

Annual Report 2020-2021



www.bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk

Chairman's Foreword

On behalf of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council I am pleased to introduce our annual report for the year 2020-21. It has been challenging to write a review for the past year as the Covid-19 pandemic has overshadowed almost every aspect of local life and has had a profound impact on Town Council activities. Rather than dwell on what could not happen due to necessary government restrictions and the many disappointments of the year, I would like to focus on the positives which have arisen and there is much to celebrate.

Our objective throughout the year has been to find as many ways as possible to support the community during a time of great hardship for many and considerable challenge for all of us. At the same time we wanted to sustain our "business as usual". Despite the lock downs we have achieved increased community engagement using digital means including social media, monthly e-newsletters, livestreaming of council meetings and the reintroduction of a printed quarterly newsletter. We have developed new partnerships and new activities with organisations working to support the community such as delivery of food parcels, a local collection centre for Foodbank Xtra, the community larder and counselling services for residents. We have also undertaken our own projects such as the refurbishment of Fenny Stratford Community Centre (a work still in progress). Our officer team has worked harder than ever and on behalf of the Council I thank them for their flexibility during a very demanding year.

However, it is the community response which has really impressed the Town Council. So much has been contributed from our local front line providers, our voluntary support networks, faith groups and community organisations, volunteers both young and old and our hard pressed local businesses and hospitality providers. This amazing local spirit and everyone pulling together showed our community's resilience and everyone who helped is to be congratulated.

Earlier this year the Town Council was encouraged by the government's funding commitment to the Town Investment Plan put forward by the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal Board. Looking ahead to the future, we sincerely hope that additional capital investment can be attracted by the £23 million already allocated to our community and that significant and meaningful projects which change Bletchley and Fenny Stratford are in fact realised. The Town Council will be picking up the pace on its Neighbourhood Plan and refocusing on our climate change initiative as soon as we can. It is the Council's hope that this report and our continuing activities will encourage more people to get involved in local democracy, learn more about their community and participate directly in making Bletchley and Fenny Stratford a better place to live and work. The Town Council will start a new term in May 2021 and there has never been a better time to engage with us and influence our activities.

A Kennedy

Cllr Angela Kennedy
Chair of Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council
April 2021



Annual Report 2020-2021

Overview of Council Work 2020-2021

Council Governance

Following postponement of the 2019-20 elections the 18 seats on Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Council have been filled for most of the council year. Four co-options took place during 2020-2021 which was the final year of a five year council term. A table of current Members' attendance records is shown at the end of this report along with a list of Members at 31 March 2021.

Since May 2020 all Council and Committee meetings have been held via video conference call in line with the Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020. Meetings have been live streamed either on Facebook or YouTube and members of the public have had the opportunity to participate online and to watch meetings live or at a later date. Whilst this has not been ideal for some, community engagement with different groups has increased through this use of digital media. In 2019-2020 the Town Council had taken the decision to move to paperless meetings and Councillors adapted to virtual meetings and use of computer tablets for reports as the year progressed. The Town Council had also invested in an IT infrastructure which enabled most employees to work from any of the Town Council's premises or from home. These arrangements greatly facilitated good governance throughout the year. Members have been determined to follow government and health and safety guidance throughout the pandemic and to encourage all residents to do the same. All amendments to services, procedures and activities were made with careful thought and thorough risk assessment.



Online Town Council Meeting

Community Hubs

Newton Leys Pavilion

Due to the pandemic during 2020-21 Newton Leys Pavilion has largely been closed to the public or open for limited times and restricted activities only such as provision of pre-school education. The transfer of the football pitches at the Pavilion from Taylor Wimpey to the Town Council has been delayed because of the furloughing of TW contractors during the pandemic and the impact of this on the condition of the playing field.



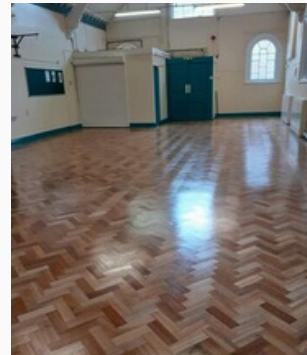
Spotlight Centre



Spotlight has been unable to be open to the public for most of the year and even access to the Computer Suite has been very limited due to social distancing requirements. However, from April 2020 the building has been used as a Foodbank Xtra collection point for local foodbank users staffed by Town Council employees. To date, we have supported over 500 families and we are grateful for the many donations given by local people and businesses to help us with this.

