



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 20th January 2026 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

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

Also present:

Cllr I Adams – Central Beds Council (CBC) Ward Member
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive (TC)
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO (DTC)
Mathew Earles – Business & Facilities Manager (BFM) – via virtual access
2 members of the public

5938. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

5939. 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.

5940. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor thanked the Public Realm Supervisor for providing a tour of the refurbished Tractor Store.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone who helped on Christmas Eve for the Community Fridge project.

The Town Mayor had hosted a Children's Puppet Theatre Show to raise funds for his charities. He thanked his wife for her help with organising the event.

The Town Mayor had attended CBC's Budget Briefing that evening which was due to be discussed later in the meeting.

5941. Leader Update

The Leader referred to the perceived lack of representation from Flitwick Town Council (FTC) regarding the planning appeal for the Steppingley Road field application. He was referring to residents' comments on social media. Cllr Snape commented that the Council understood the strength of feeling locally and why residents would want to see members of FTC present. He spoke about FTC's consultee role in the planning system.

Members discussed how the appeal was out of people's hands locally and this was now being coordinated by the Planning Inspectorate. Cllr Snape advised that FTC had commented on the planning application at length and given objections, however the reality was, that this site was in the local plan and CBC chose to not defend it. Professional advice had been sought, and FTC had been advised to not formally participate in the appeal as it was unlikely to be successful and there was a significant financial risk. This decision not to participate in the appeal did not reflect a lack of concern by any FTC member but Cllr Snape advised that the responsible decision has been taken not to be involved.

5942. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Cllr Adams reported the following:

- He had not seen the social media comments about the Steppingley Field planning application, but he would look at these.
- The enquiry for the application had begun that day and without CBC defending it, there were not many people there with him speaking.
- Cllr Adams was doing his best for the people of Flitwick and had shared objections and advice from Flitwick Local Action Group.
- He understood why there was not a big team present to defend the decision as there were big costs if the defence was to be deemed unreasonable.
- The Inspectorate had said to Cllr Adams that he would welcome someone coming from FTC or Steppingley Parish Council and he had confirmed that there would be no cost liability.
- The Appellant had already sealed the amount of costs and had given assurances that this would not be changed.
- Members were asked to advise Cllr Adams if they would be attending the enquiry on a future date and that he would let the Planning Inspector know.
- Cllr Adams had visited the site that day as part of the enquiry process and had showed areas of interest and concern. Members noted that the highways' part was being conducted the following day and that needed to be a severe impact for it to be considered.
- The enquiry would continue for three more days and was due to complete on 23rd January.

Questions

Cllr Hart asked where the enquiry was being held and she was informed it was taking place at Chicksands at 10am.

Cllr Hart asked what would be classified as a severe highways risk. Cllr Adams commented on the technical part of the highways section of the enquiry.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:57.

5943. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A resident referred to the Steppingley Field application and wanted to reiterate some of Cllr Adams' comments. She added that residents did not want this development and asked what would constitute a severe planning concern for traffic. The resident went on to explain the impact this development would have on schools and the doctors surgery.

The Chairman responded that although FTC shared the residents' concerns, this was a planning process that everyone was bounded by.

5944. INVITED SPEAKER

No invited speaker.

5945. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

None.

5946. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 16th December 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 December 2025 at the Rufus Centre as a true record.

5947. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 16th December 2025**.

No items.

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

5948. OUTSIDE BODIES

No items.

5949. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Annual Residents Survey**

Cllr Blazeby had drafted some open-ended questions for consideration which had been circulated as a starting point.

Cllr Toinko raised the following points:

- Qs 1 & 3 – he did not think these were useful questions because residents would not know the commercial information required to answer them. Cllr Toinko also commented that FTC could not do some of the things included in the question.

