



**FLITWICK TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Minutes of the Finance & General Purposes meeting held on**  
**Monday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024 at the Rufus Centre at 7:45pm**

Present:

Cllr T Parsons  
Cllr A Snape  
Cllr T Harald  
Cllr I Blazeby

Also present:

Stacie Lockey – Town Clerk & Chief Executive  
Stephanie Stanley – Deputy Town Clerk & RFO  
Helen Glover – Senior Finance Officer  
0 members of the public

**09. Apologies for Absence**

It was **resolved** to accept apologies from Cllr Roberts (unwell).

**10. 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.

**11. Public Open Session**

No items.

**12. Members Questions**

No items.

**13. Minutes**

- a. For Members to approve the minutes of the Finance & GP Meeting held on **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024**, this meeting was held at the Rufus Centre.

It was **resolved** to approve the minutes of the Finance & GP Meeting held on Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 at the Rufus Centre as a true record.

**14. Matters Arising**

- a. Minutes of the Finance & GP Meeting held on **Monday 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024** - no items.

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

15. **Items for Consideration**

a. **Draft Budget 2025-26**

Members stated that the figures for salaries and wages were needed to discuss the budget properly.

The Chairman referred to cost centre 106 – 3 Station Road and suggested removing the income budget for the retail rent. Members agreed that more discussions were required with Post Office Ltd. Cllr Snape commented that the rent for 11 High Street (the former post office) was £25k per annum, more than double the rent the Council could expect for the retail unit at 3 Station Road. Members wanted to see how this panned out since the former post office site had no parking or delivery access.

Members commented that utility expenditures would be passed to the tenants. The Chairman advised that tenants must pay for utilities and rates during the rent-free period.

The Deputy Town Clerk (DTC) commented that there had been a delay in sorting the electricity Change of Tenancy forms since it had taken a while to establish the supplier. The relevant forms have now been submitted, and electricity rates will be known afterward.

Cllr Snape had been speaking to the DTC about possible relief from business rates for 3 Station Road as the building was derelict and unable to be occupied. The team was investigating this.

Members asked about the calculations for the telephone budget. The DTC advised that the contract had been renegotiated because the current one included more devices than required.

Cllr Harald referred to the IT support budget and commented that the IT contract ended in May. He believed the costs could be reduced by reassessing the Council's IT needs.

Members noticed that there was no budget for elections. The DTC explained that it was good practice for Councils to include provision for elections expenditure and to have an Earmarked Reserve, but given the Council's financial position and the fact that there were no scheduled parish elections for the next financial year, the assumption had been made that there would not be a requirement for a budget. However, should a contested election arise, the Council would need to fund this. The Town Clerk (TC) mentioned that there had been no contested elections for recent vacancies as co-option had filled these positions.

Cllr Harald asked why the Flitwick Papers costs had increased for next year. The TC commented that this could be about outsourced design fees, but she would check with the Comms & Marketing Manager.

Cllr Snape commented that Officers would review the healthcare benefit with SimplyHealth before the next renewal (November 2025).

Members discussed insurance costs. The DTC explained that the building valuations carried out in the current year would not be replicated for 25-26 (the requirement was every five years), and the increased cost for the unoccupied building at 3 Station Road would change mid-year. The Chairman advised that insurance for the building could be recharged to tenants.

Members requested that the legal and professional fees associated with creating future tenant leases for 3 Station Road be included in the 106 cost centre.

Members questioned the current year's expenditure for the health and safety budget. The TC mentioned that the entirety of this budget would be used.

It was agreed that the staff courses/training budget should be reconsidered. The TC explained that some invoices were due for the public realm team's recent training, and the DTC stated that the hospitality team had a relatively high staff turnover and needed funds for food hygiene courses etc.

Cllr Blazeby asked about the budget for PDQs, and the Senior Finance Officer informed him that the main increase related to the additional Merchant ID required for Ticketsolve. The increased usage of the card machines also impacted the budget.

Members wanted the Spot Bonus budget to be included at £300.

Cllr Harald referred to the truck insurance budget and asked if this cost was included in the vehicle lease agreements. The TC stated that the insurance was separate. There was at least another year on the truck leases, but the TC advised that a Fleet Review would be a good idea when the time comes and that options would be presented to Members at the appropriate time.

Members had an extended discussion about the burial ground budget lines. The TC explained that there were ongoing operational costs after the burial ground reached capacity. There would be re-openings of graves for second internments and other ongoing expenses. Members were updated on the income received for burials, e.g., internment fees, vault costs, and permit fees for memorials. Cllr Blazeby questioned if there might be another income stream to explore for the burial ground in terms of maintenance. The TC commented that Officers could not contact some exclusive right owners since they would have passed away.

