FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 21st July 2026 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:
Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr P Earles
Cllr L Bandy
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr L Hart
Cllr S Long

Also present:
Cllr I Adams – Central Beds Council (CBC) Ward Member
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Sue Quinn – Community Services Officer
5 residents (2 via virtual access)

6037. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

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

6038. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

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

(a) Disclosable Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllr Wilsmore declared an interest for agenda item 12F – Local Plan – regarding one of the sites.

(b) Non-Pecuniary interests in any agenda item – Cllrs Toinko, Patterson and Thompson declared an interest for agenda item 12F due to sites listed being close to their properties.

Cllr Hart asked if she should declare an interest regarding the Projects Update and the Town Clerk advised that this was up to individuals to decide.

6039. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor provided the following updates:

- Not many replies had been received from members regarding attendance for the High Sheriff's Justice Service.

- Andy Snape, former Councillor, had resigned a month ago and the Town Mayor thanked him for the hard work he had put in over his time at the Council.
- Thanks were extended to the Communications & Marketing Officer for the work she produced in relation to a recent NT Live Competition that showcased how the Council engaged with its audience for the screenings. The Rufus Centre's entry won the competition, and this was a fantastic achievement.
- Along with the Deputy Town Mayor, the Town Mayor had attended the Garden Party at the Rufus Centre the previous day, which had 60 guests and raised funds for the Town Mayor's charities. Thanks were extended to all the officers involved in organising and delivering the event.
- With the Deputy Town Mayor, the Town Mayor had also attended the Annual Bedfordshire Games, a meeting with the Lord Lieutenant, the Armed Forces Day Service at Flitwick Church and visited the Red Kite Meadows facility.
- Members were advised that Red Kite Meadows Staff had offered to provide a tour of the facility for other members if there was interest, and Cllr Roberts stated he would be happy to collate any replies about this.
- The Town Mayor had attended the Sea Cadets Awards Ceremony, a Rail Crash Memorial Service at Elstow (which was very humbling), the Army Benevolent Fund Ceremony and a recent Town & Parish Council Forum briefing.
- The Town Mayor would provide an update about the information shared at the Town & Parish Council Forum under exempt.

The Deputy Town Mayor had attended the Scouts Camping Weekend and Kempston Civic Service.

6040. Leader Update

The Leader had attended a meeting with Cllr Adams and officers at CBC to discuss the grant and outstanding planning permission for the Nature Park. Investigations would be carried out into how the Council could reduce the quoted costs.

The Leader had met with Cllr Adams, Cllr Platt (Chairman of the Planning Improvement Working Group) and a member of Flitwick Action Group (FLAG) to discuss how the Council might publicise the Local Plan and what it means for residents. This discussion involved the use of Rufus Centre meeting space for two planned engagement sessions with residents. This would be discussed formally later in the meeting.

6041. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Cllr Adams provided the following update:

- He communicated that CBC were close to issuing a decision for the Steppingley Road land sale once the Section 106 matters were confirmed.
- Road and pavement issues in Water Lane were being addressed.
- There were ongoing issues with parking for Howard Court residents due to the nursery parents parking at the site. A Stopping Up Order to take adoption of this car park away from CBC into private ownership was likely, but this would take approximately one year to implement. This was something that the residents of Howard Court wanted.
- He was involved in the push for adoption at Froghall Fields and Steppingley Gardens estate. Some progression behind the scenes had occurred, and there would be landscaping improvements around the attenuation pond. There were discussions about a bridge from the estate to the Leisure Centre, which he supported happening, but there was some opposition to this.

- There were many leaning trees in Flitwick. Nobody needed to keep reporting them on the Fix my Street portal as these would likely be addressed by CBC in the Autumn. Some of the trees would be left as these would likely fix themselves and a programme would be developed.
- Cllr Adams would stay at the meeting to hear discussions about the Local Plan Call for Sites.

Questions

Cllr Thompson asked where the leaning trees were. Cllr Adams explained there were approximately 20 in Flitwick, mentioning locations such as Eagle Drive and Water Lane.

Cllr Earles asked for an update on the development beside James Place as some residents had been told that the building company had ceased operations. Cllr Adams had not been told any official information but work had been suspended.

Two residents entered the meeting at 20:01.

Cllr Wilsmore advised that nothing was listed on Companies House to say that the contractor had gone out of business, but there was a live planning application for changes relating to social housing. This meant there would be a requirement to change the specification about balcony material changes and another factor which he did not understand. Cllr Wilsmore thought this could be the reason for the delay and commented that this situation had been going on for a long time.

