



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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witham.gov.uk

AGENDA

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday 2nd October 2023** Time: **7:30 p.m.**

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

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present:

Councillors:

S. Ager	(Town Mayor)	P. Heath
L. Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor)	T. Hewitt
E. Adelaja		J. Martin
P. Barlow		R. Playle
J.C. Coleman		R. Ramage
J.M. Coleman		A. Sloma
B. Fleet		B. Taylor
L. Headley		E. Williams

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 5th September 2023 and of the Extraordinary Meeting held 11th September 2023 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

To receive any declarations of interest that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this agenda.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. FREEDOM OF THE TOWN PRESENTATION

Presentation of badges to current honorary Freeman.

6. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

To receive verbal reports from Essex County and Braintree District Councillors on matters relating to Witham.

7. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

To receive details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 1st to 24th September 2023 attached at page 4.

8. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the verbal Town Clerk's report on matters arising.

9. COUNCILLOR SURGERIES

To receive a motion regarding Councillor Surgeries attached at page 5.

10. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

To receive a letter from PKF Littlejohn LLP and Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate attached at page 6.

11. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

To receive and approve the Witham Town Council Strategic Plan attached at page 10.

12. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

To consider the committee membership of the Improving Health Facilities Working Group.

13. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 5th and 18th September 2023**

Minutes 88 to 108 inclusive.

To receive a report of the Meetings.

(b) **Policy and Resources Committee held 18th September 2023**

Minutes 12 to 24 inclusive.

To receive a report of the Meeting.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

TO RESOLVE 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.

15. COMMITTEE REPORT – CONTINUED

Policy and Resources Committee held 18th September 2023

Minute 25 inclusive.

16. LAND TRANSFER

To receive a report.

17. FUNDING

To receive a report.

NS/GK/SS/ 27/9/2023



LIST OF MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN SEPTEMBER 1ST TO 24TH 2023

Great Dunmow Carnival, Saturday 16th September 2023

Attended the Great Dunmow Carnival.

Witham Street Entertainment Festival, Saturday 16th September 2023

Attended the Witham Festival and helped to run the Witham Town Council stall.

New Rickstones Academy Open Evening, Thursday 21st September

Attended the New Rickstones Academy Open Evening.

Renew's Staff Appreciation Day, Friday 22 September 2023

Attended Renew's Staff Appreciation Day at The Secret Garden, Tiptree Tea Rooms.

The High Sheriff of Essex's Charity Walk, Sunday 24th September 2023

Participated in the High Sheriff of Essex's Charity Walk.

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ITEM NO: 8

Councillor: Councillor Billy Taylor

Ward: North Ward

Title: Councillor Surgeries

Motion: To introduce Councillor Surgeries at the Town Hall

Supporting Information: As a council we need to make ourselves more available to residents who need advice and support. Although we hold pop up stalls it would also be of benefit to hold monthly surgeries where residents can come and seek advice and support from councillors.

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Ms Nikki Smith
 Witham Town Council
 Town Hall
 61 Newland Street
 Witham
 Essex
 CM8 2FE

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Email:
 sba@pkf-l.com

Date:
 13 September 2023

Our Ref:
 EX0279

SAAA Ref:
 SB09562

**Witham Town Council
 Completion of the limited assurance review for the year ended 31 March 2023**

Dear Ms Smith

We have completed our review of the Annual Governance & Accountability Return (AGAR) for Witham Town Council for the year ended 31 March 2023. Please find our external auditor report and certificate (Section 3 of the AGAR Form 3) included for your attention as an attachment to the email containing this letter along with a copy of Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR, on which our report is based.

The external auditor report and certificate details any matters arising from the review. The smaller authority must consider these matters and decide what, if any, action is required.

Action you are required to take at the conclusion of the review

The Accounts and Audit Regulations 2015 (SI 2015/234) set out what you must do at the conclusion of the review. In summary, you are required to:

- Prepare a "Notice of conclusion of audit" which details the rights of inspection, in line with the statutory requirements. We attach a pro forma notice you may use for this purpose (a Word version is available on request).
- Publish the "Notice" along with the certified AGAR (Sections 1, 2 & 3) before 30 September, which must include publication on the smaller authority's website. (Please note that when the statute and regulations were amended in 2014 and 2015, they did not include a requirement for the length of time for which that the "Notice" must be published. The previous statute required 14 days; but it is now up to the authority to make this decision).
- Keep copies of the AGAR available for purchase by any person on payment of a reasonable sum.
- Ensure that Sections 1, 2 and 3 of the published AGAR remain available for public access for a period of not less than 5 years from the date of publication.

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 Canary Wharf, London
 E14 4HD

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www.pkf-l.com

Fee

We enclose our fee note, on page 4 of this attachment, for the limited assurance review, which is in accordance with the fee scales set by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Ltd which can be found at <https://saaa.co.uk/fees.html>. This fee is statutory, must be paid and is due immediately on receipt of invoice, please arrange for this to be paid **at the earliest opportunity**.

Additional charges are itemised on the fee note, where applicable. These arise where either:

- we have had to issue chaser letters and/or exercise our statutory powers due to a failure to provide an AGAR by the submission deadline; or
- it was necessary for us to undertake additional work.

Please return the remittance advice with your payment, which should be sent to: PKF Littlejohn LLP, Ref: Credit control (SBA), 5th Floor, 15 Westferry Circus, Canary Wharf, London, E14 4HD. Please include the reference EX0279 or Witham Town Council as a reference when paying by BACS.

