



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 8th March 2021**

Present: Councillors

C. Lager	(Town Mayor)
A. Kilmartin	(Deputy Town Mayor)
S. Ager	
K. Atwill	
P. Barlow	
J. Bayford	
J. Goodman	
M. Lager	
C. Livermore	
T. Pleasance	
P. Ryland	
M. Weeks	

Essex County Councillors	J. Abbott	(Witham Northern)
	D. Louis	(Witham Southern)

Braintree District Councillor	S. Wilson	(Witham South)
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J. Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
N. Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
H. Andrews	(Assistant Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy	(Democratic Officer)

And one member of the public.

268. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Hicks who had a previous engagement, Councillor Jay who had a pre-arranged appointment and Councillor Williams due to employment commitments.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

269. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 8th February 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

270. INTERESTS

Councillors Bayford, Goodman, Kilmartin, C. Lager, M. Lager and Pleasance declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 273 – Town Clerk’s Report, as members of the Royal British Legion.

271. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No comment was made by the member of the public present.

272. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Essex County Councillor Abbott explained that the Council had met and agreed a 0% increase in budget except a 1.3% increase in Social Care. He was pleased to report that the Local Highways Panel budget had been reinstated which would give the opportunity for more schemes to proceed. He cited the crossings in Cressing Road and Rickstones Road as examples. He said the County Council was being slow to repair potholes and was supposed to complete Members’ Top 50 by the end of the month. He had attended the A12 Members’ Forum and more details were now available regarding junctions. He referred to town centre improvements and the need to resurface the Collingwood Road and Newland Street junction. He was pleased to see the item on the Agenda relating to telephone scams which were becoming more sophisticated.

In answer to a question regarding the Rivenhall Incinerator, Councillor Abbott said that he had been at a meeting with the operators who planned to start building work on the incinerator without commitment to the other areas of recycling. He had written to Essex County Council saying that a fresh planning application should be submitted and the Council was taking legal advice on this complicated issue.

It was suggested that Councillor Abbott should liaise with the Assistant Town Clerk in regard to the blockages on the River Brain as she too was working on this issue.

Essex County Councillor Louis said that the significant potholes near Maltings Academy had been repaired. Powers Hall End from the roundabout to Highfields Road had been resurfaced along with the footpath from Augustus Way which was completed before the children returned to school. He too referred to the Local Highways Panel budget and the installation of signalised crossings. He said that the Community Grant scheme had now finished until after the elections when £10,000 would become available for local projects. He had spoken to the Lead Member for Youth Services as facilities reopen following the easing of restrictions. The County Council would be supporting young people who had lost their jobs as well as supporting the voluntary sector. He said finally that a new law was now in place which made unauthorised encampments on private land a criminal offence incurring a significant penalty.

Members commented on road repairs and whether they were of sufficiently high standard. Comment was also made in regard to the Highways Devolution Pilot and the difficulties encountered because of restrictions placed upon the Town and Parish Councils, ie cutting back vegetation from footpaths on category 1 roads. It was asked if modifications could be made to the scheme.

Councillor Kilmartin complained about the heavier HGVs using The Avenue and how a drain was still blocked. She reported that residents have until 20th April 2021 to register for a postal vote for the Essex County Council and Police & Fire Commissioner elections. Voters will be able to bring their own pen and there will be covid precautions in place. She reported on covid briefings received and that 90% of hospital workers including Broomfield had received their vaccination. Broomfield Hospital had been able to restore wards to covid free and planned to increase operations five-fold by working later and at weekends.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillors for their reports.

273. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Councillors Bayford, Goodman, Kilmartin, C. Lager, M. Lager and Pleasance had declared interests.

The Town Clerk's report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

274. COVID – 19: – EMERGENCY PROVISIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

The amended Emergency Provisions were received.

It was hoped that from 21st June 2021 Members would be able to meet in person so that the Provisions, in particular those relating to Meetings, could be dispensed with.

RESOLVED That the Meetings (Generally) section of the Emergency Provisions for Governance be deleted in due course.

275. LOCAL AUTHORITY MEETING REGULATIONS

- a) Correspondence was received from Priti Patel MP and the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities & Local Government.

RESOLVED That the correspondence be received and noted.

- b) Members were asked to review The Local Authorities Meetings (etc) Regulations 2020.

It was suggested that delegated meetings be stopped. The Town Clerk advised that it was too early to produce a Meetings Schedule until the Government's roadmap was able to be confirmed.

Members spoke about the Annual Town Meeting and made the suggestion that it be held on Monday 26th April 2021. Members considered that there was no facility to meet in person before 21st June at the earliest.

It was agreed that the issue of interpretation of the meetings regulations had not been fully answered by the Minister.

RESOLVED That a further letter be written to Priti Patel MP explaining that the Secretary of State had not answered the point relating to third tier local government holding Committee Meetings with a copy sent to the National Association of Local Councils.

276. TOWN COUNCIL ROADMAP

The summary of HM Government 'Covid-19 Response - Spring 2021 was received and Members asked to consider the Town Council's forward business and roadmap.

Members welcomed the Government's relaxation of restrictions but needed to be mindful that the virus was still circulating. It was suggested that there was some scope to restore events but it was necessary to see the outcome of the limited relaxations before a decision was taken. It was agreed that there was scope for the Puppet Festival, Halloween and Christmas events to be held but not the Community Day.

RESOLVED That the Town Council explores the possibility of reinstating events in line with the Government's roadmap.

277. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The delegated decisions from 1st to 23rd February 2021 were received.

RESOLVED That the delegated decisions be received and endorsed.

278. FINANCIAL ABUSE

A Motion from Councillor Jay to consider helping residents of Witham to be aware of scams was received.

RESOLVED That under Standing Order 1(c), this item be withdrawn from debate.

279. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Town Mayor explained that she had only carried out one engagement, which was to deliver a 100th birthday card to a Witham resident.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

280. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A (S5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

281. LEGAL MATTERS

(a) There were no updates.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

(b) Correspondence was received by Members.

RESOLVED That the correspondence be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.03 p.m.

Councillor C. Lager
Town Mayor

JS/GK/17.03.2021