

# Witham's Voice

Spring 2021

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**Witham**  
town council

Your quarterly newsletter

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## Have you seen us on your news feed?

If quarterly updates from your local Council aren't enough for you, you could follow us on social media for regular news and updates.



@withamcouncil



@withamtc



@town\_witham

## New Year, New Look

Is Witham's Voice looking a little different to you? It's the same newsletter with the same Council news and updates, just a sleeker design that sits better in your hands and fits better through your letterbox. We have even thrown in a couple of extra pages for you!

# Successful dog bin sponsorship scheme

Witham Town Council launched its fun dog sponsorship scheme at the end of 2020 and it is already proving to be very popular. Eight bins have so far been sponsored but more are available.

The dog bin sponsorship scheme allows those taking part to have a large vinyl photo sticker of their dog placed on to their selected bin. Cost of the sponsorship is £50 for one year and includes a £15 donation going towards a chosen dog charity. Sponsorships so far, as seen below, have been purchased as thoughtful gifts, in memory of a lost friend or simply in honour of a beloved pet.

Bins can be sponsored along the River Walk, James Cooke Wood or Whetmead Local Nature Reserve, areas Witham Town Council manage.

For further information about the scheme, please contact the Town Hall on 01376 520627 or by email [assistantclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:assistantclerk@witham.gov.uk).



*Asali (above) is very happy with her photo*



# PARENTS — WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT NITROUS OXIDE?

It may not seem like it right now, but Summer really is just around the corner, bringing warmer weather, longer evenings and a possible sight that became all too familiar in 2020 – empty silver canisters strewn across parks and open spaces. Easily obtainable and affordable, these canisters of nitrous oxide became a popular drug craze with young people across the country, and with the likelihood that groups will once again be able to gather outside in the nicer weather, it is likely we will see another surge in this trend. Whilst the issue of availability and licensing of the drug is being regularly debated with Councillors and MPs, it is important for parents to be aware of the dangerous pastime that their children could be getting involved with, and why they should be concerned.

It is worth remembering that although these canisters are widely available, possession and use of Nitrous Oxide is taken very seriously. CSC Simon Jesse

commented, “As a Community Special Constable patrolling Witham I have seen a sharp increase in the use of Nitrous Oxide canisters in the last year. These appear to be widely used at gatherings in parks, which not only leave dangerous litter for animals but are attractive to young children due to their shiny appearance. We do not want to see or hear of any tragedy caused by this misuse and we will continue to deal with this anti-social behaviour in the course of protecting lives. If anyone is found in possession of multiple cylinders with the intent to supply then it will be dealt with harshly and could result in a criminal record.”

Witham Town Councils Youth Task and Finish Group have growing concerns about the increased use of Nitrous Oxide amongst young people in Witham. Councillor Chelsey Jay adds, “This drug is so easy to get hold of and so cheap, please let your kids know that if they give any capsules away to friends, this carries a drug dealing charge and could really impact the rest of their lives, it’s no joke.”



**If you would like more information about Nitrous Oxide or have concerns about someone you know, you should TALK TO FRANK.**

**[talktofrank.com/drug/nitrous-oxide](http://talktofrank.com/drug/nitrous-oxide)  
or call 0300 1236600**

## KNOWN AS:

Balloons, Laughing Gas, Nos, Noz, Whippets, Chargers and Hippy Crack.

## HOW IS IT TAKEN?

Gas from the canisters are usually transferred in to another container, often balloons, before being inhaled by the user.

## DESIRED EFFECTS:

Universally referred to as 'Laughing Gas', nitrous oxide can cause giggling, euphoria and mild hallucinations. The effects are said to last approximately 30seconds, meaning users are likely to inhale multiple canisters in one period.

## IMMEDIATE RISKS:

Inhaling nitrous oxide can cause the throat to spasm, suffocating the user and causing them to fall unconscious, which can be fatal. The risk of this increases when inhaling directly from the canister, which is extremely dangerous due to the high pressure of the gas.

The gas can also cause dizziness, hallucinations, and difficulty to think straight, which can lead to any number of accidents. Consuming alcohol at the same time greatly increases the risk.

