



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 18th March 2025 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr A Snape
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr T Harald
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr T Parsons
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr M Platt
Cllr L Bandy

Also present:

Cllr I Adams – Central Beds Council (CBC) Ward Member
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
0 – members of the public

5775. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **resolved** to accept apologies for absence from Cllrs Earles (unwell) and Connell (work).

5776. 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.

5777. Co-Option

It was **resolved** that Lorraine Bandy and Andrew Crawford should be co-opted into the Office of Town Councillor.

Cllr Bandy declared her Acceptance of the Office of Councillor for Flitwick Town Council and signed the paperwork.

5778. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor thanked Cllr Platt for chairing the February Council meeting.

He had attended the following civic events:

- Biggleswade, Dunstable and Ampthill Civic Services.
- Function at Keech Hospice.
- Garb event at the Rufus Centre.
- Antiques Fair at the Rufus Centre.
- ABC Business Breakfast.
- A meeting with the High Sheriff.
- Flitwick's Civic Reception. The Town Mayor thanked the Officers for helping with this event.

Cllr Platt, Deputy Town Mayor, had attended the Flitwick Civic Reception event and stated this had been a good evening. Cllr Platt also thanked the Officers for their efforts.

5779. Leader Update

Cllr Snape welcomed the two new Members and said he looked forward to working with them.

3 Station Road Update

Cllr Snape thanked Cllrs Wilsmore and Earles for accompanying him to visit the site of 3 Station Road. He reported that the Officers regularly met on site and that there would be future opportunities for other Members to see the progress. The building contractors' work was progressing on time and within budget. He thanked the Deputy Town Clerk for her work on the project, and Cllr Snape was excited to see what happened next with marketing the space to prospective tenants.

5780. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Members noted the report circulated, and Cllr Adams provided the following updates:

Flooding

The work in the High Street involved installing three gullies, with an anticipated completion date of 21 March. Similar work was being done at Hinksley Road and more would be done at Hornes End Road. Cllr Adams had chased the CBC Officers to find out when the work at Hornes End Road would be scheduled.

Roadworks

Cllr Adams commented on the problematic season with local roadworks in multiple areas. The roadworks for the gullies were due to be completed on 31 March.

Future roadworks were planned to accommodate City Fibre, UKPN, and Virgin Media connections. Works were also scheduled on the A507 towards Ampthill Park for ditch and tree clearing, involving traffic lights.

Cllr Adams was conscious of the recent occasions when traffic lights had been stuck on the red lights, causing gridlock for motorists. Ward Members had informed the Streetworks Team.

Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC)

Cllr Adams was due to meet the PCC with Cllr Townsend on 20th March and planned to discuss relevant Flitwick issues such as break-ins for residents' vehicles, 'car meets' happening outside Screwfix and speeding in Maulden Road. He asked for Members to send him other concerns to raise.

The Chairman commented that he had spoken to a member of the Local Policing Team over the previous weekend, who had advised that the Police were aware of the 'car meets.' The individuals had not been at the location the last Friday evening when the Police visited this area, but this situation was on their radar.

Questions & Comments

Cllr Thompson commented that she was pleased to read that CBC were in the process of consulting residents about the Inspiring Music Programme. Cllr Adams commented that it was important for people to participate in the consultation.

Cllr Wilshire asked why traffic counters were installed on Maulden Road. Cllr Adams explained that this was part of the work proposed to reduce the speed limits outside Ruxox Nursery and the section of road between the National Speed Limit and the 40mph section.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:59.

5781. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5782. INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

5783. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Toinko commented that he did not understand CBC's response to the Council's objection to the recently discussed street trading licence application for Station Road. He asked if the Town Council planned to respond to the email.

The Town Clerk advised that Cllr Toinko's comments were the first feedback she had received on the matter and that it was up to the Members if a further response was sent to CBC. She understood that CBC believed the Town Council had not shown evidence for their objections.

Cllr Snape believed that CBC needed to take responsibility for allowing permits to traders and any associated laws that needed to be followed. He added that adequate food safety and hygiene requirements were necessary with this location not having running water and toilet facilities and the detrimental impact previous traders had on the public realm. Cllr Snape had photo evidence he could send to the Town Clerk and believed CBC should be challenged on their response.

Action Town Clerk

Cllr Wilshire noted that there seemed to be a notion at CBC that any trader that applies would be given a permit.

