

# Witham Town Council

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## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 18<sup>th</sup> April 2017**

Present: Councillors

	M.C. M	Lager	(Chairman)
	J.C.	Goodman	
	P.	Horner	
Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
	T. A.	Plesance	
	R.P.	Ramage	
	W.J.	Rose	
Mrs	J.	Williams	
	R.	Williams	
	M.	Squire	(Town Clerk)
Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

### APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L.D. Campbell, Mrs J.A. Kempf and Mrs J.M. Money.

The Chairman spoke of the Town Council's sadness to hear that former Town Councillor Steve Goodfellow had recently died. Members recognised the contribution he had made to the town. A letter of condolence would be sent.

### 93. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 20<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**94. INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at the time but at Minute 105 – Academy Governor, Councillor W.J. Rose declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Headteacher had spoken to him for advice.

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

There were no members of the press or public at the Meeting.

**96. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

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

The Town Clerk reiterated the Chairman's sentiments regarding the sad death of Steve Goodfellow. He reiterated details of the funeral arrangements and the need to ensure that his widow's wishes to be allowed to grieve privately are respected in the meantime.

He said that a date for the Revenue Task and Finish Group meeting would be organised soon.

He said that maintenance to the side of the Town Hall will commence on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017. Listed Building Consent is being sought for the repairs to the chimney stack and if necessary the builders will return to do this at a later date.

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

**97. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

(a) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Bank Reconciliations to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(b) **BUDGET STATEMENTS**

The draft Budget Statements to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were received.

The Town Clerk said that the insurance costs are currently over budget as the reimbursement for the stolen tools has not yet been received. Income and expense figures from Information Centre are considerably down on the previous year, largely down to lower volumes and reduction on ticket commission received. The Town Clerk will undertake a review of all operating activities in due course.

**RESOLVED** That the draft Budget Statements to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

The Earmarked Reserves have been shown in a new format to be clearer. It was suggested that further expenditure and revenue columns would be beneficial.

**RESOLVED** That the Earmarked Reserves be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman. (The schedule in future to show the opening balance, expenditure/income, transfers to/from general reserve and the closing balance, both year to date and forecast for the full year.)

(c) **SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Payments and Receipts for the period ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 were received.

In answer to a question, the Town Clerk explained that he puts funds on Fixed Term Deposit for varying lengths of time to gain more interest, than would otherwise be achieved by retaining large balances in the Working Fund.

**RESOLVED** That the Schedule of Payments for the period ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and totalling £44,605.46; and the Schedule of Receipts for the period ended 28<sup>th</sup> February 2017 and totalling £13,965.44, be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

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

Updated details of the Town Mayor's Gift Fund were tabled.

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

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

The Town Clerk explained that he had approved expenditure of £933.45 for replacement LED batten lighting fittings for all first floor offices and an LED polo fitting on the ground floor.

**RESOLVED** That the information be received and the expenditure endorsed.

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

A report was received following Members review of the Town Council's financial procedures and practices, which included the annual financial review as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and paying particular attention to :-

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

with cross reference to the appropriate wording from the 'Governance and Accountability for Local Councils – A Practitioners Guide (England) March 2014.

The Chairman expressed his thanks to Councillors P.R. Barlow, J.C. Goodman and W.J. Rose and noted the three observations and suggestions.

Members agreed that it was good practice to review the internal audit and discussed the suggestion that a general policy be agreed regarding the dealing with enquiries from the public.

It was thought that staff should be trained to deal with difficult phone calls. Members thought that an action log of calls should be kept.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the three suggestions that

- the Clerk attends financial courses to keep up with general developments,
- that when the next internal auditors review is made, the robustness of the internal auditor's work should be taken into consideration, as part of the assessment,
- a general policy be established regarding the procedures to deal with enquiries from the public.

## **99. PROCEDURAL/HOUSKEEPING MATTERS**

### **(a) SUMMONS TO MEETINGS**

A report was received regarding the wording on the Agenda for Members to be summoned to attend Meetings rather than invited.

The Town Clerk explained that the new wording had been used on the Policy and Resources Agenda and would now be on all future Agendas.