## LONG-TERM RISKS:

Extended use can inhibit the body from absorbing vitamin B12. Severe deficiency of B12 can lead to serious nerve damage, the lesser effect of which is to feel a tingling and numbness in the fingers and toes, with more severe cases causing paralysis. There have been many cases of prolonged users having difficulty walking and even permanently losing use of their limbs as a result.

## HOW IS IT OBTAINED?

It is illegal to sell and to share nitrous oxide as a recreational drug, however it is legal for use in medicine and catering, making it easy to get hold of. The product people are buying is actually 'whipped cream chargers', which retail at less than £10 for a pack of 10 canisters and can be purchased from sites such as Amazon and eBay. However, it is worth noting that most retailers require proof of age when purchasing canisters and will not sell the items to anyone under 18.



***“Take nothing but memories,  
leave nothing but footprints”***

## ***Enjoying Witham's Green Spaces***

One thing that the past year has taught us is the value of green spaces, such as parks, woodland and nature reserves. When everything else is shut, these areas are available for daily walks and exercise, giving us a dose of fresh air outside of our homes.

Witham Town Council manage the Riverwalk, Closed Churchyard on Guithavon Street, James Cooke Wood and Whetmead Nature Reserve. Our Operations Team work tirelessly to keep these areas maintained so that they can be enjoyed by all, including regular maintenance of paths and vegetation alongside daily litter picking.

It is also important to remember that in addition to regular use from the community, these areas are also home to a diverse wildlife, from Red Admiral butterflies to muntjacs and otters. Please be respectful of the wildlife and of each other when out enjoying these spaces by keeping to dedicated paths where possible and disposing of your litter in the bins provided. By working together to preserve our natural landscape, we can ensure their availability for future enjoyment.



# An Update from your Community Special Constables

Throughout the pandemic, we have seen a constant presence from our local policing team around the town. As well as presenting a visible police presence in the town centre and residential streets with regular foot patrols, they have been busy visiting areas of concern, as reported by local residents, and enforcing social distancing regulations.

Community Special Constable Simon Jesse has been providing Witham Town Council with a monthly report on patrols. These can be viewed in full on our website, but here is an excerpt from November and December to give you an idea of how your local policing team spend their time. These reports are updated monthly on our website and shared on our social media pages.

**To view the full monthly reports, please visit our website.**

**[www.witham.gov.uk/police-specials](http://www.witham.gov.uk/police-specials)**

## 5th November

Following concerns in the area of Dengie Close we attended this vicinity to provide some visibility, although we did not encounter any issues, we will increase patrols in this area to continue to provide some reassurance. We then moved up to the Maltings estate where we encountered a vehicle parked up in the Haygreen Road car park. After consulting with a traffic officer, we gave strong words of advice on the roadworthiness of their vehicle and then asked them to leave the area. We then moved our patrol over to the Forest Road area but shortly after we were directed to the Witham train station for reports of an assault that had only just occurred. We were able to be with the victim in under 2 minutes, once again showing the benefit of our CSC patrols. We worked to obtain details of the assault, provide support and then took the victim back to Braintree Police Station to obtain DNA samples. Due to local knowledge I was able to direct another unit to the site of the attack before we returned to patrol the area to look for evidence and scope for CCTV sources.



## 10th November

We had two CSC officers out on patrol tonight with the capability of being able to tackle drug related tasks. Following our initial patrol of the areas previously known for drug related activity, we headed towards the River Walk. With one officer dropped off near to Pattison Close and the other at Bridge Street we were able to stop an individual who was smoking cannabis. Following a stop search of this person we then located a quantity of class A drug on them. We dealt with this at scene and the person involved commented on our manner of dealing with them in a positive way. We then moved on to foot patrol in the town, before attending the Grove Centre following a disturbance. After returning to a mobile patrol we stopped a vehicle due to the manner of their driving. We were also able to attend a suspicious circumstances incident at a local car sales garage and provide a visible presence in the area.

