

## Witham Town Council

Town Hall  
Newland Street  
Witham  
CM8 2FE



Tel: 01376 520627  
Fax: 01376 502674  
Email: [townclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@witham.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.witham.gov.uk](http://www.witham.gov.uk)

### MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Monday, 15<sup>th</sup> February 2016**

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

And one member of the public

#### **APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P. Horner, Mrs A. Kilmartin and R. Ramage.

#### **66. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 8<sup>th</sup> December 2015 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **67. INTERESTS**

Councillor W.J. declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 69 – Town Clerk’s Report as a Member of Braintree District Council and in Minute 74 – Chipping Hill Bridge as a Member of the Local Highways Panel. Councillor M.C.M. Lager also declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 74 – Chipping Hill Bridge, as a local resident.

**68. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no questions from the member of the public present.

**69. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

Councillor W.J. Rose had declared an interest.

The Town Clerk's Report on matters arising was received. The Town Clerk noted that the purchase of red diesel from Braintree District Council gives rise to cost savings. The Town Clerk referred to recent correspondence advising of the allocation of the surplus on the Council Tax Collection Fund of £4,795. This has arisen because the District Council has collected more council tax than anticipated, and is returning it proportionately. The Town Clerk also noted that Charlie Austin, one of the council's caretakers had recently retired and that a replacement will be considered shortly through the Staffing and Accommodation Committee.

**RESOLVED** That the Report be received and information noted.

**70. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

**(a) BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 were received.

It was noted that whilst the council is holding the total precept for 2015-16, two months expenditure remain to be made.

**RESOLVED** That the Bank Reconciliations to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**(b) BUDGET STATEMENTS**

The Budget Statement to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Budget Statement to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**(c) SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Schedules of Payments and Receipts for the period ended 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015, 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 were received.

It was explained that the new fingerpost arm signposting St. Nicolas Church had now been installed on the signpost near the duck pond on the River Walk.

**RESOLVED** That the Schedule of Payments to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015 totalling £49,169,32, to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 totalling £60,801.80, to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 totalling £96,522.41 and the Schedule of Receipts to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2015 totalling £10,332.71, to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2015 totalling £64,046.71, to 31<sup>st</sup> January 2016 totalling £160,348.45 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

**71. INTERNAL AUDIT**

The Internal Audit Report from Heelis and Lodge dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015 was received. The report was clean with no further actions required.

**RESOLVED** That the Internal Audit Report from Heelis and Lodge dated 18<sup>th</sup> December 2015 be received and noted.

**72. INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES REVIEW**

A report was received and Members were satisfied with all aspects of the Town Council's financial procedures and practices, with cross reference to the appropriate wording from the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners Guide (England) March 2014, including the annual financial review as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 with a particular attention to :-

- (a) internal control arrangements
- (b) effectiveness of the internal audit
- (c) risk management

Two small procedural changes recommended were discussed, and it was agreed to accept the first recommendation to put the appointment of the internal auditor out to tender at regular intervals. The second recommendation, to keep the Town Mayor's Gift Fund at a level of £100, was not approved as it has an allocated budget.

**RESOLVED** that the Town Council's financial procedures and practices had been reviewed with cross reference to the appropriate wording from the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners Guide (England) March 2014, including the annual financial review as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2015 with a particular attention to :-

- (a) internal control arrangements
- (b) effectiveness of the internal audit
- (c) risk management

**RESOLVED** that report be received and the recommendations to put the appointment of the internal auditor out to tender at regular intervals implemented.

**73. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Details of Members' Attendance at Meetings were received.

**RESOLVED** That the details be received and noted.

**74. CHIPPING HILL BRIDGE – HIGHWAYS ISSUES**

Councillors M.C.M. Lager and W.J. Rose had declared an interest

A report from ECC Highways was received proposing changes following their safety review.

Members did not consider that traffic lights would be an appropriate solution in the Conservation Area, but supported recommendations to improve visibility. In particular they supported

- the removal of two courses of bricks from the bridge to lower the parapet (this may not be possible if the bridge is listed),
- relocating the existing street light column and replacing it with a more slender design;
- re-aligning the existing pedestrian barrier;
- clearer signage with obscuring vegetation to be cleared,
- lowering or removing the top timber rail of the return fencing to the parapet
- replacing the footbridge timber rails with smaller slender rails.
- that the stop line on the Chipping Hill side of the bridge should be moved back to improve visibility
- that consideration be given to raising the level of the road on this side and improving the prominence of the warning signs.
- the recommendation to undertake a residents consultation on proposals to amend the single yellow line restriction on the south side of Chipping Hill, and improve the signage which appears to be inconsistent with the road markings.

**RESOLVED** That the details be received and noted with written support to Essex County Council Highways Department to those recommendations to improve the visibility over the bridge.

**75. BUSINESS PLAN 2016-17 – REVIEW**

A detailed Business Plan for the Policy and Resources Committee was tabled and discussed in detail.

It was agreed that a project plan spreadsheet covering the Business Plans for all committees should be drawn up, to identify resource constraints. Some deadlines were amended accordingly.

The Business Plan was discussed in some detail :-

**Pathway to future outdoor accommodation agreed** – it was agreed that proposals to develop the area at the back of the Town Hall do not solve the access issues, which remain the key driver. It was noted that the lengthsman scheme is being taken forward by the Environment Committee and may inform future accommodation requirements.

**Braintree District Council's town centre improvements delivered, others agreed**  
Councillors P. Horner and Mrs C. Thompson were asked to take responsibility for this workstream.

It was noted that this was discussed at Braintree District Council in February, and that although the GVA report was received two years ago, the council is only at the Design Stage. It was agreed to invite Councillor T. Cunningham or his Deputy to update Town Councillors at the coming Town Council meeting. It was agreed that the Town Council should have a role in keeping residents advised of progress.

**Town Team/Strategy Group aligned/merged**  
Councillor M.C.M. Lager is taking this workstream forward.

**Infrastructure needs identified and recognised by BDC and ECC**  
It was noted that the Town Council's role can only be to lobby here.

**Section 106 contract at Maltings area delivered**  
Councillor Mrs J.M. Money agreed to take this workstream forward.

**RESOLVED** That the information be received and noted.

### **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.

#### **76. CAR PARK LICENCE**

A report was received.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

#### **77. OPPORTUNITIES IN THE TOWN CENTRE**

A verbal update was received.

**RESOLVED** That the information be received and noted.

#### **78. 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 9.18 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager  
Chairman  
MS/JC 16 02 16