



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

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 12th June 2023**

Place: **Council Chamber, Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors

S.	Ager	(Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
J.	Martin	
R.	Playle	(arrived at 8.29 p.m.)
A.	Sloma	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And 8 members of the public.

27. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Heath and Ramage; and Councillor Playle who would be late.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

28. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held 15th May 2023 be confirmed as a true copy and signed by the Town Mayor.

29. INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

30. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

One resident wished to make three points. She said that only 26% of Witham's residents voted in the local elections and questioned therefore whether the Town Council had the mandate for flying the pride flag. She said that she would not be shopping at Tesco during the month of June. She said it was divisive and people should ask the Civic Officer for the flag to be removed. Her second point related to the Coronation Lunch which had been organised by the Town Luncheon Club and her final point was about her attendance at a recent Planning Appeal against the District Council's decision to refuse the proposed Care Home near Gershwin Boulevard.

Another resident believed that pride flags were not divisive nor abhorrent. They represent a group of people and flying the flag shows them support, which is lacking in this country.

Another resident spoke as a gay man. He said struggles and challenges were personal and unique. He referred to homophobia and oppression suffered by gays as not being a positive aspect. He considered that acronyms do not help anyone. He thought that flying the flag was redirecting attention and that people should be focusing on actions not spending taxpayers' money on a flag.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for their comments and said that it had been a Town Council decision to fly the pride flag during June.

31. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

District Councillor Taylor explained that the District Council meeting schedule for the next four years had now been produced. He suggested it would be useful for Councillor Phil Barlow, as Leader of the Council, to give an update on the District Council's proposals for the regeneration of the town centre.

Councillor Barlow said that it had been decided to disband the Town Centre Regeneration Group as the work would hopefully commence shortly and any outstanding matters could be picked up through the Section 106 Steering Group. He did mention the proposed no right hand turn into Maldon Road and hoped this would be progressed by Essex County Council.

When Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting he reported that an extra £17.5m would be available to recruit more teams to repair potholes. The member-led scheme to nominate potholes to be repaired on both highways and footpaths would continue. He was pleased that remedial work would be carried out in Glebe Crescent. He said that the Community Initiative Fund was available with grants up to £10,000 for community projects and that all street lights with the exception of some in Dorothy Sayers Drive area, should have now been repaired.

It was agreed to bring forward the item on Full Town Council Etiquette.

32. FULL TOWN COUNCIL ETIQUETTE

A motion was received regarding etiquette at Full Town Council meetings so that Members are not required to stand when speaking.

The Town Mayor said that whilst it had always been protocol to stand at Full Town Council Meetings unless one had a medical exemption, equality would be achieved if all Members remained seated.

Members in agreeing suggested that this ruling should apply for the whole of the Administration.

RESOLVED That Members no longer be required to stand whilst speaking at Full Town Council Meetings during this Administration.

33. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 16th May to 6th June 2023 were received.

The Town Mayor commented that she had enjoyed attending both the Cadets dinner and the recent BB event.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

34. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk reminded Members of the invitation to attend a meeting with the New River Retail on Thursday, 15th June at 12 noon to hear of their plans for the Newland Centre.

The Town Clerk stated that help would be needed with the Silver Cinema on Sunday 9th July 2023. Councillors Phil Barlow and Jack Coleman offered to help.

The Town Clerk said that a Section 106 Steering Group Meeting would be arranged as a daytime meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

35. MEETING SCHEDULE 2023 – 2024

A revised Schedule of Meetings for 2023 – 2024 was received. It was explained that following the publication of Braintree District Council's Meeting Schedule it would be necessary to change three meeting dates.

RESOLVED That the revised Meeting Schedule be agreed.

36. YEAR END INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2022/2023

The Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31st March 2023 was received.

It was explained that there were two internal audits and an external audit every year. The Town Council had a robust financial system and the internal auditor would check everything before the Town Clerk as the Responsible Financial Officer signed off the accounts.

RESOLVED That the Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31st March 2023 be received and noted.

37. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2022/2023

The Draft Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 were received.

The Town Clerk added that in addition to the full accounts a user friendly one page version will be put on the website.

RESOLVED That the Annual Accounts for the year ending 31st March 2023 be received and adopted.

38. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) – SECTION 1 GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

The Town Council's Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023 was received.

The Town Clerk said that Notice is given to the Public that they have 30 working days to inspect the Accounts.

RESOLVED That the Annual Governance Statement 2022/2023 be received, approved and signed by the Town Mayor.

39. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) – SECTION 2 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS

The Town Council's signed Accounting Statements 2022/2023 were received.

The Town Clerk explained that this section of the AGAR form gave a comparison of figures from the previous year and a justification was needed if there was over a 10% variance.

RESOLVED That the Accounting Statements be received, agreed and signed by the Town Mayor.

40. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 2nd and 30th May 2023**
Minutes 301 to 311 and 1 to 11 (inclusive)

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave his report of the Meetings en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Planning and Transport Committee be received.

- (b) **Community Committee held 30th May 2023**
Minutes 1 to 18 (inclusive)

Councillor L. Barlow, Chairman of the Community Committee, gave her report of the Meeting en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee be received.

41. CO-OPTION POLICY

A Co-option Policy was received.

It was noted that a by-election had not been called to fill the vacancy. People would be able to nominate themselves and then it was the Town Council's decision to decide how to select in a transparent and fair manner.

RESOLVED That the Co-option policy be received and agreed.

RESOLVED That the Co-option policy appendices be agreed.

42. A12 WIDENING

Members were asked to formally approve the loss of land at Whetmead Nature Reserve to National Highways for the widening of the A12.

RESOLVED That the Town Council agrees to accept that there would be permanent loss of land to National Highways.

43. 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 (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

44. COMMITTEE REPORT – CONTINUED

Community Committee held 30th May 2023

Minutes 19 to 21 (inclusive)

Councillor L. Barlow continued her report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee

45. WITHAM PARK TOILET

A report on the Witham Park toilet was received.

Whilst this item was being discussed Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

46. FUNDING REPORT

A funding report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

47. LAND TRANSFER UPDATE

A land transfer report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.54 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Town Mayor

NS/GK/15.06.2023