Cllr Snape commented about the Community Services Committee using the allotments Earmarked Reserve (EMR) to fund the provision of a portaloo. He stated that this was not the correct use of the EMR. The TC agreed and advised that other capital works from this EMR were required for the sites, which she had communicated to the Community Services Team. Members commented that allotment plot holders could be asked to pay an additional fee to fund the portaloo provision.

Members discussed the phone mast income, and the TC provided an update that when the lease was renegotiated, it was agreed that the Council would receive £1,100 annually for the mast being at the site.

The Chairman asked about the Manor Park budget and actual spending for the current year. The TC advised that this budget had now been spent.

Cllr Harald asked about the play area budgets. The TC advised that the inspections had been done, and Officers were waiting for the reports to indicate what work was needed. The expenditure would be taken from this budget.

Members were informed that the Council paid business rates for the changing rooms/Sea Cadets Headquarters building. The TC commented that the Sea Cadets organisation had some internal issues, but it was hoped they would respond about taking on the changing rooms space before year-end.

Cllr Snape commented that the Council may be able to claim hospitality relief from business rates for the Rufus Centre. He explained that most of the space had a hospitality focus aligned with the online criteria. The Chairman advised that using agents with the Valuation Office made the process quicker. The DTC was following this up.

*Action: DTC*

Cllr Blazeby asked for information about the income for Millennium Park hire. The TC informed Members that this was for groups who hired the park, such as the Flitwick 10k race and the circus. Cllr Blazeby asked about any price increase for this purpose, and Members were advised that the prices had not been increased since the event protocol was recently reviewed.

Members discussed the street lighting budget. The TC explained that the Council paid for a few lights; the rest were under Central Beds Council's remit. Cllr Snape asked for the list of parish-owned lights to be sent to Members.

*Action: TC*

Cllr Harald referred to the youth activities budget, commenting that it was a significant cost. He asked about value for money. The TC stated that the Council was in a contract with the current provider until 2026 and that this would be discussed further under the exempt section.

Cllr Snape mentioned that the Food Hub cost centre needed further expenditure attributed to it, and it was agreed to hold a separate meeting about this with Cllr Snape, the TC, and the Community Services Manager to finalise the figures.

*Action: TC/CSAM/Cllr Snape*

The Chairman asked if the Hub could be classified as a charitable activity and, therefore, be a property that did not pay business rates. Cllr Snape responded that this could happen if the Hub moved under the Town Mayor's Charity remit.

Cllr Harald asked about the expenditure relating to the Flitwick Heritage & Oral Equipment budget line and sought clarification on the spend for the current year. Cllr Blazeby advised that there was a grant associated with these costs and the DTC mentioned that the Council's revenue budget had £500 in the community activities cost centre as well as £250 in the EMRs.

Cllr Snape asked for an explanation on what was spent under the community events expense budget. The SFO advised on the type of items purchased under this nominal code for the year to date and Members agreed that this budget was necessary.

*Action: DTC to oversee draft budget amendments*

## **16. Items for Information**

### **i) Finance Reports (Part 1)**

- a. FTC Financial Summary – noted.
- b. Earmarked Reserves – noted.
- c. Balance Sheet – noted.
- d. Profit & Loss – noted.
- e. Consolidated Bank Reconciliation – noted.
- f. Income & Expenditure (Finance & GP and Community Services) – noted.
- g. Cashbooks (Current Account, Business Reserves, PDQ, Barclaycard & Tenants Deposits) – noted.

### **ii) 3 Station Road**

The DTC gave the following update:

- Roof works were complete – photos would be circulated to Members.

- The consultation had begun for the third party's consent for the additional electricity cable.
- The wayleave agreement for the UK Power Networks work had been signed.
- LBC were reviewing the tender documents returned for the main works – 10 companies had submitted bids.
- The Council would appoint a contractor in December, and the works would start in January, subject to planning approval.
- There had been a second extension of time for a planning decision as CBC needed more time to consult. A comment had been made that Highways were unhappy with the design's boundary line, so the decision had been made to revert to the original boundary. Officers did not expect any further comments.
- Officers agreed to check which tree was due to come down.

**17. Public Open Session**

No items.

**18. 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 – noted.
- b.) Draft BIDB Budget 2025-26 – for consideration

Members discussed the draft BIDB budget presented in detail and Officers agreed to implement/investigate changes before further scrutiny at the next meeting.

The SFO left the meeting at 20:58.

- c.) Revenue Budget Savings – for consideration

It was **resolved** to approve the revenue budget savings 2024-25 presented in the report.

- d.) Finance Reports (Part 2) – noted.
- e.) Steppingley Road – noted.

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 21:18.

Signed..... (Chairman)