

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 6th March 2017**

Present:	Councillors	P.	Horner	(Town Mayor)
		J.C.	Bayford	
		L.D.	Campbell	
		J.C.	Goodman	
	Mrs.	J.A.	Kempf	
	Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
		M.C. M	Lager	
	Mrs	S.C.	Lager	
	Mrs	J.M.	Money	
		T. A.	Plesance	
		R.P.	Ramage	
		W.J.	Rose	
	Mrs	J.	Williams	
		R.	Williams	
	Head of Special Constab. T/Supt	S.	Anslow	(Essex Police)
		M.	Squire	(Town Clerk)
	Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.R. Barlow and P.M. Ryland; and Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin who would be leaving the Meeting early.

80. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Town Council held 16th and 24th January 2017 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

81. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

82. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No comment was made by the member of public.

83. POLICE

(a) RECRUITMENT OF SPECIAL CONSTABLES

The Town Mayor welcomed Temporary Superintendent Simon Anslow, Head of Special Constabulary, to the Meeting to talk about the recruitment of Special Constables.

Superintendent Anslow explained that following the pledge by the Police & Crime Commissioner, Roger Hirst, a new post was created of Head of Special Constabulary to ensure that the numbers of Special Constables (SPCs) would double. He said that he had been a police officer for eighteen years and for the past five months has been leading volunteers which is very different. Although unpaid, SPCs have the same office and powers as regular officers and are required to swear an oath. They are required to work as a volunteer sixteen hours each month and he hopes to ensure that these will be operational hours to maximise their benefit. They have the same ethic code as ordinary officers when both off and on duty; and if they fail to act to uphold the law, they potentially have committed a criminal act. It is an advantage if they are local to their policing area.

Superintendent Anslow explained that he has been tasked to build up the Special Constabulary to 700 officers and this will be a big challenge particularly when Essex Police are currently recruiting regular officers. Traditionally by becoming a SPC it is a way in to become a regular officer. He said that it is important to reduce wastage of SPCs because they are unhappy in their role. It is important that new recruits join for the right reasons which negates the potential number of leavers at a later stage. Last year there was 30% loss but this had been reduced to 10% after October 2016.

Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin left the Meeting.

Enquiries to become a SPC had risen by 1250% since he had taken up his role. Less than £1,000 had been spent on raising the profile of SPCs through Social Media. He said that as well as himself, additional staff have been recruited. A campaign to recruit more SPCs will begin within six months and will concentrate largely on social media which sees good results.

He said that a forty second advert will be created for use with Sky Ad Smart. This will be trialled in Uttlesford and for £5,000 will have the potential to reach 10,000 homes of 30 to 40 year olds when they use playback on their Sky Box. This will mean that campaigns can be more localised regardless of how diverse or affluent a community is. There will be five groups to target –

- Young men and women
- Stay at home parents, particularly women
- Women through Face Book

- Rural communities
- People looking to join up as a regular officer.

He said that photography competitions are being held so that adverts can have a local feel. Recommendation is the strongest asset, brilliant if a SPC entices a friend or colleague to join up too. Tagging on Face Book is also a good tool and likewise approaching someone in the community who might be a suitable candidate.

The requirements to become a SPCs are –

- Fitness
- Basic literacy and numeracy
- Structured interview
- Medical
- Vetting.

This is similar for a regular police officer.

The initial training can be four weeks intensive or over ten weekends (about 80% of the training that a regular constable would receive, but this is due largely to less investigative work). The volunteer will then be attested as a Constable. The new SPC will be deployed and supported by an experienced officer to cover all aspects of the job. Once their portfolio of activities is completed they can then undertake independent patrols. The wishes of the SPC are taken into account as to where they will be deployed. It will take generally twelve months from recruitment to independent patrols and will cost £3,200. Once confirmed as a SPC it takes between two to three years before they can become a specialist or gain promotion.

Some SPCs are fortunate as their employers support them with eight hours leave a month to help cover the basic twenty days of training, others will give ten days leave for training and four days' leave a month for duty. The SPC gains skills that are transferrable and supportive for both the company and the community.

Superintendent Anslow said that currently there are 28 SPCs in the Braintree and Uttlesford Policing Area with an aim to increase this to 55 by the end of 2019. The SPCs work from either Braintree or Dunmow Police Station and their combined hours are equivalent to five extra full time regular police officers. He said that the SPCs are a diverse team with some being in post for thirty plus years and others just a few months.

He said that he is uncomfortable suggesting that support be given for SPC's training as investment might not be returned if a volunteer works elsewhere, e.g. Braintree. He said that Witham SPCs would need to drive into Braintree to pick up their kit which takes time. There is the possibility that the Fire Station at Witham could be used to store their kit but a secure locker would be needed. The opportunity to distribute leaflets at events, etc would be useful and also an article in the Newsletter. He said that case studies of SPCs encourages people in similar situations to enrol. Financial support for Sky Ad Smart, leaflet drops or boosting social media would all assist. He then spoke about the challenges to reinvest in local policing. SPCs will be on foot patrol, but there will be an 18 month delay before they are independent. Superintendent Anslow said that he would be getting a SPC Recruitment Manager in April 2017.

