

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 30th April 2018**

Present: Councillors

Mrs	J.	Williams	(Town Mayor)
	J.C.	Bayford	
	J.C.	Goodman	
	P.	Horner	
Mrs.	J.A.	Kempf	
Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
	M.C. M	Lager	
Mrs	S.C.	Lager	
	T. A.	Pleasance	
	J.R.	Pullen	
	R.P.	Ramage	
	W.J.	Rose	
	R.	Williams	
	M.	Squire	(Town Clerk)
Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors P.R. Barlow, Mrs J.M. Money and P.M. Ryland.

70. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 5th March 2018 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

71. INTERESTS

Councillors J.C. Goodman, P. Horner, Mrs A. Kilmartin, R.P. Ramage, and W.J. Rose declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 74(ii) – Anti-Social Behaviour and Crime in Witham, as Members of Braintree District Council (BDC).

Councillors J.C. Goodman and Mrs J. Williams declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 74(ii) as signatories on the letter to Braintree District Council.

Councillor J.C. Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 82 – Contractual Matters, as a Member of Braintree District Council.

72. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

73. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that one of the large sponsorships of the Puppet Festival had come to an end. The Community Officer is currently trying to obtain further sponsorship to bridge the gap. The Witham Industrial Watch had been approached and a number of other local businesses would be approached. He was also trying to make contact with the Grove Centre manager.

It was suggested that Braintree District Councillors for Witham might be prepared to use their community grant budget and this would be investigated by Members to see if the Puppet Festival would meet the criteria.

The Town Clerk said that the wall at Chipping Hill had now been repaired.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

74. ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR & CRIME IN WITHAM

- (i) The Notes from the Anti-Social Behaviour & Crime in Witham Meeting called by the Town Mayor for 23rd April 2018 were received.

Members congratulated the Town Mayor on a well-run meeting. She explained that the second meeting organised by Priti Patel, MP, and to include Roger Hirst, Essex Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner, would likely be a more political meeting concerning funding. It would be held on 31st May 2018 at 6.30 p.m. to 8p.m. in the Public Hall.

Members spoke about the 12 Police Community Support Officers now employed over the whole region and how the Town Council used to part-fund two officers but the Chief Constable withdrew the service. It was explained that Essex Police could not guarantee at the time, that if the Town Council funded a PCSO they would be able to work full time in Witham.

The Town Mayor stressed the importance of volunteering and she explained that she was building up a list of organisations where children can go.

Members considered that better value will be obtained through recruiting Special Constables who are real policemen/women who can make a real difference. Impetus will need to be put behind the formation of Residents' Associations although it was recognised that an enormous amount of time could be spent in their creation and it

might be better to form Neighbourhood Watch Groups. A debate then took place regarding the advantages of both groups.

A suggestion was made that Residents' Associations could be championed through Witham Voice.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and information noted.

- (ii) Councillors J.C. Goodman, P. Horner, Mrs A. Kilmartin, R.P. Ramage, W.J. Rose and Mrs J. Williams had declared interests.

Correspondence was received from BDC regarding anti-social behaviour in and around the Rickstones Road Recreation Ground.

Members found it unacceptable that BDC is unable to help residents who have been suffering anti-social behaviour for so many years. To install a barrier of some sort to prevent vehicles gaining access onto the recreation ground would be a simple solution. It was thought that BDC did not understand the scale of the problem but eight years of evidence is available.

A suggestion was made that Community or Town Wardens might solve this type of problem.

After further discussion regarding the installation of a barrier and who would pay for this and be responsible for opening and locking, it was agreed that a further letter should be sent to BDC, along with evidence from the residents of the eight years they have been suffering, saying that if BDC cannot afford to install a lockable barrier then the Town Council will consider paying for a gate and employing someone to open and close the gate, to stop residents suffering further. The use of bollards was also another consideration.

RESOLVED That the Town Mayor writes a letter to Braintree District Council incorporating the above points and requesting a response within three weeks.

75. **TOWN PLAN**

The Policy and Resources Committee's Recommendation that the draft Plan be approved by the Town Council and reviewed on an annual basis was received.

Members agreed that this is a good document which should be incorporated into the Town Council's Business Plans.

RESOLVED That the Town Plan be adopted, published and reviewed annually.

76. **THE DATA PROTECTION ACT (DPA) AND GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION (GDPR)**

A further report was received from the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk explained that there is still anticipation as to what the Act will say and the implications for the Town Council. The Commissioner of the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) has stated that this is 'a journey rather than a destination' and if councils can demonstrate that they are committed to making progress towards embedding the right processes and procedures that they will have a positive attitude to finding practical solutions to some of the challenges.