Fenny Stratford Community Centre

On 1 January 2021 a lease on the Town Council owned premises at George Street came to an end. The Town Council then took over direct management of this building from the George Street Community Centre charity. This building has been variously known as Bletchley Community Centre and George Street Community Centre but has now been renamed Fenny Stratford Community Centre to reflect the Town Council's goal to operate the building as a multi use community hub for Fenny and the wider community. During 2020 structural repairs to this building and some internal work such as restoration of the parquet flooring had been undertaken by the Council in its capacity as landlord. These were funded in part by S106 developer contributions and in part by the Town Council. Since January 2021 further internal work has been ongoing with the aim of improving the internal appearance and accessibility of the building as well as updating security and existing facilities.



Restored flooring
at Fenny Stratford
Community Centre

The Town Council looks forward to welcoming existing and new users to all its buildings during the year ahead. Bookings have been and are now being taken for our premises for the financial year 2021-2022.

Green and Built Environment

Early in 2020 the Town Council declared a climate emergency and resolved to work towards carbon neutrality in our area 2030. Unfortunately, the development of the planned Climate Action Group and Action Plan has been delayed by the impact of Covid-19. Despite this setback the Town Council has concerned itself with environmental and climate change issues during the year particularly its continued opposition to the potential extension of the Bletchley Landfill Site at Newton Leys. The Council remains committed to working with Milton Keynes Council, other parishes and community groups to achieve our climate change objectives.



Working towards climate neutrality

Our allotment sites at Orchardside, Manor Fields and Larch Grove remained open throughout the year and were fully occupied at year end with a small waiting list.

The Town Council also expected to have taken ownership of the land at Newton Leys Allotments during 2020-2021 and to have let tenancies to residents. This did not happen because of issues concerning flooding of the allotment site which Taylor Wimpey has finally resolved through introduction of physical drainage measures. The final legal transfer is now expected early in 2021-2022.



Community Orchard

Specialist work was undertaken at the Community Orchard in February 2021 to replace tree guards, perform restorative pruning of fruit trees and planting of new stock. Ongoing maintenance work at the allotments took place throughout the year.



Manor Field Allotment



Electra under construction

The Town Council supported the work of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Trust to commission the Electra, an all-electric, fully accessible 12 passenger community boat with a £2,500 grant. In addition, the Town Council has entered into a three year partnership with the Waterway Trust aimed at enhancing the canal side in our area.

The Town Council increased its provision of dog bins this year, both adding to the overall number of bins and replacing some stock as well as increasing collection frequency. Unfortunately littering, dog fouling and misuse of public open space (such as the Blue Lagoon) has been an ongoing problem during the pandemic despite the valiant efforts of several community groups dedicated to doing their own litter picks and clean-ups. Our Environment and Premises Manager and the Town Rangers have worked closely with MK Council and the Parks Trust to address these issues and to “top up” their litter and rubbish collection. Our Gladiator machine has also been used to clean block paving in Queensway and this is a long piece of work in progress.

Community Safety remains an important issue in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford and the Town Council has continued to provide CCTV cameras which were deployed in locations across the area where Thames Valley Police had identified a need. This resulted in identification of individuals and a number of interventions including arrests.



CCTV in use

It has been a difficult year for Bletchley Town centre especially for retail business. Following the lifting of the first Covid lockdown social distancing measures were introduced by Milton Keynes Council (as Highways Authority). These were designed to promote community safety and included a partial road closure in Queensway. The location of market stalls was also changed as part of this scheme. These measures were not popular. The Town Council advocated for changes which were negotiated with Milton Keynes Council. Many residents did not understand that the Town Council does not own any land in Queensway, operates market stalls under a licence from Milton Keynes Council and has no highways powers. Parking in the Town Centre also generated many complaints this year and the Town Council has continued its ongoing representations to Milton Keynes Council to try to achieve improvements. Despite these problems a small core of loyal market traders continued to trade when permitted and it is hoped to build on this. The Town Council reviewed its provision of public conveniences in Albert Street committing to undertake public consultation on this service in the year ahead. It is hoped that the Town Investment Plan of the Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Town Deal will result in changes to the public realm in Bletchley and Fenny as well as to other projects.



Bletchley Market Stalls



Rangers Work



Rangers in Queensway



Town Council Van

In March 2021, the Town Council demolished its former storage facility at Manor Road. The building had not been used for its intended purpose for some years and it is now hoped to provide a more attractive green space in this location which will not be so appealing to vandals. The Town Council, working in partnership with Milton Keynes Council, co-funded outdoor furniture at the Library and new benches at the War Memorial in Queensway.