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

### **(b) CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Town Clerk asked Members to note that the Code of Conduct (adopted from Braintree District Council July 2012) which appears as annexe 'A' on the Town Council's Standing Orders will also be recorded and adopted as a separate document using Witham Town Council's own headed paper. He explained that this was a recommendation as part of the Foundation Quality Status.

The Chairman said that it would be good practice to be reminded of the principles of the Code of Conduct at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM) and every subsequent AGM.

**RESOLVED** That the District Council's Code of Conduct, adopted by the Town Council, be adopted as a separate document using the Town Council's own headed paper.

**RESOLVED** That Members be reminded of the principles of the Code of Conduct at the next Annual General Meeting (AGM) and every subsequent AGM.

(c) **LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME – FOUNDATION LEVEL**

The Town Clerk explained that the documents mentioned at the Town Council Meeting held 30<sup>th</sup> August 2016 at Minute 40 and approved by the Town Council resolution, should be itemised in full both in the Minutes for this Meeting and for the full Town Council Meeting on the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017.

**RECOMMEND TO TOWN COUNCIL** That the information be received and the following items achieved and on the Town Council website –

- Town Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations
- Town Council's Code of Conduct with a link to Councillors' registers of interests
- Town Council's Publication Scheme
- Town Council's last Annual Return
- Transparent information about Town Council's payments
- A calendar of all Town Council Meetings including the Annual Meeting of electors
- Minutes for at least one year of full Town Council Meetings, Committee and Sub-Committee Meetings
- Current Agendas
- Budget and precept information for the current or next Financial Year
- Town Council's complaint procedure
- Town Council contact details and Councillor information in line with the Transparency Code
- Town Council's Action Plan for the forthcoming year
- Evidence of consulting the community
- Publicity advertising Town Council's activities
- Evidence of participating in town and country planning.

**100. POLICIES**

(a) **PUBLICATION SCHEME**

The Publication Scheme was received.

It was agreed to adopt the Publication Scheme and update it for review at a later Meeting.

**RESOLVED** That the Publication Scheme be adopted and reviewed at a future Meeting.

(b) **PRESS/MEDIA POLICY AMENDMENT**

Members gave approval to amend the 'Policy for Dealing with Press and Media' and delete section ' 5.3 *Any filming or taping of Council or Committee proceedings by*

*the media must be with prior notice to the Town Clerk and Leader/Chair of the particular meetings'.*

**RESOLVED** That the amended Policy for Dealing with Press and Media be adopted.

**101. REVIEW OF CURRENT WORKING PRACTICES**

**(a) THE TRIAL PERIOD OF THE NEW PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE**

A report was received regarding the trial period of the new Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee.

Members considered that it had worked well but there needed to be a flexibility of start time.

**RESOLVED** That the new Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee be confirmed but a flexible start time be instigated.

**(b) APPOINTMENT OF COMMITTEES AT THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

A report was received concerning the appointment of Committees at the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council.

The Town Clerk said that he had taken external advice regarding the proposals.

Members agreed that nominations for all Committees, Sub-Committees and Working Parties, appointment of Chairmen and Vice Chairmen to Committees/Sub-Committees and representatives on outside bodies would be taken as a single item on the Agenda for the Town Council Annual General Meeting.

The Town Clerk emphasised that the nominations should be in writing as part of the written agenda.

Members should give due care and attention to

- Political balance on the committees.
- Matching experience and ability of members with the role required.
- Equality / gender / non-discriminatory principles in general
- Ex-officio considerations.

It would be prudent to review on an annual basis to check how well the new procedures work in practice.

**RESOLVED** That the proposed procedure to nominate in writing as a single item on the Agenda of the Annual General Meeting of the Town Council, Members and Chairmen/Vice Chairmen of Committees and Sub-Committees and representatives on outside bodies be agreed and adopted.

**RESOLVED** To review the procedures on an annual basis.

(a) **WORKING PARTIES/TASK AND FINISH GROUPS**

A report regarding the current Working Parties/Task and Finish Groups was received. It was noted that the number of these working groups did use a substantial amount of office time and resources.

