



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

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Monday, 27th January 2020**

Present: Councillors T.A. Pleasance (Chairman)
J.C. Goodman (Vice Chairman)
Mrs S. Ager
K.L. Atwill
J.C. Bayford
S.E. Hicks
Miss C. Jay
Mrs A. Kilmartin
M.C.M. Lager
Mrs S.C. Lager

Also in attendance: Cllr R.P. Ramage

Essex County Councillor J. Abbott (Witham Northern)
J. Sheehy (Town Clerk)
Mrs G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)
Miss N. Smith (Assistant RFO)

71. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C.S. Livermore who had a previous engagement and Councillor R. Williams who was working.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted .

72. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 11th November 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

73. INTERESTS

Councillor J.C. Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 81 – Highways Report, as it refers to Chipping Dell parking restrictions and he is a resident of that road.

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 76 – Town Clerk’s Report, as she is regularly affected by inconsiderate parking whilst trying to gain access to Lawn Chase.

74. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public at the Meeting.

75. REPORT(S) FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

The Chairman welcomed Councillor J. Abbott to the Meeting.

Councillor J. Abbott explained that Essex County Council would be setting its budget next month which would be challenging as its finances were in dire straits.

He explained that there had been a Local Highways Panel meeting last week and the parking problems affecting Lawn Chase had been discussed. The proposed box markings at its junction with Newland Street have been validated and funding would be sought at the next meeting on 26th March 2020, likewise funding for a new zebra crossing in Rickstones Road. At long last the pedestrian crossing in Cressing Road was at an advanced stage. He had raised concerns about the traffic in Conrad Road which would be exacerbated by the additional housing and new school. He noted that there had been no progress on the Blackwater Rail Trail but the Town Clerk explained that he had now been put in contact with the Head of the Asset Department.

Councillor J. Abbott said that he had been talking to Essex County Council regarding the traffic island at the junction of The Avenue and Collingwood Road. The island had been hit many times and it was an unsafe place for pedestrians to cross. He had hoped for improvements as part of the redevelopment of the railway station. He referred Members to a website called Crash Maps which showed this roundabout as having the highest incidence of accidents but Highways were refusing to take action.

He then spoke about the new traffic signal scheme in Newland Street and had hoped there would be scope for improvements but apparently not, although he had been informed some potholes might be filled in. He had raised the issue of the poor gateway to Witham north from the A12 with potholes and poor signage. He was interested to see that the Tree Group had raised the issue of a Tree Preservation Order for the elm tree at Lynfield Motors, as he considered the tree to be vulnerable.

Finally, he reported on the proposed incinerator at Rivenhall Airfield. He said that both a permit and planning consent was required for a 35m stack which is far shorter than the usual 80/90m ones. He had been told that the stack would be more efficient.

Members then had the opportunity to ask questions and make comments.

Members considered that a no right turn into Maldon Road at the junction with Newland Street would aid the flow of traffic. Concern was expressed that there had been no consultation before the work on the traffic lights commenced.

Members raised the problem of the traffic signals on the approach to the southern A12 slip road and the resultant queuing back to Guithavon Valley. It was understood that the traffic signals would remain in place until the bridge was repaired or demolished as part of the A12 improvements. Councillor J. Abbott said that he would be attending a meeting to discuss the A12 widening scheme and would raise the matter again.

Councillor J. Abbott reminded Members that the Local Highways Panel was an open meeting and urged Members to attend the next meeting on 26th March 2020 at 7.15 p.m. at Causeway House to take forward their particular issues of concern.

In response to the lorry depositing shale at both ends of The Avenue when turning right, the Town Clerk said he would ask the Monitoring Centre to check CCTV cameras for the culprit's index plate.

The Chairman thanked Councillor J. Abbott for his report.

76. CLERK'S REPORT

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager had declared an interest.

The Clerk's report on matters arising was received.

It was noted that the new seats had now been installed in the Town Park by the District Council.

RESOLVED That the Report be received and noted.

77. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BUDGET

The Environment Committee Budget was received.

The Town Clerk pointed out matters of interest. The equipment line was over-budget because of necessary one off capital expenditure for equipment for the fourth member of the Open Spaces Team. He suggested that £1,000 from River Walk extension, £1,000 from River Walk improvements and £2,000 from River Walk be vired to Central Services as a surveyor's report had been commissioned and work to the Town Hall might be required in order to keep the listed building in good order.