- Q2 – he asked if supplementary information could be included here about rides for younger children at the Family Fun Day. Cllr Toinko believed that the fair should be free and to include activities for younger children. He hoped that the Soft Play would be available again in the Village Hall to keep children out of the sun.
- Q4 – Cllr Toinko thought this question was confusing and asked if this was volunteer led. He mentioned that residents might come up with ideas that the Council had not thought about.
- Q5 – Cllr Toinko thought the section about trialling new events needed to be reworded/reconsidered since some of the examples were low cost and resident-led, whereas larger events (e.g. Christmas Lights Switch On and the Festival of Lights) were incomparable in terms of cost. Cllr Toinko added that he thought there should be a direct question specifically about the Festival of Lights to state the precept cost.

Cllr Snape was in favour of having the open-ended questions with targeted examples. The Chairman commented that residents' responses gave the Council a steer on things.

Cllr Hart thanked Cllr Blazeby for drafting the questions and commented that she liked the questions circulated.

In terms of timeframes for releasing the survey, Members still had time to contribute to the open-ended questions and it was agreed for anyone with ideas, to send these to the Town Clerk. The item would be considered again at the February meeting.

Members had an extended discussion about the benchmark questions that were in line with the Local Government Association's survey, in particular residents' perception of safety in the day verses safety at night time.

Cllr Hart suggested including a general question to give people an option to expand on any of the answers given.

b. **[CB/25/03904/RD](#) – Footbridge for Flitwick Railway Station, rear of The Swan, 1 Dunstable Road, Flitwick, MK45 1HP**

Members were asked to consider a response to the planning application.

Comments from the Planning Improvement Working Group were as follows:

'The Planning Improvement Working Group welcomes the proposed works at Flitwick Railway Station designed to enhance accessibility, including the provision of step-free access to the Station facilities for all travellers. We recommend that Flitwick Town Council support the application, and notify CBC accordingly.'

Cllr Hodges was reluctant to include anything in the response that would slow this proposal down.

Cllr Wilsmore commented that there was the potential for the steps to be in the wrong place.

It was **resolved** to support the PIWG's recommendation to support the application discussed (CB/25/03904/RD).

c. **Proposed Budget 2026-27**

Members were asked to consider the proposed budget for 2026-27 and agree on the Precept.

Cllr Parsons, Chairman of the Finance & General Purposes (F&GP) Committee summarised that a few changes were made since the December Council meeting, and Members of the F&GP Committee were comfortable with the Council's financial position. He advised that due to expenditure relating to the 3 Station Road project, this had affected the reserves position and these were currently slightly below the expected level. Members noted that there was a capital receipt coming. The consensus within the F&GP Committee was to increase the precept in line with inflation at 3%.

Cllr Parsons thanked the Officers for their work in preparing the budget papers. This work had helped members of the F&GP Committee easily scrutinise the figures presented.

Cllr Toinko commented that the new budget line for Community Activities to hold a Festival of Lights event was not something that the members had decided to do. He proposed an amendment to the proposed budget to remove budget line 4541/313 and re-purpose this funding to the costs attributed to the Family Fun Day for 2026. A vote took place but this proposal was not carried.

It was **resolved** to approve the circulated Flitwick Town Council Budget for 2026-27 at £1,094,044 with a 3% Precept rise.

Action: DTC

d. **Central Bedfordshire Council Budget 2026-2027**

Members were asked to consider a response to the Central Bedfordshire Council budget.

The Chairman had attended CBC's Budget Briefing that day and reported that £40m of cuts to CBC's revenue budget were to come over the next three years. A significant outcome was that Town Councils were going to be expected to take on more functions that were currently run by CBC. However, there had been no financial decisions on this at the briefing.

Cllr Toinko had researched the budget and noticed a line about CBC planning to save money by reducing routine maintenance of their sites. He commented that the £30k saving was a mistake as every visitor would notice this. Cllr Toinko commented that if the sites were in Flitwick, this could lead to a similar dialogue that the Town Council had about maintaining the space outside the station.

Cllr Snape, Leader of the Council, had met with CBC Cllrs Mackey, Adams and Baker recently and he agreed with CBC's position that due to the funding changes in the Government, it meant that principle authorities needed to look hard at their provisions. Cllr Snape saw this as an opportunity for Town Councils. Cllr Snape agreed that small changes that added to disrepair was not constructive.