## 17th November

We were fortunate to be joined by an additional Braintree Specials unit for patrols in Witham which allowed us to coordinate mobile patrols around the town. We covered the Flora Road area, including Calamint Road, Foxglove Close & Speedwell Close before heading over to Honeysuckle Way & Bramble Road. We visited the Forest Road estate, checking Cut Throat Lane by foot and the other unit checked on vehicles parked near to the Cemetery entrance. We carried out further patrols around Witham with no reported incidents, however, we did follow a vehicle leaving Witham towards Hatfield Peverel. Although we lost sight of this car, we did locate a vehicle in the Village Hall car park involved in drug supply. Although the occupants made off, we have their details and we seized drugs and the vehicle, enquiries are ongoing.

## December 4th

We commenced foot patrols following a suspicious circumstances incident near to the park area at the bottom of Rosebay Close, after a search with no trace we moved through Powers Hall End to the area behind the shops on Spa Road. Here we spotted three people that appeared to be sheltering in a store shed, as we approached, one walked briskly away and we stopped to engage with the other two. After moving them on we continued our patrol around the shops before heading in to the Humber Road estate. At the bottom of the estate we came across the same three teenagers near to the field and as we approached two immediately ran off leaving one in the process of rolling a joint containing cannabis. A subsequent stop search did not produce anything further and due to the juvenile age of the person, this has been recorded and will be dealt with appropriately. Unfortunately the others deserted their friend but we will be looking out for them in the future.

## December 21st

I crewed with PC Wilshire from the Witham Town Team and we carried out high visibility patrols. The focus was to provide a presence on the estates and in the park areas to engage and encourage the social distancing rules to protect the residents of Witham from the spread of the virus. In addition to this, there had been several posts on local Facebook groups which had highlighted suspicious activity around different neighbourhoods which is more prevalent at this time of year due to the likely rewards of presents and gifts in residents' homes. We were pleased to say that during our patrol there was no evidence of this, and we only had to speak to a small number of people concerning social distancing. We also visited the focal areas previously identified on Cypress Road, the park area on the Templars estate and Blunts Hall Road.

# Home Alone on Christmas Day

This Christmas, Witham Town Council partnered with Home Alone on Christmas Day to provide hot Christmas lunches to socially isolated members of the community. Thanks to the support of local businesses, charities and volunteers, we were able to provide a hot Christmas meal to those who would usually have relied on charity events for company during the festive season.



Not only were home cooked meals delivered to their door steps, but thanks to the generosity of the local community we were also able to hand out Christmas gifts and cards to everyone with their lunches, adding an extra special touch to the occasion.

We were also able to put a number of people in touch with charities and organisations that can help them to feel less lonely and isolated, which is especially prevalent during the recent lockdowns.

If you are feeling isolated or lonely and believe you could benefit from the regular contact that these groups provide, please contact our Deputy Town Clerk on 01376 520627 or email [deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk) for more information.

## Events in Witham

2020 saw the cancellation of many events across the country, including Witham's annual Community Day and Puppet Festival. Despite regular attempts to adapt the different events to fit around Covid-19 regulations, the constantly changing situation meant it just wasn't safe or sensible to deliver any public events.

It is clear, however, that there is a growing appetite for community events to return in 2021, and Witham Town Council are hoping to be able to provide a programme of events, however this will be subject to official government guidance surrounding the Covid-19 pandemic. To keep up to date with any planned events, follow us on social media or pop in to our Information Centre located in the Town Hall.



@withamcouncil



@withamtc



@town\_witham

# To those we lost in 2020

## Brian Wilmer

Brian was a well-known and well-loved character around the town. A keen gardener and photographer, he loved being outside and regularly walked along the River Walk. Brian could also often be found sitting outside one of the local cafes, chatting to passers-by, and sometime treating them to a song. Brian was a regular visitor to the Information Centre and held an annual exhibitions of his photography both here and at the Library. He also provided photos for the Witham calendar for many years. As a member of Witham Camera Club, Witham and Countryside Society, Witham Horticultural Society and our own Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee, he will be sadly missed by so many people in the town.



