



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 17th February 2026 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

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

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)
Lisa Simpson – Community Engagement Manager (CEM)

5953. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **resolved** to accept apologies for absence from Cllrs Parsons (holiday), Harald (bereavement) and Hodges (unwell).

5954. 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.

5955. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor had attended the following civic engagements:

- Given a talk about the role of the Town Mayor at Flitwick Library
- Attended the Flitwick Community Fridge 3rd Birthday Celebrations
- Attended the Children's Town Trail Presentation Evening with pupils of Kingsmoor Lower School and their families as part of the Council's Flitwick Living History project
- Attended a Men's Mental Health event organised by the Amptill Town Mayor

The Town Mayor reminded Members to speak through the Chairman and to follow the 3-minute rule for meetings.

The Deputy Town Mayor would chair the March Council meeting.

The Deputy Town Mayor had attended a recent meeting of the Beds Association of Town & Parish Councils (BATPC) and would provide an update under item 11.

5956. Leader Update

No items.

5957. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Cllr Adams apologised that he had not had time to prepare a written report and updated members on the following information:

Senior Living Development (Red Kite Meadows)

Cllr Adams had asked for an update on this project and received a briefing the previous day. CBC planned to move residents into the independent living units from 23rd March onwards, and the residents for the care home element were hoped to be completed in May. The care home side included moving Ferndale residents, and it was anticipated that familiar groups would be moved together. Once this stage was completed, the home would be opened to others which was to be made up from 50% self-funders and 50% adult social care entitlement.

The hoardings around the site were due to be removed on 8th March.

Steppingley Road Field Planning Application

Residents had been asking about the outcome of the enquiry, but there was no news. The developer had erected fencing around the site, but chose to undertake this work presumptuously, without the inspection outcome being known.

Land next to the Senior Living Facility

This project was running a month behind, and no planning application had yet been received for the 24 bungalows (McCarthy & Stone), but it was thought this was imminent.

Land at Steppingley Road (adjacent to allotments)

This application was close to being made under an officer-delegated decision. Cllr Adams had revoked the call-in for the Development Management Committee because the answers provided were satisfactory.

Land at Froghall Farm

This item was due to be considered by the CBC Executive Committee in April for the right to sell the land. The land included a listed building, but not the grey farmhouse, which CBC would retain ownership of. Cllr Adams was due to speak to Steppingley Parish Council about this as well, since it was in their parish. Plans were unknown but given that the old barns were a Grade II listed building, there would be limitations, and it was assumed to be an upmarket development.

Fix My Street

Cllr Adams reminded members and officers that individuals must report highway matters on the Fix My Street portal before he would chase them up.

Questions

Cllr Wilsmore asked if there had been a TRO applied to the Kite Meadows Road to enforce the parking arrangements. Cllr Adams stated that this had not been done yet.

Cllr Wilsmore asked what was happening at Grange Farm in Ampthill. Cllr Adams did not know about this, but he was happy to investigate and report back.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:57.

5958. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5959. INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

5960. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No items.

5961. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 20th January 2026**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th January 2026 at the Rufus Centre.

- b. For Members to receive and consider the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee meeting, held on **Tuesday 3rd February 2026**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Members noted the resolutions presented and that the recommendation for approving the Community Engagement Strategy would be considered later in the meeting.

5962. MATTERS ARISING

- a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 20th January 2026** – no items.

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

5963. OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Platt, the Council's representative for attending BATPC meetings, attended a recent meeting on 12th February and provided a list of agenda items discussed. He advised that the main item of business related to the Governance Review, which would see a reduction of 107 councillors across Central Beds. This decision would have no cost savings, but the impact would be related to a reduction in local input and increased control for CBC as an authority. It was agreed at the BATPC meeting to make this Governance Review public. Cllr Platt stated that he had notes of the meeting that he could share with other Members if required.

A member asked how many attendees there were at the BATPC meeting, and Cllr Platt advised that there were seven people.

5964. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Community Fridge – Stocksfield Room

The Chairman introduced the item by outlining the resolution passed at the previous meeting. He added that Option B, as presented in the circulated report, addressed concerns raised previously about the Lockyer Suite bookings that required a green room facility, and it was a compromise to potentially resolve this issue. Members were informed that this option also provided a lot more space for the Community Fridge project than was currently available.

