



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 21st October 2025 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr L Bandy
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr A Crawford
Cllr P Earles
Cllr L Hart
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr M Platt
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr D Toinko

Also present:

Cllr I Adams – Central Beds Council (CBC) Ward Member
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Lisa Simpson – Community Engagement Manager
2 members of the public

5893. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **resolved** to accept apologies for absence from Cllr Snape, Parsons, and Harald (work commitments).

5894. 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 Earles Declared an Interest on Agenda Item 15c – Village Hall – as she was a Member of the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC).

5895. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor had a busy month at the following civic engagements:

- The Lord Lieutenant had visited the Community Fridge
- The High Sheriff's Justice Service
- Biggleswade Town Council Quiz

- Flitwick Church Festival
- Civic Reception for Volunteers in Ampthill
- Army Benevolent Fund Event
- The Big Christmas Cupcake and Cuppa for CHUMS

The Town Mayor reminded Members that his Quiz Night was scheduled for 28th November, and tickets were on sale.

Members were asked to advise Officers if they could attend the Remembrance Sunday parade.

Citizens' Advice Bureau (CAB) representatives would visit the Community Fridge twice a month, starting the following day, to offer advice to users and the wider community.

The Deputy Town Mayor, Cllr Platt, had attended the following civic engagements:

- Kempston Town Council Charity Evening
- Annual Trafalgar Night Dinner
- Lord Lieutenant Central Beds Event
- Houghton Regis Civic Reception

5896. Leader Update

Members noted the email circulated by Cllr Snape.

5897. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Cllr Adams was pleased to note that the CAB representatives were coming to the Rufus Centre biweekly. He advised Members that the Ampthill and Bedford branches had recently merged, which should see more service provision for the local area. Cllr Adams was an Appointee for the CAB, and he believed the merger was positive for the Flitwick area.

Cllr Adams had received some queries from Cllr Bandy about Fix My Street, which he would investigate.

There were no questions from Members.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:51.

5898. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Two residents had attended the meeting since receiving letters regarding the appeal for the Steppingley Road field planning application. The Chairman commented that there had been no official announcement from CBC, making it difficult for the Town Council to comment. The Town Clerk reiterated that the only notification received related to the appeal.

The resident requested reassurance from the Members that the Town Council would oppose the development if the appeal were to be considered. The Chairman commented that the Town Council had previously objected to the application, but without knowing the current position and associated circumstances, Members were unable to comment at this time.

5899. INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

5900. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No items.

5901. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 16th September 2025**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday, 16th September 2025, at the Rufus Centre as an accurate record of the meeting.

- b. For Members to receive and consider the resolutions and recommendations of the Extra Ordinary Town Council meeting, held on **Wednesday 24th September 2025**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Extra Ordinary Town Council meeting held on Wednesday 24th September, at the Rufus Centre as an accurate record of the meeting with the following amendments: add Cllr Patterson and delete Cllr Hodges from the list of Members present.

5902. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 16th September 2025 and Wednesday 24th September 2025**.

No items.

- b. Members to receive any updates from Officers – the Town Clerk had one update to give under the exempt section.

5903. OUTSIDE BODIES

No items.

5904. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Flag Flying Policy**

Members were informed that the policy was due for renewal.

Cllr Wilsmore asked when the policy was last reviewed. Cllr Blazeby explained that the decision was deferred from May 2025. Cllr Toinko stated that he had requested this decision be deferred until this meeting due to key dates over the summer, including the King's birthday and Pride.

Cllr Toinko presented his view, which included:

- The flags caused a lot of debate at meetings and generated criticism online, as well as instigating issues for Town Council staff in reception.
- A resident had mistakenly accused the Council of not flying the flag for Remembrance.
- Graffiti in the town had become political.

- There were no social media posts about flags over the summer, and for this reason, he questioned why the Council was flying flags, almost in secret.
- He proposed that the Council remove the flagpole at the Rufus Centre.
- His view was that the Council inherited the flagpole when it purchased the building, and flying the flags caused problems for staff at the centre for no benefit.

Cllr Earles disagreed with this view and remarked that it was the Council's duty to fly the flags for King and country. She believed that as a Council, the flagpole should remain and that all flags should be flown without the need for promotions on social media. Some Members commented that it was not a duty of the Council to fly national flags. Cllr Toinko stated that the Rufus Centre was not a Crown or Government building.

Cllr Blazeby sought clarity on whether, from an organisational perspective, there was any responsibility to fly flags of any form. The Town Clerk confirmed that there was no obligation to fly flags as a Town Council. Cllr Blazeby believed that flags were divisive and the Rufus Centre was in the wrong part of town, regardless. He added that there was no need for the Council to fly flags, and there was an added staff responsibility to put them up/take them down.

Cllr Patterson believed that removing the flagpole was the 'nuclear' option, and it would upset many groups in the community. He added that removing the flagpole would not be done quietly (questioning if a road closure would be needed), so he believed keeping the flagpole would cause less harm. Cllr Toinko commented that there would be no need for a road closure.