Superintendent Anslow then answered Members' questions. He said that employers normally give SPCs time off to attend court and they would be reimbursed if unpaid. Money

has been taken from elsewhere in the budget to fund this project. £3.2m has been invested and will hopefully realise £12m equivalent in regular Police Officers' hours. He said that whilst some SPCs have an emotional connection to their home town others prefer to work elsewhere. There are lots of SPCs working in Colchester as they are attracted by the big town so he stressed the importance of focusing on policing other areas. He said that SPCs are as young as 18 and as old as 71 years. It is hoped that Police Cadets will feed into SPCs. It is hoped to have four SPCs for rural policing in each District. Extra training will be needed for these officers. The importance of engaging with community groups, i.e. Young Farmers was stressed.

Members agreed that this all concurs with the Town Council's aims as something needs to be done to deter crimes in Witham. There had been a spate of robberies and no arrests. A key priority for the Town Council in 2017/2018 is to increase the number of SPCs and to help with recruitment. Members thought that the Information Centre could be used for displays, messages put on a display screen and articles in Witham's Voice newsletter. It was agreed that by working together through the Task and Finish Group a difference could be made and the first priority would be to establish a good working relationship with the Recruitment Manager once in post.

Members thanked Superintendent Anslow for his informative presentation.

(b) LOCAL CASE FOR CHANGE

The Police and Crime Commissioner's (PCC) public consultation – Local Case for Change was received.

Members were informed that further information is available on the website and there is a survey to complete. Members said that there are four options –

- Do nothing,
- The PCC take a seat on the Fire Authority,
- The PCC takes charge of both organisations,
- A full merger of both organisations.

Members agreed that a response should be made. The Fire and Ambulance services are already working together and a fire engine with a defibrillator could be sent to a suspected heart attack.

The suggestion was made that something needed to be done but a full merger would be inappropriate and a seat on the Fire Authority was considered to be ineffective. It was agreed that Members should make individual responses to the survey and a letter sent to the PCC expressing the Town Council's views that he should take charge of both organisations.

RESOLVED That a letter be sent to the Police and Crime Commissioner explaining that the Town Council would wish to support the option that he takes charge of both organisations.

84. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that he had received a letter from Nicola Beach, Chief Executive Officer of Braintree District Council, concerning Community Governance which will

include a boundary review of those areas affected by major developments. He thought that Members should have the opportunity to discuss this issue and suggested that as a response is needed by 30th April it should be considered by the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee at its Meeting on 20th March 2017.

Members suggested that further informal discussions should be held with Hatfield Peverel and Rivenhall Parish Councils.

RESOLVED That the District Council's letter on Community Governance be referred to the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee Meeting on 20th March 2017.

85. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's Engagements were received.

The Town Mayor thanked those Councillors who had undertaken mayoral engagements on his behalf.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

86. STANDING ORDERS

A new Standing Order 89 – Members' attendance on Training Courses and a revised Standing Order 7 to include 'In compliance with all aspects of the Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations Act 2014' were received.

Members agreed that these should be adopted and the Town Clerk said that new Standing Orders would be distributed in due course.

RESOLVED That a new Standing Order 89 – Members' attendance on Training Courses and a revised Standing Order 7, be adopted by the Town Council.

87. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Community Committee Meeting held 6th February 2017

Minutes 66 – 83 (inclusive).

Councillor R. Williams, Chairman of the Community Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report be received.

(b) Environment Committee Meeting held 23rd January 2017

Minutes 69 – 82 (inclusive).

Councillor J.C. Goodman, Chairman of the Environment Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

(c) **Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held 29th February 2017**

Minute 75 – 90 (inclusive).

Councillor M.C.M. Lager, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

Minute 88 – Community Day/Outdoor Cinema

The Town Clerk explained that he had just received an email explaining that the Outdoor Cinema would not now be held on the evening of the Community Day but now on the preceding Friday evening. He stressed that this is a stand-alone event. However, the Town Council will assist supporting the event in the usual way.

RESOLVED That the information be received.

RESOLVED That Report be received.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

88. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) **Community Committee Meeting held 6th February 2017**

Minutes 84 and 85.

Councillor R. Williams continued his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee be received.

(b) **Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held 20th February 2017**

Minutes 91 and 92.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager continued his Report en bloc.

In view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders.

RESOLVED That Standing Order 4(a) be suspended to allow business to be completed.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Policy and Resources Committee be received.

89. STREET NAMING

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

90. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Members agreed that no item discussed in Public Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

RESOLVED That no item discussed in Private Session be moved into the Public Domain.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.42 p.m.

Councillor P. Horner
Town Mayor

MS/GK/8.3.2017