5784. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 18th February 2025**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to accept the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 18th February 2025 at the Rufus Centre.

- b. For Members to receive and consider the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee meeting, held on **Tuesday 4th March 2025**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Cllr Thompson advised that the resolutions presented two errors:

- Item 1265b – Community Fridge – to be corrected to say that the Committee adopted the Terms of Reference and the Role Responsibilities document.
- Item 1265d – VE Day – correct typo to state ‘vintage singer. ’

The Community Services Committee resolutions from Tuesday 4th March 2025 were noted.

5785. MATTERS ARISING

- a. **Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 18th February 2025** - no items.

- b. **Members to receive any updates from Officers**

The Town Clerk reminded Members to respond to the Doodle poll about the residents' survey sessions at the Village Hall and said that any help would be appreciated.

5786. OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Snape asked Cllr Platt if he could summarise discussions held at the Beds Association of Town & Parish Council meetings at some point by perhaps supplying copies of the minutes so that Members could understand the business being transacted there. Cllr Platt agreed to do this.

Action: Cllr Platt

5787. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Governance Review**

Cllr Snape believed it would benefit Members to discuss this topic at the meeting and make a more formal decision in April. He had consulted with Ward Members as they needed to be on board with what the Town Council proposed. Cllr Snape highlighted four areas for discussion:

- Abolishing the two wards (East & West) – Cllr Snape believed this divide was divisive and enabled negative connotations for the East Ward. It was not in keeping with how the Town Council worked – the Members worked to serve a single town. Cllr Snape advised that the East and West Wards were historically implemented in line with the Mid Beds District Council's set-up, which had no relevance today.
- Reducing the Town Councillors for Flitwick from 17 to (at least) 15. Cllr Snape advised that over recent years, it had been challenging to retain 15 Members and that residents should be allowed to vote via an election.
- Review of the parish boundary – two areas:
 - To incorporate Flitwick Cricket Club within the parish boundary because it has Flitwick in its name, the building is marketed as part of the town, and the organisation has benefited from Section 106 funding as part of Flitwick's allocation. Cllr Snape commented that a discussion with Westoning Parish Council would be required if this approach was taken.
 - To look at the parish boundary between Flitwick and Steppingley - the boundary was in the middle of Woodside Field. Cllr Snape commented that there was a high probability that CBC would look to offer the land immediately

north of Froghall Road as a grey site for housing. Cllr Snape did not think this suggestion would be well-received by Steppingley Parish Council, but he believed there was an argument to have this conversation.

Comments from Members

Cllr Thompson agreed with pursuing the reduction of Members and abolishing two wards for Flitwick but commented that the Council needed to remain conscious of the challenges faced by the East Ward. She added that recruiting Members from the town's West Ward was easier. Cllr Thompson agreed about the parish boundary line between Steppingley and Flitwick because if development did go on this site, the residents would access Flitwick amenities, but she was indifferent about the Cricket Club aspect due to the lack of value this would bring.

Cllr Patterson also agreed with abolishing two wards but raised questions about reducing the number of FTC Members because he did not see any benefit. He commented that over time, as the town grew, it could attract more Members. Cllr Snape responded that the Council was obliged to try to fill any vacancies; however, the Deputy Returning Officer at CBC had agreed to turn a blind eye to the current situation. Cllr Snape stated this was a grey area and that CBC could try to recruit the Ward Members to be Town Councillors as well.

Cllr Patterson asked the Town Clerk if filling the vacancies was required. The Town Clerk stated that the Council should be filling the vacancies. Cllr Patterson sought clarification about the benefit of an election and its mid-term cost. He was advised that there would be a cost for a contested election.

Cllr Blazeby asked if there was any impact on the General Power of Competence, and he was advised that it was not necessarily an issue. Still, it would occur every four years when the elections happened.

Cllr Harald asked if there was a legal minimum number of Members. Cllr Snape stated that there was not, and the Town Clerk agreed to check this in the Standing Orders.

Action: Town Clerk

Cllr Snape commented that operationally, the Council would struggle to transact the business of its committee structure with less than 12 Members. Cllr Roberts commented that sometimes the number of Members assisting with events was a struggle, and therefore, he would resist going lower than 15 Members.

