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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday, 28th October 2025**

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

Present: Councillors:

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)
J.C.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Mayor) (arrived 8.24p.m.)
E.	Adelaja	
L.	Barlow	
P.	Barlow	
J.M.	Coleman	
L.	Headley	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public and three candidates for co-option.

112. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fleet, Martin and Sloma; and Councillor J.C. Coleman who would be late.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

113. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 29th September 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

114. INTERESTS

There were no interests declared at the time but later in the Meeting, Councillor J.C. Coleman declared a non-pecuniary interest at Minute 124 – Statement of Internal Controls Policy, as the Council for which he worked had the same auditor and Councillor Robertson declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minutes 127 – Land Report and 128 – Community Centre, as the company for which he was employed had undertaken some work on the centre.

115. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The member of the public spoke about the Section 106 funding for public art for the Maltings Lane estate. He said that as part of the original planning application in 2006, £100,000 had been allocated, which would increase in line with inflation. What had happened to the interest? Could the money be spent on other projects such as a new GP surgery?

It was explained that originally the funding had been allocated for a place of worship and health centre but there were no doctors willing to move to the site. The Town Council had already tried to persuade the District Council to reduce the funding for public art and use the remainder for other projects without success. Any remaining funds would be returned to the developer. The District Council had been asked to release interest to the Town Council but it had declined. It was hoped that the public art funding could be used for something functional as creative play equipment.

The Town Mayor said that a written response would be provided and he thanked the member of the public for his attendance.

116. CO-OPTION

a) Person specifications from the five co-option candidates were received.

The Town Mayor welcomed the three co-option candidates to the Meeting and invited the first applicant to speak in support of her application.

The first applicant explained that she had lived in Witham South for 20 years. She had two sons, one at primary and the other at senior school. She was a trustee for Inspires MAT to ensure that all Witham children get the same standard of education. She said that since that time she had become the Safeguarding lead and the link to primary schools. She said that she had worked for Essex County Council for thirteen years in HR until 2019 when she took redundancy. She set up her own business and became a member of the Chamber of Commerce. She knew and worked with lots of people so knew what they wanted. She wanted to be a voice for residents despite political persuasion.

In answer to a question, the applicant, explained that she had always wanted to be involved in the local council as well as pushing herself outside her comfort zone and understood the commitment involved.

The Town Mayor thanked the applicant for her presentation and invited the next applicant to speak.

The applicant thanked Members for the opportunity to expand on his application. He explained that during his fifteen years as a Town Councillor he had been Chairman of both Planning and Transport and Environment Committees as well as a Member on numerous Committees so had an insight into what was needed for the town. Since stepping down as a Councillor he had been co-opted on to the Open Spaces Sub-Committee and the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group, two aspects of particular interest. He had been instrumental in setting up a Working Group to commemorate WW1. He had also served one term as a District Councillor but did not seek re-

election as he found being a Town Councillor more uplifting and relevant. He said that it would be an honour to serve again and had a strong commitment to do his best for the residents of Witham.

In answer to a question, he explained that he regretted his decision not to seek re-election and missed being part of the Council.

The Town Mayor thanked him for his presentation and invited the next applicant to speak.

The applicant explained that he had been a former Councillor for twelve years. He enjoyed the healthy banter around the Council Chamber. He was interested in the Town Council involvement with the police and road safety. He was now self-employed and repaired medical equipment in people's homes. He valued the River Walk and was a volunteer litter picker. He wished to be involved with the people of Witham.

In answer to a question the applicant explained that being a Town Councillor had been a good experience, being self-employed he could give the commitment required to the role.

The Town Mayor thanked the applicant for his presentation. He explained that the fourth candidate, had been unable to attend as her child was unwell and her husband was working. She had forwarded additional information in support of her application which the Town Mayor read out.

The applicant stated that she had lived in Witham for eight years and had children who attended local schools. She reminded Members that she had been to a previous Town Council Meeting expressing her concerns about road safety. She had an experience of business and as a Councillor she would promote local services and products. She had a university qualification supporting children with special needs and had a passion to create a dedicated support group for children with additional needs. She was interested in the Neighbourhood Plan and other new projects to improve the town. She said that she would be honoured to be co-opted as a Councillor.

