

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Annual Town Meeting**

Date: **Tuesday, 23th April 2019**

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

And ten members of the public.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Mrs J.A Kempf and P.M Ryland due to previous engagements.

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the Meeting.

2. INTERESTS

No interests were received.

3. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Meeting held 22nd April 2018 were received and signed by the Chairman.

4. ESSEX POLICE REPORT

Members welcomed Chief Inspector Janette Rawlingson, Braintree & Uttlesford District Commander. C.I Rawlingson introduced herself to the meeting and explained her professional background leading up to her post as the District Commander. She commended the District as a good place to live and work and proceeded to advise those in attendance on local policing statistics. She explained that the Braintree & Uttlesford policing District was over 400sqm of area under her control and was facing constant challenges with resources under pressure, with 41 Special Constables now in operation over the policing District, with three warranted officers in force in Witham and another in Halstead. C.I Rawlinson explained the various units under her command and that crime has gone up across the District. It was explained that demand for policing was generally outside of rural areas, with an emphasis being placed on recruitment of additional staff following the raise of the policing precept, increasing visible policing. C.I Rawlinson invited questions from members of the public present. A question was posed concerning County Lines drug dealing in the District. The Mayor thanked the Chief Inspector for her attendance and presentation to the meeting.

5. MEMBER REPORTS

Community Committee – Cllr. Rob Williams

Cllr. Williams gave his report highlighting business plan priorities of community safety, NHS provision, free events for the public and a drive to renovate the Information Centre to a wider service fit for the ‘Town Centre’. Cllr. Williams explained that the newly refitted CCTV system funded by the Town Council was fully operational with a Service Level Agreement with Chelmsford City Council in the final stages of agreement. Further work was being conducted by the Town Council to help new residents associations form to ensure greater involvement from the public in improving community safety. It was reported that the Town Council’s bill of free events were continuing to grow and were providing economic benefits to the town via increased footfall. The Community Committee continued to provide grant funding for local community organisations including Citizens Advice.

Environment Committee – Cllr. John Goodman.

Cllr. John Goodman drew attention to the Town Council’s opposition to the development of the Gimsons site having partnered with the Heart of Witham Preservation Group. The meeting was notified that a project to secure the River Walk with new knee rails and bollards funded by \$106 money and a major arboriculture survey undertaken to perform tree works across the Town Council’s sites to keep good order with the public tree stock. Cllr. Goodman explained that the Town Council was taking part in the Essex County Council Highways Devolution Pilot whereby the Town Council receives a grant for highways works to be performed locally.

Policy & Resources Committee – Cllr. Michael Lager

Cllr. Michael Lager commented on the Council having embarked on a significant year of change having completed steps to become compliant with new GDPR legislation, national planning policy and challenging the decision made to grant planning consent for 78 houses at the Gimsons site. He reported that the Town Twinning Association had ceased but the formal civic partnership remained. Cllr. Lager updated the meeting following multiple staffing changes and a change in Town Clerk and a movement towards a bolder strategic approach to the Council’s business objectives. He reported the Town Council had taken steps to secure the River Walk from unauthorized encampments.

Planning Applications & Transport Sub-Committee – Cllr. Angela Kilmartin

Cllr. Kilmartin notified the meeting that the Council continued its campaign against the Gimsos application and explained that the Town Council was initiating the process of applying for a Judicial Review concerning the decision made by the Local Planning Authority in granting the application. In addition to reviewing policy and transport related matters, the Town Councils Planning Committee debated several hundred applications for consideration across Witham.

Town Mayor's Report – Cllr. Tom Pleasance

The Town Mayor reported on his year in office and commended those whom he had met during his service who served the local community including fellow mayors of neighbouring towns and the many active groups in Witham. He recounted the Town Council and local community's work in commemorating the 100th anniversary of Remembrance Day and beacon lighting ceremony that concluded the bill of events. The Town Mayor thanked the Council's staff and fellow members for their support during his term and both his wife and Deputy Mayor.

The Carnival Committee thanked Members of the Council for its financial contribution to aid the 90th Anniversary Celebrations.

6. ACCOUNTS

The audited accounts for the year ended 31st March 2018 were received.

The Town Clerk advised that the Council was continuing a programme of fiscal prudence and considered budgeting for future projects with the withdrawal of all grant and principal authority funding.

The Town Mayor thanked the Town Clerk for his comments.

7. MATTERS RAISED BY MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

A query was raised over the future of the period garden located to the rear of the Town Hall. It was stated that the Town Council was reviewing the future possibility of greater use for the Open Spaces Team but any proposed works would need to be subject to a planning application.

Councillor T.A Pleasance
Town Mayor

JS/08.05.2019