



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Community Services Committee meeting
held on Tuesday 1st July 2025 at the Rufus Centre

Present:

Cllr C Thompson (Chairman)
Cllr A Crawford
Cllr P Earles
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr L Bandy
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr T Harald

Also Present:

Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO (DTC) via virtual access
Grace Bunyan – Administration Officer
Sarah Burgess – Amenities Officer (AO)
Aaron Pepper – Public Realm Supervisor (PRS)
Sue Quinn – Community Services Officer (CSO)

1 member of Flitwick Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC)

1281. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **RESOLVED** to accept the apologies for Cllr Platt (work commitment).

1282. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

- (a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllrs Toinko and Earles declared a pecuniary interest in agenda item 9d – Burial Ground, Allotment & Football Pitch Fees as both were allotment holders.
- (b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr Earles declared a non-pecuniary interest on agenda item 9f – Flitwick Village Hall Car Park – as she was a member of the Flitwick VHMC.

1283. CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman provided the following updates:

- The new Community Engagement Manager was due to start the role in August.
- One of the Community Services Officers had resigned from her role with immediate effect.
- Due to these changes, there were staff shortages in the Community Services Team at present and the Chairman asked Members to bear this in mind for the coming

months.

- The Chairman thanked members for their support with both the 'Flitwick Family Fun Day' and 'Pride Picnic' events and informed members of the strong positive feedback which was received for both events. Members were reminded that the Town Clerk had requested their feedback on Family Fun Day via email and were encouraged to provide it if they had not already done so.

1284. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

The VHMC representative highlighted their request for the Council to consider reinstating the fence that was removed between the FTC Hub car park and the Village Hall car park.

The VHMC did not believe that the single white line, which replaced the fence, was effective in preventing vehicles from driving between the two car parks, and that the line did not create sufficient differentiation between the car parks.

The VHMC representative informed members that the Committee could not erect fencing themselves. Members were informed of near misses/accidents that the VHMC believed were caused by the lack of fencing. The VHMC representative referred to the previous bollards but commented that drivers had ignored these.

The Chairman proposed that item 9f be the first item for consideration, and Members agreed to this.

1285. INVITED SPEAKER

No speaker was invited to the meeting.

1286. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Members raised no questions at this time.

1287. MINUTES

- a. For Members to receive and adopt the minutes of the Community Services meeting held on **Tuesday 6th May 2025**.

Cllr Toinko proposed an amendment to Item 1277b – Flitwick 10k Race – to correct the wording to 'independent Ward Councillors had previously been asked to attend and start the race'.

It was **RESOLVED** to adopt the minutes from the Community Services meeting held on Tuesday 6th May 2025 with the following amendment: re-word item 1277b as mentioned by Cllr Toinko.

1288. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Community Services Committee Meeting on **Tuesday 6th May 2025**.

Cllr Toinko mentioned the wavering of fees concerning Item 1277b. He expressed his surprise that a large event, such as the Flitwick 10k Race, would receive a subsidised cost, as he believed it was a well-supported event with sponsorship. Cllr Toinko proposed reviewing the policy related to this matter. The AO confirmed that the 'event booking protocol' was due for review next month.

The Chairman asked Members to indicate their availability for attending the meeting in August via a show of hands. It was agreed that Members would discuss the subsidies as part of the review of the 'event booking protocol' document.

1289. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. Members considered the request from the Village Hall Management Committee.

The Chairman advised members that the Community Services Committee were not able to make a final decision regarding the Village Hall Management Committee's request, as any decisions would need to be made at the next full council meeting, and that the Committee were asked to consider whether they wanted to re-open the conversation relating to the matter.