Cllr Earles commented that the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) wanted to know if there was an officer in charge of Section 106 contributions. She was informed that there is an officer responsible for community halls and Cllr Adams agreed to share contact details with the Town Clerk.

Cllr Wilsmore asked about Ward Members and whether they had a consultee role for Section 106 funding. Cllr Adams advised that he had asked about this because previously, the Town Council had been consultees for leisure provisions but Ward Members were not. He stated that consulting Ward Members would be beneficial and since the meeting he had with CBC officers, he would share his views and this situation would improve.

Cllr Blazeby commented that the Town Clerk was consulted but mentioned the point that would she know if the Bowls Club needed a new pitch. The Town Clerk advised that this issue had been discussed at a Community Services meeting.

Cllr Wilsmore raised an observation that Section 106 money had not been put into cycling/walking infrastructure, mentioning the connectivity between Flitwick and Westoning, as well as the inadequacies of the pavement along Greenfield Road. He mentioned the Home to School Transport Policy where children from these areas were expected to walk to Flitwick schools, but there was no safe way to do this. He thought these improvements would be suitable for the Section 106 funding for both school children and commuters.

The Chairman commented that at the Town & Parish Forum Briefing, CBC had mentioned Section 106 funding but that Town & Parish Councils had very little say on what projects were funded. CBC had stated that this issue would be looked at.

6042. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Keith Lewis, resident and Chair of FLAG, had attended the meeting with fellow FLAG member Martin to listen to the Council's debate about the Local Plan Call for Sites and

would be happy to answer any questions. Mr Lewis advised that FLAG were due to hold several public drop-in sessions, both at the Rufus Centre and at the Village Hall on market days, and posters had been displayed around the town. Promotion had been uploaded to the FLAG and Steppingley Parish Council Facebook pages. Mr Lewis was expecting quite a high attendance at these public sessions because residents were concerned about the Local Plan. FLAG representatives advised that the group were not there to sway residents' opinions, but they would communicate the facts and advise on the CBC process with the Call for Sites.

Mr Lewis advised about FLAG's history and the professional consultant advice obtained about the planning process in relation to the Steppingley Road field development. There was only ever a 4-5% chance of winning the outcome with that development objection because the site was in the Local Plan. For the current situation, FLAG had been forewarned about the need to object at this stage and the group wanted to inform residents about what was coming.

6043. INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

6044. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No items.

6045. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 16th June 2026**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

Cllr Hart requested that a word be deleted from the capital plan discussion section of the minutes, as she thought members were surprised by the land value.

It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 16th June 2026 held at the Rufus Centre as a true record with one amendment: delete the word 'not' from the relevant section of the minutes.

b. For Members to receive and consider the resolutions and recommendations of the Community Services Committee meeting, held on **Tuesday 7th July 2026**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

Members noted the resolutions of the Community Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 7th July 2026.

Cllr Hodges asked if the Community Services meeting discussed the farmer having a land management plan. Cllr Thompson, Chair of the Community Services meeting, stated that there were already farmers for spaces like the Manor Park and the Nature Park land. The farmer was aware of the grant funding, and the Council was in a contract with him, like the agreements used in Maulden and Clophill. Cllr Thompson advised that the farmer would be able to better support the grazing activity, but it did not change much for the Council.

Cllr Hodges asked if the Council had seen the management plan for the farmer. Cllr Thompson advised that the plans were owned by the Council for the Manor Park and Nature Park, which the farmer adhered to.

6046. MATTERS ARISING

a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 16th June 2026**.

No items.

b. Members to receive any updates from Officers.

No items.

6047. OUTSIDE BODIES

No items.

6048. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Co-Option

It was **resolved** to co-opt Sharon Long into the Office of Councillor for Flitwick Town Council.

The Chairman welcomed Sharon to the Council.

b. Town Mayor's Allowance Policy

Cllr Hart asked if the policy was explicit enough to allow the Deputy Town Mayor to claim expenses. The Chairman confirmed that when the Deputy Town Mayor attended civic engagements, she was able to claim for her expenses.

It was **resolved** to adopt the circulated Town Mayor's Allowance Policy.

c. Terms of Reference

It was **resolved** to adopt the circulated Terms of Reference for the Business Development & Finance Committee.

d. HR Committee Vacancy

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Long to the HR Committee.

e. FTC Local Plan Consultation Response

Cllr Hart provided members with an updated version of the circulated report to better reflect the PIWG meeting discussions and decision.