Pump House before



and after

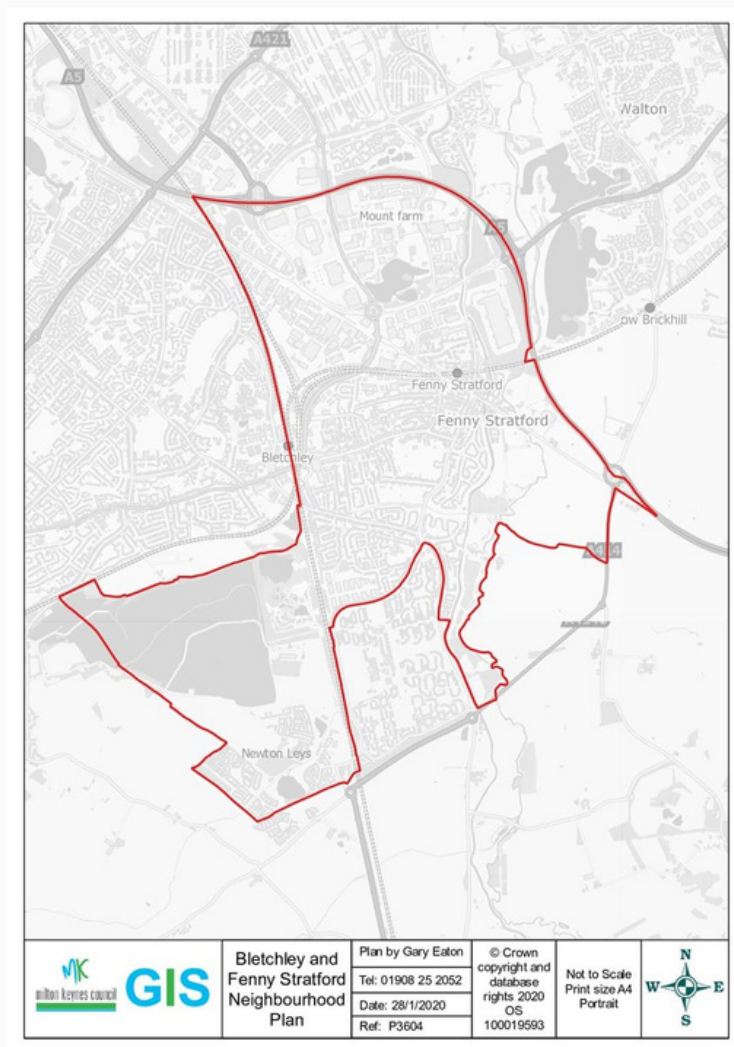


New Benches at the War Memorial

Planning and Development

Our area has seen considerable development in the last year with new houses built or planned at Eaton Leys and Newton Leys and elsewhere, continued conversion of commercial properties to residential and some significant individual developments on key sites such as the planned Lakes Estate regeneration. The Council has reviewed over 140 planning applications submitted to Milton Keynes Council, commenting or objecting to many and listening to residents' views about the impact of new buildings. We have also responded to local and national planning policy consultations including the government's White Paper "Planning for the Future".

With the future of the planning system in England uncertain the Town Council remains committed to developing a Neighbourhood Development Plan for Bletchley and Fenny Stratford.



Neighbourhood Plan Area

The designated plan area we put forward was approved by Milton Keynes Council in May 2020 and a core Steering Group has since been set up to lead the development of the plan on behalf of the community. The Town Council has also continued to push Milton Keynes Council for the development of a Supplementary Planning Document for Central Bletchley to follow on from the Central Bletchley Prospectus published in 2019.

Responding to the pandemic

The Town Council has been mindful of the needs of the local community and has listened to concerns and requests from residents throughout the pandemic. The Council remains committed to developing its engagement with residents and this has been especially important this year. We have increased our use of social media and produced a monthly digital newsletter as well as reintroducing a printed quarterly newsletter and planning and undertaking consultation on issues.

The Town Council responded to the Covid-19 pandemic in several ways including delivery of Sofea food parcels in partnership with Water Eaton Church. Over 100 boxes per week were delivered to residents between April and September 2020 when this scheme came to an end. Building on this successful partnership the Town Council again collaborated with the church to launch the Water Eaton Community Larder. This not only provides good food at a good price but also helps avoid food surplus going to landfill. We also collaborated with other partners such as local Family Centres, Age UK, public health and MK Council and others to support families and individuals in need and to help them access services. The support of community volunteers has been invaluable in helping us to help residents.



Preparing for the Community Larder



It is recognised that for many of us the pandemic has had a detrimental effect upon our mental and physical health. With this in mind the Town Council has funded counselling support for residents using the West Bletchley Counselling Service, funded outdoor and physical activities for young people through our partners delivering youth services and play schemes and has also decided to reintroduce free swimming at Bletchley Leisure for residents in our area beginning in 2021-2022.

The Town Council has also allocated grant funding to charities working in our area to meet community needs. This year this has included organisations working to help children and families with life limiting conditions and provision of housing for young people.