Cllr Snape did not think there was much to respond to as a Town Council. He commented that there was the potential to explore what the changed meant for Town Councils and that CBC should not just be about core services. Cllr Snape said that CBC had a responsibility to play in this respect and that he would like to be involved in this conversation going forward.

Cllr Hodges asked about the reasons why this was the situation for the Central Beds area. The Chairman advised that there was a perception that the Labour Government were helping labour authorities as well as the areas where Reform could do well in the elections. He added that Central Beds was classed as a prosperous area.

Cllr Hart believed that maintaining the spaces in Central Beds was an important factor to consider and suggested proposing CBC owned sites such as Flitwick Woods. Cllr Hart proposed to approach CBC and ask them to consider the cost benefit of recuing

environmental services given that the area was known for its outstanding natural sites. Cllr Toinko agreed that the sites were productive for encouraging good health and residents enjoyed them.

It was **resolved** to respond to the CBC budget consultation by asking for more clarity around the proposed reduction of maintenance of green spaces, and if any of the 43 sites were in Flitwick.

Action: TC

e. **Stocksfield Room**

The Chairman advised that the DTC had been asked to clarify whether the members who were also Community Fridge Volunteers were permitted to vote on this item. The Chairman explained that the Beds Association of Town & Parish Councils (BATPC) had considered this and advised that it was up to individual members, but they did not see that this was a situation where non-pecuniary interests needed to be declared given that it was a Council project. The Chairman commented that as part of the conversations with BATPC, it had been suggested to review the Council's Code of Conduct to give more clarity on dispensations and bring it in line with the Local Government Association's model version.

Action: TC/DTC

Cllr Blazeby provided some background and context for how dispensations would be useful to allow members the freedom to contribute their experience and assist the Council in making decisions. Cllr Blazeby commented that more details were required about this.

Cllr Toinko asked about the limits on whether members were volunteers or Trustees of the Town Mayor's Charity. The DTC commented that this was not relevant as no limitations were placed on the Trustees or volunteers, and that if members believed they could remain open minded in discussions, and did not want to declare an interest, then they could take part in the debate and vote.

Cllr Snape advised that he did not have an interest to declare. He pointed out that this was a Council project and that volunteers/Trustees did not benefit from it, but it was about supporting residents. Cllr Snape had assisted the Officers in preparing this report to add detail to the paper for a meaningful discussion. He added that he had hoped to reach more of an agreement with officers.

Cllr Snape advised the following:

- The paper highlighted the challenges with space, health and safety and how this was impacting residents using the service.
- The fridge project was utilising the Stocksfield space on a trial basis until the end of February and this paper was asking the Council for approval to use the room on a permanent basis.
- The proposal would not be expensive or cause a big impact on the Rufus Centre's traded service.
- The fridge operations could not continue in its current format to support the level of users.

Cllr Patterson was in favour of supporting the change as he could see the community benefit but asked a question about the loss of meeting room space to rent it out. He asked about the Stocksfield Room being rented by corporate clients as part of a Lockyer Suite booking and for information about the current usage. The TC advised that the Stocksfield Room did get used for events, parties etc. but it mostly was occupied by non-profit organisations and charities, both of which were happy to be relocated elsewhere.

Cllr Snape referred to the Business Improvement & Development Board's updated policy about community groups and access to rooms. He commented that no events had stopped due to the current trial of the fridge project using the Stocksfield Room. Members noted that some groups who previously used the room had been relocated to the Hub or other Rufus Centre rooms. This was manageable but Cllr Snape recognised there was an opportunity cost.

Cllr Blazeby advised the following:

- He was fully in favour of the fridge project and commented on ensuring that it operated safely and giving users the service and dignity that it deserved.
- He questioned the reason for permanently allocating the room.
- He stated that the members should be provided with costs.
- He questioned the access to the fridge for users being through the café at peak times and did not think this was appropriate. This should be done externally.
- The main door was not currently accessible from outside.
- The newer double fire doors needed to be visible on the plan presented.
- The paper did not address questions about safe access or egress other than it was dangerous (he agreed that the Council needed to make this safe and investigate ramp options due to a trip hazard).
- He wanted more detail about the opportunity costs of losing the Stocksfield.
- He wanted a clearer understanding of what changes were needed in the Stocksfield to make it work, including any cupboards, changes to the alarm system etc. He felt this information was required before a decision was made, especially for permanent usage.
- He stated that in principle, it was the right route to go down but a true understanding of the costs were required.

