



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 15TH July 2025 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr A Snape
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr A Crawford
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr P Earles
Cllr L Bandy
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr T Harald
Cllr D Toinko

Also present:

Cllr Adams – CBC
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
3 members of the public

5847. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **resolved** to accept apologies for absence from Cllrs Parsons, Platt (holiday), and Thompson (work commitment).

5848. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

Cllr Adams entered the meeting at 19:48.

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – none.

5849. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The End of Project Celebration for the 3 Station Road Refurbishment on 8th July was a success, and the Town Mayor thanked those involved in the event's organisation and the Members who attended.

The Town Mayor had attended the following civic engagements since the last meeting:

- Ampt Hill Vs Cancer 5K Run/Walk Event

- 35th Annual Games for Teenagers & Adults with Learning Disabilities
- RAF and Tesco employee Chris McDowell's Welcome Party in Flitwick on his cycle journey from Edinburgh to Welwyn Garden City for Armed Forces Day
- Flitwick & Ampthill Sea Cadets Parent/Cadet Boating & BBQ Evening

The Town Mayor expressed his gratitude to the Public Realm Supervisor and his team for the improvements to the town's grounds.

5850. Leader Update

No items.

5851. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Members noted the circulated report.

The Chairman asked for an update on the parking situation outside the Vape Shop on the Avenue. Cllr Adams responded that he needed to follow up on this matter again. CBC had agreed to put the lines there, but so far, this has not been implemented. The same situation remained for Maulden Road.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:52.

5852. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5853. INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

5854. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No items.

5855. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a.** For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 17th June 2025**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 17th June 2025 at the Rufus Centre as a true record.

- b.** For Members to receive and consider the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee meeting, held on **Tuesday 1st July 2025**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

The resolutions of the Community Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 1st July 2025 were noted.

5856. MATTERS ARISING

- a.** Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 17th June 2025**.

No items.

- b.** Members to receive any updates from Officers – no items.

5857. OUTSIDE BODIES

No items.

5858. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Post Office

Members received a report from Officers and the Leader and considered recommendations within the report.

Cllr Snape provided an overview to explain the background information about the Post Office service, including the investigations that had gone into its viability at the Rufus Centre (on two separate occasions) and through the marketing exercise for tenants at 3 Station Road as part of the refurbishment project. All investigations had proven that the finances did not work. The 'best offer' for the retail unit at 1 Station Road came from the Cottage Bakery, but this did not include a Post Office counter.

Officers had reapproached Post Office Ltd. in the most recent investigations for having a Post Office counter as part of the Council's Reception Services. Post Office Ltd. had visited the site, provided forecasts, and adaptation options for the reception area. Cllr Snape thanked the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk for their work on this. There was a large capital outlay to progress this project, and based on the finance forecasts provided by Post Office Ltd., it was showing difficulty in breaking even, even with the utilisation of existing Admin staff's time.

Cllr Snape commented that the Council had become more evidence-led. The Rufus Centre, being outside the town centre, meant that there was no comparable data.

Some Members commented that it was a difficult decision, as residents regularly asked them to reinstate the Post Office service.

Cllr Snape believed that Members needed to decide on a direction for this at this meeting. He concluded that the Council could hold its head high, as all routes had been explored. However, even though he would like to progress with a Post Office at the Rufus Centre, he did not believe it made financial sense, given the use of taxpayers' money.

Cllr Wilsmore commented that there were different forms of post office counters, and the one locally that was comparable to the one investigated for the Rufus Centre was in Maulden. From the services offered, residents could access most of these elsewhere in Flitwick, apart from depositing cash. He added that progressing with the project for the Rufus Centre would be very expensive for minimal benefit.

Cllr Toinko agreed with Cllr Wilsmore and commented on the large capital outlay. He did not think that the Post Office Ltd. estimates for the finances were conservative. Cllr Toinko questioned if people would return to a Flitwick Post Office now that alternative arrangements for its services had been found. He added that the Annual Residents' Survey response indicated that residents did not want to subsidise the costs. Cllr Toinko also raised the point about the impact a Post Office would have on the business services of the Rufus Centre and the disruption it could cause in reception.

The Chairman agreed with the economics of the situation discussed, but he commented that the Post Office service is something that has been frequently raised with him by residents in his role. The Chairman was conflicted on the best route for the Council.

Cllr Blazeby raised concerns about the required changes to the building's entrance/foyer area, and how this could negatively impact the flow of people in and out of the Rufus Centre, particularly for those wanting to send parcels via the Post Office. Cllr Blazeby

believed that residents had moved on since the service was lost, as they had found alternative ways to access the services.

The Chairman suggested that the Council could advertise in places where other services were provided in Flitwick and asked if Members would agree to revisit this in a year. Members were not in support of revisiting the idea.

Cllr Hodges requested that the supporting paper be made public, and he was advised that it had already been published on the website.

