



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 21st May 2024 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr A Snape
Cllr S Livens
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr J Roberts
Cllr M Platt
Cllr C Copleston
Cllr T Harald
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr T Connell
Cllr C Thompson
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr T Parsons
Cllr J Gleave

Also present:

Cllr G Mackey – Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member
Cllr I Adams – Central Bedfordshire Council Ward Member
Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Beverley Jones – Communications & Marketing Manager
Mat Earles – Business & Facilities Manager (via virtual access)
Members of the public - 4

5627 **ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR FOR THE YEAR 2024-2025**

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Roberts to the office of Town Mayor for the year 2024-2025.

5628 **DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Cllr Roberts declared his acceptance of office as the Town Mayor and signed the paperwork.

The Chairman awarded Cllr Snape with a past Town Mayor badge.

5629 **ELECTION OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR FOR THE YEAR 2024-2025**

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Platt to the office of Deputy Town Mayor for the year 2024-2025.

5630 **DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

Cllr Platt declared his acceptance of office as the Deputy Town Mayor and signed the paperwork.

5631 ELECTION OF LEADER FOR 2024-2026

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Snape as the Leader of Flitwick Town Council for 2024-2026.

5632 ELECTION OF DEPUTY LEADER FOR 2024-2026

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Blazeby as the Deputy Leader of Flitwick Town Council for 2024-2026.

5633 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence but Members noted that Cllrs Parsons and Gleave would arrive late for the meeting due to being delayed on public transport.

5634 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.

5635 TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman mentioned that Cllr Snape had an announcement to make.

Cllr Snape said it was a tradition for Town Mayors to leave office to offer a gift to the Council. He wanted to present Members with a different kind of gift and commented that there was not a lot of artwork on display at the Rufus Centre. Jo Watterson, an artist, produced four lino prints intended to be displayed in the building.

On behalf of the Council, the Chairman thanked Cllr Snape for his fantastic work as the Town Mayor, mentioning the great steps this Council had undertaken under his direction. The Chairman thanked Cllr Snape's husband for his support and stated that working alongside Cllr Snape during his year as Deputy Mayor had been an honour.

5636 REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Members noted the circulated report from Cllr Adams. The report focused on:

- Outstanding issues.
- The Steppingley Road field revised the planning application, which contained more details than the original application, and there was a lot of local opposition. This was a real concern for Flitwick residents. There was a challenge since the site was in the Local Plan, and the application needed to be considered in the planning framework rather than emotion. Cllr Adams had met with a local action group.

Cllrs Parsons and Gleave entered the meeting at 19:58.

- The delay associated with access for all at Flitwick Station. There had been problems with sourcing materials for the bridge works, and contractors were being changed. Central Beds Council (CBC) was waiting for more details from Network Rail.
- Ward Members had met with representatives from the Leisure Centre on how the centre was being run.

Cllr Mackey congratulated Cllr Roberts on his election as the new Town Mayor. He recently met with the new Police & Crime Commissioner and Chief Constable, and at both meetings, he raised Flitwick-related issues with them.

Questions

Cllr Livens stated that Ampthill had a designated 'litter picker', which originally was based in Flitwick, and she asked if they could return to help tidy up the town. Cllr Adams had been reminded that day about the action to write to CBC Officers about this issue and had done so.

Cllr Snape raised the issue of insufficient grass cutting in Flitwick. He mentioned that the town was not due another cut for at least two weeks. Members had previously mentioned a past tender exercise undertaken by CBC, which did not result in the appointment of any contractor. He asked if Ward Members could point out to CBC Officers that 6 cuts per year was insufficient and did not meet residents' expectations. He reiterated that the Council was not interested in paying for additional cuts to maintain CBC's land as the fees were too expensive. Members were not happy to wait two years until the contract was re-tendered.

Cllr Mackey mentioned that grass-cutting was being discussed at CBC but highlighted their difficult financial position. Cllr Adams had a different view and had shared this on social media earlier that day because it was of huge concern to residents. The previous year had seen 8 cuts, whereas it was now 6. Cllr Adams did not feel that £6k was a lot in the large Place & Communities budget and hoped a solution could resolve the situation. He added that he intended to continue applying pressure to progress this.

