



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of Flitwick Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 15th August 2023 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr A Snape – Chairman
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr J Gleave
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr T Connell
Cllr Roberts
Cllr Harald
Cllr Shaw

CBC Cllr H Townsend
CBC Cllr I Adams

Also present:

Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Dan Toinko – virtual access
Sue Livens (resident) – virtual access
1 member of the public

5498. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received and accepted for Cllrs Blazeby, Toinko and Parsons (holiday), Cllr Badham (work), Cllr Platt (family commitment) and Cllr Meredith-Shaw (sabbatical leave).

5499. 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 Shaw declared the following interests:

Item 11e – Sabbatical Leave – Cllr Meredith-Shaw is his daughter.

Item 7 – Reports from Ward Members – he was a football coach for Flitwick Eagles.

Cllr Connell declared an interest in item 11f – Town Mayor's Charity – due to her role in one of the current charities and took no part in the discussion.

5500. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor had attended the following civic events:

Dunstable Charity Coffee Morning

The High Sheriff of Bedfordshire's Garden Party

Annual Formal Reception at the Joint Strategic Command, Chicksands

SHARE: Flitwick & Ampthill - Repair Café

The Deputy Town Mayor had attended the Topping Out Ceremony for the over 55's development at Steppingley Road.

5501. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Cllr Adams referred to the sport themed grant funding that had been previously awarded to Flitwick via the Community Assets and Ward Councillor grants:

Flitwick & Ampthill Tennis Club – resurfacing 3 courts

Flitwick Football Centre – patio terrace canopy

Flitwick Cricket Club – clubhouse redevelopment

Flitwick Town Council – skatepark lighting.

Cllr Adams mentioned that there was also a bid going in for a special facility at a Flitwick School, and more details would follow.

The Chairman asked if the trees had died in the transport interchange area, and if they had, he assumed these would be replaced. Cllr Townsend reported that CBC were unsure if the trees had died or not, but that this information would be known in the spring. She added that if the trees had died, then there was a 12-month warranty within the scheme and the trees would be replaced.

The Chairman asked if there was a maintenance regime for the area around the station. Cllr Townsend commented that this depended on who owned the land, but if it was CBC owned, then the Assets Department would look after it.

The Chairman mentioned that the planting area outside Tesco was unkept and full of weeds. He asked who was responsible for this area however the Ward Councillors did not know the answer, so agreed to investigate and report back.

Action: Ward Members

Cllr Wilsmore commented that the center parcs buses parking on Steppingley Road on Fridays was causing terrible traffic congestion when there was a buses area section at the station that they could use, which would be out of the way. Cllr Townsend stated that the bus companies had a commercial contract but noted the situation was frustrating. The Chairman asked if there was any assistance FTC could provide. Ward Members agreed to investigate solutions to this issue.

Ward Members left the meeting at 19:56.

5502. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Sue Livens (resident) mentioned that the sound system did not appear to be working very well for the meeting as she was struggling to hear the discussion.

5503. INVITED SPEAKER

There was no invited speaker.

5504. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Shaw asked what was happening with the current burial ground as spaces were running out. He also asked if any progress had been made regarding CBC taking the

steps to create a new burial ground. The Chairman explained that no land was available to create a new site in Flitwick and that both FTC and CBC were not responsible for providing a burial ground. This was a discretionary power for FTC and that CBC could only do this in unparished areas.

The Town Clerk would be asked to update Members by email on her return from annual leave regarding the number of plots available at the burial ground.

Action: Town Clerk

Cllr Hodges asked if the Council had received an official response from the Chief Whip or the Chairman of Mid-Bedfordshire Conservative Association following the letter sent to MP Nadine Dorries regarding the lack of representation at Westminster for Mid Bedfordshire. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that no response had been received.

5505. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 18th July 2023**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre. **(This item was taken in Exempt)**
- b. For Members to receive and consider **resolution and recommendations** of the Business Development Improvement Board Meeting, held on **Tuesday 25th July 2023**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Members noted the recommendations of the Business Development & Improvement Board meeting held on Tuesday 25th July 2023 at the Rufus Centre.