It was **resolved** to close the investigations of having a Post Office counter at the Rufus Centre and take no further action.

b. Match Funding – UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) Community Grants

Members were asked to consider allocating £5,000 from the Ops Reserve EMR (319) for the Council's UKSPF Community Grants funding application 2025/26.

Officers were submitting a bid to improve accessibility at the Hub, and a verbal update about the project was provided at the meeting to give more details.

The project must be delivered with all funding spent by December 2025.

Cllr Snape asked if the project included the removal of the falsification of entry on the building (i.e., large-scale, heavy barriers across the back door, etc.), and it was confirmed that it did.

Cllr Wilsmore inquired about the Paxton system, and a response was provided.

It was **resolved** to allocate £5,000 from the Ops Reserve EMR (319) for the Town Council's UKSPF Community Grants funding application 2025/26.

5859. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

Members are asked to note the following finance reports:

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

b. Councillor Attendance Record

Members were asked to note the circulated Councillor Attendance Record for meetings (Civic Year 2024-25).

Cllr Harald explained that the numbers were incorrect, and not all lines presented were based on the total number of meetings. Cllr Harald was required to withdraw from the Business Improvement & Development Board (BIDB) now that he was a tenant of the Rufus Centre, and this had not been included in the spreadsheet.

Cllr Blazeby congratulated Cllr Toinko on his 100% attendance.

Cllr Patterson advised that he was recorded as not giving apologies for BIDB in May 2024, but he was not a Member of this Committee. He also stated that there was no record of his attendance at the May Town Council meeting.

Cllrs Roberts, Snape, and Harald had given apologies for one of the BIDB meetings, but this was not on the document.

There were missing lines for Cllr Earles on the Town Council meetings and Cllrs Bandy and Crawford at Community Services.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that these errors would be corrected, and Officers needed a new system for recording attendance and apologies. It was agreed for Members to note the Councillor Attendance Record for Civic Year 2024-25 at the next Full Council meeting.

Action: DTC

c. Delegated Authority Decision

Members noted that the following decision was made via delegated authority on 27th June 2025:

To fix the gas contract for two years with Corona for £18,748 per annum from 2027 to 2029. The RFO advised that this contract was from February 2027 to February 2029.

5860. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Mr Culman had attended the meeting to talk to Members about the decision made to close vehicle access to the Steppingley Road allotments at one working day's notice to enable the contractors of the Senior Living Development to complete the road works. He advised the following points:

- There was no time for plot holders to plan how to cope with the situation
- It caused problems in the height of the growing season, especially with a heat wave
- Mr Culman believed that the Council had put the construction company ahead of residents' needs
- Vehicle access would not have affected any work being done on Monday
- The new pedestrian gate could have provided access on Tuesday – Friday, and vehicles could have been provided access sooner if Farrans had planned evening work and other changes
- Mr Culman anticipated further closures being required to make good
- He requested that the Council refuse any future closures until there were what he considered to be proper plans set with adequate notice provided to allotment plot holders
- He wanted the Council to liaise with allotment representatives before taking any action for future closures

The Town Clerk advised that the Council had access rights, but Farran's request was not unreasonable. After seeking legal advice, it was confirmed that the construction company did not need to provide any notice and that the Council did not have the right to refuse the work from progressing. The Town Clerk appreciated that the situation was frustrating for plot holders, but there was no legal right to refuse the work. All plot holders were notified about the closure of the roadway, and three of them raised concerns.

Based on this explanation, Mr Culman commented that there was no right of access to the site. The Town Clerk replied that this was Mr Culman's interpretation.

Mr Culman asked if there was a possibility that Officers could negotiate with Farrans if this situation came up again, based on the terms he had presented. The Town Clerk advised that the request from Farrans was reasonable and the site was still accessible by foot (all

allotment holders were Flitwick residents). Officers had offered assistance with plot maintenance during the period and a lot of thought had gone into mitigating the impact.

Cllr Snape proposed under Standing Order 1r ii) to move to the next item of business.

It was **resolved** to proceed to the next item of business under Standing Order 1r ii).

A resident commented that it was disappointing to hear that the Council was not progressing with the Post Office, as she preferred this service to the others available. The resident asked why the service was so expensive and what was involved, considering other smaller towns had a Post Office.

The Chairman advised that there were various reasons for the high costs, including set-up costs, staff time, and the premises themselves. He informed the resident that other towns had a retail provider willing to cover these costs as part of their business, making it a viable service. The resident expressed her disappointment with the Council's decision and asked if any other retailers in the town would be willing to take it on. Members advised that this idea had been explored, but none of the business owners were willing to move forward with it. Cllr Wilsmore advised that the Post Office counters were located inside other shops, and it was the owners who chose to do this, but it did not generate any revenue.

The Chairman asked the resident what they would use the Post Office for. She answered that she accessed the service for sending parcels, collecting stamps and withdrawing cash.

Residents left the meeting at 20:33.

The meeting closed at 20:33.

5861. EXEMPT ITEMS

No items.