



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE  
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## AGENDA

### WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> February 2026** Time: **7:30 p.m.**

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

**Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.**

To be present:

Councillors:

P. Heath (Town Mayor)	L. Headley
J.C. Coleman (Deputy Town Mayor)	J. Martin
E. Adelaja	R. Playle
L. Barlow	R. Ramage
P. Barlow	J. Robertson
J.M. Coleman	A. Sloma
B. Fleet	B. Taylor
J. Goodman	E. Williams

Nikki Smith  
Town Clerk  
NS/GK/3.2.2026

#### **1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

#### **2. MINUTES**

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 12<sup>th</sup> January 2026 (previously circulated).

**3. INTERESTS**

To receive any declarations of interest that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this agenda.

**4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment.

*Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)*

**5. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE**

To receive reports from Essex County and Braintree District Councillors on matters relating to Witham.

**6. TACKLING SPEEDING/20s PLENTY**

To receive an update from the Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee.

**7. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS**

To receive details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 1<sup>st</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026 attached at page 4.

**8. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

To receive the Town Clerk's report on matters arising attached at page 6.

**9. LEGIONELLA RESPONSIBILITIES**

To formally appoint a Duty Holder, Responsible Person, Deputy Duty Holder and Deputy Responsible Person as part of the Town Council's Legionella responsibilities.

**10. DRAFT MEETING SCHEDULE 2026/2027**

To receive and approve the draft Meeting Schedule for 2026/2027 civic year attached at page 7.

**11. BUS GRANT**

To receive a report attached at page 9.

**12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: 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.

**13. LAND TRANSFER**

To receive a report attached at page 13.

**14. MALTINGS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE**

To receive a report attached at page 14.

**15. UK TOWN OF CULTURE**

To receive a report attached at page 18.



**LIST OF MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN  
1<sup>st</sup> January 2026 to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026  
Councillor Paul Heath**

**Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Hosted the Chatty Café at the Town Hall Heritage Room, engaging with residents.

**Friday 9<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Hosted Afternoon Tea at the URC.

**Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Hosted the Chatty Café at the Town Hall Heritage Room, engaging with residents.

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Hosted the Quiz night at the RBL.

**Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Attended Sunday Cinema at the RBL.

**Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> January 2026**

Hosted the Chatty Café at the Town Hall Heritage Room, engaging with residents.

**Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> January 2026**

Hosted the Chatty Café at the Town Hall Heritage Room, engaging with residents.



**Monday 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2026**

Attended the Veterans Coffee Morning at the RBL.

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ITEM NO: 8

**Officer Report: Town Clerk's Report**

**The following matters are for members to note:**

Events

The events calendar has been set for the year if Members would like to note the dates for their diaries-

- Easter Trail 4<sup>th</sup> April 10.00-3.00pm
- Dog Show 2<sup>nd</sup> May 10.00-3.00pm
- Music Festival 4<sup>th</sup> July 3.00-10.00pm
- Teddy Bear's Picnic 6<sup>th</sup> August 12.00-2.00pm
- Summer Fayre 22<sup>nd</sup> August 12.00-5.00pm
- Witham Festival 19<sup>th</sup> September 10.30-2.30pm
- Halloween Trail 31<sup>st</sup> October 10.00-3.00pm
- Remembrance Parade 8<sup>th</sup> November 2.00-4.00pm
- Christmas Fayre 21<sup>st</sup> November 3.00-7.00pm

An Open Garden event will also be confirmed in due course.

Improving Fire Engine Availability in Essex

Essex Fire and Rescue Service is consulting on the "Improving Fire Engine Availability in Essex" proposal, which includes Witham Fire Station. Members are encouraged to review and respond to the consultation they have been sent via <https://www.essex-fire.gov.uk/improving-daytime-fire-engine-availability> . A local consultation roadshow will take place in the Heritage Room on 19 February, 12.30pm–3.30pm.

**Advice:**

To receive and note.

