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

# MINUTES

## ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Tuesday, 13th May 2025**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham.**

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Present: | Councillors | L. | Barlow | (Retiring Town Mayor) |
| | | P. | Heath | (Deputy Town Mayor) |
| | | P. | Barlow | |
| | | J.C. | Coleman | |
| | | J.M. | Coleman | |
| | | B. | Fleet | |
| | | L. | Headley | |
| | | T. | Hewitt | |
| | | J. | Martin | |
| | | R. | Playle | |
| | | R. | Ramage | |
| | | J. | Robertson | |
| | | A. | Sloma | |
| | | B. | Taylor | |
| | | E. | Williams | |
| | | N. | Smith | (Town Clerk) |
| | | H. | Andrews | (Deputy Town Clerk) |
| | | G. | Kennedy | (Committee Secretary) |

### 1. ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR FOR 2025/2026

The retiring Town Mayor, Councillor Lucy Barlow, gave formal thanks to staff for their support and hard work throughout her year in office. She also thanked her fellow councillors. She was grateful for the opportunity to serve the town and spoke of the varied events she had attended and the privilege to lead both the D Day Commemorative Parade and the recent VE Day Parade. She said that it had been a wonderful year and also thanked her family for their support.

Councillor Playle offered his congratulations to Councillor Barlow for completing her year in office with dignity and for steering meetings efficiently.

Councillor P. Barlow spoke about Lucy's work within the community particularly with the Royal British Legion and the wonderful job she had done.

The retiring Town Mayor called for nominations to serve for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

Councillor J.C. Coleman in nominating Councillor Heath spoke about his dedication and service to the town. He spoke of his generosity as a mentor and guide as well as his compassion and understanding.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor Paul Heath be elected to serve as Town Mayor of Witham for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

The retiring Town Mayor presented Councillor Paul Heath with his Badge of Office and in return he presented Councillor L. Barlow with a Former Town Mayor's plaque.

## 2. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE

Councillor Paul Heath spoke of his pride in accepting the honour of being Town Mayor for the third time. He said that Witham was a fantastic community to live in and he would do his utmost to promote the town and volunteers. He said that he had chosen the Alzheimer's Society as his Town Mayor's Charity.

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed by the Town Mayor and witnessed.

**RESOLVED** That the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be accepted.

## 3. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Adelaja and Councillor L. Barlow said that she might need to leave the Meeting early.

**RESOLVED** That the apologies be received and approved.

## 4. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this time.

## 5. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR FOR 2025/2026

The Town Mayor invited nominations for a Deputy Town Mayor to serve for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

Councillor Robertson in nominating Councillor Jack Coleman, spoke of his enthusiasm and attention to detail as well as speaking up for his constituents.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor Jack Coleman be elected to serve as Deputy Town Mayor for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

Councillor Jack Coleman thanked Members for their support and undertook to serve with the Town Mayor in championing the people of Witham.

The Town Mayor then presented Councillor Jack Coleman with his Deputy Town Mayor collaret.

## 6. DISPOSAL OF TOWN MAYOR'S APPEAL 2024/2025

Members were asked to authorise disposal of the Town Mayor's Appeal during the Civic Year 2024/2025, to Home-Start and Kids Inspire.

**RESOLVED** That authority be given to release the sum of £1,788.59 from the Town Mayor's Appeal to be shared between her nominated charities Home-Start and Kids Inspire.

## 7. TOWN MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE FOR THE CIVIC YEAR 2025/2026

Members were asked to authorise payment of the Town Mayor's Allowance set at £2,000 for the Civic Year 2025/2026.

**RESOLVED** That authorisation of payment of the Town Mayor's Allowance of £2,000 for the Civic year 2025/2026 be confirmed.

## 8. MINUTES

The Minutes of the Witham Town Council Meeting held 31st March 2025 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 31st March 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

## 9. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

It was explained that as Councillor Heath was an experienced Councillor, the decision had been taken to not to appoint a Leader of the Council for this Civic year.

**RESOLVED** That the Council does not appoint a Leader for the Civic year 2025/2026.

## 10. APPOINTMENT/ DISSOLUTION OF COMMITTEES

Members were asked to consider the future of the Climate Working Group.

It was suggested that, as the Climate Working Group had not met in the past year and the Environment Committee had taken climate change projects such as 'The Bee Squared' forward, the group should be disbanded. Concern was expressed that the group provided a focus and would advise the Environment Committee. After further discussion it was suggested that the group be disbanded for a year and the matter revisited at the next annual meeting.

