



FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL
Minutes of the Flitwick Town Council meeting held on
Tuesday 19th November 2024 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm

Present:

Cllr J Roberts (Chairman)
Cllr S Livens
Cllr F Patterson
Cllr M Platt
Cllr R Wilsmore
Cllr I Blazeby
Cllr T Parsons
Cllr H Hodges
Cllr P Earles
Cllr D Toinko
Cllr T Harald
Cllr C Thompson

Cllr I Adams – Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) Ward Member

Also present:

Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO
Ray O'Neill - Avebury
3 members of the public (1 via virtual access)

5715. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

It was **resolved** to accept apologies from Cllrs Snape and Connell (work commitments).

5716. 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 –

Cllr Hodges declared an interest in agenda item 13c – Planning – as there was an application from his neighbour included.

Cllr Earles declared an interest on agenda item 12h – Village Hall Management Committee Representative (VHMC) – as she was a member of this Committee.

5717. TOWN MAYOR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Town Mayor advised that it had been a busy time since the last meeting and he had attended several civic events including:

- Respite at Home's Silver Jubilee AGM

- Ampthill's Cancer Group
- Houghton Regis' Charity Event
- A service for the Road Victim's Trust in Bedford
- Two Remembrance Services – the Airmen Memorial Service at the Rufus Centre and the main service on Remembrance Sunday in the town centre.

Members were informed that Cllr Copleston had resigned as a Town Councillor. The Town Mayor thanked her for her work on the Council and wished her the best for the future.

Cllr Platt, Deputy Town Mayor, mentioned that he had attended the Town & Parish Council AGM and the Remembrance Services.

5718. Leader Update

No update.

5719. REPORTS FROM WARD MEMBERS

Members noted the report circulated.

Cllr Adams advised that the senior living village in Steppingley Road was expected to be occupied from June to August 2025. The build had been delayed, and legal work was progressing.

The CBC Traffic Management Committee was due to meet on 26 November, and Cllr Adams planned to attend to represent Flitwick regarding traffic concerns at Maulden Road. He hoped for an extension of the 30mph limit and for consideration of reducing the national speed limit section of the road.

Cllr Adams reported that there were increasing concerns about speeding in Steppingley Road and an incident involving a child that morning. He requested that Members send him any known details on this. Cllr Adams commented that the increased development around this road made the traffic issues more of a concern.

Questions

Cllr Livens asked if Cllr Adams had received her email about bins and benches. Cllr Adams agreed to discuss this with Cllr Livens separately.

Cllr Wilshire asked for an update on step-free access at Flitwick Station. Cllr Adams reported no further updates and was still waiting for an updated project plan. He added that there was a fear that funding for step-free access could be forgotten with the release of the new Government budget. This was the rumour in Biggleswade, who had a similar situation with their station. Cllr Adams would continue to push for answers.

The Chairman asked for an update regarding parking restrictions for the Avenue (outside the Vape Shop). Cllr Adams had seen the notice about double yellow lines but had not been notified of anything else so he agreed to follow this up.

Cllr Thompson entered the meeting at 19:53.

Cllr Thompson asked for an update about when the scrutiny meeting would take place about the recent floods. Cllr Adams advised that CBC was arranging a Sustainable Communities Scrutiny Meeting. There would be another summit where the Leader and Executive Members would represent Members' views at a meeting with other interested parties. There would be a Q&A session with Members which Cllr Adams would attend. He

commented that he would have preferred a big public scrutiny meeting, but this was not how CBC planned to progress.

Cllr Wilsmore asked for the Ward Members' report on flooding to be shared with FTC Members and Cllr Adams agreed to do this.

Cllr Adams left the meeting at 19:55.

5720. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

Jon Culman (resident) referred to the Leader Update section of the previous meeting's minutes and commented that FTC needed to put pressure on CBC to clear the gullies more often. He said that the building work in the local area was causing silt, etc., to wash down to the gullies. Mr Culman mentioned that he was aware that FTC was not statutory responsible for the floods, but he was pleased to read that the Town Council saw that it had a duty to do something on this. Mr Culman offered his assistance with this work.

