



## FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Town Council meeting held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023  
at the Rufus Centre at 7:45 pm

Present:

Cllr A Snape (Chairman)  
Cllr J Gleave  
Cllr K Badham  
Cllr T Parsons  
Cllr R Wilsmore  
Cllr M Platt  
Cllr S Livens  
Cllr F Patterson  
Cllr T Connell  
Cllr H Hodges  
Cllr I Blazeby  
Cllr J Roberts  
Cllr T Harald  
Cllr D Toinko  
Cllr C Thompson

Also present:

Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO  
Susan Eldred – Community Services & Amenities Manager (online)

Cllr I Adams – Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member  
Luis Cadete – Luton Borough Council

### **5541. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence.

### **5542. 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 – none.

### **5543. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

The Town Mayor had been on holiday and Cllr Roberts had led the Remembrance Sunday event. The Town Mayor thanked Cllr Roberts, commented that it looked like a great event and thanked Members and Officers. It was the first time the Council had used its own PA, which had worked well. Cllr Roberts also thanked the Officers.

Thanks were extended to everyone who had supported the Town Mayor's Charity Quiz Night, and a special thank you was given to Cllr Thompson for her role as Quiz Master. The event raised £1,108.50 for the charities.

Cllr Roberts had attended Saint Goban Webber's Open/Fun Day event.

Members were informed that the Flitwick Town Mayor's Charity had been approved by the Charity Commission that week and that the Trustees would soon meet. A bank account would be opened. The Town Mayor explained that crowdfunding was now accessible for initiatives like Community Fridge.

*Action: Town Clerk/Finance Team*

MP Alistar Stratham had been invited to attend the next Council meeting and had provisionally accepted.

The Town Mayor commented on the upcoming Christmas events: the Lights Switch On (26<sup>th</sup> November), the Charity Wine Tasting Evening (1<sup>st</sup> December) and the Over 60's Christmas Lunch (12<sup>th</sup> December). Members were asked to let the Community Services Team know if they could help serve the lunches.

The Town Mayor mentioned that some recent meetings had been long, and he had asked the Town Clerk about adjourning meetings for a comfort break. Chairs had been requested to consider adding in a short break when a meeting was expected to be long.

#### **5544. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS**

Members noted the report.

Members thanked Cllr Adams for the report and commented that it was very detailed, which was appreciated.

The Chairman thanked Cllr Adams for his enquiries regarding the untidy area outside Tesco. He asked if CBC Contractors were responsible, what would happen next and if CBC Officers were picking this up. Members were informed that the area was supposed to be seeded, but the Chairman advised that this had not happened. Furthermore, raised concrete was visible around the many signs that had been installed. The area would eventually be Tesco's responsibility but Cllr Adams was waiting for confirmation about if this was with contractors for 12 months. This matter would be followed up.

The Chairman requested an update on the land at the former Leisure Centre site on Steppingley Road. Cllr Adams explained that there was a CBC meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> November, and he would request an update then if his question was selected. Cllr Adams reiterated his comments from the previous meeting in that he was still concerned that residents do not know about the plans. He wanted to understand the steps CBC would take to share the information with residents, and he hoped he would be selected to speak at the meeting. Cllr Adams mentioned he would also request timescales as there was currently no sign of this going on the open market. The Chairman advised that he was meeting with CBC Cllr Mackey the following day and would ask about this matter.

The Chairman advised Cllr Adams that some street light columns were still not working which was disappointing considering the town's Christmas Lights Switch On was this weekend. One light on the railway bridge had been out of action for almost two years due to a UK Power Networks fault. A list of faulty light columns would be sent to Cllr Adams for him to take this matter further with CBC Officers.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:54.

#### **5545. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No items.

**5546. INVITED SPEAKER**

There was no invited speaker.

**5546. MEMBERS QUESTIONS**

Cllr Badham advised that he was performing in a show with Barton Player in Barton-le-Clay and would be fundraising for the Community Fridge and the Need Project as part of the production. He asked Members to share his social media posts about this.

**5548. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS**

a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 17th October 2023**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre. **(This item will be taken in EXEMPT)**

b. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the Community Services Meeting, held on **Tuesday 7th November 2023**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

The resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee Meeting held on Thursday 7<sup>th</sup> November 2023 were noted.

c. For Members to receive and consider the **resolutions and recommendations** of the Business Improvement & Development Board Meeting, held on **Tuesday 17th October 2023**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre. **(This item will be taken in EXEMPT)**

**5549. MATTERS ARISING**

a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023

Cllr Badham referred to minute number 5528 – Town Mayor’s Announcements – and asked if there had been a further update on two of the Ward Members not attending the Council meetings. He stated that this meant the Members were not representing the people of Flitwick. The Chairman advised that he had not spoken to Cllr Townsend since the previous meeting, but he would be meeting Cllr Mackey the following day and planned to speak to him regarding this. Cllr Badham requested the Ward Members’ reasoning in writing because he thought this was poor, particularly in their paid roles. Cllr Snape agreed but commented that while CBC encouraged Ward Councillors to attend parish council meetings, they were not compelled to attend the meetings.