Play session delivered by MK Play Association 2020



Counselling and Wellbeing Support Poster

Council Finances 2020-2021

Draft annual accounts for the year ending 31 March 2021 are included in this report to provide a comparison with last year's accounts. These accounts will be subject to internal audit during May 2021 and subsequently to external audit. Full details of the audit process and all our audit reports are available on our website www.bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk and any questions about the accounts should be addressed to the Clerk/Responsible Financial Officer at clerk@bletchleyfennystratford-tc.gov.uk.

To summarise, like many other organisations both public and private, the Town Council has been affected by the economic repercussions of the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, income was reduced by our inability to let Newton Leys Pavilion for most of the year due to social distancing measures. The Town Council did benefit from some government grants in respect of our premises running costs but overall there was a significant loss of anticipated hire income. However expenditure was also significantly reduced as some services were necessarily restricted or suspended at times (eg Market, Albert Street Public Conveniences) and planned events could not take place safely (eg Christmas Event). The Town Council also chose not to recruit to approved new staff posts during the pandemic. This resulted in savings against the planned budget. The overall outcome of the year's finances was an underspend of £146,111 against budget and this sum was added to the Council's general reserve. This underspend was forecast by the time the budget for 2021-2022 was approved and was taken into consideration by the Council in setting the budget and precept for 2021-2022.

Draft Unaudited Accounts for 2020-2021

Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31/03/21

31/03/2020		31/03/2021
	Operating Income	
35,000	Community Grants	10,000
3,347	Spotlight	10,241
795,458	Precept/Grant	798,409
1,617	Christmas Lights Overhead Expe	0
40	Christmas Event	40
1,000	Albert Street Toilets	1,000
5,188	Allotments & Community Orchard	75,411
0	Fenny Stratford Community Cent	22,778
0	Community Infrastructure Fund	3,496
24,532	74/76 Queensway/Library	4,162
7,292	Council Support Services	2,383
227,497	Newton Leys Pavilion	41,080
14,321	Market	1,526
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1,115,292	Total Income	970,526
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	Running Costs	
62,873	Community Grants	22,846
8,491	Democratic Services	13,411
0	Planters	1,559
7,800	Youth Work	12,708
13,915	Dog Bins	17,613
22,233	Senior Youth Club	19,696
9,287	Spotlight	7,707
5,283	Bandstand	1,528
3,382	Community Engagement	8,932
29,234	Christmas Lights Overhead Expe	16,532
12,578	Christmas Event	535
31,475	Albert Street Toilets	31,558
11,334	Allotments & Community Orchard	27,346
0	War Memorial	22
5,271	The Chapel	1,869
1,740	Manor Road Lockup	2,774
2,500	Fenny Stratford Community Cent	56,947
1,416	Professional Fees	4,896
22,951	Community Infrastructure Fund	(8,225)
30,800	Community Projects/Services	31,240
270,563	Staff Costs	290,875
68,860	74/76 Queensway/Library	70,547
79,048	Council Support Services	44,894
2,770	Town Council Vehicle	27,918
0	Neighbourhood Plan	166
87,402	Newton Leys Pavilion	46,099
3,692	Market	2,935
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794,898	Total Expenditure	754,926
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Bletchley & Fenny Stratford Town Council

Income and Expenditure Account for Year Ended 31/03/2021

31/03/2020

31/03/2021

	General Fund Analysis	
294,237	Opening Balance	456,205
1,115,292	Plus : Income for Year	970,526
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1,409,529		1,426,731
794,898	Less : Expenditure for Year	754,926
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614,632		671,805
158,427	Transfers TO / FROM Reserves	226,923
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456,205	Closing Balance	444,882
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Councillor Attendance

(As of 24th March 2021)

Councillor	Number of meetings Attended (full council and committee meetings)	Attendance rate (based on attendance at all meetings the councillor was due to attend during the year)
Gavin Bedford (from November 2020)	6	100%
Samantha Browne	17	81%
Keith Ely	25	83%
Richard Graham	17	77%
Ron Haine	24	100%
William Hewitt	6	40%
Ed Hume	28	90%
Mohammad Imran (from December 2020)	4	80%
Ethaniel Kelly-Wilson	31	94%
Angela Kennedy	18	58%
Gary Kenworthy	18	95%
Ayesha Khanom (from December 2020)	4	80%
Michael McDonald	21	75%
E'Amonn O'Rourke	24	92%
Sean Porter	5	33%
Mohammed Rohim	7	47%
Terry Stephens (from October 2020)	7	100%
Mariee Wymer (from November 2020)	10	100%

Bletchley & Fenny Town Councillors



Manor North

Chairman

CLlr Angela Kennedy

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Central Bletchley

Vice Chair

CLlr Richard Graham

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Queensway & Denbigh North

CLlr Ron Haine

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CLlr William Hewitt

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Manor South

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CLlr Gavin Bedford

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CLlr Terry Stephens

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Granby

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Newton Leys

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CLlr Michael McDonald

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CLlr Gary Kenworthy

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