Members spoke about the different working parties and Task and Finish Groups; and the need to manage them properly. The importance of having a standard Terms of Reference, identifying the purpose and outcome was stressed and the suggestion was made that the meetings should not last longer than one hour, unless there are exceptional circumstances. E.g. the Improving Healthcare Working Party may take longer.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and all groups have Terms of Reference identifying their purpose and outcome to be achieved and that the meetings last no more than one hour, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

**102. MEETING SCHEDULE FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2017/2018**

The draft Meeting Schedule for the Civic Year 2017/2018 was received.

The difficulty of arranging Meetings that were convenient to all Members was recognised and it was pointed out that the schedule is set taking into account Braintree District Council Meetings.

**RESOLVED** That the Meeting Schedule for the Civic Year 2017/2018 be adopted.

**103. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Details of Members' attendance at Meetings were received.

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

**104. COMMEMORATIVE TREE SCHEME**

A report regarding the Commemorative Tree Scheme was received.

The Town Clerk advised that the current charge does not cover the costs and suggested an increase to £150 for 2018/2019 financial year.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the cost of a Commemorative Tree rise to £150 for 2018/2019 financial year.

**105. ACADEMY GOVERNOR**

Members were asked to consider a request from Mrs Jane Bass, Multi-Academy Trust, asking for a Member of the Town Council to become a Governor at Templar Academy/Powers Hall Academy.

Councillor W.J. Rose declared a non-pecuniary interest as Mrs Bass had sought advice from him.

It was suggested that all Members be invited to consider the request and the matter taken to the Town Council Meeting to be held 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017.

**RESOLVED** That this matter be referred to the Town Council Meeting on Tuesday, 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017.

**106. REQUEST FROM THE WITHAM TWINNING ASSOCIATION**

A report and request from Janet Welton-Pai from the Witham Twinning Association was received.

The Town Clerk advised that the sterling equivalent of €280 was due be paid into the Town Council current account and then shared amongst those who attended Aßlar for the Reunification Celebrations. He had spoken to Mrs Welton-Pai and advised that no money had yet been received. He said that Councillor P.R. Barlow had asked that his share be given to the Mayor's Appeal.

The Chairman said that those Members who attended need to write a letter to explain what they wish done with their money.

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

**EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

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

**107. WITHAM IN BLOOM**

A report on contractual matters was received.

Members recognised the tremendous effort undertaken by Mrs Annie Northfield and the difficulty in getting anyone at present to undertake all aspects of her role. The Town Clerk said that the current budget to spend on the town centre floral displays will be exceeded this financial year. A good deal had been negotiated with Skippers in the past and the displays are exemplary.

Members discussed how best to resolve the issue and it was agreed to vire the outstanding sum from the Open Spaces' budget. It was important for the Town Council to keep the Witham in Bloom branding.



**RESOLVED** That the report be received and –

- That a letter be sent to all sponsors thanking them for their support and explaining that the small amount of residue money will be put towards this year's floral displays
- The additional £1,445 for the floral displays be vired from the Open Spaces' budget
- That a letter be sent to Mrs Annie Northfield explaining the way forward
- That the Town Council keeps the Witham in Bloom branding.

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.

**108. ASBESTOS REPORT**

Quotations for an asbestos survey of the Town Hall were received.

Members agreed that the quotation from Envirosurv Ltd should be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the quotation from Envirosurv Ltd at a cost of £790 to carry out an asbestos survey of the Town Hall be accepted.

**109. CHIPPING HILL WALL**

Quotations for the repair to Chipping Hill wall were received.

Members agreed that it would be sensible to use the services of the Open Spaces Team to undertake this work.

**RESOLVED** That the repairs to the wall be undertaken in-house.

**110. OTHER CONTRACTUAL AND STAFFING MATTERS**

A verbal report was given by the Town Clerk.

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

**111. PUBLIC DOMAIN**

It was agreed that Minutes 107 – Witham in Bloom, 108 - Asbestos Report and 109 – Chipping Hill wall should be moved into the Public Domain.

Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 18.4.2017. Cont'd.

**RESOLVED** That Minutes 107 – Witham in Bloom, 108 - Asbestos Report and 109 – Chipping Hill wall, discussed in Private Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 10.02 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager  
Chairman

MS/GK/28.4.2017