Members had an extended discussion about the fence that previously separated the car parks of Flitwick Town Council and Flitwick Village Hall, as well as the white line that replaced it. Members discussed this in detail, including the following:

- Quotes that the previous Town Clerk obtained
- The damage that caused the previous fence to be removed
- Alternative options which had previously been explored, such as bollards, which were deemed to be too low
- The Public Realm Team previously erected items to create delineation, rather than contractors, to lower costs
- The Public Realm Team's responsibility is to open and lock FTC's car park at The Hub
- The different uses of the two car parks – The Village Hall car park is only open for events/venue hire, whereas the FTC car park has set opening times during the day
- Accidents that have almost occurred due to there being no barriers in place to stop vehicles from entering the market area on a Friday
- Suggesting affordable alternative barriers to the Village Hall Management Representative, such as cones with tape, to stop cars entering the Village Hall car park from the FTC Hub car park
- Trying to manage the car parks as one larger car park
- The suggestion that the Hub car park (belonging to FTC) be converted to the Village Hall's car park on a Friday when the market takes place

The DTC informed members that officers had previously requested that the solicitors review the license agreement and planning conditions related to the matter, and that the solicitors had confirmed that the existing white line was an adequate delineation. The Village Hall Management Committee representative argued that there was not sufficient signage or differentiation between the car parks. The VHMC representative highlighted to members that the line was not much thicker than that of a standard parking bay line and showed members an image of the line to demonstrate their point.

The VHMC representative requested that members consider reinstating the fence with gates that previously separated the car parks. Members agreed that they had little recollection of this being there, so they believed it must have been removed a long time ago.

The PRS suggested that the Village Hall could purchase traffic management barriers to use on days when the market was held in the Village Hall car park, as it seemed the issue with cars driving between car parks was predominantly on this day. The PRS suggested that the traffic management barriers were readily available at a reasonably low cost. The VHMC representative stated that it was not financially possible for them to purchase these. Members discussed the possibility of the Council purchasing traffic management barriers to separate the car parks on days when the market was held and for possible use at council-run events.

Members requested confirmation from the DTC as to whether an official statement was in place regarding the conversion of the Hub car park to the Village Hall's car park on Fridays, as suggested by the VHMC representative. The DTC advised members that she was unable to clarify this for sure; however, she did not see anything regarding days of

the week in the license agreement. The DTC offered to share the License Agreement and confirmed that the 2021 document was the latest version.

Members asked officers to look at the temporary barrier solution and report back to members at a later meeting, but noted it was for investigation and no formal proposal could be made at this time.

The VHMC representative left the meeting at 20:20.

b. Election of Vice-Chairman

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Toinko as the Vice-Chairman of the Community Services Committee.

c. Working Groups Memberships

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Toinko and Cllr Earles as appointed members of the Allotment Working Group.

The Chairman noted that Cllr Platt was a current member and it felt appropriate to hold the remaining spot so he could be considered at a future meeting.

It was agreed to postpone electing members to the Public Art Working Group, as the CSO advised that the remit was broader than just public art.

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Thompson, Cllr Toinko, and Cllr Wilshire as appointed members of the Nature Park Working Group.

It was **RESOLVED** to elect Cllr Wilshire, Cllr Bandy, and Cllr Earles as appointed members of the Manor Park Working Group.

d. Annual Residents' Survey

Members were asked to consider the feedback from the Annual Residents' Survey.

The Chairman highlighted the vast number of comments that related to issues outside the Town Council's remit.

Cllr Harald emphasized the recurring mention of litter within the feedback from residents. The Chairman informed members that Ampthill had an operative who collected litter on foot within Ampthill, whereas Flitwick Town Council had a vehicle-based operative. Members stated that they had never seen litter pickers around the town except for volunteers. Members believed that Flitwick was not receiving the same level of service as Ampthill, to which they were entitled. This issue had been raised during a full Town Council meeting and was under discussion with Central Bedfordshire Council, so no further action from the Community Services Committee was required at this time.

Members discussed the feedback from the survey, which pertained to the Mosquito War Memorial. However, in their opinion, the audience for this was limited, so it was not deemed feasible to allocate funds to this project at this time.

