



**FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on**  
**Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm**

Present:

Cllr T Parsons (Chairman)

Cllr J Roberts

Cllr A Snape

Cllr T Harald

Also present:

Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive

Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO

Helen Glover – Senior Finance Officer

**1. Apologies for Absence**

There were no apologies for absence.

**2. 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.

**3. Public Open Session**

There were no items.

**4. Members Questions**

There were no questions.

**5. Items for Consideration**

There were no items.

**6. Items for Information**

**a. Finance Reports (Part 1)**

i. FTC Financial Summary – noted.

ii. Earmarked Reserves – noted.

iii. Balance Sheet – noted.

iv. Profit & Loss – noted.

v. Consolidated Bank Reconciliation – noted.

vi. Income & Expenditure (Finance & GP and Community Services) – noted.

vii. Cashbooks (Current Account, Business Reserves, PDQ, Barclaycard & Tenants Deposits) – noted.

**b. 3 Station Road**

Members were advised that:

- Planners at Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) had requested further details on the impact of trees at the site and the consultant had been authorised to carry out this assessment at a cost of £300.
- CBC had previously suggested that the planning application be withdrawn, but LBC's (Luton Borough Council) Design Team had suggested the route of conducting the additional impact assessment on the trees instead. This caused a delay in the planning process, but a decision was expected soon.
- The contractors submitting bids for the main works had requested an extension to the submission deadline, and therefore, this had been moved back by one week to 30<sup>th</sup> October.
- Officers had investigated lowering the cost of electricity capacity work by liaising with an alternative company to see if they could provide a lower quotation than UK Power Networks (UKPN). Unfortunately, the quote received was not much different from UKPN's. Officers had received advice stating that using two companies could complicate the process and cause delays. UKPN also required payment upfront, which suited the Community Ownership Fund (COF) requirements for its spending deadline.
- The roof works had begun, but the wet weather had impacted progress.
- The roof works, and the utilities work (including the new electricity cable) would form part of the COF grant claim.
- Nothing had progressed in securing tenants for the building, as this would commence in the new year.

Cllr Snape mentioned that he had emailed Officers during the day with several questions relating to the project. Officers had responded, but he asked if there had been any progress regarding the Openreach work. Members were advised that the connection had been installed for future tenant usage. Cllr Snape commented that it seemed early in the refurbishment for this type of work; however, Members were reminded that some utility work had been brought forward to comply with the COF grant requirements.

**c. Initial Discussion - Draft Budget 2025-26**

Officers showed Members the spreadsheets created for the draft revenue budget for 2025-26 on the screen. The RFO mentioned that the budget preparation was in its early stages and that she and other relevant Officers had met to discuss forecasts for 2024-25 year-end for each budget line, and the budget for next year.

The RFO commented that some Members had asked about using Rialtas (the accounts package) for budget preparation this year to save time; however, officers had opted to use the spreadsheet again for various reasons, including version control and its workability. The cells had been protected this time to mitigate the risk of amending the wrong figures, and the RFO explained that it did not take long to prepare the document. The budget notes facility on Rialtas was limited, and the figures were not on the same page as the notes, making it difficult to use when changes were happening at the early budgeting stage. The aim was to move the figures onto Rialtas towards the end of November and use this at the December Council meeting when the draft budget was considered.

Members were informed that there would be an opportunity to scrutinise the budget at the November Finance Committee meeting. The Chairman asked if the formation of the Finance Committee meant that there was a different approach to preparing the budget than last year, and the RFO explained that it would be much the same as when there was a Finance Scrutiny Working Group.

The budgets timetable looked like this:

October

Initial budget is drawn up and reviewed by Officers.

November

The Finance Committee scrutinises the draft budget presented, and Committees consider their budgets after the finance meeting.

December

The Finance Committee will scrutinise the budget further, and the Council will consider the draft budget.

January

Final scrutiny from the Finance Committee with the view of adopting the 2025-26 budget at the Council meeting.

Cllr Snape requested that the Food Hub costs be split out of the community budget for various reasons. The RFO commented that this could be done on Rialtas by creating a new section on the accounts, like what had been done for 3 Station Road.

*Action: SFO*

Members wanted to avoid taking out a loan for the 3 Station Road refurbishment project, so the discussion centred around being particularly conservative for the budget next year. Cllr Snape agreed to raise this at the Council meeting the following day to set the tone.

Members believed that all discretionary services should be included in the discussion about what should be deferred or cut, referring to youth services and community grants as examples. A point was raised about the true cost of allotments and that the Council should not rely on its Earmarked Reserve. The Committee wanted to discuss value for money for activities. Cllr Snape appreciated that this was a challenging process.

**7. Public Open Session**

There were no items.

**8. 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.) Finance Reports (Part 2) – reports were noted.
- b.) RFO Update – Financial Position

It was **resolved** to adopt the virements proposed in the document, with the addition of £14,600 from the Capital Receipts Reserve (EMR 350), £1,500 from Office Equipment & Furniture (4025/101), and £500 from Regalia Fund (4035/102) to be transferred to EMR 3 Station Road Development (322).

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 8:44pm.

Signed ..... (Chairman)