

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 8th December 2015**

Present:	Councillors	M.C.M.	Lager	(Chairman)
		J.C.	Goodman	
	Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
	Mrs	J.M.	Money	
		T. A.	Pleasance	
		W.J.	Rose	
		R.	Williams	

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C.J. Bailey, P. Horner, Mrs J.A. Kempf and R.P. Ramage.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 20th October 2015 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

50. INTERESTS

Councillors J.C. Goodman, Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Minutes 60 – Braintree District Council is ready for Budget Challenge and 64 – River Walk, as Members of Braintree District Council.

51. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

52. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk advised that he would be seeking a meeting in the new year with Members from Hatfield Peverel and Rivenhall Parish Councils regarding a Boundary Review.

RESOLVED That the Report be received and information noted.

53. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 31st October 2015 were received.

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

(b) **BUDGET STATEMENTS**

The Budget Statement to 31st October 2015 were received.

The Town Clerk highlighted the telephone budget that had been exceeded as new phones had been necessary and likewise for office equipment as a new computer was required for the Community Officer. He advised that overall the budget is on-track.

Members commented on the Period Garden and the Town Clerk advised that the gardener is instructed to cut back her hours in the winter to keep within budget.

RESOLVED That the Budget Statement to 31st October 2015 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(c) **SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Payments and Receipts for the period ended 31st October 2015 was received.

Members asked why fuel is purchased from both Braintree District Council and Doe Motors. The Town Clerk said that he would investigate the historical rationale behind this.

It was suggested that rather than employ a contractor to undertake PAT testing a member of staff could be trained to do this task saving money.

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Payments to 31st October 2015 totalling £58,656.65 and the Schedule of Receipts to 31st October 2015 totalling £12,571.24 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(d) **TOWN MAYOR'S GIFT FUND**

Details of the Town Mayor's Gift Fund were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

(e) **EXPENDITURE AUTHORISED BY THE TOWN CLERK**

The Town Clerk explained that £461.30 has been spent on internal redecoration of the Function Room kitchen so that it would meet hygiene standards and that £2,286.60 has been spent on a new telephone system.

RESOLVED That the expenditure be agreed.

54. **FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT**

The latest Financial Risk Assessment conducted in accordance with the appropriate wording from the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils - A Practitioners Guide (England) March 2014' was received.

The Town Clerk explained that he would arrange for Councillors P.R. Barlow, C.J. Bailey and J.C. Goodman to review the internal financial control systems and practices.

RESOLVED That the Financial Risk Assessment be endorsed and information noted.

55. **HALL HIRE**

(a) **REVIEW OF FEES**

A report was received recommending that it would be inappropriate to make changes to hire fees at this time.

The Town Clerk said that this is an annual review of fees and the last time there was an increase was in 2010. He said that the Function Rooms are used most days there is ample scope for further booking and marketing of these facilities.

RESOLVED That the report be received and hall hire fees be kept at the same level.

(b) **CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU (CAB) ENQUIRY**

A report was received regarding a request by the CAB for free use of the Function Room for its AGM.

Members agreed that it is a modest sum for charities to hire the facilities and that the Town council needs to be consistent with all Community Groups. It is necessary for the Town Council to cover its caretaking costs in the evenings and at weekends.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the request refused.

56. LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME

The Town Clerk explained that there had been a Meeting with Councillors J.C. Goodman and Mrs A. Kilmartin to consider the Local Council Award Scheme requirements specific to the Town Council. Thanks to the Deputy Town Clerk should be recorded for the enormous amount of work she had undertaken.

He said that three draft policies would be taken to Town Council for agreement and then added to the website. An application would then be made for the Council to gain Foundation Status before progressing to Gold level.

RESOLVED That a report be made to Town Council and thanks to the Deputy Town Clerk recorded for her work on the scheme.

57. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes held in Open Session of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 24th November 2015 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes held in Open Session of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 24th November 2015 be received.

58. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Details of Members' Attendance at Meetings were received.

Members considered that it was helpful to show percentages but recognised the amount of work involved by staff and that the new Excel format was difficult to read.

It was noted that Councillor Mrs C. Thompson had not attended a Meeting for a while because of her work commitments and the Town Clerk said that he would contact her.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

59. BUSINESS PLAN – REVIEW

Members then reviewed the Business Plans –

(a) Environment Committee

Members were informed that the CCTV system in Chelmsford is being upgraded but concern was expressed that if the cameras are not working or properly monitored then there is no point in proceeding with an upgrade in our own system.

It was agreed that the matter would be revisited once the system has been upgraded and an assurance given that the Town Council is not paying for a poor service.

The Parking Strategy Group is currently assessing data.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

(b) Community Committee

Members were informed that a date will be fixed for the next Health Facilities Working Group meeting after Christmas.

The Grant Aid Policy was reviewed and recommendations made to the Community Committee on 1st December 2015.

The report on Adverse Weather was made to the Community Committee 1st December 2015.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

(c) Town Council

The Strategic Vision for Witham Tasking Group had met in November.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

60. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL IS READY FOR BUDGET CHALLENGE

Councillors J.C. Goodman, Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose had declared non-pecuniary interests.

The District Council's press release dated 23rd November 2015 was received.

The Chairman explained that the biggest impact would be the Localism Fund being cut to zero by the Government over the next three years. This would represent c £59,000, 12% of the Town Council's income. The District Council would be able to retain Business Rates but it is unlikely that it will be passed on to Town and Parish Councils. Choices will need to be made once the District Council has made its decision.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

61. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE BUDGET 2016/2017

The proposed Policy and Resources Committee Budget for 2016/2017 was received.

The Town Clerk explained that there is a new budget heading of Joint Working with Braintree District/Essex County and Parish Councils and that funds would be earmarked on an annual accrual basis for election expenses.

RESOLVED That the following budget bids for the Policy and Resources Committee be presented to the Estimates Sub-Committee for consideration –

Mayor's Gift Fund Allowance	-	£100
Christmas Expenses	-	£2,500
Mayor's Allowance	-	£2,500
Civic Receptions/International Relations	-	£1,000
Newsletter and Publications	-	£9,000
Town Plan / Neighbourhood Plan	-	£5,000
Joint Working with BDC/ECC/Parishes	-	£3,000
Economic Employment Support	-	£5,000
Administration/Central Services	-	£47,500
<u>Total</u>	-	<u>£75,600</u>

Income

Administration/Central Services	-	£2,500
Hall Hire	-	£10,000
Bank/investment income	-	£3,000
<u>Total</u>	-	<u>£15,500</u>

Earmarked Reserves

Major repairs and renewals	-	£15,000
Members' Allowance	-	£3,200
Election Expenses	-	£6,500
<u>Total</u>	-	<u>£24,700</u>

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.

62. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes held in Private Session of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 24th November 2015 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

63. TELEPHONE REPORT

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

64. RIVERWALK

Councillors J.C. Goodman, Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose had declared non-pecuniary interests.

Three reports on matters pertaining to the River Walk were received.

RESOLVED That the reports be received and noted.

65. PUBLIC DOMAIN

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

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

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.20 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager
Chairman
MS/GK 14.12.2015