks had become business as usual. Members did not feel the nature park was paused since work was being undertaken. Members were advised that the benches at Flitwick Town Square were expected in August. Cllr Blazeby referenced some of the corporate priorities, and it was explained that the review of the Scheme of Delegations in relation to corporate had been worked on that day. It was agreed to keep the living history website task with Council.

*Action: Deputy Town Clerk*

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

Members noted the Planning Responses, including Delegated Decisions.

**e. Planning – CBC Decisions**

Members noted the CBC Decisions on Planning Applications.

**5496. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No items.

**5497. 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.

**a. Minutes & Recommendations**

Members **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2023 as a true record.

Members **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June 2023 with one amendment: insert resolution at the start to state that Cllr Blazeby was the meeting Chairman.

**b. Finance Reports Part 2**

**c. 3 Station Road**

**d. Land at Steppingley Road**

**e. EXEMPT Delegated Authority Decision**

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.**

Meeting closed at 21:22.