

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 12th December 2017**

Present:	Councillors	M.C. M	Lager	(Chairman)
		J.C.	Goodman	
		P.	Horner	
	Mrs	J.M.	Money	
		T. A.	Pleasance	
		R.P.	Ramage	
		W.J.	Rose	
	Mrs	J.	Williams	
		R.	Williams	
Also in attendance:	Cllr	J.R.	Pullen	
		M.	Squire	(Town Clerk)
	Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

The Chairman congratulated John Pullen on his election as a Town Councillor and welcomed him to the Meeting.

APOLOGIES

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

43. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 16th October 2017 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

44. INTERESTS

Councillors Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 48 – Witham Ambulance Trust, as Trustees.

Councillors J.C. Goodman, Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 47 – Notice placed in Braintree and Witham Times, and Minute 52 – 2018/2019 Precept, as Members of Braintree District Council.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 48 – Witham Ambulance Trust, Councillors J.C. Goodman, T.A. Pleasance, W.J. Rose and R. Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as members of the Royal British Legion.

45. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

46. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that he was obtaining quotes to replace the side door intercom in the Council Chamber and Reception which would ensure greater security.

He said that he had received correspondence from Braintree District Council explaining that the Council Tax Surplus for 2018 would be £7,737 and the Tax Base for Band D 8116.32. The letter would be taken to the Town Council Meeting to be held on 15th January 2018.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

47. NOTICE PLACED IN BRAINTREE AND WITHAM TIMES DATED 23RD NOVEMBER 2017 – LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 SECTION 123 (1), (2A) VARIOUS OPEN SPACE, WITHAM, ESSEX

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

A report was received regarding concerns over the above Notice placed in the Braintree and Witham Times relating to three separate areas the latter area which referred to the disposal of a strip of land off River View which presently consists of open space.

The Town Clerk explained that three members of the public had raised concerns on the latter area. The area is not part of the River Walk but is adjacent to it.

Members agreed that the Town Council should offer no objection, as it does not form part of the River Walk and reply to the three members of the public who raised concerns.

RESOLVED That the Town Council raises no objection to the Notice.

RESOLVED That the above resolution should be conveyed to the three members of the public who approached the Town Council.

48. WITHAM AMBULANCE TRUST (WAT)

Councillors Mrs A. Kilmartin, Mrs J.M. Money and W.J. Rose had declared interests.

The Town Clerk gave some history of the setting up of the Trust in 1921 to assist local people of Witham and specific surrounding villages to be taken by ambulance to hospital or to convalesce.

(a) External Audit Report

The external audit report from Heelis & Lodge dated 16th November 2017 was received.

RESOLVED That the external audit report be received and noted.

(b) Witham Ambulance Trust Minutes

The Witham Ambulance Trust Minutes dated 26th October 2017 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

(c) Future of Witham Ambulance Trust

A report was received regarding the future of the Witham Ambulance Trust and the Trustees had made a resolution to recommend closure.

The Town Clerk explained despite the Trust being set up in 1921, when times were so different, the Trustees always strive to adhere to the ethos and aims of the original Trust.

Members agreed that whilst it would be sad to close the Trust, in reality, despite prolific advertising, the Trust is hardly used. The amount of administrative office involved is disproportionate to the benefits. It was agreed that the charity chosen as the recipient should be local, linked to transport and for those who are injured or in need.

The suggestions for a suitable charity to be the recipient was discussed.

Councillors J.C. Goodman, T.A. Pleasance, W.J. Rose and R. Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as members of the Royal British Legion.

The three suggestions of St John Ambulance, Essex Air Ambulance and Help the Heroes was discussed along with the suggestion of the Royal British Legion. The difficulty of the money being used to help local people rather than Essex residents as a whole was recognised.

It was agreed that the actions of the Trustees to close the Witham Ambulance Trust and to distribute existing funds to charity is acceptable to the Town Council.

Any such actions must have the approval of the Charities Commission.

RESOLVED That a recommendation be made to the Witham Ambulance Trustees to close the Trust and to dispose of the residue funds in line with the ethos of the Trust for the transport of local people who are injured or in need and with the approval of the Charities Commission.

49. REVIEW OF DRAFT TOWN PLAN

A report was received.

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Plan still required several hours of editing work which would hopefully be completed before Christmas and taken to Town Council Meeting on 15th January 2018. He detailed the work undertaken to date and the problems of editing a 'living document' with content continually changing.