5721. INVITED SPEAKER

The Chairman advised that unfortunately MP Blake Stephenson had been unable to attend the meeting due to other commitments so there was no invited speaker.

5722. MEMBERS QUESTIONS

No items.

5723. MINUTES AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF MEETINGS

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 15th October**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on Tuesday 15th October 2024 at the Rufus Centre as an accurate record.

- b. For Members to note the resolutions of the Finance & General Purposes Committee meeting, held on **Monday 14th October 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

The resolutions of the Finance & GP Committee meeting held on Monday 14th October 2024 were noted.

- c. For Members to note the resolutions of the Community Services Committee meeting, held on **Tuesday 5th November 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

The resolutions of the Community Services Committee meeting held on Tuesday 5th November 2024 were noted.

- d. For Members to note the resolutions of the Business Improvement & Development Board meeting, held on **Tuesday 12th November 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

The resolutions of the BIDB meeting held on 12th November 2024 were noted.

- e. For Members to note the resolutions of the HR Committee meeting, held on **Friday 15th November 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

The resolutions of the HR Committee held on Friday 15th November were noted.

5724. MATTERS ARISING

a. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held on **Tuesday 15th October 2024.**

Cllr Thompson commented that decisions listed on recommendation and resolution sheets had become inconsistent and requested guidance be sent to Members so that expectations were known.

Action: TC

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

5725. OUTSIDE BODIES

No items.

5726. ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

a. Airmen Memorial Service Request

The organiser of the Airmen Memorial Service requested permission from the Council to formalise the event so that it could continue in future years. The Chairman had attended the event this year and said it was good. Nine people were present, which was in line with previously agreed guidance. Members discussed that the service was limited to 10 people, and no dignitaries were invited without permission from the Town Mayor. The order of precedence was also to be followed.

Cllr Parsons asked if the proposal would replicate this year's event arrangements. The Chairman advised that this was correct. There would be little input from FTC, and it was for the resident to organise.

Cllr Blazeby asked if the request was to agree to it year by year or for a longer period. The Chairman advised that it was a decision for FTC to make. Cllr Blazeby commented that an annual agreement would make sense because it would be in line with reviewing general remembrance services.

Cllr Earles asked why the numbers were limited and the Chairman explained that this was to stop it from detracting from the main remembrance service and so that numbers were controlled for the small space where the service took place. Cllr Earles commented that 10 attendees would mean not all FTC Members could attend.

It was **resolved** to accept the proposal that the Airmen Memorial Service should be considered by the Council alongside the annual remembrance service; however, this would be reviewed annually.

b. CB/24/02981/FULL

The Chairman informed Members of the recommendation made by the Planning Improvement Working Group (PIWG) regarding the above application. Cllr Hodges, Chairman of the PIWG, commented that the image used for this application on CBC's website used different colours. He reported that the PIWG had concerns about the impact this development would have on the roads in proximity to it as it was close to Kendal Drive and Tesco junctions. He added that it was a busy area for pedestrians crossing the road.

Cllr Earles raised concerns about parking arrangements for the flat owners, as there was already insufficient parking for shop owners and employees. Cllr Hodges agreed to look at the parking behind the shops. Cllr Thompson thought there was a low allocation for parking for this type of development. Cllr Hodges recalled the application for flats in The

Ridgeway where there was a 50% ratio for parking. Cllr Wilsmore commented that the proximity of a train station from the proposed development also impacted the minimum number of spaces required.

Cllr Thompson asked why this application had been referred for Council consideration. The TC advised that the terms of reference stated that the council was to determine any application for more than one dwelling.

Cllr Toinko believed this application constituted overdevelopment of the site, and he shared his parking concerns. He added that the traffic concerns were relevant as this was a congested town. Members were concerned about the construction vehicles during the work.

Members discussed the material planning considerations, and the TC said these objections carried more weight. She reiterated that parking and overdevelopment were material reasons.

It was **resolved** to approve the PIWG recommendation subject to the additional comments relating to traffic concerns, insufficient parking, and overdevelopment of the immediate location.