Cllr Toinko had seen complaints regarding road safety at junctions and insufficient grass cutting. He mentioned that people had no objection to highway contractors maintaining these areas and that their focus should be on safety. Cllr Adams agreed with this and mentioned it was part of a separate contract.

Cllr Thompson referred to the older people's care village facility in Steppingley Road and asked if CBC was still on track for opening in September. She mentioned that during the last brief, Officers had stated there would be showrooms to see in May, but this had not happened yet, to her knowledge. Cllr Mackey commented that this project had been delayed, but Members had not yet been informed of new dates. Cllr Mackey mentioned the new crematorium project was completed by CBC.

Cllr Livens referred to the 'Fix My Street' website and stated that she was having difficulty reporting long grass on there for an area on the outskirts of Steppingley. She mentioned that there was not a link to the site.

Ward Members left the meeting at 20:09.

5637 **MEMBERSHIP OF STANDING COMMITTEES**

a. For Members to determine the membership of the Town Council's Standing Committees, Boards, and Working Groups that report to the Council.

For those who had not stated it as their first choice, a written ballot was taken for the Business Improvement & Development Board (BI&DB) membership.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the BI&DB: Cllrs Blazeby, Hodges, Snape, Harald, Parsons and Roberts.

Since nine Members stated that the Community Services was their first choice Committee, a written ballot was taken to establish its membership (8 members).

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the Community Services Committee: Cllrs Thompson, Gleave, Connell, Livens, Wilsmore, Copleston, Toinko and Platt.

A member of the public left the meeting at this time 20:18.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the HR Committee: Cllrs Snape, Roberts, Parsons, Copleston and Blazeby.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the Appeals Committee: Cllrs Gleave, Wilsmore, Thompson, Harald and Toinko.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the Finance Scrutiny Working Group: Cllrs Parsons, Blazeby, Snape, Roberts and Harald.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the Planning Improvement Working Group: Cllrs Gleave, Hodges, Wilsmore, Harald and Platt.

It was **resolved** to elect the following Members to the Environmental Working Group: Cllrs Livens, Toinko, Wilsmore, Thompson, Gleave and Platt.

b. For Members to appoint Chairmen for Standing Committees

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Blazeby as Chairman of the BIDB.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Thompson as Chairman of the Community Services Committee.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Snape as Chairman of the HR Committee.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Thompson as Chairman of the Appeals Committee.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Parsons as the Chairman of the Finance Scrutiny Working Group.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Gleave as the Chairman of the Planning Improvement Working Group.

It was **resolved** to elect Cllr Toinko as the Chairman of the Environmental Working Group.

5638 APPOINTMENT OF REPRESENTATIVES ON OUTSIDE BODIES

- a. It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Blazeby as the Council's representative on the Village Hall Management Committee. Cllr Thompson was elected as the sub.
- b. It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Hodges as the Council's representative on the Patient Group at Flitwick Surgery. Cllr Wilsmore was elected as the sub.
- c. It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Gleave as the Council's representative to attend CBC DMC meetings. Cllr Wilsmore was elected as the sub.
- d. It was **resolved** to appoint Cllr Wilsmore as the Council's representative for the Police Priority Setting meetings.

Cllr Patterson was proposed and seconded as the sub to attend the Police Priority Setting meetings. However, Members voted against this. Cllr Connell was subsequently proposed, seconded, and elected as the sub.

5639 PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

No items.