Timetable for 2023/24

Next year we plan to set a submission deadline for the return of the completed AGAR Form 3 and associated documents (or Certificate of Exemption) in the usual way and this is expected to be Monday 1 July 2024. It is anticipated that the instructions will be sent out during March 2024, subject to arrangements for the 2023/24 AGARs and Certificates of Exemption being finalised by Smaller Authorities' Audit Appointments Limited (SAAA). Our instructions will cover any changes about which smaller authorities need to be aware.

- The smaller authority must inform the electorate of a single period of 30 working days during which public rights may be exercised. This information **must be published at least the day before** the inspection period commences;
- The inspection period **must** include the first 10 working days of July 2024, i.e. 1 to 12 July inclusive. In practice this means that public rights may be exercised:
 - at the earliest, between Monday 3 June and Friday 12 July 2024; and
 - at the latest, between Monday 1 July and Friday 9 August 2024.

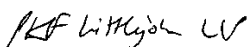
As in previous years, in order to assist you in this process we plan to include a pro forma template notice with a suggested inspection period on our website. On submitting your AGAR and associated documentation, as was the case for this year, we will need you to either confirm that the suggested dates have been adopted or inform us of the alternative dates selected.

We would like to draw your attention to a change within the Practitioners' Guide 2023 which is mandatory for the 2023/24 period. Paragraph 1.26 relates to the requirements in relation to Assertion 3 and states '*Email management - every authority should have an email account that belongs to the council and to which the council has access – this ideally would be a .gov.uk or .org.uk address or could be an address linked to the council website.*' In order to answer yes to Assertion 3 in the 2023/24 Annual Governance Statement the local authority should ensure that it has an email address that complies with this requirement and if it does not already it should do so urgently.

Feedback on 2022/23

Please note that if you wish to provide feedback, our satisfaction survey template can be used, which is available on our website on this page: <https://www.pkf-l.com/services/limited-assurance-regime/useful-information-and-links/>

Yours sincerely



PKF Littlejohn LLP

Section 3 – External Auditor’s Report and Certificate 2022/23

In respect of

Witham Town Council – EX0279

1 Respective responsibilities of the auditor and the authority

Our responsibility as auditors to complete a **limited assurance review** is set out by the National Audit Office (NAO). A limited assurance review is **not a full statutory audit**, it does not constitute an audit carried out in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK & Ireland) and hence it **does not** provide the same level of assurance that such an audit would. The UK Government has determined that a lower level of assurance than that provided by a full statutory audit is appropriate for those local public bodies with the lowest levels of spending.

Under a limited assurance review, the auditor is responsible for reviewing Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with NAO Auditor Guidance Note 02 (AGN 02) as issued by the NAO on behalf of the Comptroller and Auditor General. AGN 02 is available from the NAO website – <https://www.nao.org.uk/code-audit-practice/guidance-and-information-for-auditors/>

This authority is responsible for ensuring that its financial management is adequate and effective and that it has a sound system of internal control. The authority prepares an Annual Governance and Accountability Return in accordance with *Proper Practices* which:

- summarises the accounting records for the year ended 31 March 2023; and
- confirms and provides assurance on those matters that are relevant to our duties and responsibilities as external auditors.

2 External auditor’s limited assurance opinion 2022/23

On the basis of our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR), in our opinion the information in Sections 1 and 2 of the AGAR is in accordance with Proper Practices and no other matters have come to our attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements have not been met.

Other matters not affecting our opinion which we draw to the attention of the authority:

None

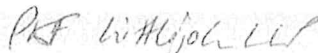
3 External auditor certificate 2022/23

We certify that we have completed our review of Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return, and discharged our responsibilities under the Local Audit and Accountability Act 2014, for the year ended 31 March 2023.

External Auditor Name

PKF LITTLEJOHN LLP

External Auditor Signature



Date

12/09/2023



STRATEGIC PLAN 2023 – 2027

Leading positive change
by working to make Witham a
greener, fairer and safer town.



Planning and Transport Committee Responsibilities and Objectives



**Creation of a
Witham
Neighbourhood
Plan**



**Scrutiny of
Planning
Applications**



**Deliver a Witham
Cycleways
Strategy**



**To provide Local
Plan
Representation**




**To continue to
provide
Highways Matters
& Parking Reports**

Community Committee Responsibilities and Objectives



Special Constables Recruitment



Promotion and Improvement to Healthcare and Well-Being Services



Preserving Historical Artefacts and Public Art

CCTV Expansion

Tackling Social Isolation

Community, Business and Group Engagement



Grant Aid Scheme



Events, including Civic and Christmas Decorations



Community Safety Awareness

Provision of Community Transport

Environment Committee Responsibilities and Objectives

**James Cooke
Wood Scheme
Improvement**

**All Matters Relating to
the Council's Owned
Open Spaces**

**Allotment and
Community Orchard
Management**

**Path & Cycleway
Programme and Parish
Paths Partnership**

**Open Spaces
Management
Plans**

**Review of Floral
Displays and
Witham in Bloom**

**Linking
Whetmead & The
River Walk**

**Climate
Change**

**All Matters
Relating to
Trees**

**Scrutiny of
Section 106
Obligations**

Policy and Resources Committee Responsibilities and Objectives



Scrutiny of Financial and Administrative Practices



Town Hall Site Improvement Project



Town Plan



Review of Communications



Strategic Acquisitions & Investments



Prospectus for Devolution