Action: Amenities Officer

c. Calendar of Meeting Dates 2025

Cllr Thompson referred to the email sent to Members that day, which stated that the calendar of meeting dates had been amended and asked if there was a substantial change. The DTC advised that this was re-issued as an additional Finance & GP meeting had been organised for January.

It was **resolved** to approve the circulated calendar of meeting dates for 2025.

d. Government Consultation - Enabling remote attendance and proxy voting at local authority meetings

Cllr Blazeby advised that he had completed the consultation document as an individual. He stated that it would be worthwhile seeking the views of Officers and for the team to look at how the remote meetings operated during the Covid-19 pandemic. This period allowed flexibility for Members to actively participate in meetings and vote while contributing to the meeting remotely, which was not permitted currently. Cllr Blazeby believed that this flexibility was required for Members who volunteer their services. It was agreed to Officers to look at this and bring their views for Members to consider at the December meeting.

Action: TC

e. Central Bedfordshire Council – Launch of the Brownfield Call for Sites

Cllr Blazeby asked if the Town Council owned any brownfield sites, and the TC did not believe so. Cllr Parsons commented that there was a piece of CBC land near the station that could be proposed, and he was unsure why CBC did not suggest this site.

It was **resolved** to respond to the Brownfield Call for Sites with a proposal to include the site near Flitwick Station.

f. A00475 – Windmill Road, Flitwick – Waiting Restrictions

Cllr Blazeby commented that if the proposed restrictions were not going to be policed, then the restrictions would have no impact. He commented that the yellow lines outside the shop in Windmill Road do not deter people from parking there. Cllr Livens believed that yellow lines positively impacted Brookes Road but noted that this street was much quieter than Windmill Road.

Cllr Wilsmore asked where this proposal had originated. Cllr Blazeby advised that CBC had been discussing it with the resident's group for some time and had carried out repeated speed tests. Cllr Wilsmore was in favour of the restrictions because if the lines were there, then FTC could push CBC to enforce it.

Members discussed the residents of Windmill Road previously not being in favour of banning all parking there which explained the restrictions.

It was **resolved** to ask Officers to respond in favour of introducing restrictions on Windmill Road.

g. Central Bedfordshire Council - Street Trading Policy Consultation 2024

Cllr Toinko was surprised that CBC did not already check street traders' MOT, gas safety, insurance or hygiene certificates. He was in favour of this being introduced as they constituted basic safety checks.

Cllr Toinko referred to the ice cream vans section and commented that the proposed changes seemed more relaxed than the industry processes. He thought the policy needed to match industry standards.

It was **resolved** to support the CBC Street Trading Policy Consultation 2024 changes but to comment that the sections relating to ice cream vans should match the industry processes.

h. Flitwick Village Hall Management Committee (VHMC) Representative

Cllr Thompson, FTC representative for the VHMC, advised that the meetings tend to take place in the middle of the afternoons, and her job does not allow her the flexibility to have time to attend these meetings. She stated that this was not when the meetings were typically happening when she took on the role, so a sub would be appreciated. Cllr Thompson said that she made arrangements to attend a recent meeting, which was then subsequently changed.

There were no Members interested in being a sub for the VHMC.

Cllr Thompson asked for guidance on whether the Council could ask an Officer to attend the VHMC meetings to cover for Members. The TC was unsure but would investigate and report her findings at the next meeting. The TC confirmed that this arrangement of having an FTC representative attend VHMC meetings was historic. She did not immediately see a problem with Officers attending to listen to the discussions but asked if Members had an issue with staff spending time doing this.

Members noted that Cllr Earles was an existing member of the VHMC but not as a FTC representative. She asked if she could perform both roles however Members thought this could be a conflict of interest. The TC would bear this in mind for her investigations.

Action: TC

5727. ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

a. Finance Reports

- i) Balance Sheet – noted.

- ii) Central Projects Fund – noted. Cllr Livens asked what the document was as the paper's printed version had made the orientation portrait and was subsequently unreadable. It was agreed for the admin team to print the project fund document landscape for future meetings.