The Chairman asked if members were happy to receive the amendments. Cllr Thompson asked for clarification about how profound the amendments were. Cllr Hart explained that the updated document was mostly in line with the version circulated.

The Town Clerk advised that members had been asked to comment on the document on 14th July ready for the paper to be circulated on 16th. Cllr Hart commented that members did not receive the email mentioned. The Town Clerk responded that officers received comments from Cllr Hart following the email and these had been included in the document sent out. The Town Clerk clarified that Cllr Hart had sent an updated version to members on the day of the meeting at 18:30.

Cllr Hodges advised that he had received the email from officers but responded to members only. Cllr Hart confirmed that she had incorporated Cllr Hodges' points in the updated version of the document.

Cllr Hodges asked Cllr Wilsmore which site number related to his declaration of interest. Cllr Wilsmore confirmed that this was 136553.

The Chairman stated that using a version of the document that was not previously circulated was confusing.

Cllr Long asked about the timeframe for a response and asked if the decision could be delegated to a committee. Cllr Blazeby advised about the remit of the PIWG.

Cllr Thompson asked if there was an option to agree the Council's response via email to allow members time to review the updated version. Cllr Blazeby asked if there were any material differences or if the changes were minor but providing more detail so the objections remained the same. Cllr Hart stated that one decision was amended but it was mostly reorganised with more details given.

Cllr Toinko referenced site 136288, commenting that the updated version was different and highlighted that facts should be stated rather than basing statements on matters the Council were unsure about. He added that the commentary about the Council being unsure if certain land was greenbelt was inappropriate because the words used suggest that CBC should check this. Cllr Adams informed members that the site being discussed was greenbelt, but the land by Steppingley Hospital was not.

It was **resolved** that members would accept the updated document circulated.

Cllr Hart stated that for the PIWG, there were 3 sites deemed acceptable for development; the land providing access to the multistorey car park, the land beside the railway by Froghall Road and the land near Aldi. There were two sites that the working group did not recommend for or against development, including the land near Steppingley Hospital.

Cllr Thompson raised concerns about the assumptive nature of the document, commenting that the more assumptive language used creates a less robust position. She requested that the document be factual.

Cllr Wilsmore asked about the classification for the land near Steppingley Hospital, requesting to know what 'residential (other)' meant. Members were informed that this related to a minor retail offer within a housing estate.

Cllr Toinko referred to the statements in the document about Grade II farmland and objecting on the grounds of food security. He felt these statements needed to be factual and accurate as the document weakened the position with these claims. He referred to what happened at Steppingley Road field in that there was no way of stopping the sale of this land to a developer.

Cllr Toinko mentioned flooding and how this was a similar issue in the document being discussed. Cllr Wilsmore stated that surveys were carried out for planning applications and these would likely discredit the Council's objections.

Members wanted the accuracy of the document tightened. Cllr Hart commented that this stage of the process was the initial Call for Sites and was not yet formal. She believed the grounds presented were right and she had used maps provided by the Environment Agency. Cllr Wilsmore advised that the high water tables did not have any relation to flooding.

A member raised the point that the definition for food security had nothing to do with where food came from.

Cllr Hodges did not have a problem with the holistic view presented and including information of general concern, e.g. the production of food produce, as this was not a live application situation. Cllr Wilsmore agreed but stated that the Council needed to be careful because the flood map did not match flooding areas.

Cllr Adams advised the following points:

- The task at hand was not to pick sites, and there was confusion with the consultee role. He stated that it was not for members to say which sites to develop, but that the biggest task was to explain what sites should not be developed and potentially include prioritisation within that.
- The grading for greenbelt land is done via studies based on value. He advised that the grading is based on the contribution the land makes. Members were informed that the greenbelt in front of Flitwick Moor had been graded as having a weak contribution and was a different site to the Moor, which was a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI). Cllr Adams commented that the Steppingley Road field site was given the highest greenbelt grade.
- Cllr Adams suggested discussions about greenbelt sites should not be focused on food security, but more around the value, not only for food, but also in terms of amenity value for residents. He advised that land with amenity value was precious and this point can be made as it was part of the grading process for greenbelt.
- Cllr Adams felt that food security was an issue but not a general point across the town. He added that erosion of greenbelt was damaging and gave examples about coalescence with Ampthill.