Schedule of Meetings for Civic Year 2026/2027

Agenda Item 10

FULL COUNCIL & STANDING COMMITTEES

	2026								2027				
	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY
TOWN COUNCIL	AM Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 15 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 14 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 10 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 5 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup> Mon 30 <sup>th</sup>		Mon 11 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 9 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 5 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 4 <sup>th</sup> AM Mon 17 <sup>th</sup>
ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE			Mon 27 <sup>th</sup>			Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>			Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>			Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>	
COMMUNITY COMMITTEE		Mon 1 <sup>st</sup>		Mon 24 <sup>th</sup>			Tues 17 <sup>th</sup>			Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup>			
POLICY & RESOURCES COMMITTEE		Mon 29 <sup>th</sup>			Mon 21 <sup>st</sup>			Mon 7 <sup>th</sup>			Tues 23 <sup>rd</sup>		
PLANNING & TRANSPORT COMMITTEE  <i>(Commences 6:30pm)</i>	Mon 18 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 1 <sup>st</sup> Mon 15 <sup>th</sup> Mon 29 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 14 <sup>th</sup> Mon 27 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 10 <sup>th</sup> Mon 24 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 7 <sup>th</sup> Mon 21 <sup>st</sup>	Mon 5 <sup>th</sup> Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 3 <sup>rd</sup> Tues 17 <sup>th</sup> Mon 30 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 11 <sup>th</sup> Mon 25 <sup>th</sup>	Mon 8 <sup>th</sup> Mon 22 <sup>nd</sup>	Tues 9 <sup>th</sup> Tues 23 <sup>rd</sup>	Mon 5 <sup>th</sup> Mon 19 <sup>th</sup>	Tues 4 <sup>th</sup>
STAFFING COMMITTEE  <i>(Commences 7:30pm)</i>							Mon 9 <sup>th</sup>						
ESTIMATES COMMITTEE								Tues 15 <sup>th</sup>					

Elections 6<sup>th</sup> May 2027

02/02/2026

**Schedule of Meetings for Civic Year 2026/2027**

**SUB-COMMITTEES & SCRUTINY FUNCTIONS**

	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DEC	JAN	FEB	MAR	APRIL	MAY
OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE <i>(Commences 2:00pm)</i>		Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>			Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup>			Wed 2 <sup>nd</sup>			Wed 3 <sup>rd</sup>		
FINANCE SCRUTINY PANEL <i>(Commences 10:00am)</i>					Thurs 17th						Thurs 18th		

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ITEM NO: 11

## Officer Report: Essex Love Your Bus 2 Grant - Direct Bus Service to Broomfield Hospital

### Introduction

This report updates Members on the submission of a grant application to the Essex "Love Your Bus Fund" to establish a direct bus service linking Witham to Broomfield Hospital. The proposal represents a significant step forward in addressing long-standing transport inequalities and health access barriers that have been a focus of Council campaigns for over 20 years.

### Background and Need

#### Healthcare access challenge:

Witham has no secondary care provision. Residents requiring treatment at Broomfield Hospital currently face a complex, three-stage journey using multiple buses, or are forced to pay for expensive taxis or private cars. This is a particular hardship for older, disabled, low-income and car-free residents, many of whom have told the Council they have postponed or cancelled hospital appointments rather than undertake the journey.

#### Long-standing campaign:

The Council has been campaigning for improved transport links to secondary care since at least 2002, when a council survey showed 95% of residents supported a direct bus link. In 2025, a further survey of 258 residents found 93% would be more likely to travel to Broomfield by bus if a direct service existed, with 49% then using taxis and 18% reliant on carers or family vehicles.

#### Recent advocacy:

In the past year, the Council has written to the NHS Alliance Director for Mid Essex, the Essex County Council Cabinet Member for Highways, Infrastructure and Sustainable Transport, and the Secretary of State, highlighting the transport barriers to secondary care. The Council has also submitted a formal response to the Essex Local Transport consultation and the previous Council Leader spoke with the Chief Executive of the Integrated Care Board to raise health and transport deficits.

### The Proposal

#### Service outline:

The Council is proposing that DigiGo (a demand-responsive community transport provider already operating in the area) extends its service to Witham and runs up to 5 direct return journeys per day between Witham and Broomfield Hospital, using a 16-seater minibus.

#### Expected outcomes:

- Simplify current complex multi-stage journeys into a single, bookable, direct service
- Improve access to secondary care for patients, visitors, carers and hospital staff

- Reduce reliance on taxis and private cars for hospital trips
- Support lower-income and vulnerable residents who cannot currently afford or manage the existing journey
- Contribute to Essex County Council's strategic goals of reducing car dependency, improving health and wellbeing, and promoting independence

**Target occupancy:**

DigiGo has indicated that the service should become commercially sustainable once occupancy reaches around 75% after the first year of operation.

**Funding and Financial Terms**

**Grant amount sought:**

£50,000 from the Essex Love Your Bus 2 Fund.

**Additional contributions:**

- Braintree District Council: approximately £30,000 from Section 106 sustainable transport funding to lease a fully accessible bus for one year
- Witham Town Council: £6,346.15 in-kind (staff time for social media, newsletters, launch events, graphic design, leaflets, parking and monitoring/reporting)
- DigiGo: approximately £1,000 in marketing support

**Total project cost:** £87,346.15

**Use of Love Your Bus grant:**

The £50,000 will fund eligible revenue costs, including driver hours, fuel, scheduling and monitoring and evaluation activities.