Cllr Thompson had missed the previous meeting but commented that, although she was an advocate for the Community Fridge since its creation, this project had snowballed and was becoming a high cost to the Council. She mentioned that the Council had supported several proposals to support the project's growth, but that these were considered in isolation, and when compared to other activities, this project received significantly more funding. Cllr Thompson felt the service was incredibly important, but felt the impact on the Rufus Centre was not being fully considered in the report. Her personal view was to proceed with Option B, albeit that other members may consider this route a compromise too far.

Cllr Hart commented that she understood the points raised by Cllr Thompson, but she believed that it did not make sense to spend the additional capital funds to install the partition wall. She stated that there were other options for a green room by using the meeting rooms for the 14-16 bookings that required the facility. Cllr Hart did not think the proposed size of the green room was large enough for any artists/entertainers with more than 1 or 2 people. She added that the operations of the fridge project would work far better with the whole space of the Stocksfield Room.

Cllr Hart referred to the site plan included in the report and commented that it would have been helpful to show members the three entrances available to the Lockyer Suite on the right-hand side of the hall. She did not believe that the additional expenditure to include a green room within the footprint of the Stocksfield Room was the right route.

Cllr Bandy commented that the fridge project needed the whole space due to demand for the service, and that more residents of Flitwick needed it to happen, given the cost of living. She believed that the Council should look after its community, and this was a step toward achieving that aspiration. Cllr Bandy commented that the groups who used to utilise the space had been moved elsewhere. She urged members to reflect on this.

Cllr Wilsmore agreed with Cllr Thompson's standpoint and believed the Council needed to strike a balance between the commerciality of the Rufus Centre and community activity, and commented that a green room should be incorporated. He could not see any mention of other locations for a green room within the report.

Cllr Crawford asked whether there were any other options for a green room. The Town Clerk said that Officers could look at options and that other alternative spaces had been discussed offline, but these ideas were considered too costly. The Town Clerk stated that the use of meeting room space had not been discussed, as it was perhaps too far from the Lockyer Suite, but if Members wanted this looked at in detail, Officers would do so. Cllr Blazeby commented on the opportunity cost of using the meeting rooms.

Cllr Hart commented that other venues' green rooms/preparation spaces/backstage areas were much further away than the Rufus Centre's meeting rooms. The Town Clerk highlighted one reason to be aware of was the toilets being in the main foyer area, and the inability to block these off. Members noted that there were no toilets in the current 'green room'.

Cllr Snape felt that it was important to say that the fridge's growth had reached this scale due to community need. The project was unlikely to grow further, as there were

insufficient food supplies to support any further expansion of the service. He believed the operations had reached their peak, but there was a need to make the activity safe for volunteers and users. The current space was not big enough, and other buildings, such as the Hub, were not viable.

Cllr Snape referred to the ongoing artificial tension between commercial and community value in terms of the Council's activities and commented that members have been unable to resolve this issue. Cllr Snape felt there was room for both elements, but there were currently inconsistencies in decision-making. He pointed out one example of the difference in answers regarding the allocation of space for the Community Engagement Team and the Rufus Team. Cllr Snape mentioned the workshop for the Hospitality Porters and thought the Council needed to improve consistency in matters like this.

Cllr Snape advised that he was frustrated with the process in this situation, commenting that at the previous meeting, it was resolved to look at options, but only three had been presented for consideration. He commented that the idea of partitioning the room or the green room requirement had not been debated previously, and that an option had been developed with increased capital costs for a facility that might be used 10-12 times annually.

Cllr Snape informed members that the fridge service was data-led, and he expected a robust assessment of the green room partition option to include the number of events booked for the coming year. The Stocksfield Room occupancy from last year was not part of the report either. He added that it was known that the Rufus Centre had overall low occupancy and mentioned the difficulties with operating in a building that used to be a school.

Cllr Snape's final point was around co-production. He informed members that the service enlisted the help of 30+ volunteers, and the compromise option was not discussed with anyone who worked to help make the service happen. He elaborated that this process had created significant bad feeling and that the Council should learn from this together.