## Roy Belsham

Roy was one of the first members of Witham Town Council and sat on the Town Centre Strategy Group. After retiring from a long career as an architect, Roy used his skills to design the town sign (as seen on the front cover) which was unveiled in 2003 and still stands in Newland Street today. He regularly attended St Nicolas Church where he was a member of the choir for 80 years and also acted as the assistant organist. Roy was also an active member of Witham Rotary where he spent his time raising money for various charities, as well as helping his local Witham community.

## Has lockdown left you feeling isolated?

Many people across the country go days at a time without speaking to anyone, leaving them isolated from society, and the restrictions of the pandemic have made it even harder to reach out to someone. Whether you're a struggling single parent, the sole carer of a loved one, you're vulnerable or lonely, there are a number of organisations that have been set up to help you feel less isolated by offering a friendly voice at the other end of the phone. If you feel like this could benefit you, Witham Town Council can put you in touch with organisations that can help.

**For more information, please contact email [deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk) or call 01376 520627**



## TOWN HALL

Tel: 01376 520627

[townclerk@witham.gov.uk](mailto:townclerk@witham.gov.uk)

## INFORMATION CENTRE

Tel: 01376 502674

## 61 Newland Street, Witham, Essex CM8 2FE

Witham Town Council Offices are open Monday - Thursday 9:00AM-5:00PM and Friday 9:30AM-4:00PM.

The Information Centre in the Town Hall is open from 9:00AM-4:30PM Monday, Tuesday & Thursday, 10:00AM-4.30pm Wednesday and 9:30AM - 4:00PM Friday.

Both are closed Weekends and Bank Holidays.

Meetings of your Town Council are open for you to attend. There is usually an opportunity at the start of each meeting to speak directly to members of the Council regarding current agenda items.

Full details are displayed at [www.witham.gov.uk](http://www.witham.gov.uk)

Agendas are also on display on the noticeboard in Newland Street.

Meetings usually begin at 7:30PM and Planning Applications & Transport Committee meetings at 6:30PM. These are held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall.

**Due to the current pandemic we are only running FULL TOWN COUNCIL meetings. These are held via zoom and start at 7pm. Details of how to join are published along with agendas on our website and Facebook page. Alternatively please contact Witham Town Council for full details.**

## UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Monday 8th March
- Tuesday 6th April
- Tuesday 4th May
- Monday 10th May (AGM)

# YOUR COUNCILLORS

## CENTRAL WARD

**Michael Lager:** 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT.  
Tel: 01376 513747

**Robert Williams:** 25 Guithavon Valley CM8  
1HF Tel: 01376 510845

## WEST WARD

**Susan Ager:** 15 Chelmer Road CM8 2EY  
Tel: 01376 512470

**John Goodman:** 2 Chippingdell CM8 2JX.  
Tel: 01376 516918

**Tom Pleasance:** 5 Helford Court CM8 1TL.  
Tel: 01376 501597

**Paul Ryland:** 6 Old Parsonage Court CM8  
1XP Tel: 01376 502500

## SOUTH WARD

**Kevin Atwill:** 11 Guithavon Street CM8  
1BJ Tel: 07798 873544

**Chelsey Jay:** [cllrchelseyjay@gmail.com](mailto:cllrchelseyjay@gmail.com)

**Angela Kilmartin:** Flat 3, Iceni House,  
Newland Street CM8 2FS.

Tel: 01376 502872

**Cliff Livermore:** 4 Norah Guildler House, Strutt  
Close, Hatfield Peverel CM3  
2HB Tel: 07825 093394

## NORTH WARD

**Philip Barlow:** Rivendell, Chalks Road CM8  
2BT Tel: 01376 514033

**Jack Bayford:** 112 Oak Road, Rivenhall  
CM8 3HG Tel: 07860 748151

**Steve Hicks:** 9 Malyon Road CM8 1DF  
Tel: 01376 512590 e-mail:  
[steviehicks57@outlook.com](mailto:steviehicks57@outlook.com)

**Michelle Weeks:** 20 Elderberry Gardens CM8  
2PT Tel: 01376 515912

## HATFIELD WARD

**Clare Lager:** 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT  
Tel: 01376 513747