



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
01376 520627
witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 26th October 2020**

Present: Councillors

Mrs	S.C.	Lager	(Town Mayor)
Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	(Deputy Town Mayor)
Mrs	S.	Ager	
	K.L.	Atwill	
	P.R.	Barlow	
	J.C.	Goodman	
	S.E.	Hicks	
Miss	C.	Jay	
	M.C.M.	Lager	
	C.S.	Livermore	
	T.A.	Pleasance	
Miss	M.L.	Weeks	
	R.	Williams	

Essex County Councillors

(Witham Northern)	J.	Abbott
(Witham Southern)	D.	Louis

J. Sheehy (Town Clerk)
Miss N. Smith (Deputy Town Clerk)
Mrs G. Kennedy (Democratic Officer)

And one member of the public.

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the Meeting and gave her congratulations to Geraldine Kennedy who had been working for the Town Council for 25years. Members joined the Mayor in thanking Geraldine Kennedy for her loyalty and dedication.

190. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J.C. Bayford due to previous engagements.

RESOLVED That the apologies be accepted.

191. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 28th September 2020 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor in due course.

192. INTERESTS

Councillors K.L. Atwill and R. Williams both declared pecuniary interests in Minute 202 – Markets, as Directors of Marketing Witham and would leave the Meeting at that point.

Councillor K.L. Atwill declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 196 – Delegated Decisions, in relation to two planning applications in which he had commented to the District Council.

Councillor S.E. Hicks also declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 196 – Delegated Decisions, as he was a neighbour to one of the planning applicants.

Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 200 – Task and Finish Group – Social Isolation, as the Council representative and Chairman of the Town Luncheon Club.

Essex County Councillor J. Abbott declared an interest in Minute 196 – Delegated Decisions, as one of the planning applications referred to tree work at his mother's home.

193. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The member of the public present declined to make a statement.

194. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Councillor J. Abbott explained that there had been an Essex County Council (ECC) Meeting on 13th October 2020 when he had raised a written question asking for a more efficient way to repair clusters of highway issues. He complained that after The Avenue was closed recently for resurfacing, it then had to be closed again for a replacement bollard to be fitted near the roundabout. He said that he is pursuing the 50-pothole initiative and waiting for the red markings to appear.

Members were advised that a question had been raised at ECC in relation to access to the local refuse site as he considered that it was pedantic to refuse access to some vehicles. Members were informed that ECC have no proposals to alter site admittance rules it was considered that Witham was too small to accept all types of waste.

Members were informed that ECC had formally requested HM Government for the county to be placed into Tier 2 restrictions and this had not been debated by Members. The Council had set aside £165,000 towards an extension of the Holiday Hunger Scheme and a donation to Foodbank with up to 10,000 hampers being available during the half term holiday.

Councillor J. Abbott was pleased to see progress on the A12 but there was still a huge amount of detail required in relation to HGV routing, public rights of way, cycleways, etc.

At a recent District Council Meeting, Councillor Abbott had requested a multi-agency approach to improve the northern approach into Witham. He said that an improvement of the Courts estate was being organised.

The Town Council's proposal to complete re-lining works for the entrance of Lawn Chase, Witham, was supported by Councillor Abbott, who explained that parish councils paying for highways works that the Local Highways Panel (LHP) was unable to fund was a growing phenomenon.

Councillor D. Louis had sent a report earlier in the day which had been circulated to Members. He explained that he had given a grant from his Member's Locality Fund to support the Charter Market. He said that he still had money available if Members were aware of other projects in Witham.

He said that whilst the responsibility for the A12 laid with Highways England, the impact of traffic on other roads was the responsibility of the County Council. He stressed the importance of working together to ensure that everything is resolved before work starts on the widening/re-routing of the A12 to prevent retrospective work.

Members were invited to put questions to County Councillors in attendance.

A question was raised over a protracted installation of bus-stop seating within the vicinity of the former Witham police station and requested whether grants could cover this work. Councillor J. Abbott undertook to explore this suggestion and added that the seats are on the Local Highways Panel list awaiting funding.