Cllr Snape's view was to prioritise the fridge. He stated that he had no interest or bias and that he cared deeply about the traded service as well. Cllr Snape commented that he was currently prioritising a well-valued community service that was unable to operate safely anymore. He wanted residents to receive the service they deserved, and his preference was to proceed with Option A rather than Option B, which would complicate the space layout for a demanding service in an under-utilised building.

Cllr Thompson fundamentally agreed with Cllr Snape's points about the community space verses the traded service requirements and commented that as the Chairman of the Community Services Committee, she had fought for fairness throughout her time in this role. She referred to the reduction of the community events programme as an example and went on to explain that it appeared to be inconsistent when it came to the fridge because this project seemed to be expanding while other community provisions were being stopped. She referred to the fact that many members were also volunteers for the fridge project and commented that the Council needed to be careful. Cllr Thompson agreed that the resolution about community verses commercial debate was required and reiterated her points about being in favour of Option B.

The Chairman pointed out that Option B was suggesting a considerable extension of space for the project and that this was a compromise. He was a volunteer for the fridge project and believed that this additional space would be fantastic. The Chairman explained that the entire space in the Stocksfield Room would be available for fridge operations when Lockyer Suite bookings did not require a green room, which would be the case most of the time. He was in favour of Option B.

Cllr Hart asked about the number of Rufus Centre events that featured entertainers (e.g., bands) with more than two people. Cllr Blazeby advised that historically there had been only a few bands using the Lockyer Suite, with comedians, tribute acts without a band, etc., being more common. Cllr Blazeby had spoken to the Business & Facilities Manager (BFM), who had advised that the proposed green room space was minor (8sqm) compared to the full room (33sqm). The BFM had advised Cllr Blazeby that four seats would comfortably fit in the proposed area with room for hanging space and a mirror. Cllr Blazeby explained the following:

- There were 12 bookings for the next financial year that would require a green room, and it was presumed this would increase as the year progressed
- This space was unsuitable to facilitate weddings
- It was challenging to answer the questions about data because there were limited recordings of the room's usage, given that most bookings were free of charge
- The Stocksfield Room was the ideal location for a green room, given it was adjacent to the main suite and did not need performers to walk through other areas of the building to get there
- Option B was a suitable compromise that would work for the business
- There was a potential for the traded service to make a surplus of £120k, which would help the Council put on community activities
- Use of the proposed space was only ad hoc when required for an event
- The paper was written by the CEM, but it provided a partition option with costs as per the resolution made at the previous meeting
- The option was practical, but if members voted in favour of Option A, the Council would need to allocate a green room elsewhere, and there was an opportunity cost to think about

Cllr Snape commented that Cllr Blazeby had been trying to find a solution, but it would have been more appropriate for everyone involved to be present for these offline discussions. Cllr Snape mentioned that the members were supposed to be colleagues.

Cllr Blazeby responded that he was frustrated because he and the Town Mayor had spent hours discussing potential options with the staff teams to establish the best compromise. Cllr Snape mentioned that the fridge volunteers were not there to give their opinion, and respectfully, the Town Mayor did not volunteer during the day.

Cllr Blazeby commented that he was not against attending a meeting about this. The Chairman stated that the members were all trying to achieve the same thing and that he and Cllr Blazeby had been open about the offline discussions. The Chairman reminded members that the original paper considered in January only presented one option. Cllr Snape responded that the compromise could have been discussed with representatives from the fridge there, and that would have been better than having this in-depth disagreement at a Full Council meeting. The Chairman disagreed with this.

Cllr Wilsmore believed that Option B was the compromise to suit everyone and could not understand what the extra space being suggested as the green room would give the fridge operations.

Cllr Hart reiterated her earlier comments about an alternative location for the green room and said that in other venues, acts were moved around the buildings and through different areas. She added a point about the additional costs of the partition option for a space that was not often required. Cllr Hart agreed with Cllr Snape's points about there being a lack of data in the report presented in terms of the Stocksfield Room usage.