**RESOLVED** That the Climate Working Group be dissolved.

**RESOLVED** That the dissolution of the Climate Working Group be revisited at the next Annual Meeting of the Town Council.

## 11. SCHEME OF DELEGATION

Members were asked to approve the changes to the current Scheme of Delegation.

It was noted that the Estimates Sub-Committee needed to be made a stand-alone Committee.

**RESOLVED** That the changes to the Scheme of Delegation be approved.

## 12. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES

Nominations were received to appoint Members to serve on the following Standing Committees for the Civic Year 2025/2026 -

(a) Community Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Community Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | E. | Adelaja |
| | L. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | L. | Headley |
| | P. | Heath |
| | J. | Martin |
| | R. | Playle |
| | R. | Ramage |
| | J. | Robertson |
| | E. | Williams |

(b) Environment Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Environment Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | E. | Adelaja |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | J.M. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | L. | Headley |
| | T. | Hewitt |
| | J. | Martin |
| | J. | Robertson |
| | A. | Sloma |
| | B. | Taylor |

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Policy and Resources Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | L. | Barlow |
| | P. | Barlow |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | L. | Headley |
| | P. | Heath |
| | J. | Martin |
| | R. | Playle |
| | R. | Ramage |
| | J. | Robertson |
| | B. | Taylor |

(d) Planning Applications and Transport Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Planning and Transport Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | E. | Adelaja |
| | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | J.M. | Coleman |
| | L. | Headley |
| | R. | Playle |
| | R. | Ramage |
| | J. | Robertson |
| | A. | Sloma |
| | E. | Williams |

(e) Staffing Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following members be elected to serve on the Staffing Committee for the ensuing Civic Year -

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | P. | Barlow |
| | L. | Barlow |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | P. | Heath |
| | J. | Martin |
| | R. | Playle |

(f) Estimates Committee

The suggestion was made that the Estimates Committee should be made up of the Town Mayor, Chairs and Vice-Chairs of Committees. This was met with disappointment as it was considered that to ensure collaboration in the process other councillors should be appointed. It was agreed that the Scheme of Delegation would be amended at the next Town Council Meeting and additional Members appointed.

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Estimates Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | J.M. | Coleman |
| | P. | Heath |
| | J. | Martin |
| | J. | Robertson |

## 13. APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS/VICES

Nominations were received to appoint Chairman and Vice Chairman and make appointment of such to each of the following for the Civic Year 2025/2026:

(a) Community Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J.C. Coleman be appointed as Chairman and Councillor P. Heath be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Community Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(b) Environment Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J. Martin be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J.M. Coleman be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Heath be appointed as Chairman and Councillor Robertson be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(d) Planning Applications and Transport Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J. Robertson be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J.C. Coleman be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(e) Staffing Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J. Martin be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Staffing Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(f) Estimates Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Heath be appointed as Chairman and Councillor Robertson be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Estimates Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

## 14. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SUB-COMMITTEES

**RESOLVED** That the following members elected to serve on the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | J.M. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | P. | Heath |
| | T. | Hewitt |
| | R. | Ramage |

## 15. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES

To receive nominations and vote to appoint Members to the following Advisory Committees for the Civic Year:

(a) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

Comment was made that this was a hybrid group so others could join.

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | L. | Headley |
| | T. | Hewitt |
| | R. | Playle |

(b) Improving Healthcare Facilities Working Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Improving Healthcare Facilities Working Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | J.M. | Coleman |
| | L. | Headley |
| | T. | Hewitt |
| | R. | Ramage |
| | B. | Taylor |

(c) Section 106 Steering Group

The suggestion was made that as the Cycling Development Group had not met recently it would be appropriate to merge with the Section 106 Steering Group.

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Section 106 Steering Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | L. | Barlow |
| | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | L. | Headley |
| | P. | Heath |
| | R. | Playle |
| | B. | Taylor |

(d) Financial Scrutiny Review Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Financial Scrutiny Review Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | E. | Adelaja |
| | P. | Barlow |
| | B. | Fleet |

(e) Cycling Development Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Cycling Development Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | L. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | P. | Heath |
| | R. | Playle |

(f) The Voice Editing Panel

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on The Voice Editing Panel for the ensuing Civic Year –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | J.C. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | P. | Heath |
| | R. | Playle |

## 16. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND REPRESENTATIVES

Members were asked to appoint Members to the following representative positions for the Civic Year 2025/2026:

(a) Braintree Association of Local Councils

**RESOLVED** That Councillor Robertson be appointed to serve on the Braintree Association of Local Councils and Councillor J.C. Coleman act as his deputy.