5640 LEADER UPDATE

Firstly, Cllr Snape wanted to thank Members for all their support in electing him as Leader of the Council. His ongoing priorities were to:

- Strengthen the connections within our community and with other partners, such as Central Bedfordshire Council, Bedfordshire Police, our MP, and local businesses.
- Work with the Deputy Leader and Town Clerk to produce a new strategy that we can use to prioritise our work and ensure we deliver the best value for money possible. The first step will be an all-member workshop to discuss everything. We want to understand aspirations and opportunities.
 - The new strategy will be more targeted and specific. Unlike last time, we will own this, not a consultant. We will focus on missions, challenges, needs, and problems.
 - Missions will tackle the big problems our community faces or areas where we can improve the town or living experience.
 - Defined challenges will help us solve problems contributing to our missions.
 - We need to dig deeper to understand the needs of our community. We need to understand the problems we want to solve, recognise why a situation or something isn't good enough, and have ideas for moving forward.
 - We'll be looking to define 4-5 key missions - long-term goals to work towards over the next three years that will act as the north star for everything we do.
 - We'll also look to define the challenges and problems we need to resolve to achieve our missions—the challenges will help us deliver on our missions. This doesn't mean that we can't pursue other opportunities, but it will give us a focus and a way of measuring our delivery.
 - Once we've done that, the Town Clerk will be responsible for working with her team to ensure we have a clear work plan for each area. The appropriate committee chair will be expected to work with the Town Clerk and relevant manager to ensure it's delivered, with updates and discussions happening on the right Committee.
- We will also review the scheme of delegations to ensure that the scheme works for us as a council. We are already proposing that the Finance & Scrutiny Working Group move back to being a standing Committee with delegated powers.

Cllr Snape stated that he would prepare a written update for the next meeting.

5641 INVITED SPEAKER

No items.

5642 MEMBERS QUESTIONS

Cllr Toinko asked Members about their views on not using the 'first choice' system for the Committee Choices process next year. He gave reasons why the system did not work any more and highlighted that it would be more transparent if the Council did not use this process going forward.

Cllr Parsons supported this idea and commented that it was important for the right Members to be elected to the right Committees depending on their skills.

It was agreed for Officers to prepare a report on this for Members to consider since the current process had been custom and practice for several years.

Action: Deputy Town Clerk

Cllr Livens asked for an update on additional benches. The Town Clerk commented that she had not received a reply from the relevant CBC Officer and that Cllr Livens had also

agreed to contact the Ward Members. Cllr Livens commented that Cllr Adams now had a copy of the maps.

5643 MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held, on **Tuesday 16th April 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

Cllr Toinko referred to item 5615 – Reports from Ward Members - and commented that he felt it was unfair to note one Ward Members' reason for absence and not for the other two. Cllr Thompson stated that the Council did note it when no apologies were given from Flitwick Town Councillors. Cllr Snape commented that Ward Members were not officially summoned to the meetings but felt that the Council should note their attendance. It was agreed to amend the previous minutes to state that Councillors regretted that Cllr Adams was not in attendance due to a family bereavement.

It was **resolved** to adopt the minutes of the Town Council meeting held on Tuesday 16th April 2024 as an accurate record with one amendment: to edit the wording under item 5615 relating to the reason why Cllr Adams had not attended the meeting as discussed.

- b. For Members to receive and consider **resolutions and recommendations** of the HR Committee meeting, held on **Wednesday 17th April 2024**, this meeting was held at The Rufus Centre.

The resolutions and recommendations of the HR Committee meeting held on Wednesday 17th April 2024 were noted.

5644 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items or updates from Officers.

5645 OUTSIDE BODIES

Cllr Blazeby advised that he and Cllr Snape had attended the Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) Annual General Meeting. A new Committee had been voted in with new people joining. The VHMC discussed setting up a sub-group to fund roof repair works. The Committee was trying to establish how much funding this project required. There was a new Treasurer, and the group was committed to producing better promotion via social media.

Various matters were discussed at the AGM, including ideas for fundraising and the future of how the hall will be run. Members were informed that the accounts were not being passed by the charity commission. There was concern about where some of the figures had come from, particularly in relation to prices for gas and electricity, which had lower rates this year compared to the previous year. The new Treasurer was looking at this.

Members were surprised to hear that the Village Hall Caretaker had to ask for a pay rise as he had not been paid the minimum wage. The next meeting was scheduled for 19 June at 7:30 p.m.