**Grant conditions:**

- Revenue projects only (capital not eligible)
- Grant-funded spending must be completed by 31 March 2027
- Quarterly progress reports must be submitted to Essex County Council
- Final evaluation report due 31 December 2027
- Essex County Council reserves the right to audit projects and claw back funds if delivery expectations are not met

**Partnership Support**

The application is supported by a strong partnership network:

**Strategic partners:**

- Braintree District Council (Section 106 funding and commitment)
- Local County Councillor (formal letter of support)
- Priti Patel MP (formal letter of support)
- Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust / Broomfield Hospital (letter of support and data)

**Community partners:**

- Witham Community Hub
- Witham Foodbank
- Royal British Legion (Witham branch)
- Local churches (United Reformed Church, Bethel Church, St Nicholas Church)
- Moorfield Court Residents Association
- Citizens Advice

These partners will help promote the service to their users and networks, ensuring that those most in need are aware of it and can access it.

**Evidence Base**

**Resident demand:**

- 2002 survey: 95% support for a direct bus link
- 2025 Witham survey: 93% of 258 residents would use a direct bus if available
- Weekly complaints from residents about transport barriers to hospital appointments
- Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust 2025 Patient Travel Survey: 76% of trips to hospital made by car, with 31% of Broomfield respondents reporting parking problems

**Health need:**

- Witham has no secondary care; St Peter's Hospital (Braintree) is closing
- Residents currently delay or cancel appointments due to transport barriers
- Health inequalities and social isolation linked to poor transport access

**Sustainability Plan**

**One-year business case:**

The £50,000 grant (alongside the £30,000 Section 106 lease funding) will enable the service to operate at a useful frequency during year one, building patronage towards the 75% occupancy target needed for breakeven.

**Beyond year one:**

If 75%+ occupancy is achieved, DigiGo is expected to be able to continue the service on a breakeven or near-breakeven basis, reducing reliance on public subsidy. Braintree District Council has indicated that further Section 106 contributions may be available to support longer-term sustainability if demand is demonstrated.

**Council role:**

The Town Council's matched investment in marketing, launch events, and ongoing liaison with health and community partners is designed to build and maintain awareness and usage, supporting long-term viability beyond the grant period. The bus will be parked at the new Witham Community Centre overnight to reduce travelling time into Witham from Braintree.

**Monitoring:**

Quarterly data sharing with the operator and resident feedback will allow refinement of timetables and routings to keep the service efficient and responsive to demand.

**Timeline**

- **January 2026:** Application submitted to Essex County Council
- **March/April 2026 (expected):** Grant panel decision
- **April 2026 onwards:** Formal grant agreement and project initiation (if successful)
- **Target service launch:** Summer 2026
- **31 March 2027:** Grant-funded spending completion deadline
- **31 December 2027:** Final evaluation report to Essex County Council

**Risks and Mitigation**

**Risk:** Grant application unsuccessful

**Mitigation:** Strong partnership support, evidence of need, alignment with Essex County Council strategic goals, and delivery partner commitment should strengthen the bid. Council has already invested staff time in developing the application.

**Risk:** Service does not reach 75% occupancy within year one

**Mitigation:** Intensive local promotion through matched staffing, engagement with health partners and flexible demand-responsive routing to match demand with the option of approaching Hatfield Parish Council and extending the service in to there if required. DigiGo has experience operating similar services.

**Risk:** Section 106 funding from Braintree District Council is delayed or not confirmed

**Mitigation:** Ongoing liaison with Braintree District Council confirms commitment to the lease funding. This partnership is essential to the application and has been locked in before submission.

**Risk:** Compliance and reporting burden

**Mitigation:** The Clerk and administrative team will establish quarterly reporting processes and liaison with the grant funder from the outset. DigiGo is experienced in data sharing for monitoring purposes.

**Strategic Alignment**

The proposal directly supports Essex County Council's "Love Your Bus" objectives:

- **Strong, inclusive and sustainable economy** – enables residents to work and access services more easily
- **High-quality environment** – reduces car journeys and emissions
- **Health, wellbeing and independence for all ages** – improves access to secondary care and reduces transport-related social isolation
- **Good place for families to grow** – supports young families and vulnerable households to reach essential services

**Advice:** Members are asked to receive and note the bid.

NS/30.01.2026

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