Cllr Wilsmore asked if the greenbelt grading information was available to the public. Cllr Adams responded that members could look at the previous grading and the Suitability Assessment also covered it. There were greenbelt studies and Cllr Adams presumed these would be done again. Cllr Adams stated that the impact on people was of greatest importance.

Cllr Blazeby asked if the PIWG members could review the discussion at this meeting and amend the proposed document. He said this could be sent to Councillors and submitted by the deadline for responses by giving the Town Clerk delegated powers to issue the response.

Cllr Thompson highlighted that the key aspects for the PIWG to consider related to food security and flooding, the accuracy around Grade II farmland, and references to greenbelt land and its value. Cllr Hodges agreed to help Cllr Hart where possible. Cllr Thompson agreed to send these points to Cllr Hart.

Cllr Adams advised that he would be able to request an extension for the Town Council if needed. Cllr Hart commented that the PIWG should be able to get a revised draft to the members before next week.

It was **resolved** for the PIWG to amend the document to reflect the above discussion but ultimately delegate to the Town Clerk to submit the response once she was satisfied with its contents.

f. Local Plan Consultation

(i) Consultation

Cllr Blazeby highlighted the following:

- Residents would not thank the Council if it did not get involved in a good communication process for alerting residents about the new Local Plan consultation.
- There had been criticism at previous Councils for not being overt about what was happening for past Local Plan processes, and this was an opportunity to be clear.
- Part of the reason for meeting representatives from FLAG and Cllr Adams was to collectively pull together to provide a mechanism for residents to attend sessions showing maps to guide people about the sites. Residents could ask questions at the sessions and learn about the proposals.

- Residents could attend scheduled sessions at the Rufus Centre and the Village Hall so there were opportunities on both sides of the town.
- Other local Town and Parish Councils were taking a similar approach by hosting public meetings; however, Cllr Blazeby stated that this proposal was to take it a step further.
- The consultation webpage lists the sites and residents are required to make individual comments about each proposal covering Flitwick and Steppingley.
- The CBC consultation was using an online form only, and this proposal was about creating a hard copy form, detailing information about the drop-in public sessions and some content that residents may, or may not, want to use in their responses.
- The suggested form was designed to allow for support or object decisions for each site, and the people involved in creating it were not trying to coerce residents, but rather to facilitate engagement in the consultation, which was something that the Council should do.
- Some members had expressed concern to Cllr Blazeby about working with a group like FLAG, commenting that the circulated version of the leaflet had both the Council's and FLAG's logos on it, but he mentioned that these could be removed.
- Cllr Blazeby was convinced that if the Council failed to provide something like what was being suggested for engagement, it would be criticised and he did not want to be in that position.

Cllr Toinko agreed that the Council should signpost for engagement and was in favour of the maps and facilitating the drop-in meetings. He raised the following points:

- Whilst the suggested publicity included tick boxes for support or object for each site, he did not think it was true to say that the leaflet was not influencing decisions. He mentioned that the accompanying statements for sites were negative, without any positives or neutral views.
- There were discrepancies between the publicity and the PIWG objections.
- There were subjective claims and inappropriate expansion comments.
- He referenced the Code of Recommended Practice for Publicity for Local Authorities, stating that this document needed to be objective, accurate and factual. In no way should this be persuasive, and for this reason, the document failed the rules set out in the Code of Recommended Practice.
- The suggested publicity did not include an imprint and it was unclear who was providing the information.
- The Council could not fund campaign material with precept funds.
- He mentioned the Data Controller of the Council needed to have concerns about gathering personal data. Cllr Toinko was referring to the notion of giving replies to the Council's reception team to pass onto CBC.
- He asked if CBC could process the replies (support and object) on the form and it was confirmed that they could.
- There was a need for a written agreement, and there was no privacy notice.
- Questions were raised about whether CBC needed all the personal information, and it was confirmed that part of the online form requested the same information as what was included in the leaflet apart from the signature.
- The Data Controller would need to report the Council to the Information Commissioner's Office should this leaflet be agreed in its current form.

Cllr Thompson stated that she agreed with some of Cllr Toinko's points and asked why the form needed to be distributed back to CBC via the Town Council. She suggested arranging for the forms to go directly to CBC as processing data added many complications. Cllr Thompson stated that she would feel more comfortable with this.

Cllr Blazeby advised that the CBC website and address were on the front of the leaflet and the URL included was for the site plans.

