



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 26th September 2022**

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

Present: Councillors

J.	Bayford	(Town Mayor)
J.	Goodman	(Deputy Town Mayor)
S.	Ager	
P.	Barlow	
S.	Hicks	
C.	Jay	
A.	Kilmartin	
C.	Lager	
M.	Lager	
T.	Pleasance	
J.	Williams	
R.	Williams	

Also in attendance: Cllrs

D.	Louis	(Witham Southern)
R.	Playle	(Witham Northern)
W.	Rose	(Witham West)
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
C.	Strachan	Assistant RFO)

The Meeting commenced with one minute's silence in tribute to the late Queen Elizabeth II.

87. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atwill, Heath, Rajeev and Weeks.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

88. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 30th August 2022 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

89. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at the time but at Minute 98 – Witham Carnival Association, Councillor Hicks declared a non-pecuniary interest as he used to be involved with the carnival and Councillor J Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest as she is a member of the carnival committee; and at Minute 99 - 2023 Events, Councillor Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest as his granddaughter was part of a performing arts group which could be invited to be part of a Music Festival.

90. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

91. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Braintree District Councillor Wilson had sent her apologies.

Councillor Rose explained that a skate park consultation would begin on 14th October 2022 as the out-dated facilities need to be replaced. There would be an opportunity to respond in person on Saturday, 22nd October between 3.30 p.m. to 5 p.m. at the skate park. A meeting had been held with the Primary Care Trust about health facilities in the town but there was no commitment by GPs to staff new premises.

Councillor Playle referred to the closure of Chipping Hill bridge and hoped that the problems with diverted traffic would soon settle. He said that the Secretary of State had accepted the submission of the application for the A12 widening. He understood the Town Council's disappointment that the devolution scheme had now closed and hoped that a deal could be brokered for the Town Council to continue. He said that he would shortly be meeting with the Highways Liaison Officer for a site visit to deal with strategic issues and finally said that there would be a stakeholder meeting on 3rd October to discuss Youth Service provision in the district.

Members hoped that the no right turn into Maldon Road from Newland Street would be progressed and likewise the bus shelter near the old police station. Comment was made in relation to the devolution scheme that Suffolk County Council had held a free two-day course for Parish and Town Council workers to allow them to work adjacent to main routes.

Councillor Louis said that there would be a Local Highways Panel Meeting next Monday. He had submitted LHP requests for HGV routes, weight limit for Maltings Lane and a safety barrier at the bottom of the footpath from Spa Road. He was pleased to announce that the traffic lights over the A12 from Hatfield Road should soon be removed. The new contract for bus shelters should be in place this autumn and then consideration would be given to relocate any redundant shelters. He reminded Members that he still had money available in his Locality Fund. He added that he could take up any concerns regarding the diversion in place because of the closure of Chipping Hill Bridge and that he had taken a holistic approach that it would be better to have an HGV routing review in the first instance before a weight restriction on the bridge.

The Town Mayor thanked everyone for their reports.

RESOLVED That the reports be received and noted.

92. TOWN MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor’s engagements attended for period 31st August to 26th September 2022 were received.

The Town Mayor explained that due to personal reasons he had been unable to attend Chelmsford Cathedral on Sunday.

Councillor Goodman said that it had been an honour and privilege to make the Proclamation for King Charles III.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

93. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

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

It was explained that Committees would be considering strategy and budgets at their next Meetings before recommendations being taken to the Estimates Committee Meeting in December 2022. Although this was the last year of this administration it was necessary to set a budget but plans put in place could be changed.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

94. STANDING ORDERS

A report on a proposed change to Standing Orders regarding public participation was received.

Members considered this to be a good idea but recognised that whilst the public could raise issues Members would be unable to make a decision at that Meeting. It was agreed that the word ‘answer’ should be changed to ‘ask’.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the proposed change to Standing Orders with the above amendment be approved.

95. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

A letter was received from PKF Littlejohn LLP along with Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate.

Members thanked the Town Clerk and her staff for a successful audit. It was recognised that the procedures in place, including the internal audit and the Scrutiny Group led to competence.

RESOLVED That the letter and Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate be received and noted.

96. KEEPING WARM THIS WINTER

(a) List of Venues

A list of venues providing a warm environment and refreshments to the vulnerable was received.

Members agreed that this was a useful list which could go onto the Town Council’s website and would be updated regularly.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

(b) Motion

A Motion was received from Councillor Ager requesting that the Function Room be used on a Monday to provide a warm place with refreshments.