- c. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Committee Meeting, held on **Tuesday 1st August 2023**, this meeting is held at The Rufus Centre.

Members noted the resolutions of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on Tuesday 1st August 2023 at the Rufus Centre.

- d. For Members to receive and consider the **resolutions and recommendations** of the Personnel Committee Meeting, held on **Monday 7th August 2023**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre. **(This item was taken in EXEMPT)**

5506. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th July 2023.

The Chairman requested an update on 'SHARE: Flitwick & Ampthill' utilising the Rufus Centre. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that this was in hand and commented that the container had been cleared for the group to utilise the storage container.

- b. Members to receive any updates from Officers – none.

5507. OUTSIDE BODIES

There were no reports.

5508. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. **Deputy Responsible Finance Officer (RFO)**

It was **resolved** to appoint Stacie Lockey as the Deputy RFO. The Financial Regulations would be updated to reflect this decision.

b. **Local Organisation Leases**

The Chairman reminded Members that this item would have previously been dealt with at Corporate Services Committee, which was not currently meeting.

Girl Guides

It was **resolved** to accept a revised lease term of 20 years for the Girl Guides.

Scouts

Members noted that the draft lease circulated incorporated the new area as agreed in 2022 and that the wording in the document was in line with Members' requirements previously agreed for all local organisations who had buildings on Council land.

Cllr Thompson asked if the diagram was accurate and if Officers were confident that the new plan aligned with what Members had signed off previously. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed this to be the case and advised that the only alteration was to the site boundary line, which had been moved slightly to be within Station Road open space, rather than encroaching onto the grassed verge, which was CBC Highways land.

It was **resolved** to accept the Scouts draft lease and accompanying drawing.

c. **Planning Improvement Working Group**

Members noted the report circulated. Cllr Gleave confirmed that the Group replaced the previous incarnation of the Group. Cllr Wilsmore asked if residents had resigned from the Group, and Cllr Gleave confirmed this to be the case. It was confirmed that Cllr Wilsmore was a Councillor elected onto this Group at the Annual Statutory Meeting in May, whereas he had been a non-Councillor member the previous civic year.

It was **resolved** to co-opt the following residents as members of the Planning Improvement Working Group: Nick Dugard, Judy Martin, Martin Sheehan, and Steve Coates.

d. **Scheme of Delegations Review**

The Chairman gave some background as to why the review of Corporate Services responsibilities had taken place. A discussion took place on suggestions presented in the report including:

Cllr Thompson asked about vehicle leases and where these were reported currently. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Grounds Team trucks (Fleet Reviews) historically went to Community Services, which was why vehicle insurance was suggested to move there too.

Members agreed to the Chairman's suggestion that the organisation of civic events should come under the Council's remit, given this was overseen by the Town Mayor. Cllr Thompson commented that she could see why this had been suggested for Community Services.

Cllr Snape asked Members for their opinion on renaming the Personnel Committee as the HR Committee as this was a more modern name.

It was **resolved** to rename the Personnel Committee as the HR Committee.

In relation to the finance recommendations in the report, Cllr Hodges asked about expenditure and questioned if Officers had the authority to spend up to a certain value without Council approval. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Financial Regulations covered this, and that Officers could spend against the revenue budget but would need approval for overspending. The Chairman clarified that the Council agreed on a revenue budget annually.

It was **resolved** to progress with recommendation 3 shown in the report – To elect 3-4 Members to a Finance Scrutiny Working Group with all expenditure decisions and statutory requirements to continue to be within the Council's remit.

The Chairman questioned if the suggested Communications Panel was necessary. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that her research had shown that some Councils of a similar size to Flitwick had a Comms Panel, whereas some Councils did not, so this was a decision for Members. The Deputy Town Clerk suggested that Members could set up a Comms Panel on a trial basis. It was agreed to defer this decision to the next meeting when Cllr Blazeby would be present.

Action: Deputy Town Clerk

Members agreed with recommendation 4 shown in the report – Within Officers' review of the Standing Orders, to insert an item relating to the Council's ability to remove non-Councillor member participants of Working Groups, setting out rules for membership and what would qualify for removing individuals from Working Groups. It was agreed to include this wording in the Standing Orders when the review took place.

e. Sabbatical Leave

It was **resolved** to grant Cllr Meredith-Shaw sabbatical leave from the present day to the end of November.