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

**5550. OUTSIDE BODIES**

**5551. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION**

a. **Finance Scrutiny Working Group (FSWG) Membership**

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Roberts to the Finance Scrutiny Working Group.

b. **CBC - Local Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) Consultation**

Members were informed that the LCWIP Consultation was focused on encouraging people to cycle and walk more. Cllr Blazeby presented Members with an update on the

Consultation, as he had attended a meeting with representatives of Ampthill Town Council the previous day, along with Cllrs Gleave, Wilsmore and Roberts.

Members were informed that Flitwick was grouped with Ampthill as an area within the LCWIP. At the meeting the previous day, it was decided to look at cross-over points of joint concern between the two towns, and it was agreed that there was a need to campaign for better cross-over points.

Cllr Blazeby explained the consultation's link with the Green Wheel initiative.

Members noted the consultation deadline of 14<sup>th</sup> December and that highways were a delegated responsibility for the Community Services Committee. Members were frustrated at the continuing lack of engagement from CBC officers regarding the Green Wheel and LCWIP initiatives.

It was **resolved** for the Planning Improvement Working Group to draft a response to the LCWIP Consultation. This draft response will be considered for adoption at the next Community Services Meeting.

*Action: Town Clerk*

**c. Draft Budget 2024/25**

**i) RFO Report**

The Chairman thanked the RFO and her team, as well as Cllrs Blazeby and Parsons, for their work on budget planning. The circulated report was noted.

Members were pleased with the clarity of the reports circulated and appreciated the clear timetable. The Chairman referred to the Rufus Centre capital investment that was required, and Members discussed some of the proposed projects. Members were keen to show residents that the Council did not plan to spend Council tax money on the Rufus Centre improvements, which would be funded by the surplus generated by the business. The RFO was asked to consider this when the final proposed budget was approved.

The Chairman mentioned that the Council needed to consider what to do with any year-end surplus generated by the Rufus Centre. The surplus from the previous financial year had been added to the general reserve. The RFO endorsed the Chairman's view that an Earmarked Reserve should be created for the Rufus Centre surplus.

The Chairman commented that a strategy was required for the use of General Reserves. He advised that the Council required clarity on what funds should be held and that a clear statement/position from the RFO would be helpful.

*Action: RFO*

**ii) Draft Budget 2024-25**

The Chairman commented on the need for the forward capital plan to align with precept discussions. He referred to the recent social media posts forming part of the wider context, relating to the challenges for CBC finances. Members were informed that it was almost certain that CBC would increase their Council tax by the maximum permitted by the Government and the Chairman mentioned this in context with adding more pressure onto residents when setting the Town Council Precept for 2024-25. Officers had requested a steer from Members on the draft budget in relation to this.

Cllr Blazeby mentioned that the reports circulated were not the final version and that the process in place allowed for adequate scrutiny, as well as ensuring the Council makes provision for what is required for its services.

Cllr Parsons commented that it was difficult to have the full budget discussion given some crucial capital project matters that were linked and due to be considered under Exempt.

The Chairman referred to the circulated initial Precept implications and explained the General Reserves column. He asked for household banding information (what the figures meant per annum for a Band D household) and clarification on the number of households in each band.

*Action: RFO*

**5552. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**a. Finance Reports**

- i) Flitwick Town Council Summary, Investments & Loans – noted.
- ii) Balance Sheet – noted.

**b. Projects Fund Applications**

- (i) Members are asked to note that the Rolling Capital Fund has been renamed the Projects Fund. The procedure of the Council approving spend will remain – noted.
- (ii) Members are asked to note the Projects Fund Summary document circulated – noted.

**5553. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION – none.**

**5554. 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 & Recommendations**

It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 as a true record.

**b. 3 Station Road**

It was **resolved** to progress with a Feasibility Study using the already allocated £10k overspend on Professional Fees to obtain possible rent values and refurbishment data from a consultant.

It was **resolved** to agree in principle with the funding approach detailed in the circulated report and the order of spend presented.

**c. Local Organisation Leases**

Members received an update from Officers regarding the progression of local organisation leases.

The correspondence received from the RBL was noted.

**d. Land at Steppingley Road**

Members received an update and discussed matters relating to the land at Steppingley Road.

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 22:06.