Members discussed the comments that related to policing and crime within the town. Cllr Harald informed members that he had been told the crime rate in Flitwick is low. The Chairman thought it would be interesting to gain confirmation from the Council on whether any local Councils sponsored a PCSO. Cllr Wilshire assumed that the wording in the comment, which members were referring to, could be incorrect, and that perhaps they had been referring to 'street rangers'. The CSO confirmed that Wolverton and Milton Keynes had

previously sponsored a PCSO.

Members raised concerns that it seemed unclear to residents about the distinct responsibilities of Flitwick Town Council and how these differed from those of Central Bedfordshire Council. Cllr Wilsmore felt that the Annual Residents' Survey asked questions that prompted responses relating to issues that were not within the control of the Town Council. Members highlighted that the Town Council was the residents' first point of contact for reporting any problems and suggested that they could escalate matters to the Ward Councillors and review certain aspects where appropriate. Cllr Wilsmore suggested that FTC needed to highlight to residents that FTC is not responsible for specific issues raised.

Members agreed that Central Bedfordshire Council and other public authorities were already addressing the main issues raised in the survey.

The Chairman highlighted the vast number of comments regarding activities for older people. The CSO advised that the issue the Council previously faced was that the activities they were offering were free or low-cost, and thought that if the Council were to revisit introducing activities, they would need to have realistic costs and a balance. Members suggested informing older people of alternative activities.

e. Burial Ground, Allotment & Football Pitch Fee's

Cllr Earles and Cllr Toinko left the meeting at 20:42 - Disclosable Pecuniary interest in the agenda item (allotments).

Members received a report from the Amenities Officer and considered the recommendations.

Allotments

Members requested clarification as to what was covered by the allotment rent. The AO advised that the fee covered maintenance, water, and toilets on the site. Cllr Harald queried whether a lot of time was spent completing maintenance work on the sites by the public realm team, to which the PRS advised that a great extent of time was spent carrying out maintenance.

Cllr Harald mentioned that a 20% increase in the current allotment fees would only equate to an additional £5.44 per annum, which he believed was a low amount. The Chairman highlighted that although it may currently seem like a low increase in cost, if a 20 percent increase were applied each year, this would eventually result in a substantial rise in allotment rent over time.

The Chairman reminded members that the fee changes would not take effect until 2027 and that, at this point, building works would likely be taking place on the site adjacent to the Steppingley Road site. The Chairman advised members that they were currently unsure of the impact this would have on the site and how detrimental this could be, and believed members should consider this when deciding on fee increases.

The AO advised that the item could be revisited during the next Community Services meeting, allowing officers to collect further information and provide more clarification on costs, thereby aiding members in making their decision.

The Chairman referred to the Allotments EMR, which was accessed when large items needed to be purchased for the allotments service.

The AO highlighted to members that plots commonly required work to be done by the Public Realm Team once allotment plot holders terminated their leases or were served with a notice to quit.

Members requested clarification as to whether the deposit for an allotment plot would be a

one-off fee, to which the AO clarified that it would be. Members suggested that the fee would act as a deterrent to prevent plot holders from leaving plots in a dissatisfactory state, rather than using the deposit to cover the costs of the work to bring plots back to a satisfactory state if necessary. Members struggled to agree on a reasonable deposit amount, with some arguing that a deposit of as high as £100 may deter residents from taking on an allotment plot. In contrast, other members argued that if the deposit was as low as £50, plot holders might choose to leave the plot in its current condition, as the cost of doing the works may be greater than the deposit they would lose. Although members agreed that a deposit for allotment plots should be introduced, the decision was deferred until the next meeting as they were unable to decide on the deposit amount.

Cllr Earles and Cllr Toinko re-entered the meeting at 20:54.

Burial Ground

Members asked for a definition of 'exclusive rights'. The AO clarified that 'exclusive rights' referred to the ownership of the grave or plot and informed members of the administrative work required to transfer these. The AO highlighted that as part of research undertaken, FTC was the only Council that did not currently charge a fee for the transfer of exclusive rights.

The AO also emphasised to members that the Council would no longer be receiving income for purchasing a new grave, as there were no spaces left.