Councillor Ager explained that she and Councillor Heath proposed to be responsible for this initiative which would be open for everyone to keep warm. This would be achieved on a small budget and with help from supermarkets a simple lunch of soup could be arranged. Councillor Heath would use his allowance to fund the library being open too.

Members welcomed the idea but a risk assessment was suggested.

RESOLVED That a risk and safety assessment be carried out so that the Function Room can be open on a Monday during the winter months to allow people to keep warm.

It was agreed to adjourn the Meeting to allow for Community Special Sergeant Jesse to introduce Charlie Watts as a new Community Special Constable. Members welcomed CSC Watts and looked forward to working with him.

97. **PERIOD GARDEN**

A Motion was received from Councillor Barlow that parts of the Period Garden be restored and opened again to the public.

Councillor Barlow said that as part of the Change of Use application for the Town Hall, the Town Council was required to create a Period Garden. He understood the need to provide more space for the operations team and considered that the back part of the garden with the heritage fruit trees could be restored. Members were mindful of the garden being previously used for anti-social behaviour and recommended that gates be erected and locked out of hours. Light sensors and CCTV cameras could also be used.

RESOLVED That the motion that parts of the Period Garden be restored and opened again to the public be agreed in principle and the matter referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

98. **WITHAM CARNIVAL ASSOCIATION**

A report about the future support given to the Witham Carnival Association was received.

Councillor Hicks declared a non-pecuniary interest as he used to be involved in the carnival.

Councillor J. Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest as a member of the carnival committee.

It was explained that those children and young people selected to be in the carnival court have not only an enjoyable year but grow in confidence and that more committee members were being sought.

RESOLVED That the need for matched funding be removed if the Carnival Association applied for further grants and that assistance for manpower be considered as required.

99. 2023 EVENTS

A request was received from the Community Committee for 2023 events to be discussed at Full Town Council.

During the discussion of this item, Councillor Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest as his granddaughter was part of a performing arts group that could be invited to take part in a music festival.

Members considered in depth whether to hold a Dog Show or a Music Festival next year particularly as it could coincide with the Coronation.

In view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders.

RESOLVED That in view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Order 3x to allow business to continue.

Whilst some Members wished the Dog Show to be held annually it was agreed that next year there would be an event to celebrate the Coronation.

RESOLVED That an event to celebrate the Coronation be organised for 2023 and that the Dog Show be considered for 2024.

100. OPERATION LONDON BRIDGE

(a) A report was received regarding the procedures put into place for Operation London Bridge.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

(b) A letter of condolence was received from Christian Schwarz, Mayor of Aßlar.

Members thought this to be a generous and thoughtful gesture and that Christian Schwarz should be thanked for his condolence.

Members considered that best wishes should be sent to both Wardbröl and Aßlar as they celebrate Unification Day on 3rd October 2022.

RESOLVED That the letter be received and acknowledged with thanks.

RESOLVED That letters be sent to the Mayors of Wardbröl and Aßlar sending best wishes as they celebrate Unification Day.

101. DIGNITY AT WORK

Members were asked to approve the Dignity at Work policy.

RESOLVED That the Dignity at Work policy be received and approved.

102. MEMBERS' RELATIONSHIP

Members were asked to approve the Members/ Officers Relations policy.

RESOLVED That the Member/Officer Relationship policy be received and approved.

103. CIVILITY AND RESPECT PLEDGE

A report and information regarding the Civility and Respect Pledge was received and Members asked to consider signing.

The Town Clerk explained that the National Association of Local Councils and the Society of Local Council Clerks had encouraged all Councils to sign.

RESOLVED That the Town Council would sign the Civility and Respect Pledge.

Councillor Kilmartin left the Meeting.

104. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning and Transport Committee held 30th August 2022

Minutes 84 – 95 (inclusive)

Councillor Goodman, Chair of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

Minute 93 – Cycling Development Group

A recommendation was made to increase the group's membership and to appoint Councillor Heath to the Group.

RESOLVED That the membership of the Cycling Development Group be increased to six and Councillor Heath be nominated to serve for 2022/2023.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Planning and Transport Committee be received and noted.

105. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

106. LAND TRANSFER

A Land Transfer report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

107. FUNDING REPORT

(a) The Funding Report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

(b) A report on Safer Streets funding was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 10 p.m.

Councillor J. Bayford
Town Mayor

NS/GK/30.9.2022