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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 7th July 2025**

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

Present: Councillors:

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)
J.C.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	
P.	Barlow	
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
J.	Martin	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public.

48. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adelaja, Hewitt, Playle, Sloma and Taylor.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and the reasons approved.

49. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 9th June 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

50. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at the time.

51. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public asked questions in relation to the recent footpath repairs near Moat Farm Chase which forms part of the Public Rights of Way footpath 109.

The Town Mayor explained that as there were a large number of questions to be answered it would be necessary to provide a written response. He gave an assurance that a comprehensive reply would be sent within the week. The member of the public reiterated the need to ensure that the footpath was safe for all users and wanted an assurance that safety was not compromised by cost.

The Town Mayor thanked the member of the public for attending the Meeting.

52. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Braintree District Councillors Martin and Ramage had been attending Local Plan Meetings considering the outcomes from the Call for Sites exercise. It was explained that the larger sites around the major towns would be considered in the autumn.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

53. 20'S PLENTY/TACKLING SPEEDING REPORT

The Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee explained that a meeting had been arranged with the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways to discuss traffic issues including 20's Plenty. Quotes for the speed indicator device would be considered at the next Planning and Transport Committee.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

54. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 5th June to 2nd July 2025 were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

55. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that it would be necessary to defer the next Town Council Meeting from 4th to the 11th August 2025 so that quotations for the Christmas Lights could be considered.

Rat boxes by the duck pond have been vandalised, with bait being removed and replaced.

She said that a nature trail camera at Whetmead had been vandalised within less than two hours of installation.

She was pleased to announce that Witham had received a Dementia Friendly Town Award.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

56. INTERNAL CONTROL STATEMENT

The Internal Control Statement was received.

RESOLVED That the Internal Control Statement be received and agreed.

57. CO-OPTION POLICY

The updated Co-Option policy was received.

RESOLVED That the updated Co-Option policy be received and adopted.

58. BUS SERVICES

Councillor P. Barlow explained that the two recent bus surveys had been unhelpful. He said that the Town Council had long campaigned for a direct bus service to either hospitals or secondary care facilities. He considered that the surveys did not lend themselves to comment on strategic issues and that letters should be written to the originators of the surveys drawing attention to these failings. In addition he considered that a letter should be written to the Secretary of State for Health explaining that the town suffers from both a health and transport deficit; and a letter to the Deputy Prime Minister supporting the need for an Essex Mayor so there would be better control over bus services.

RESOLVED That letters be sent to Essex County Council and the NHS Mid and South Essex about the inadequacies of bus services in Witham and the lack of opportunity to comment on the recent surveys about strategic issues.

RESOLVED That a letter be sent to the Secretary of State for Health explaining that the town suffers from both a health and transport deficiency.

RESOLVED That a letter be sent to the Deputy Prime Minister supporting the need for an Essex Mayor who would have better control over bus services.

59. 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.

60. BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL'S ELECTION COSTS

A report was received about the by election costs.

Members recognised that the Town Council had exhausted channels to reduce these costs.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the full costs of the by election at £8,115.06 be paid to Braintree District Council.

61. WITHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

A monthly progress report for the Witham Community Centre was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

62. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

63. PUBLIC ART

A report on public art was received.

Members recognised the hard work committed by the artists and found it difficult to choose who should be awarded the contract for public art on the River Walk which would be funded from Section 106 developers' contributions. After deliberations it was agreed that Simon O'Rourke would be chosen.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the contract for public art on the River Walk be awarded to Simon O'Rourke to provide wooden sculptures for the River Walk up to the cost of £22,325.42 funded through Section 106 developers' contributions.

64. CHARTER MARKET

The Town Clerk explained that the number of stalls at the Charter Market had decreased in number. The original cost of the lease from the Lord of the Manor had been £1,000 per annum and would increase to £2,000 this year and rise to £5,000 thereafter. She had tried to extend the road closure, which in itself would be expensive, but she had been unsuccessful with her contacts at Essex County Council.

RESOLVED That the Charter Market be closed as costs were becoming prohibitive and the Town Clerk be authorised to dispose of the remaining balance in the budget.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.40 p.m.

Councillor P. Heath
Town Mayor

NS/GK/10.7.2025