

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Monday, 24th August 2015**

Present:	Councillors	M.C.M.	Lager	(Chairman)
		C.J.	Bailey	
		J.C.	Goodman	
		P.	Horner	
	Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
		T. A.	Plesance	
		R.P.	Ramage	
		W.J.	Rose	
		R.	Williams	
	Mrs	J.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Clerk)
	Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public.

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs J.A. Kempf, Mrs J.M. Money and Mrs C. Thompson.

The Chairman read out a note that had been circulated earlier that day explaining that the Town Clerk's stay in hospital had been longer than expected and he would not be back in the office for at least ten days.

Members wished Mark a speedy recovery and asked that their thanks be recorded to those members of staff who had ensured the continuity of Town Council business last week.

19. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 29th June 2015 be agreed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

20. INTERESTS

Councillors C.J. Bailey, J.C. Goodman, P. Horner, Mrs A. Kilmartin, R.P. Ramage and W.J. Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 26 – Lodge Farm Development, as Members of Braintree District Council.

Councillor W.J. Rose declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 22 – Town Clerk's Report, as it referred to the Town Mayor's Allowance.

At Minute 28 – Town Centre Strategy Group, Councillors P. Horner and M.C.M. Lager declared a non-pecuniary interest as members of the Town Centre Strategy Group.

21. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No comment was made by the member of public present.

22. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Councillor W.J. Rose had declared a non-pecuniary interest.

The Town Clerk's Report on matters arising was received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that this year it is unlikely that staff will be able to assist Members on their Councillors' Stall at the Puppet Festival and therefore additional volunteers are needed.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk's Report be received and information noted.

23. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 31st July 2015 were received.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that there were only a few cheques outstanding.

RESOLVED That the Bank Reconciliations to 31st July 2015 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(b) **BUDGET STATEMENTS**

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that she had been unable to produce the budget statements which would be deferred to the next Meeting.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

(c) **SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Payments and Receipts for the period ended 31st July 2015 were received.

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Payments to 31st July 2015 and totalling £145,007.06; and Schedule of Receipts to 31st July 2015 and totalling £162,548.38 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

24. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the Minutes of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee held 3rd August 2015 were not yet available.

RESOLVED That the information be received and the Minutes awaited.

25. ELECTRONIC DISTRIBUTION OF AGENDAS AND MINUTES

A report was received concerning the distribution of Agendas and Minutes.

The Chairman considered that most Members were happy to receive these documents electronically whilst a minority also wished to receive a hard copy. Members recognised the additional work involved in dealing with both systems and congratulated them on coping when the phone and internet were unavailable.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

26. LODGE FARM DEVELOPMENT

Councillors C.J. Bailey, J.C. Goodman, P. Horner, Mrs A. Kilmartin, R.P. Ramage and W.J. Rose had declared non-pecuniary interests.

A report was received concerning the provision of allotments on the Lodge Farm Development.

Members considered that the Town Council had insufficient resources to run the proposed allotments at Lodge Farm and that it would be more appropriate for the Allotment Society to take this on. It was noted that the District Council were prepared to ask the developer for a 25 year maintenance agreement yet was unwilling itself to sign up to such agreements with the Town Council. Members also noted that they would wish the allotments to be made available in an early phasing of the development.

RESOLVED That the Town Council does not have sufficient resources to run the proposed allotments at Lodge Farm and that the District Council should approach the Allotment Society.

27. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Details of Members' attendance at Meetings were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

28. TOWN CENTRE STRATEGY GROUP

Councillors P. Horner and M.C.M. Lager declared a non-pecuniary interest as members of the Town Centre Strategy Group.

The Minutes of the Town Centre Strategy Group Meeting held 23rd July 2015 were received.

Members' attention was drawn to the Strategy Group's Work Plan and it was noted in particular that parking would be considered. The suggestion was made that Mr Belsham who was to lead this topic should be asked to join the Town Council's Parking Working Group. It was thought that there is a danger there could be a proliferation of separate groups looking at similar issues. The Chairman suggested that the Committee Chairmen should seek to ensure this does not happen. Members spoke about the difficulties if Groups are not prepared to collaborate.

The Chairman stressed the importance of using volunteers with time and expertise and urged the Committee Chairmen to provide leadership and co-ordination.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

29. BUSINESS PLAN

(a) **REVIEW**

A further report from the Chairman of the Community Committee was tabled.

The Chairman considered that the Community Committee had been productive setting up two Working Groups, to consider Health and Grant Aid, and appointing two spokesmen for Adverse Weather and Anti-Social Behaviour.

Members spoke about the flooding last September and noted that in a major emergency the District Council has an Emergency Plan which would be initiated. It was noted that the Environment Agency no longer takes responsibility for the maintenance of rivers and water courses unless there is a risk of flooding, but that the District Council has cleared the ditches which caused the flooding problems in Colne Chase last year.

It was suggested that when the two Committee Chairmen meet with the new CCTV liaison officer at Chelmsford City Council, other Members might also wish to join them in a site visit to the Control Room.

The Chairman reminded Members that Working Groups have no authority to make policy decisions, just make recommendations to the appropriate committee.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

(b) **BUSINESS PLAN FOR POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**

The Business Plan for the Policy and Resources Committee was received.

The Chairman said that he was prepared to take forward the items relating to election commitments and budget.

Members then discussed future development and were concerned that as six planning officers had recently left the District Council, there could be plans for it to work with another Council. It was thought that Essex County Council would be promoting devolution rather than partnership working. The importance of keeping residents involved through the Voice and social media was stressed. The comment was made that there was danger of the emerging Local Plan being in accordance with Government Policy but not looking at how the District should develop. It was agreed that a Working Group should be set up which would include devolution in its brief. Councillors C.J. Bailey and R.P. Ramage would be part of the Group, with further Members being appointed at Town Council.

Members then discussed the promotion of enterprise and the suggestion was made that a consultant could be engaged to assist, however it was considered that this was unnecessary. Members appreciated that with no career officers in schools young people do not have sufficient information to make informed decisions and it was felt that a Youth Officer in the Hub might be able to assist along with the Chamber of Commerce. It was agreed that Councillor Mrs C. Thompson should be asked to take this point forward.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

RESOLVED That a Working Party, to include Councillors C.J. Bailey and R.P. Ramage, be set up to take forward future development of Witham and devolution and additional Members appointed at Town Council.

RESOLVED That Councillor Mrs C. Thompson be asked to take forward the issues on promoting enterprise, new business and jobs jointly with the Town Team and Market groups.

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.

29. BUSINESS PLAN (Continued)

(c) ACCOMMODATION

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

(d) LENGTHSMAN SCHEME

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

30. TECHNOLOGY

The Deputy Town Clerk gave a verbal report. She explained that the Town Hall was now reconnected to the phone lines and internet. A contract had been signed with a new provider and transfer should be completed within the next ten days. It is hoped that the existing lines and numbers will remain. Initially there will be some additional costs but thereafter savings.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

31. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 3rd August 2015 were not yet available.

A verbal report was given.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

32. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Members considered that Minute 30 – Technology, should be moved into the Public Domain.

RESOLVED That Minute 30 – Technology, should be moved into the Public Domain.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.22 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager
Chairman

JC/GK/26.8.2015