The Chairman queried whether the Council would still have to carry out transfers of exclusive rights if there were no burial plots left. The AO advised that in the case of a double plot, a transfer of exclusive rights may be required.

Members asked for clarification whether the burial plots were owned or leased. The AO clarified that they were leased.

Members questioned whether any more burial plots would become available. The Chairman clarified that the Council was currently unable to offer any additional plots. Cllr Wilsmore requested an indication of the number of possible additional plots if the turning circle at the top end of the burial site was removed. The AO advised that the removal of the tuning circle would only enable a further 7 burial plots as the entire circle was not able to be removed as access for grave diggers etc. needed to remain.

The Chairman suggested adding an item to one of the future Council meetings to discuss creating additional burial plots but noted that this had been discussed previously and the Council had decided not to progress with this.

Members discussed implementing a fee of £62 for transfer of exclusive rights, based on the average fees taken from other Town Councils.

It was **RESOLVED** to implement a fee of £62 to transfer the exclusive rights for a grave/plot.

It was decided to defer the burial ground fees until the next meeting.

Football Pitches

Cllr Toinko requested clarification as to whether the fees for football pitches had to be proportionate to the increase in allotment and burial fees. The DTC advised members that, to her knowledge, there was no legal requirement for the fees to be in proportion, however she advised that she would be able to check and confirm. The DTC commented that in previous years the fees were proportionate but, as mentioned previously, they did not believe that this was a requirement.

Cllr Harald proposed the fee be rounded up to the nearest whole number as it was currently an unusual amount.

The Chairman highlighted that FTC fees for pitches were quite expensive compared to other Town Councils.

Members asked for clarification on what defined 'senior' in relation to the football pitch fees. The AO clarified 'senior' referred to those 18+ and advised members that although FTC were able to book and offer both senior and junior pitches, officers found that they did not tend to receive senior pitch bookings due to the lack of changing facilities and the FA regulations.

The AO highlighted that the football pitch fees stated in the report included VAT.

It was **RESOLVED** for Football Pitch Hire fees for 2026/27 to remain the same as the current year.

f. **Combatting Loneliness & Social Isolation**

Members discussed and noted the 'Combatting Loneliness & Social Isolation' initiative document that has been produced by Cllr Mark Smith (Central Bedfordshire Ward Councillor – Ampthill Ward).

The Chairman drew members' attention to page 18 - action planning checklist and read this section aloud. The Chairman highlighted to members that this was the only action element of the document. The Chairman informed members that the committee did not have to commit to any actions at this point, but asked members whether they had anything to share on the subject for the committee to consider.

The CSO informed members that they had previously tried to get social prescribers to use our services with no success. The CSO advised that they also experienced this with services such as Citizens Advice and Credit Union. Members discussed reporting back to Cllr Mark Smith in relation to the Council finding it difficult to make progress with these groups.

Action: Town Clerk

Members were unclear of what was required in relation to the agenda item. The CSO said they would gain clarity regarding this.

1290. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Community Financial Report**

Members received and noted a report from the Senior Finance Officer.

b. **Officer Update**

- i.) The PRS highlighted the recent work carried out by the Public Realm Team and informed Members of verbally positive comments which they had received from shop owners located on Kings Road.

Members were informed that a resident had expressed their interest in war graves to the team and that this individual was happy to maintain them (with permission from FTC). Cllr Wilsmore queried whether the Council was permitted to allow a resident to maintain the war graves and the PRS agreed to investigate this and confirm the position. Cllr Wilsmore also asked the PRS whether the area of the burial ground where the war graves were located could be made more accessible. The PRS advised that this was on the team's upcoming agenda.

The PRS mentioned the work being carried out by the Community Payback Team and highlighted that their next task was focused on bus stops around town. Cllr Toinko asked if we owned any bus stops and the AO confirmed that FTC were responsible for several in the town. Cllr Wilsmore highlighted limitations of what FTC could ask the Community Payback Team to

do and the PRS advised that the risk was with the Community Payback organisation.