Action: DTC

b. 3 Station Road

The DTC gave the following update:

- Roof works were complete, and the scaffolding would be removed before the Lights Switch On event.
- The canopy needed to be installed.
- The tender responses for the main build works were being reviewed by LBC's design team. Ten bids had been submitted and all were within FTC's budget. The tender report was due on 6th December and the Council had until 13th December to appoint a contractor to remain on schedule with the programme.
- There was an opportunity to reduce the refurbishment costs later through value engineering.
- There would be a standstill period (15 days) following the contractor's appointment with a contract notice planned for issue on 8th January.
- Following this, the mobilisation period would commence, and the works would start afterward.
- However, that day, CBC notified us of a further extension of time request for the planning application, as the Case Officer had not had time to consult sufficiently. This was very disappointing, as the application was submitted in July. LBC advised that the new decision date was 13th December, which meant it was now tight to stay in line with the project's program.
- LBC's Project Manager had advised Officers that this extension of time decision could be appealed but this process was lengthy and could result in more delays. LBC has advised that FTC remain patient on a decision for now, and LBC would continue to chase for a decision prior to the 13th.
- Members were informed that correspondence between LBC and the Case Officer had been positive to date and permission was likely to be granted following design amendments to revert to the original boundary line.
- Officers agreed to keep Members updated on the planning situation.

c. Planning

The FTC and CBC Planning decisions were noted. Cllr Hodges referenced the Vicarage Hill application and the subsequent correspondence received from a resident. He asked if Officers would reply and the TC advised that this had been done.

5728. PUBLIC OPEN SESSION

A resident advised that he had previously attended the FTC Annual Assembly and raised a point at that meeting about litter in the town. He reminded Members that he asked questions about the Street Operative for Ampthill, who worked there every weekday, meticulously cleaning the town, whereas Flitwick did not have this. He felt that littering in Flitwick had got worse since the Annual Assembly meeting, and he still remained in the dark about why Ampthill had the operative, whereas Flitwick did not. The resident mentioned that a Flitwick Town Councillor agreed to look into this matter, and he requested an update. The resident also sought clarification on whether his request was unreasonable and if so, for the reasons behind this.

The TC confirmed that she had seen a significant amount of correspondence between the FTC Leader and Cllr Adams, who were challenging CBC about this matter. CBC had advised in this correspondence that Flitwick was receiving this service; however, Members and Officers disputed this. The TC reassured the resident that this matter was

being dealt with and Members were pushing for a better outcome for Flitwick. The resident responded that the work for Flitwick only involved clearing the bins but it did not include litter picking. The resident was pleased to hear FTC was actively pursuing this matter. He mentioned that the community litter pick events were positive and volunteered to help at these; however, this issue was ongoing. The TC agreed to keep the resident updated on any progress made.

Mr Culman stated that the Steppingley Road allotments site fencing was not fit for purpose and gave reasons behind this. He mentioned that this contributed to thefts of allotment holders' possessions at the site. Mr. Culman stated that the site needed a 6 ft high palisade fence. He informed the Council that the Police had been surprised at the ease with which offenders could gain access.

Mr Culman had also attended the meeting to advise that the problems with the Manor Park gates remained, with them only working one out of five occasions he had visited recently. He commented that he knew FTC was considering chopping some trees back to help provide more opportunity for the sun to reach the gates for battery power. However, he believed the trees were too large, and some were not on FTC land. Mr Culman said the gates were dirty and the Public Realm Team needed a proper washing kit.

The TC believed that Officers had been keeping Mr Culman updated with progress but responded that the Council had been seeking quotes for the allotment fence; however, procurement rules had to be followed. It was anticipated that the quotes would be considered at the Community Services Committee meeting in December, and Mr Culman was welcome to attend.

The TC appreciated Mr Culman's frustration with the Manor Park gates and confirmed that Officers wanted to cut the trees back. She was interested to hear that Mr Culman did not believe this would work, considering Officers had been advised that this would help the situation. She would report this to the Amenities Officer for further investigation. The TC advised that as a last resort, the Council would look to move the solar panels, but given that this was the most costly option and this was taxpayers' money, it was prudent to evaluate the options first.

5729. 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.

Ray O'Neill (Avebury) entered the meeting at 20:53.

b. Land at Steppingley Road

Members received an update from the TC and Mr O'Neill for information.

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 21:20.

Signed (Chairman)