(b) Chamber of Commerce

**RESOLVED** That Councillor Heath, as Town Mayor, be appointed as the Town Council representative on the Chamber of Commerce.

(c) Citizens Advice

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J.C. Coleman, as the Chairman of the Community Committee, be appointed as the representative to the Citizens Advice.

(d) Witham Carnival Association

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as the representative on the Witham Carnival Association.

(e) Passenger Transport Panel

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J.C. Coleman be appointed as the Town Council representative on the Passenger Transport Panel.

(f) LGBTQ+ Ambassador

The suggestion was made that to be more inclusive and encompassing and to include all sections of the community such as ethnic minorities and religious groups that the name should be changed to Equalities and Communities Ambassador.

**RESOLVED** That the name be changed to Equalities and Communities Ambassador.

**RESOLVED** That Councillors L. Headley and T. Hewitt be appointed as the Equalities and Communities Ambassador.

## 17. ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS

Revised Standing Orders were received for adoption.

**RESOLVED** That the revised Standing Orders be adopted.

## 18. ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

A report was received about revisions to the current Financial Regulations.

The Town Clerk advised that new Financial Regulations would be taken to the next Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

**RESOLVED** That the revisions to the current Financial Regulations be adopted.

## 19. ADOPTION OF CODE OF CONDUCT

The Code of Conduct for adoption for the Civic Year 2025/2026 was received.

**RESOLVED** That the Code of Conduct be adopted.

## 20. APPOINTMENT OF AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES

The Authorised Signatories were confirmed.

**RESOLVED** That the following Councillors be confirmed as authorised signatories –

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Councillors | P. | Barlow |
| | J.C. | Coleman |
| | B. | Fleet |
| | L. | Headley |
| | P. | Heath |
| | R. | Playle |

## 21. ASSET REVIEW

Details of the Council's assets were received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the Town Sign had not been registered previously.

**RESOLVED** That details of the Town Council assets be received and noted.

**22. APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2025/2026**

Members confirmed that Heelis and Lodge would continue to provide the Council's internal audit for the financial year 2025/2026.

**RESOLVED** That Heelis and Lodge be confirmed as the Council's internal auditor for the financial year 2025/2026.

**23. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT**

The amended Community Engagement Statement which included 'pop-up' stalls and community events was received.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Community Engagement Statement be received and agreed.

**24. TREASURY & INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Town Council's Treasury Investment Policy was received. Amendments to comply with legislation and industry standards were included.

**RESOLVED** That the Treasury Investment Policy be received and agreed.

**25. TIME AND PLACE OF ORDINARY MEETINGS**

The Meeting Calendar for 2025/2026 was received.

**RESOLVED** That the Meeting Schedule for 2025/2026 be received and agreed.

**26. YEAR END INTERNAL AUDITOR'S REPORT**

The Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31st March 2025 was received.

It was noted that the only comment made was to consider reviewing fidelity insurance but it was considered that stringent measures were in place to reduce risk.

In answer to a question the Town Clerk explained that she was looking at options with regard to a card payment option for petty cash.

**RESOLVED** That the Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31st March 2025 be received and noted.

**27. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2024/2025**

The Draft Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 were received.

The Town Clerk explained that once adopted a single page would be produced giving details for residents.

**RESOLVED** That the Annual Accounts for the year ended 31st March 2025 be received and adopted.

**28. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) – SECTION 1 GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Town Council's Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31st March 2025 was received.

**RESOLVED** That the Annual Governance Statement Section 1 for the Year Ended 31st March 2025 be agreed and signed by the Town Mayor.

**29. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) - SECTION 2 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

The Town Council's Section 2 Accounting Statements for the Year Ended 31st March 2025 was received.

**RESOLVED** That the Annual Governance Accounting Statements Section 2 be agreed and signed by the Town Mayor.

The Town Mayor expressed his gratitude to the Town Clerk for completion of the Annual Accounts despite staff shortages.

**30. 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.

**31. ELECTION COSTS**

A verbal report was received.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**32. MALTINGS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

A report was received.

Members agreed that the Sale Contract, relating to the Maltings Lane Community Centre, between Braintree District Council and the Town Council be signed.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Mayor sign the contract of sale.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.52 p.m.

Councillor P. Heath
Town Mayor

NS/GK/15.5.2025