Cllr Wilsmore stated that the Union Jack flag was flown on three days per year, and one of those was for Remembrance. He noted that the town's focus for this was beside the War Memorial.

Cllr Hodges stated that this was a 'no-win' situation. He said that if the flagpole were removed, it might upset people who had not previously commented on this situation. Cllr Hodges was sad to hear about the abuse that staff had received about the flags and that the public should be challenged on this behaviour. Cllr Hodges wanted the current policy to remain. He subsequently asked if the flagpole should be relocated to Station Road. Cllr Blazeby responded that it was not permitted to fly flags adjacent to any War Memorial.

Cllr Toinko proposed removing the flagpole at the Rufus Centre and ceasing to follow the circulated policy. A vote was held, but the proposal was not carried.

It was **resolved** to continue with the existing Flag Flying policy and review it in 10 years.

b. Consultation: Defining the High Street Areas for High Street Rental Auctions (HSRAs)

Cllr Blazeby reiterated his view about the several business premises that were not included in the footprint for this consultation. He explained that all of these were contained within the list of descriptions for the types of businesses.

It was **resolved** to ask CBC to include the other businesses within the immediate town centre area (including D&G Shorts, the garages and Flitwick Motorcycles) within the consultation.

Action: Town Clerk

c. **Finance**

i) **External Audit - Year End 31st March 2025**

Members noted the External Auditor's report.

It was **resolved** to approve the Audited AGAR, year-ended 31st March 2025.

ii) **Internal Audit (1st Interim)**

It was **resolved** to accept the First Interim Internal Audit Report for 2025-26.

d. **Central Bedfordshire Council - Designating Local Green Spaces**

Cllr Hart had prepared a brief presentation on this topic, having attended a CBC meeting on the subject.

Key points included:

- There was no need to be a landowner to recommend sites.
- The plan was free.
- It was a good process to protect areas of importance whilst understanding that there needed to be some development.
- It would make it more challenging to develop the set areas.
- The areas that the FTC could put forward needed to be within half a kilometre of Flitwick.
- There was no restriction on the size of a green space put forward.
- There was the possibility of proposing a footpath as a green space.
- Members liked the idea of including Flitwick Woods and the smaller green spaces on the estates.
- There was a requirement to demonstrate community use via evidence (i.e. photos).
- Suggesting allotment sites and parks would add another layer of protection.
- There was a two-year timeframe with a draft version anticipated from CBC in June/July 2026, ready for public feedback.
- Cllr Hart was willing to apply on behalf of FTC, and she believed several sites could be included; however, input was required from other Members.
- The deadline for the application was 20th November.

Cllr Wilsmore commented that it would be prudent for Members to be cautious when putting forward a site that was owned by FTC as this could impede plans for future Councils. He also stated that land ownership can be complicated at times, and developers often have little interest. Cllr Wilsmore mentioned that some grass verges belonged to private properties, and he had noticed an increased number of applications from residents to incorporate these spaces as part of the properties' gardens. Cllr Hart did not feel that this process would impede these situations.

It was agreed that Members email the Town Clerk over the next two weeks with any suggested green spaces (and supporting evidence of the sites being used). The Town Clerk would collate the information received and work with Cllr Hart on this in readiness for the next Council meeting.

The Town Clerk would share a copy of the green spaces presentation after the meeting.

Action: Town Clerk/Cllr Hart

e. **Corporate Risk Register**

It was **resolved** to adopt the circulated Corporate Risk Register.

5905. **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Finance Reports**

The balance sheet and projects fund document were noted.

b. **Planning**

The FTC Planning Decisions and CBC Planning Decisions were noted.

5906. **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

A resident enquired about Agenda Item 12b – Consultation on Defining the High Street – and wanted to know more about its implications. The Chairman stated that CBC had requested a designated area to define the location of shops in the town. Cllr Wilsmore highlighted the Government legislation regarding vacant shops and how local authorities could step in to encourage people to rent out these spaces.

A resident enquired about the opening date of the Cottage Bakery. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the tenant was hoping to open in mid-November.

A resident asked when the new Dentist would open. The Members did not have any information relating to this.

A resident asked what was happening behind the Total Garage. Cllr Wilsmore believed this was a private development of flats.

A resident enquired about the development taking place beside James Place. Cllr Earles explained that this development would see 40 new dwellings. Cllr Wilsmore added that there had been several planning applications for this site, which had been ongoing for some time.

A resident asked for an update on the retirement village development on Steppingley Road. The Chairman advised that CBC aimed to open this around Christmas time. The resident enquired as to whether residents of Ferndale would be moving there, and Members stated that this was the case. The resident was informed that details about this development were included on CBC's website.

The residents left the meeting at 20:38.

5907. **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. **Officer Update** – noted.

c. Youth Contract

It was **resolved** to approve the recommendation to extend the contract up to August 31, 2026, for £17,081.

d. Village Hall

It was **resolved** for the Town Clerk to send the circulated letter with one minor amendment.

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 21:08.

Signed..... (Chairman)