5646 ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

- a. **Planning Improvement Working Group (PIWG)**

Cllr Gleave provided some background information about the Working Group's remit, including its meetings, which sometimes featured presentations from outside bodies. These external bodies were not just developers but also pressure groups. Under the current Terms of Reference, the PIWG did not have to maintain formal minutes of meetings; however, it had become customary to take notes and publish these. The PIWG

was proposing to formally minute these meetings and include the draft versions in the supporting papers for Council meetings so that all Members could comment on the discussions.

Cllr Snape commented that it would be good to do what was being suggested. The supporting paper for this meeting made some interesting points, including commentary about an off-the-record agreement with the Scouts that seemed underhand and inappropriate.

Cllr Toinko sought clarification on the process for publishing these minutes. It was agreed that the PIWG minutes would be published on the website and circulated to Members like any other supporting paper for Council meetings.

Cllr Blazeby asked how these meetings would be serviced from an Officer's point of view. The Town Clerk advised that the Amenities Officer would attend to take the minutes if needed, and this would be reflected in an updated Terms of Reference. The Terms of Reference for the PIWG would be amended as part of the Scheme of Delegations review.

Action: Town Clerk

b. Ask for Clive

Cllr Snape introduced this item as a matter that Proud AF had been speaking about for some time. He was proposing that the Council join 'Ask for Clive' which is a national charity based in St Albans that aims to promote social inclusion. It would mean putting a sticker on the door to show that discrimination would not be tolerated at the Rufus Centre. Proud AF had aspirations to work with local businesses to see if they would sign up. Engagement with some students at Redborne had shown that the young people did not want a separate Youth Club, but instead wanted Proud AF to advise on venues that were safe for them to attend. The Rufus Centre held lots of events.

Cllr Snape commented that Proud AF also wanted the Council to sign up to 'Pub Pride' but the deadline had been missed by one day. 'Pub Pride' coincided with the upcoming Drag Night.

Cllr Thompson was in support of this idea and commented that this was an important initiative to add since the Council had already taken lots of other steps to make the Rufus Centre a safe space, including for domestic abuse etc.

It was **resolved** to sign up to 'Ask for Clive' and take part in 'Pub Pride' if possible.

Action: Community Services & Amenities Manager

c. Overspend – Establishment

The HR Committee had recently agreed to progress with the recruitment of a Communications and Marketing Internship. Members were asked to approve a possible overspend on the salaries and wages budget to cover this. The cost to the Council was discussed, and the agreed contingency in the salaries and wages budget might cover this expenditure. Officers wanted to raise this with Members as a possible overspend. Officers will update members on this at the relevant time.

It was **resolved** to authorise a possible overspend on the salaries and wages budget for employing a Communications & Marketing Intern.

d. Flitwick Combined Charities

It was noted that Paul Cranmer, Ann Lutley, Sheila Smith, Catherine Hursthouse and Reverend Claire Harald were trustees of Flitwick Combined Charities for the ensuing year.

5647 **ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

a. **Councillor Attendance**

Members pointed out that the record presented was incorrect and needed to incorporate meetings for the Civic Year. Officers agreed to work on the record and return the revised attendance document to the next Council meeting.

b. **3 Station Road**

Members noted the delegated authority decision to opt to tax 3 Station Road.

The Deputy Town Clerk updated members on the building's refurbishment project, noting that the programme had slipped by one month. Sketch designs and an updated cost plan were being worked on. Discussions were happening with Post Office Ltd. to establish their requirements for the build. Luton Borough Council, who were project managing, were progressing with all the necessary surveys and other matters in readiness for the planning application. It was anticipated for the build contractor to be appointed in December.

It was agreed for Officers to arrange a site visit for Members.

Action: DTC

c. **Planning – Responses to CBC including Officer Delegated Decisions**

The planning responses were noted.

d. **Planning – CBC Decisions**

The planning decisions were noted.

5648 **PUBLIC OPEN SESSION**

No items.

5649 **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 Reports – noted.

b. Land at Steppingley Road

It was **resolved** to dispose of the land at Steppingley Road with a registered provider by way of a conditional contract.

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 21:26.