Cllr Bandy did not think the proposed green room area was big enough and commented that Cllr Blazeby should volunteer for a morning at the fridge to see how it worked.

Cllr Thompson suggested that the Council should trust the details provided by the BFM. Cllr Hart responded that the details provided by the BFM had been given verbally by Cllr Blazeby, and these points were not included in the report. Cllr Thompson commented that these details had been shared as part of the discussion and Cllr Blazeby reminded members that the circulated report had been written as a community proposal. He added that a joint report might not have proposed the same thing and suggested there would have been a greater focus on a green room.

It was **resolved** to progress with Option B – to segregate the Stocksfield Room to accommodate a separate green room for Rufus Centre events, as presented in the circulated site plan, and to utilise the remaining Stocksfield Room space for Community Fridge operations. The Community Fridge would utilise the 'green room' space when Rufus Centre bookings did not require it.

Action: TC/CEM/BFM

Cllr Blazeby commented that it would be useful for members to understand how this proposal would be funded, as the original paper stated that information on the funding route should be provided. He added that members could be informed at the next meeting about the funding for this activity, as it had not been budgeted for, and there was an opportunity cost.

The Town Clerk advised that Cllr Blazeby raised a valid point and that funding for projects would be included in all subsequent reports. She advised members that this work could be funded by the Ops Reserves, as other capital projects had been for this financial year, and then, should the Town Mayor's Charity choose to contribute, any grants would be deducted from the total expenditure.

It was **resolved** to allocate £15,433.30 from the Ops Reserves (319) to fund the capital works for the Stocksfield Room as detailed in Option B of the circulated paper.

Action: DTC

b. Environmental Working Group (EWG)

Cllr Hart had asked for this item to be put on the agenda. The membership was discussed, along with its relationship to the committee structure. Members noted that the EWG reported to the Council since there were matters affecting both the community and the business activity. Members discussed that the EWG looked at green spaces, wildflower planting, environmental issues, waste disposal, working with contractors, initiatives with staff to conserve energy, and building management (including solar panels use and LED lighting) etc. Members noted that this group did not deal with litter picking or other smaller, similar matters. Cllr Blazeby pointed out that the EWG had historically presented options for the Council to consider, and that previously there were an equal number of members to residents on the working group.

It was **resolved** to elect the following members to the EWG: Cllrs Hart, Patterson, Wilsmore and Toinko.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Hart as the Chairman of the EWG.

c. Annual Residents Survey

Various questions had been raised since the last meeting. Cllr Blazeby reminded members of the importance of a reasonable survey length and the risk that respondents would not complete the questions if it were too long.

Cllr Thompson asked for clarification on which questions were being proposed, and it was confirmed that the top four questions in the supporting paper and Cllr Parsons' previous suggestion regarding residents' safety would be included. The public safety question had been removed from the national survey, and members agreed that the language could be slightly adjusted to gather actionable data on matters such as CCTV and street lighting times.

Members agreed that there was little point including questions that the Town Council had limited control over, e.g. air quality, congestion etc.

Members had an extended discussion about air pollution and traffic calming measures.

It was **resolved** to accept the three questions circulated at the top of the supporting paper (taking out 'town centre' from question 3) and tightening the language on the safety question.

Action: Communications & Marketing Manager

Cllr Hart offered to analyse the results of the survey.

d. Community Engagement Strategy

The Community Services Committee had recommended the circulated Community Engagement Strategy be adopted. Cllr Thompson advised that this document had been written in advance of the new Corporate Strategy for the Council and therefore some assumptions had been made when putting this together in terms of the Council's direction with activities. She added that it may need amendments once the Corporate Strategy was developed.

It was **resolved** to adopt the circulated Community Engagement Strategy with the revised dates of 2026 – 2031.

Action: CEM

The CEM left the meeting at 21:01.

e. Central Bedfordshire Council – Street Naming & Numbering Application CB/SN/25/0260

Cllr Crawford asked why the correspondence had been written to Phillip Thompson. The TC advised that he was a former Councillor, and the incorrect address information had been addressed with CBC subsequently.

Cllr Wilsmore asked how many roads there would be for this development, as the plans looked like one road in a horseshoe shape.