RESOLVED That £1,000 from River Walk extension, £1,000 from River Walk improvements and £2,000 from River Walk budgets be vired to the Central Services budget.

RESOLVED That the Environment Committee Budget be received.

78. PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee Meetings held 11th and 25th November, 9th and 17th December 2019 and 13th January 2020 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

79. WITHAM LOCAL HERITAGE LIST TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Minutes from the Witham Local Heritage Task and Finish Group Meeting held 9th January 2020 were received.

Members agreed that the document should be made available to all Members of the Town Council.

Members commented that the statue which had been at The Albert, now The Railway public house, needed to be put back into position. It was agreed that staff would make the necessary enquiries to locate this statue.

RESOLVED That enquiries be made to locate the missing statue.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

80. DELIVERING DEVELOPERS' OBLIGATIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Minutes from the Delivering Developers' Obligations Task and Finish Group Meeting held 20th November 2019 were received.

Members expressed their frustration that outline planning consent had not been taken forward on Maltings Lane estate and suggested that a compulsory purchase should be pursued. A realignment of the boundary of the community land would apparently make it more attractive proposition for development. £1m would become available after the 200th house was built on the Lodge Farm estate and details about the community facility were coming forward. There was £119k available for public art and the Town Council's views would be considered. Money would be available for cyclepaths and enquiries would be made of Essex County Council to ascertain what might be available. It was understood that funding was available from Greenfields for enhancement of the Forest Road 'pond'.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

81. HIGHWAYS REPORT

Councillor J.C. Goodman had declared an interest.

The updated Highways Report was received. It was agreed to approach the Local Highways Panel to see whether white lining the Town Hall access could be progressed.

RESOLVED That the Highways Report be received and noted.

82. HIGHWAYS DEVOLUTION PILOT

A report on the Highways Devolution Pilot was received.

The Town Clerk explained that there was still £14,000 to be spent on the devolution project and it was important that this money was spent. Members were reminded to inform the Town Hall office of projects.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

83. POTHOLES

Councillor Mrs S.A. Ager asked Members to consider ways of improving the County Council's service in repairing potholes.

Members agreed that the situation is unsatisfactory but recognised the reluctance to make remedial repairs until the better weather. After discussion it was agreed that Members by the end of February should come up with a list of potholes in their Wards which can then be forwarded to the Essex County Councillors for advice on how to progress the repair. It was considered that further legal advice concerning the Highways Authority's role for liabilities and the Town Council's powers under the highways act would be beneficial.

RESOLVED That Members be asked to provide a list of potholes in their Wards by the end of February which can then be forwarded to the Essex County Councillors to seek action.

RESOLVED that advice be sought from the National Association of Local Council's legal service as to the powers available to the Town Council for repairs of potholes on the highway.

84. TREE GROUP

The Minutes of the Tree Group Meetings held 5th November, 3rd December 2019 and 7th January 2020 were received.

The Town Clerk explained that he had a meeting with the Tree Group regarding the merits of setting up a Tree Trust. He proposed to bring a report to the next Meeting.

Members commented on the damage to trees in the Newlands and the Town Clerk said that he would ask the Tree Group to assist.

Members commented that the Tree Group is unique and an initiative to be proud of. It was agreed that the Town Clerk would publicise the Group through the Essex Association of Local Councils, Clerks and Councils and any other appropriate publication.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that publicity would be prejudicial to the public interest.

85. LAND MANAGEMENT

A verbal report was received from the Town Clerk.

Fly Posting

The Town Clerk explained that the Council is not currently utilising its statutory powers to fine and enforce cases of graffiti and fly posting. Members considered that fly posting was a blight and the Town Council could use its statutory powers to fine the offenders in a bid to keep the town in good order and assist Principal Authorities in their duties.

RESOLVED That the relevant advice be sought from Braintree District Council and a policy be agreed to take this matter forward.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

86. PUBLIC DOMAIN

It was agreed that the item on Fly Posting discussed in Private Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

RESOLVED That the item on Fly Posting discussed in Private Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.57p.m.

Councillor _____
Chairman

JS/GK/30.1.2020