The Town Mayor explained that the fifth candidate was unable to attend the Meeting as he had a longstanding family commitment.

He said that all candidates would be an asset to the Council. He added that anyone wishing to make the town a better place would be welcome in the Council Chamber as co-opted Members of the Working Parties and Groups.

- b) Members were asked to co-opt the chosen candidate for the vacancy in Witham Town (South Ward).

The Town Clerk explained that the chosen candidate had to have at least 50% of the vote otherwise the candidate with the lowest votes would step down.

RESOLVED That John Goodman be elected to serve as the co-opted candidate for Witham Town Council for South Ward.

The Town Mayor and Members welcome Councillor Goodman to the table.

117. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office from Councillor J. Goodman was received.

RESOLVED That the Declaration of Acceptance of Office was received.

118. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Essex County Councillor Playle explained that once again the North Essex Parking Partnership (NEPP) proposed changes to parking arrangements in Newland Street and urged Members to respond to its consultation.

It was explained that at the earlier Planning and Transport Committee Meeting it had been agreed to oppose the proposals and to start a petition.

Braintree District Councillor Heath said that the Scrutiny Group had investigated NEPP and the Leader of BDC proposed to work under the guidance of the Group and was understood to oppose the scheme.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

119. 20s PLENTY/ TACKLING SPEEDING

The Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee explained that there was nothing to report.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

120. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for the period 25th September to 21st October 2025 were received. He explained that he had thoroughly enjoyed his engagements.

RESOLVED That the details of the Town Mayor's engagements be received and noted.

121. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

She thanked those Members who had assisted at the Halloween Trail on Saturday with 550 children enjoying the event. She reminded Members of the Remembrance Day Parade on Sunday, 9th November and then the Christmas Market on Saturday, 22nd November 2025.

She advised Members to comment individually about the Polling Station consultation and the change from using Rickstones Academy to Rickstones Church.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

122. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL

A report from the Financial Scrutiny Panel which met on 3rd October 2025 was received.

It was explained that this work was an important part of the mechanism to demonstrate that staff adhere to policies.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

Councillor J.C. Coleman arrived at the Meeting.

123. RISK REGISTER 2025/2026

The Risk Register for 2025/2026 was received and commended to Members to approve.

RESOLVED That the Risk Register for 2025/2026 be received and approved.

124. STATEMENT OF INTERNAL CONTROLS POLICY

The Statement of Internal Controls Policy was received and Members asked to approve.

The Town Clerk explained that the Internal Auditor had recommended that the Town Council had this policy which was put in place last year. In answer to a question she explained that every year the internal controls were reviewed and whilst being good it had been decided to increase the fidelity cover. She said that the internal auditor was reviewed annually but there were a limited number available who were reasonably priced.

Councillor J.C. Coleman declared a non-pecuniary interest as the Council for which he works has the same external auditor.

Whilst this matter was discussed Councillor Adelaja was absent from the Council Chamber.

RESOLVED That the Statement of Internal Controls Policy be received and approved.

125. WITHAM'S VOICE

Members were asked about the value of producing Witham's Voice four times a year. This arose as so many people at the Street Festival had complained they had not known about it despite it being in the newsletter. The Voice was used to advertise Council events but it quickly became out of date. In a bid to save officer time, Members were asked to consider issuing Witham's Voice just twice a year.

Members spoke about the necessity to consult on the Neighbourhood Plan and the Voice would be an obvious vehicle. The Town Clerk explained that there would be a budget to produce a consultation document and other occasional leaflets.

RESOLVED That the decision be taken to produce Witham's Voice just twice a year in future.

Whilst this matter was discussed Councillor Ramage was absent from the Council Chamber.

126. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

127. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

Councillor Robertson declared a non-pecuniary interest in this item and the next as the company for which he was employed had undertaken work on the Community Centre.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

128. COMMUNITY CENTRE

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

129. BUS SERVICES

An update on bus services in Witham was received.

RESOLVED That the update be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.42 p.m.

Councillor P. Heath
Town Mayor
NS/GK/30.10.2025

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