Cllr Wilsmore was in favour of abolishing the two wards. He disagreed about the boundary change to incorporate the Cricket Club because the logical boundary was the River Flit. Cllr Wilsmore commented that CBC had to do a lot of work to conform to Section 5 of the Crematorium Act (proximity to housing), but he did not think the same rules applied if housing was built after a crematorium. He added that the Steppingley Parish Council meeting minutes often state aspirations for a Performing Arts Centre at Froghall Farm. He did not believe this location would become a housing development because it was on a floodplain.

Cllr Blazeby favoured reducing the number of Members as this would simplify the recruitment process. He reinforced that the Council had struggled with vacancies over the years and that the recruitment process took up unnecessary Officer time. He agreed with being cautious about reducing the numbers too far due to the Council's operational needs. Regarding the boundaries, Cllr Blazeby was unsure of the benefit of incorporating the Cricket Club, and he did not think Steppingley Parish Council would agree to this due to the potential revenue this site could achieve.

Cllr Toinko had an alternative view and did not see the benefit of reducing the number of Members. He understood the reasons for abolishing the two wards but wanted to ensure the Council maintained its efforts to understand the different needs of the East Ward. He did not see the benefit of incorporating the Cricket Club into the boundary but favoured including the farmland on the other side of Froghall Road.

Cllr Parsons asked if the Council knew Steppingley Parish's view on the land idea. He considered whether the Parish Council might be in favour if they saw themselves as a rural community and, therefore, would not want a future housing development. Cllr Snape pointed out that the Town Council would be consulted on any developments if the land were included in the Flitwick boundary.

Cllr Harald asked for the background as to why the Cricket Club had Flitwick in its name if it was not in the parish boundary and he was informed that this was because the Club was formally located at the Tesco site.

Cllr Snape commented that the movement of the boundary line to incorporate the Cricket Club would stop the Section 106 funding. He advised that as a Sports Club, the organisation were eligible to receive funding from Sport England, whereas other groups in the town were unable to do this.

The Chairman reiterated that the Governance Review position would be discussed formally at the April meeting.

b. Information & Data Protection Policy

Cllr Blazeby asked if it was possible for CBC to monitor any additional CCTV the Town Council may install in the Hub/Village Hall area. He mentioned that this site was the biggest town centre area not covered by CCTV. The Town Clerk commented that this idea had been pursued previously, but the Council would be required to upgrade its cameras for this to work.

Cllr Harald mentioned that the policy needed to be more specific about how long data was retained. Clarifications were also required relating to how permissions could be withdrawn.

Cllr Snape mentioned that the Council needed to make sure it could implement the planned membership scheme for the Community Fridge as people's data would be retained as part of this initiative since it was a direct service provided by the Council. This required the policy to be explicit with clear definitions about data handling and responsibilities.

It was agreed that Cllrs Harald and Snape would discuss this policy with Officers and that Members would reconsider the revised policy at next month's meeting.

Action: Town Clerk & Cllrs Harald/Snape

c. Flitwick Scout Group Building Plans

Members had an extended discussion about the plans. Cllr Snape emphasised that there was no legal reason why the Scouts could not progress with the plans. He mentioned that since the last time the Group presented the plans, Officers had looked at the lease, and they are not required to consult with the Council.

Conversations with the Scouts had taken place regarding the breach of the lease should the Scouts knock the existing building down to create hard standing. The Scouts had reassured Members that this was not their intention and that the Group wanted to re-purpose the existing structure for a meeting room and essential storage. Cllr Snape stated that the plans were within the existing footprint of the land.

Cllr Snape advised Members that this item concerned providing permission for the planning application to be submitted under the Council's name, as there was a discounted fee.

Cllr Hodges commented that it was a shame that the site could not be cleared and the whole building could be rebuilt, but it was understood that the Scouts did not have the financial resources to progress this route. Cllr Hodges praised the Scouts for the service they provided young people of Flitwick and surrounding parishes.

It was **resolved** to agree for the planning application to be submitted in the Town Council's name.

d. Standing Orders

It was **resolved** to adopt the revised standing orders as circulated.

e. Co-Option Policy Review

It was **resolved** to adopt the co-option policy as circulated.

5788. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

- i) Balance Sheet – noted.
- ii) Projects Fund – noted.

5789. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5790. 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. Confidential Report – noted.**
- b. Land at Steppingley Road – noted.**

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.

The meeting closed at 20:53.

Signed (Chairman)