Cllr Snape advised that the officers do have costs but these were not included in the report. Cllr Blazeby commented that proposals for projects would not be considered without the costs and questioned why a decision was needed at this meeting.

Cllr Bandy commented that the use of the Stocksfield for the fridge project needed to happen because users of the service and volunteers were struggling. She added that the volunteers were trying to help Flitwick. Cllr Blazeby reiterated his points about needing the costs.

Cllr Wilsmore commented that he did not have an idea about the internal layout of the rooms and members agreed that it would be useful for those who were unfamiliar with the space, to have a walk round. Cllr Wilsmore believed that the proposal needed to be thought out further.

Cllr Patterson asked if there was a middle ground for this meeting in that the Council could make the space safe and deal with the other aspects later.

Cllr Blazeby was in favour of the fridge project using the space but wanted clarity on what works were required, transparency and cost implications.

Cllr Snape called a point of order as he felt that Cllr Blazeby was repeating his points. The Chairman advised that there was insufficient details for members to vote on this item and requested cost and explanation of other issues to be included in a future proposal.

Cllr Hart proposed giving support regarding the Council's commitment to move forward with the idea to give reassurance to volunteers that the Council were thinking seriously about it.

Cllr Wilsmore asked if there was a case for moving the fridge project to the Hub. Cllr Snape advised that this had been discussed at the Community Services Committee and the Hub had been deemed unsuitable.

Cllr Toinko asked if the previously discussed work had been implemented to install the steel doors. Members noted that an order had been placed.

It was **resolved** to progress with obtaining other relevant information mentioned in this discussion about costs and investigating options for the how it might work for Flitwick Community Fridge to use the Stocksfield Room. This revised proposal would be considered at the next meeting.

Action: Community Engagement Manager

5950. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

Members noted the following finance reports:

- i) Balance Sheet
- ii) Projects Fund

b. Central Bedfordshire Council Town Centre Benchmarking Report

Members were asked to note the report from the Central Bedfordshire Town Centre Benchmarking exercise.

The Chairman commented that the reports were interesting and reinforced the public's views about having a bakery in the town.

Cllr Blazeby advised that historically, previous benchmarking reports had assisted the DTC with grant funding applications as supporting information with recognised data.

c. Planning

Members noted the FTC Planning decisions and the Central Bedfordshire Planning decisions.

5951. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A resident asked about the footbridge application at the station that had been discussed in the meeting and requested information about how this would work. Cllr Hodges, Chair of the PIWG, commented that the existing footbridge was to remain and a new access provided with lifts, ramps etc. The MP had written to Network Rail (NWR) for clarification on what was due to happen and there were no plans to remove the existing footbridge. The resident believed that an entrance point from the car park on Station Road would have been a lot easier to achieve however Cllr Wilsmore pointed out that this car park was privately owned.

Cllr Wilsmore advised that NWR had to purchase a small amount of land for this proposal and that they probably would have had to pay a significant amount of money for it.

A resident asked if it would be possible for a Christmas Lunch for the over 60's this year. The Chairman passed this to the Community Services Committee and Cllr Wilsmore suggested including this in the residents' survey questions.

A resident asked if copies of the survey went to homes. Cllr Blazeby advised that hard copies were held at the Rufus Centre, other community buildings and 'Chat to a Councillor' sessions but most responses were completed online. There would be information about the survey and a link to the questions via a QR code in forthcoming editions of Flitwick Papers. Notices were also displayed around the town and then results were analysed and presented as part of the Annual Town Meeting.

A resident asked for an update on 3 Station Road and the Chairman advised that unfortunately there was nothing to report but that members were conscious of it sitting empty.

Residents left the meeting at 21:14.

5952. 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

Members noted the report.

b. Flitwick Village Hall

Members received an update.

c. Station Road

Members received an update.

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 21:53.