Cllr Hart had been involved in many surveys and was well-informed about GDPR regulations. She suggested the Council have a box for collecting responses which would remain unopened and in this way, the role remained as facilitating collections.

Cllr Toinko commented that there was a requirement to state who the Council was distributing to and Cllr Hart responded that this could be written on the leaflet. Cllr Toinko was of the view that there would need to be a written agreement with CBC.

Cllr Adams advised that CBC had confirmed that it was willing to have physical applications in the way suggested and he did not see why a written agreement was needed. CBC stated that the format did not matter. CBC were going to use AI to look at the data.

Cllr Toinko believed that this route was breaking the law. The Town Clerk advised that she would contact the Council's GDPR advisors in the morning to seek confirmation.

Members discussed the need for even-handed publicity, and the debate again centred on the current text being skewed to invite objections.

Cllr Wilsmore commented about the requirement to include comments on the online version of the form. Cllr Adams stated that this was free narrative and that Town Councils, along with other collective groups, were given a different type of form to state if it would pick a site(s), what would it be.

Cllr Thompson asked why the leaflet did not just list the sites without comments and allow residents attending the public drop-in sessions to hear information to support their decisions. Cllr Long agreed and commented that FLAG could provide reasons for potential objections.

Mr Lewis (FLAG representative) commented that most residents whom members represented did not want further town developments due to the road system being unable to handle it. He stated that the leaflet was required but understood that the Council needed to consider their stance. Mr Lewis had delivered over 1000 objections to the land at Steppingley Road development, and nobody had asked what he was doing with their information/data. He concluded that the Council were putting up walls that did not exist and that members needed to support residents on this.

Cllr Thompson responded that the members were fully in support of doing a leaflet and enabling the process but this needed to be done within legal boundaries.

Mr Lewis gave some historical context about the way the current plan and its sites were approved, giving information about the extensive delays between the beginning of that process in 2014, the formulation of the plan in 2017 and its published date in 2021. He mentioned the sale of the Steppingley Road field sale and how it related to Permisson's investment of funds in the background. Mr Lewis reiterated that something needed to be done now to stop this development.

Cllr Hodges wished to raise a point of order as he was uncomfortable with the ongoing discussion. He proposed to move agenda items 12f i) and ii) to the exempt section. Cllr Hodges explained that this was because he did not feel that the Council should be discussing this matter with representatives from FLAG in the room.

It was **resolved** to continue discussions for agenda items 12f i) and ii) in the exempt section of the meeting.

(ii) Budget

This item was moved to exempt.

The FLAG representatives and Cllr Adams left the meeting at 21:21.

g. Environmental Working Group

i) It was **resolved** to accept the revised Terms of Reference for the Environmental Working Group.

ii) It was **resolved** to co-opt the following residents onto the Environmental Working Group: Andy Smith, Bryn Timlin, Judy Davey, Leisa Milne and Sue Livens

6049. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

The Balance Sheet and the Project Fund Summary were noted.

b. Planning Decisions

The planning decisions were noted.

6050. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

6051. EXEMPT ITEMS

The following resolution is **moved** that is advisable in the public interest that the public and press be excluded whilst the following exempt items is discussed.

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.

6048. f. i) cont. Local Plan Consultation

It was **resolved** to allow FLAG use of meeting room space and to advertise their events as part of their approach.

It was **resolved** to fund large-scale maps and produce a display at the Rufus Centre for the Local Plan consultation. The maps could be borrowed for any activity but homed predominantly at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to produce a leaflet without the FLAG logo that meets GDPR requirements (Town Clerk to seek immediate advice) in line with the Code of Recommended Practice for Publicity for Local Authorities, drafting two leaflet versions:

A) Raising awareness completely neutral without reference to wider objections
B) Raising awareness and including details of FTC's agreed objections

For members to vote urgently over email on a final version for publishing to get the publicity printed and distributed as soon as possible.

The following budget virement would be made for the expenditure relating to these decisions:

- To move £1,500 from the Festival of Lights budget (nominal code 4541/313) to a new expenditure nominal code in cost centre 601 (Planning).

6051.

a. Confidential Report – to note

The Confidential Report was noted.

b. 3 Station Road – for consideration

It was **resolved** to accept the offer presented in Option 2.

c. Project Updates – to note

Members received an update on current projects.

The Community Services Officer left the meeting at 22:20.

The meeting closed at 22:25.

Signed …… (Chairman)