Cllr Toinko asked why the matter was being considered by members. Cllr Snape advised that the Council were consulted on road naming matters.

Members had an extended discussion about the appropriateness of two of the proposed street names, but reservations were made about the 'servicesmen's' one.

It was **resolved** to accept 'Bonnewit' and 'Muncaster' but suggest 'DeHavilland' in replacement of 'Servicesmen'.

Action: TC

f. Councillor Working Space

The Chairman had requested that this item be included on the agenda, as a small office was due to become available, and it was proposed that members could use it when visiting the Council offices. He added that officers could also use the space for a meeting room.

Cllr Blazeby asked if the space was rentable. The TC advised that it was currently not rentable. Due to the discussion being related to a current Rufus Centre tenant, the TC suggested moving this item for further debate to the exempt section of the meeting, which was agreed.

g. Rotavator Purchase

The Amenities Officer had prepared a report for members to consider regarding the purchase of a rotavator.

The following points were made:

- Cllr Toinko pointed out that this proposal had not been considered by the Allotment Working Group, and he thought it would have been beneficial to talk to allotment representatives about this proposal because rotavating plots could frustrate those who farm all year. He did not understand the rationale for wanting this.
- Cllr Blazeby asked how the service had been costed and where the rotavator would be stored. He also raised concerns about the officer's time to implement this.
- The TC stated that officers would need to cost it out properly and that she took members' points on board. Members were informed that there was a high turnover of plots, and that the Public Realm Team were already strimming and clearing plots when allotment holders gave up their plots. The TC commented that rotavating plots would save time, and that funds in the Allotment EMR were available to purchase the equipment if members agreed. The TC was unsure whether this proposal was appropriate for consideration by the Allotment Working Group.
- Cllr Thompson was surprised that this issue had not been discussed at the Allotment Working Group. She believed the frequent transfer of allotments was the primary reason for this proposal and that the fees for tenants to use the service were more of an afterthought. Cllr Thompson supported the recommendation and the EMR was available to use, but she asked whether the upcoming capital receipt could be used for the purchase.
- Cllr Hart asked if the rotavator could be used on other Council sites, and the TC agreed that this could happen.
- Cllr Blazeby commented that there did not seem to be an explicit demand from allotment holders and that the paper had not been written in the same way as described by the TC.
- Cllr Toinko did not think the expenditure should come from the allotment EMR and recalled the Council rotavating other areas previously for the installation of wildflower meadows. He also commented that there were differing opinions on how helpful it was to rotavate, as when the weeds were chopped in this way, new weeds emerged.
- Cllr Wilsmore commented on the price to hire a rotavator from Jewsons and wondered why the Council would offer the proposed service.
- Cllr Thompson pointed out that the officers, including the Public Realm Team, had indicated that they would see the value in having a rotavator and reminded members that not agreeing to the proposal was a way of saying that the members knew how to do the work better. She asked the members to be mindful of this connotation when making decisions.
- Cllr Snape referred to the community budget perhaps being underspent. The DTC advised that it was underspent, but she would need to investigate the numbers before advising members of what was available.

It was **resolved** to purchase the rotavator at a cost of £999.00 and delegate the decision of where to code this expenditure to the Town Clerk, but it was not to come from the Allotments EMR.

Action: TC

5965. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

The balance sheet and the project fund summary documents were noted.

5966. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5967. 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

The Confidential Report from the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 20th January 2026 was noted.

b. 3 Station Road

It was **resolved** to:

1. Approve a capital incentive to be taken from the unspent Central Projects Fund and Ops Reserves from the current financial year, to assist with the fit-out of 3 Station Road.
2. Re-market 3 Station Road for wider use to include restaurant, retail, leisure, medical, and potentially educational opportunities (marketing material would not detail the value of the capital incentive and would take a different approach to the previous literature).
3. Delegate future decisions relating to the tenancy of 3 Station Road to the Finance & General Purposes Committee.

Action: TC/DTC

5964f cont.

Councillor Working Space

It was **resolved** to make the office space available for councillors and officers until such time it is required for renting out in the future.

Action: TC/BFM

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 21:33.