The suggestion was made that the Town Plan should be annually reviewed about budget time so that finances can be put in place to fund necessary work.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted and that the Town Plan should be reviewed annually at budget time.

50. POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE - BUSINESS PLAN AND BUDGET

(a) Business Plan 2018/2019 and the following two years

A draft plan of the Chairman's aspirations for proposed work by the Policy and Resources Committee for the forthcoming year was received.

The Chairman detailed his report including the unfinished business and the actions proposed. It was agreed to include within this document the compliance with the Data Protection and to ensure that parameters are in place.

Members discussed the need to generate income and to be prudent. It was hoped that the New Homes Bonus would be reinvested in Witham to support housing development but there was no sign of the District Council introducing the Community Infrastructure Levy. The comment was made that there would be no merit in undertaking a Neighbourhood Plan currently, but the Chairman thought that added protection for the Conservation Area could be achieved.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

(b) Budget 2018/2019 and the following two years

A proposed budget was received from the Town Clerk for the following three years.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget and earmarked reserves be accepted and taken to the Estimates Sub-Committee Meeting on 8th January 2018.

Councillor J.R. Pullen then left the Meeting.

51. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) **BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 31st October 2017 were received.

RESOLVED That the Bank Reconciliations to 31st October 2017 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(b) **BUDGET STATEMENTS**

The Budget Statements to 31st October 2017 were received.

RESOLVED That the Budget Statements be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

(c) **SCHEDULE OF PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Payments and Receipts for the periods ending 30th September 2017 and 31st October 2017 were received.

The Town Clerk was asked to investigate photocopier charges and it was agreed that he would investigate.

RESOLVED That the Schedules of Payments for the period ending 30th September 2017 and totalling £76,468.97; and for the period ending 31st October 2017 and totalling £51,951.13; and the Schedules of Receipts for the period ending 30th September 2017 and totalling £235,526.79; and for the period ending 31st October 2017 and totalling £7,813.47 be received, agreed and signed by the Chairman.

52. 2018/2019 PRECEPT

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

A letter was received from Braintree District Council detailing the Localism Fund and Council Tax Collection Fund Surplus.

RESOLVED That the letter be received and information noted.

53. FINANCIAL RESERVES POLICY

Members were asked to review and approve a financial reserves policy.

The Chairman detailed the proposed policy and –

- The need to ensure sufficient resources are held for major items
- To equalise expenditure on major items
- To hold money already allocated for a particular purpose.

He considered it important to set up this formal process and to keep under review. The Policy would form part of the Financial Regulations in due course.

The Town Clerk explained that it is necessary to have a balance of approximately half a year's intended net expenditure at any given time. He considered it prudent to earmark reserves to anticipate future costs. He added that as part of the Quality Council status it is necessary to have a policy for all procedures and if appropriate to put the relevant policy on the website.

RESOLVED That the Reserves Policy be received and adopted.

54. INTERIM FINANCIAL AUDIT

The interim financial audit dated 16th November 2017 was received.

Comment was made that consideration to register for VAT will be held in abeyance.

RESOLVED That the interim financial audit be received and noted.

55. INTERNAL FINANCIAL CONTROL PROCEDURES AND PRACTICES REVIEW

A report was received following the internal financial review of 1st December 2017, including the annual accounts and financial review as at 31st March 2017, with 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. Members were also copied in, the relevant guideline extract – page 50, Part 2 - The annual return and corporate governance – table 3 'Areas where local councils may self-manage risk'.

It was noted that the control procedures and practices are satisfactory.

Comment was made that it is still necessary to have a general policy regarding dealing with enquiries/telephone calls from the general public but the heavy work load in the office was recognised.

RESOLVED That the report be received and information noted.

56. REVIEW OF TOWN COUNCIL FEES

A report was received regarding the review of hall hire fees.

It was agreed to hold the fees at the current level.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the fees for hall hire remain at the current level.

57. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes held in Public Session of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 24th October 2017 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

58. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Details of Members' attendance at Meetings were received.

RESOLVED That the details 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.

59. STAFFING AND ACCOMMODATION SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes held in Private Session of the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee Meeting held 24th October 2017 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received.

60. OTHER STAFFING AND CONTRACTUAL MATTERS

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report.

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 be received and noted.

61. 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 9.46 p.m.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager
Chairman

MS/GK/19.12.17