



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

### WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2023**

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

Present: Councillors

J.	Bayford	(Town Mayor)
J.	Goodman	(Deputy Town Mayor)
S.	Ager	
P.	Barlow	
P.	Heath	
S.	Hicks	
C.	Jay	
A.	Kilmartin	
C.	Lager	
M.	Lager	
T.	Pleasance	

Also in attendance:

Essex County Councillor	R.	Playle	(Witham Northern)
	N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

#### 158. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atwill, Rajeev, Weeks, J. Williams and R. Williams.

**RESOLVED** That the apologies be received and approved.

#### 159. MINUTES

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**160. INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

**161. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There were no members of the press or public present.

**162. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE**

Braintree District Councillor Hicks said that he had acquired ten bags of salt for the Templars Residents Association.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**163. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 – 16<sup>th</sup> January 2023 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the details be received and noted.

**164. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

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

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**165. CIVIC RECEPTION**

The Town Clerk explained that she had sought advice from the District Council's Monitoring Officer, as the Civic Reception will be held during the pre-election period. She was told that as this was the only date when the Mayor of Aßlar could attend it was appropriate for the civic reception to continue as planned, with attendance limited to those connected with the twinning, past Town Mayors and Councillors.

The Town Clerk asked whether Members would wish the Mayor of Waldbröl to be invited also. After discussion, it was agreed that the Mayor of Waldbröl should be invited and accommodation booked for two nights. Officers would staff the Civic Reception but any other entertainment would need to be hosted and financed by Members.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Mayor of Waldbröl be invited to the Civic Reception and accommodation booked for up to two nights.

Essex County Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting and it was agreed to continue Essex County and Braintree District Council Update.

**166. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE (CONTINUED)**

Councillor Playle explained that the potholes he had reported as part of his scheme were currently being repaired. He had asked that footpaths and pavements be considered as part of a future scheme. He said that repairs to streetlights had been delayed as there had been an issue in the supply chain with replacement bulbs but Witham's streetlights should be fixed within the next few weeks. It was noted that the streetlights are now turned off at midnight. Essex

County Council’s budget had been agreed with a basic 1.5% increase and a 2% levy for social care. He said that the Local Highways Panel projects were progressing. It was hoped that the bus shelter contract would be finalised shortly.

Members then had an opportunity to ask questions. Councillor Playle said that he would speak again to Councillor Louis, Witham Southern, about devolution and likewise try to arrange a face-to-face meeting about HGV routing. It was noted that a new bus service runs along Gershwin Boulevard so bus shelters would need to be retained rather than used elsewhere in the town.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Playle for his report.

**167. ACCESS TO THE RIVER WALK**

Correspondence was received from Gigaclear regarding access to install and maintain electronic communications apparatus along the south side of Guithavon Valley.

It was noted that the description on the agreement wrongly stated south side of Guithavon Road

**RESOLVED** That subject to changes in the description on the agreement that the Town Clerk be authorised to sign the agreement.<sup>1</sup>

**168. SIGNATORIES**

Members were asked to consider changing the current banking signatories.

It was proposed to replace Councillors Atwill and R. Williams with Councillors Ager and Heath.

**RESOLVED** That Councillors Ager and Heath replace Councillors Atwill and R. Williams as Town Council signatories.

**169. COMMITTEE REPORTS**

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 19<sup>th</sup> December 2022 and 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023**  
Minutes 187 to 209 (inclusive).

Councillor Goodman as Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee gave his report of the Meetings.

It was noted that following the Committee’s decision not to progress the 20’s Plenty scheme, it had been resolved to refer the matter to the Policy and Resources Committee as it had been a long standing policy of the Town Council’s to seek 20 mph limit on all residential streets.

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

- (b) **Environment Committee held 9<sup>th</sup> January 2023**  
Minutes 26 to 38 (inclusive).

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<sup>1</sup> Gigaclear has explained that the land registry had the description as Guithavon Road.

Councillor Goodman as Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee gave a report of the Meeting.

**RESOLVED** That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

**170. PRECEPT 2023 – 2024**

- (a) The Minutes of the Estimates Sub Committee Meeting held 12<sup>th</sup> December 2022 were received.

Councillor M. Lager, as Leader of the Council, gave a report covering the impact of Covid delays and lack of accommodation for the open spaces team. Improvements to the River Walk had yet to be implemented but better marking of the footpath and cycleways would soon be completed. With the successful Appeal by Bellway there would be £200,000 section 106 money for the River Walk and a further £2.9m funding for bus and cycleway improvements. A grant of £70,000 had been obtained for the CCTV improvements and an external grant would provide funding for two street wardens for eighteen months. Witham had the largest team of Community Specials in the Braintree District. He spoke of the serious frustration of dealing with electric scooters and the drug problems in the town. He referred to the floral displays in the town centre and support for Citizens Advice. It was disappointing that little progress had been made regarding improvements to medical facilities in the town. It was an ambition to join up cycleways and there was an opportunity to obtain funding as part of the A12 widening to improve facilities. He spoke of better relationships with Braintree District Council and investment in the town including £4m on a community centre on the Maltings Lane estate. He then spoke about the challenges to be faced in 2023 and 2024 to maintain these ambitions. He was grateful for the support given by all staff.

Councillor Lager in endorsing the recommendations said that a reduction in the Administrative budget of £7,000 had arisen due to a reduction in Staffing hours but it was now estimated that the River Walk Cycleways EMR would have approximately £53,000 in it at the end of this financial year, not £60,000.

Members commended the budget and agreed that it recognised the challenges for the forthcoming financial year.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Estimates Sub Committee be received.

**RESOLVED** That the revised budget for Admin and Central Services for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the budget for the Community Committee for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the budget for the Environment Committee for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the budget for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the budget for the Planning and Transport Committee for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the revised reserves balance for 2023/2024 be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the Precept of £797,941 for 2023/2024 be approved, an increase of £9.36 per annum to £89.64 at Band D.

- (b) A pictorial representation of the 2023/2024 budget as requested by Estimates Committee was received and approved with some amendments.

**RESOLVED** That the pictorial representation be received, approved and welcomed

**171. 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.

**172. FUNDING REPORT**

The funding report was received.

**RESOLVED** That the funding report be received and noted.

**173. LAND TRANSFER UPDATE**

The Land Transfer report was received.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**174. RIVER WALK IMPROVEMENTS**

The report concerning improvements to the River Walk near Ebenezer Close/Bramble Road was received.

Members were informed that this had been an ongoing problem with water encroaching onto the pathway and with the bad weather had caused further deterioration of the surface. Three quotations had been sought and the cheapest had recommended a bigger pipe to take the water away.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the quotation from Essex Drainage Solution at the sum of £6,852.00 be accepted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.55 p.m.

Councillor J. Bayford  
Town Mayor

NS/GK/31.1.2023