Town and Parish Councils will be exempt from the requirement of appointing a Data Protection Officer but the appointment may be regarded as good practice. It is important not to panic but equally not to be complacent. It is envisaged that an overall General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) policy and privacy Notice will be in place by 25th May 2018. The general policy will point to and filter down to a number of specific smaller policies for specific areas of Town Council work and procedures. It will be important to show what data is held, why we have it and what safeguards are in place.

Members were informed that as the Town Council CCTV cameras are monitored in Chelmsford by the City Council, the data requirements for the Town Council will be more limited. It will be necessary to continue to ensure that signs are on the posts advising people they are being filmed.

The suggestion was made that Councillors would be better to use a Town Council email address rather than their own one when dealing with residents. It was thought that Members should password protect information.

The Town Clerk advised of the importance of ensuring that personal details are not detailed at Meetings.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Town Clerk asked to actively pursue the appointment of a Data Protection Officer from the list to be provided by the Essex Association of Local Councils.

77. MEMBERSHIP OF COMMITTEES

A report was received regarding the Membership of the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee.

The Town Clerk advised that it is a dangerous precedent to change the constitution of a Committee or Sub-Committee to allow for personal circumstances of one individual Member. A change in Committee size and constitution should be based on more structured and procedural reasoning. Whilst there were historic reasons for all 16 Members to be on this sub-committee, they currently report to 12 Members of the Environment Committee and this may warrant review.

Members discussed the implications and agreed that a smaller sub-committee would be a good working solution. It was thought that it may be better to exclude those BDC Members who are on its Planning Committee.

RESOLVED That Standing Orders be amended in due course to allow for just twelve Members to serve on the Planning Applications

and Transport Sub-Committee and that any BDC Member who serves on its Planning Committee be excluded.

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.

78. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's Engagements were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

79. NEW PAYROLL PROVIDER

Correspondence was received regarding a new payroll provider.

The Town Clerk advised that the current provider is retiring. He said that it is useful to use a payroll provider and recommended that there should be a trial period of six months for the new company.

RESOLVED That the information be received and a trial period of six months for the new company be agreed.

80. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) **Community Committee Meeting held 3rd April 2018**

Minutes 72 – 89 (inclusive).

Councillor R. Williams, Chairman of the Community Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

Minute 75 – Essex County Councillor – John Jowers

It was suggested that through the Environment Committee a business case should be prepared to look at the feasibility and costings of taking over the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Minute 80 – Business Plan

It was suggested that a business case should be prepared, as a potential revenue generator, for taking over the Town Park from the District Council.

Minute 89 – Residents' Associations

It was suggested that rather than add an additional burden on the Officer of another Task and Finish Group, the creation of Residents' Associations should come under the Community Safety Task and Finish Group.

RESOLVED That the above issues be taken forward.

RESOLVED That the Report be received.

(b) **Environment Committee Meeting held 19th March 2018**

Minutes 84 – 93 (inclusive).

Councillor J.C. Goodman, Chairman of the Environment Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

At Minute 94 – Town Mayor's Initiative

It was noted that Halstead do so well in the Regional Competitions and may be a good model to follow. It was suggested that Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin, as the Town Council Member responsible for Witham in Bloom, should investigate this further, although this was declined and not really feasible given the multitude of other commitments that she has currently.

RESOLVED That the Report be received.

(c) **Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held 16th April 2018**

Minutes 76 – 86 (inclusive).

Councillor M.C.M. Lager, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

Minute 82 – Data Protection Act

It was pointed out that a date 'typo' had occurred which would be amended.

RESOLVED That the Report be received.

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.

81. **COMMITTEE REPORTS (Continued)**

(a) **Community Committee Meeting held 3rd April 2018**

Minutes 90 and 91.

Councillor R. Williams continued his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee be received.

(b) **Environment Committee Meeting held 19th March 2018**

Minutes 94 and 95.

Councillor J.C. Goodman continued his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

(c) **Policy and Resources Committee Meeting held 16th April 2018**

Minutes 87 and 88.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager continued his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Policy and Resources Committee be received.

82. CONTRACTUAL MATTERS

Councillor J.C. Goodman had declared a pecuniary interest as member of the District Council.

A verbal report was received from the Town Clerk.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

83. PUBLIC DOMAIN

It was 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 Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 9.42 p.m.

Councillor Mrs J. Williams
Town Mayor

MS/GK/8.5.2018