



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 7<sup>th</sup> November 2022**

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

Present: Councillors

S.	Ager	(Chairman)
J.	Williams	(Vice Chairman)
J.	Bayford	
P.	Heath	
C.	Jay	
C.	Lager	
M.	Lager	
R.	Williams	

Also in attendance

Cllrs	P.	Barlow	
Essex Police S/Sgt	S.	Jesse	(Community Special)
	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
	N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
	C.	Strachan	(Assistant RFO)
Holdfast Credit Union	F.	Hardie	(Chair of the Board)
	S.	Williams	(General Manager)

### **36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Rajeev and Weeks.

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

### **37. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 15<sup>th</sup> August 2022 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**38. INTERESTS**

Councillors P. Barlow and M. Lager declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 44 – Number 39 Bus, as they use the service.

Councillor Bayford declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 51 – Grant Aid Updates – Royal British Legion, as a member of the RBL.

Councillor R. Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 51 – Grant Aid Updates – Witham Carnival Association, as a member of the association.

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

There were no members of the press or public present.

**40. GUEST SPEAKER – HOLDFAST CREDIT UNION**

The Chairman welcomed Fenella Hardie and Stephanie Williams from Holdfast Credit Union.

Fenella Hardie explained that she was Chair of the Holdfast Credit Union and Stephanie the Manager. Holdfast is run from the United Reformed Church and part of its outreach into the community. Holdfast which was set up thirty years ago is run by volunteers with the exception of two part time posts. Credit Unions are not for profit organisations offering savings and loans with the emphasis on savings. Those eligible can obtain small loans costing 3% per month on the declining balance equating to 49% per annum. Other organisations charge interest rates of three or in some cases four figures. Small loans can prevent people getting into debt and they are assessed whether they can afford repayments whilst still continuing to save. Ms Hardie said that financial education is an important part of Holdfast's role and they run a Junior Savers scheme at Holy Family School. Holdfast is responsible for safeguarding members' money and they only lend if the debt can be repaid. In addition they give free life assurance up to £5,000. Ms Hardie said that in these times of austerity there are desperate people who require emergency loans rather than turn to illegal money lenders. Stephanie explained that they provide a money advice service and help to consolidate debts. She said that on-line gambling is a serious problem. Members were impressed with the work.

The Chairman thanked Fenella and Stephanie for attending the Meeting and their informative report.

**41. ESSEX POLICE**

Special Sergeant Simon Jesse was welcomed to the Meeting.

He explained that he had been incredibly busy this past month as the focus had shifted so that all 999 calls would be allocated within three minutes. If he is on duty he might have to respond to an emergency call in Witham which could result in being taken away from his usual duties for the entire shift. S/Sgt Jesse said that he had carried out speed checks in Armond Road, visible patrols in Dengie Close and confiscated an e scooter. He said that e scooters are not a force priority and they focus on more serious matters with larger reported figures. In answer to a question he spoke about egging of vehicles and buildings which was only an offence if damage had been caused. He mentioned problems with a large group of young men and the difficulties in policing. He spoke about the recent Town Council Halloween event and the good opportunity to interact with the public.

The Chairman thanked Special Sergeant Jesse for his report.

**42. CLERK’S REPORT**

The Town Clerk explained that the Carnival Association was unlikely to fill all the positions on their committee. The AGM would be held this month and a decision taken at that time regarding the association’s future.

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

**43. COMMUNITY SPEEDWATCH**

Members were informed that only one person had expressed an interest in being part of Speedwatch. It was agreed that speed checks should be left to the police.

Members spoke of the value of Variable Speed Signs in gaining intelligence and that speeding issues could form part of the Neighbourhood Plan workshop.

**RESOLVED** That the information be received and that the use of Variable Speed Signs be explored.

**44. NUMBER 39 BUS**

Councillors Barlow and M. Lager had declared interests.

A report regarding the Number 39 Bus was received.

Members noted that there had been lots of complaints about the irregular service and that Essex County Council had withdrawn the funding for the Saturday service. The suggestion was made that a meeting be arranged with Stephensons to discuss the issues.

It was reported that the Traffic Commissioner licences the bus companies and enforcement could be sought if there was a breach in conditions. A Member could seek a Freedom of Information request concerning whether an application had been made to stop the Saturday service and those in the middle of the afternoon.

Members further discussed the issue including the need for a mini bus rather than a full size bus and whether the closure of Chipping Hill bridge had affected the service.

**RESOLVED** That the matter be further investigated.

Councillor Jay left the Council Chamber.

**45. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE & BUDGET REPORT**

The income and expenditure report up to 30th September 2022 was received.

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

Councillor Jay returned to the Council Chamber.

**46. 2023-2024 DRAFT CORPORATE STRATEGY AND BUDGET**

Members had the opportunity to comment upon the proposed Community Committee Strategy and Budget for 2023-2024 prior to the Estimates Meeting in December.

The Leader of the Council went through the objectives and the allocated funding. He spoke of the risks of technical problems with the CCTV equipment and the difficulty in recruiting special constables. He said that the successful running of the Information Centre and events was a tribute to staff.

Members considered that the Community Grant Aid budget should remain at £15,000.

**RESOLVED** That the Community Grant Aid budget for 2023 – 2024 be increased to £15,000.

It was suggested that the Silver Screen budget could be reduced to £750. It was stressed that this was a Councillor-led initiative and it was important that Members assist.

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

#### **47. KING'S CORONATION**

A report regarding the King's Coronation was received.

Members agreed that it would be appropriate to hold an event on the River Walk to mark the King's coronation.

The Town Clerk said that the Essex County Councillor for Witham Northern would be using his Locality Fund to hold a luncheon on Friday, 5<sup>th</sup> May 2023, in the Public Hall for the elderly in conjunction with the Lunch Club. It was agreed that Town Council officers would give administrative support.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and an event be held on the River Walk with a budget of £10,000.

**RESOLVED** That Town Council officers give administrative support to the County Councillor's event.

#### **48. CIVIC RECEPTION**

Members were asked to consider holding a Civic Reception in April 2023 to mark the end of the administration as so many Members would be stepping down from the Council.

Members agreed that this would be a good opportunity not only to thank those who would be retiring but to invite former Mayors and the Mayor of Aþlar who would be visiting the UK.

**RESOLVED** That a Civic Reception be held in April 2023 and a budget of up to £2,500 be allocated.

#### **49. YOUTH ENGAGEMENT**

A report on youth engagement was received.

Members agreed that the suggestion to offer mock interviews for sixth form students was an excellent idea.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the suggestion to offer mock interviews for sixth form students be agreed and taken forward.

**50. GRANT AID REQUESTS**

An update on the Witham BB grant request was received.

Members agreed that a further grant of £3,241 should be made to Witham BB.

**RESOLVED** That a further grant of £3,241 be made to Witham BB.

**51. GRANT AID UPDATES**

Grant Aid updates were received from the following grant recipients-

(a) Witham Carnival

Councillor R. Williams had declared an interest.

(b) Witham BB

(c) Witham Chess Club

(d) Royal British Legion

Councillor Bayford had declared an interest.

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

**52. SOCIAL MEDIA REPORT**

The report on Social Media was received.

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

**53. 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.

**54. INFORMATION CENTRE**

A report was received from the Information Centre Manager.

Members agreed that the Information Centre Manager should be commended for her work.

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

**55. GRANT AID UPDATE**

An update on the grant given to St John Ambulance was received.

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

**56. HEALTHCARE**

The Minutes of the Healthcare Meeting held 26<sup>th</sup> October 2022 was received.

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

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.20 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager  
Chairman

NS/CS/GK/10.11.2022