A question was asked as to whether a proposed new school in Rickstones Road would be a replacement school and what would happen to the old school buildings, as the old Chipping Hill school building was once again empty. Councillor J. Abbott explained that the school was to provide extra needed provision. He would enquire with ECC about the future of the old school building at Chipping Hill.

The suggestion was made that there should be collaboration between County and District Members in regard to Locality Funding. The Town Mayor considered this to be an excellent idea to pursue.¹

Disappointment was expressed by the Town Council that the County Council had decided to move to Tier 2 restrictions without public consultation.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillors J. Abbott and D. Louis for their reports.

195. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

He explained that he had just received pre-application advice from the Local Planning Authority regarding accessibility to the front of the Town Hall. He would refer the matter to the next Policy & Resources Committee to examine the business case and funding implications for new, improved access for the Town Hall.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

¹ This matter would be referred to the next Council Meeting for Members to consider suitable projects which could be funded through this scheme.

196. DELEGATED DECISIONS

Councillors K.L. Atwill and S.E. Hicks had declared interests.

Delegated Decisions for the period 28th August to 23rd September 2020 were received.

A query concerning the purpose of the Delegated Decisions report was made. Members were advised by the Leader of the Council & Town Clerk that The Local Authorities and Police and Crime Panels (Coronavirus) (Flexibility of Local Authority and Police and Crime Panel Meetings) (England and Wales) Regulations 2020 continued to underpin meetings arrangements for local authorities.

It was noted by members that Town & Parish Councils remain prohibited by the regulations from holding 'remote' committee meetings due to the omission of Town & Parish Councils from the regulations as a 'relevant authority'. As such, committee decisions continue to be handled under officer-delegated powers and the Covid-19 Governance Provisions, with the Delegated Decisions report providing a transparent record for both Members and the Public as to the Town Council's discharge of its functions.

RESOLVED That the Delegated Decisions be received and noted.

197. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

The Town Mayor had not undertaken any engagements in the past month but would be judging Halloween pumpkins and opening Cards for Good Causes later in the week.

The Deputy Town Mayor explained that she had represented both the Town Council and the people of Witham outside St Nicolas Church for the funeral of Roy Belsham, former Councillor, stalwart and contributor to the town.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

198. LAWN CHASE

A report was received and Members asked to consider funding the white lining at the entrance to Lawn Chase.

Members recognised this could set a precedent but considered to resolve this long standing issue it would be necessary to fund the work. The suggestion was made that this might be funded through devolved work or Locality Funding.

RESOLVED That contractors be appointed to white line the entrance to Lawn Chase at a cost of £295.

199. ESTIMATES SUB-COMMITTEE

Members were asked to appoint Councillor Mrs S. Ager, as Chairman of the Community Committee, to the Estimates Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED That Councillor Mrs S. Ager be appointed to the Estimates Sub-Committee.

200. TASK & FINISH GROUP FOR SOCIAL ISOLATION

Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin had declared an interest.

A report was received from Councillor Susan Ager, Chairman of the Social Isolation Task and Finish Group, and Members asked to consider and approve proposals.

It was suggested that the Police Commissioner should be informed that J9 training, for those likely to meet those suffering domestic abuse, was being undertaken.

It was explained that Home Alone on Christmas would be providing hot meals on Christmas Day for those on their own and asked if the Town Hall kitchen and function room could be used. A fully qualified chef has been secured to do the cooking and volunteers would be delivering the meals. It was thought between 75 and 120 meals would be needed and a publicity campaign would be set up. It was known that the Salvation Army would be delivering frozen Christmas meals but contact would be made with them.

Members congratulated the Social Isolation Group and the Home Alone on Christmas team for this initiative.

RESOLVED That the report be received and permission given for the Town Hall kitchen and function room to be used on Christmas Day.

201. EXCLUSION OF 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 of the Local Government Act 1972, S3 - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person.

202. MARKETS

Councillors K.L. Atwill and R. Williams had declared pecuniary interests and left the Meeting.

An initial report concerning markets in Witham was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.14 p.m.

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager
Town Mayor

JS/GK/28.10.2020