Cllr Shaw abstained from this vote.

f. Town Mayor's Charity

Members noted the report. Cllr Thompson asked if she and the other Trustees named in the appendix needed to declare a non-pecuniary interest. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that this was not necessary.

The Chairman provided some background information on why the proposal was to be considered, including the ability to raise more funds that were not vatable, to be able to crowd fund, and to access more grants. He added that the initial Trustees suggested were the current Town Mayor, Deputy Mayor, and the Chairman of Community Services. It was confirmed that Trustees were able to resign if they wanted to and that there was one vacancy. The Town Clerk & Chief Executive would be an ex-officio trustee. Members were advised that the standard constitution document was recommended as the set-up process would take considerably longer if this was not the case. The intention was to set up robust policies around this initiative.

It was **resolved** to:

1. Progress with setting up a charity using the Model Constitution circulated.
2. To open a bank account for the charity with 2 signatures to approve expenditure, in line with the charity commission guidelines.
3. To agree the suggested Trustees.

g. Business Improvement & Development Board (BI&DB) Membership

Newly co-opted Member Cllr Parsons had expressed an interest in being elected to the BI&DB.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Parsons to the BI&DB, temporarily increasing the membership from 6 to 7 Members.

5509. 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 – The Chairman requested for the ‘commitment remaining’ column to be checked.
- v) Bank Reconciliations – noted.

OMEGA Reports:

- vi) Income & Expenditure (Corporate & Community) – noted.
- vii) Cashbook (CB1 & CB2) Transactions – noted.

b. Rolling Capital Fund (RCF) Applications

(i) Members noted the RCF Summary document circulated.

(ii) Members are asked to approve the following Committee applications to the RCF:

- Business Development Improvement Board – Digital Signage - £3,485.00
- Business Development Improvement Board – Lockyer Suite Flooring - £4,800.00

It was **resolved** to approve the BI&DB RCF application for Digital Signage at a cost of £3,485.00.

It was **resolved** to approve the BI&DB RCF application for Lockyer Suite Flooring at a cost of £4,800.00.

Cllr Thompson questioned the way RCF projects were accounted for, in terms of what would be classified as a ‘business’ project and what would be a ‘council’ (i.e. Precept) funded project. She asked if there was scope for profits raised within the business to fund capital projects for the Rufus Centre or Rendezvous Café, and for the Precept funding element of the RCF to fund Council-related projects. She added that the current way of administering and presenting the RCF did not give this detail. The Deputy Town Clerk agreed that this sounded sensible and touched on the fact that this was another complication for Councils running commercial activities. The Deputy Town Clerk commented that the RCF was accounted for in the way the accountant had shown Officers, but this was not to say there were not other options with it going forward and this would be investigated.

Action: RFO

The Chairman mentioned that an alternative route would be to allow the Business & Facilities Manager to go over budget, with the shortfall being taken from the General Reserve at the end of the year.

5510. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Sue Livens (resident) again advised the Council that the sound quality for the meeting as a virtual attendee had been poor. The Chairman asked for the sound system to be tested by Officers.

Sue Livens and the other resident in the public gallery left the meeting at 20:30.

5511. 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 Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 18th July 2023 at the Rufus Centre as a true record with one amendment for item 14a(i).

b. Town Clerk & Deputy Town Clerk Roles

It was **resolved** to appoint Stacie Lockey as the Town Clerk & Chief Executive at SCP 50. The transparency wording circulated in the supporting paper would be published on the Council's website (financial page).

It was **resolved** for Stephanie Stanley to revert to the Deputy Town Clerk & RFO role.

c. Finance Reports Part 2

d. Options

It was **resolved** to endorse the recommendations set out in the report and to progress with one other action.

e. Station Road Allotments Telecoms Mast

It was **resolved** to proceed with the Head of Terms circulated with the value offered for a 20 year lease subject to legal advice.

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 20:59.