Cllr Toinko asked whether it would be more beneficial for the Public Realm Team to allocate their time to tasks such as cleaning play areas, rather than watering planters, and asked for clarification on how long watering takes. The PRS confirmed that the watering could take one person the majority of a day.

Members queried who owned pieces of land around shops at Kings Road. Cllr Wilsmore queried why FTC were maintaining flower beds in some areas but not others.

Members asked if it was possible have a map of Flitwick and mark areas that we are responsible for so that this can be clarified and help members understand and discuss things in future. This was agreed.

Action: Amenities Officer

i) Members to note the Community Officer update.

The CSO pointed out the mistake in date at the top of the report and apologised for this, clarifying that the date should have read '1st July 2025'.

The Chairman requested an update on how planning was going for Remembrance and Christmas Lights events, especially considering the staff shortages on the Community Services Team.

The CSO informed members that the SAG and road closure had been submitted for Remembrance Sunday, and that they had spoken with the Deputy Lieutenant Major Simon Sadler and everything was in hand. Members were told that the invitation list for the event had been sent to the Town Mayor for confirmation and that Officers were in contact with the Royal British Legion.

The CSO informed members that the SAG for the Christmas Lights had been completed earlier that day and that this would be submitted the same week, along with the risk assessment. Members were advised that Officers had everything in hand for the event's organisation.

Members discussed the issue in relation to the Family Fun Day (FFD) where there had been a stall holder leaving the field in their vehicle prematurely, which caused health and safety concerns. The CSO advised members that the stall holder had asked the Officers via email on the Friday (13th June) whether they were able to leave the site earlier via vehicle, and again verbally on the day. Members were told that it had been re-iterated to the stall holder that they were not allowed to do so. Members suggested that this stall holder should not be invited back to FFD in future due to the severity of the issue.

Members suggested locking the gate to the park to help to resolve this issue, however the CSO advised that we cannot lock the gate due to SAG conditions. Members asked whether this could be changed for next year's event, however the CSO clarified that this was not possible. Members were informed that security personnel were immediately positioned at the gate to the site and the stall holder was marshaled off safely.

The CSO advised that stallholder feedback the feedback suggested an amendment to the stalls finish time, to alter this to 4:30pm. Members suggested that in future there could be allocated areas open between 4:30pm-5:30pm for stall holders to leave the site. The CSO advised members that this had been done in previous years.

The Chairman requested clarification on how many stalls there were at FFD this year compared to last year. The CSO confirmed that there were 5 less stalls and that this was due to payment chasing and last-minute cancellations.

Cllr Toinko asked for clarification in the report about there being no verbal issues in relation to the Fun Fair. He stated that there were issues raised online.

Cllr Earles told members that one Fun Fair ride were charging £4. The CSO clarified that this had not been permitted and that the stall holder was asked to change this on the day. Members were advised that this ride was an additional ride that had not booked by the stall holder meaning this invalidated their risk assessment. The CSO advised that the Town Clerk

had taken the decision on the day to leave the additional ride in situ as it was too late and impractical to move them off the field. Feedback was given to the provider stating that this was not in line with the agreement for the event.

The Chairman requested that members spoke to the CSO or Town Clerk regarding any additional comments relating to FFD.

Cllr Wilsmore requested confirmation as to whether the tethered mallets had been fitted at Hinksley Music Park. The PRS and AO confirmed that the mallets had been fitted. The CSO told members that they had not been fitted when the Music Park was originally installed due to being unsure of what height to fit them at.

c. STOP Campaign Donation

Members noted the information included on the agenda about leftover funds being used for providing additional benches in Manor Park. Cllr Toinko requested clarification on what the STOP Campaign was and Cllr Wilsmore explained that this related to the work done to stop development from going on Parsons Field near Manor Park.

1291. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

1292. 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. Youth Provision Report – members noted the Youth Provision Report

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 ended 21:45

Signed (Chairman)