

Witham Town Council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 21st January 2019**

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

And two members of the public

70. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs A. Kilmartin and Mrs J.M. Money who had previous engagements.

71. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this time.

72. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No comments were made by the members of the public present.

73. CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that he had received an email from a reporter at the Braintree and Witham Times regarding the District Council's decision not to hold the Planning Meeting to consider the Gimsons planning application in Witham. This matter would be referred back to the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee for discussion.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

74. ESTIMATES SUB-COMMITTEE

(a) Minutes

The Minutes of the Estimates Sub-Committee Meeting held 7th January 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Estimates Sub-Committee Meeting held 7th January 2019 be received and noted.

(b) Committee Plans and Outcomes

Councillor M.C.M. Lager, as Chairman of the Estimates Sub-Committee gave a report from the Meeting.

He explained that the strategy for the next civic year would be to deliver visible benefits for Witham residents, visitors and businesses; and this is reflected in the Business Plans and supported by the new Town Plan. The two top priorities will be to make the town a safer place and to improve health services. The full list is probably the most ambitious and to deliver would mean a significant increase in the precept.

He then went through the Business Plans individually referring to further investment in the CCTV system and tighter monitoring; the drive to recruit more Special Police Constables and what can be done to support residents. He said that World War 1 Commemorations, culminating in the Lighting of the Beacon, had now finished. Options for the Puppet Festival would be considered and the Christmas Lights might need to be replaced. The Citizens Advice would continue to be supported and the Information Centre would be developed into a Community Hub.

He said that there had been an unprecedented number of planning applications for large developments in the town. Major maintenance had been required for trees on the River Walk and this would continue. The Town Council street lights would be converted to LED to improve reliability and cost savings on electricity. The River Walk has been secured to prevent traveller incursions through Section 106 monies. Likewise money would be spent on the Town Park. He referred to the transfer of assets from the Witham Urban to Braintree District Council which included the industrial estates and the park. He said that local management had resulted in the River Walk being better looked after. He said that there was an opportunity for Local Highways Work to be undertaken by the Town Council using

contractors and a sum of £17,000 would be available. River Walk pathways had been surveyed and would be upgraded. The Town Council had an ambition to bridge the River Blackwater at Blackwater Lane.

He said that parking needed to be improved at the Town Hall and better protection for the tools and equipment. He said that the cost of all these ambitious projects could be achieved with the proposed increase in precept.

He said that the business plan for the Community Committee would need to have the development of the Information Centre into a Community Hub included and for Environment Committee the business plan should include the need to work towards appropriate localisation of services from Braintree District Council.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager said that in May there would be the local elections for a new Town Council. Their first task would be to review the plans and make whatever changes they judge necessary to improve them.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the business plans for the Community Committee be amended to include the development of the Information Centre into a Community Hub and the Environment Committee business plan include the need to work towards appropriate localisation of services from Braintree District Council.

(c) Budget 2019/2020 and for the following two years

Councillor M.C.M. Lager said that to achieve the ambitious plans for the Town Council it would be necessary to increase the precept to £557,278 a Band D equivalent to £67.70 per annum much the same increase as last year.

RESOLVED That the recommendations from the Estimates Sub-Committee relating to budget bids, earmarked reserves and precept be received and agreed by Town Council.

75. PRECEPT 2019/2020

The Precept Form from Braintree District Council was agreed and Members asked to agree a precept for 2019/2020.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager advocated a Band D rate of £67.70 and a precept of £557,278 to the Council.

Members were in agreement that to fulfil the Town Council's aspirations the precept should rise to £557,278. Members were pleased with the impact that the new Special Police Constables were making.

RESOLVED That the Precept Form be received, that at Precept of £557,278, a Band D equivalent of £67.70 be agreed; and approval given for the form to be signed.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager said that he wanted to say a few words as this would be the last Meeting that Mark Squire would be attending as the Town Clerk. He wished him well in his new position of Town Clerk at Loughton Town Council. He said that Mark would be a hard act to follow but he had every confidence in James Sheehy, who would be taking up post from 1st February 2019. He thanked Mark for his sound advice and unflappable approach. He asked that the Town Council's thanks be placed on record and everyone wished him all the best in the future.

The Town Clerk thanked everyone for their kind words of appreciation and said that it had been an absolute pleasure in working for the Town Council.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 7.52 p.m.

Councillor T.A. Pleasance
Chairman

MS/GK/29.1.2019