Witham town council

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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 28th September 2020**

Present:	Councillors	Mrs	S.C.	Lager	(Town Mayor)
		Mrs	S.	Ager	
			K.L.	Atwill	
			P.R.	Barlow	
			J.C.	Bayford	
			J.C.	Goodman	
			S.E.	Hicks	(arrived 7.18 p.m.)
		Miss	C.	Jay	
		Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
			M.C.M.	Lager	
			C.S.	Livermore	(arrived 8.10 p.m.)
			T.A.	Pleasance	
		Miss	M.L.	Weeks	
			R.	Williams	
Essex County Council		Cllr	J.	Abbott	(Witham Northern)
			J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
		Miss	N.	Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		Mrs	H.	Andrews	(Assistant Proper Officer)
		Miss	L.	Brimson	(Events Officer)
		Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And two members of the public.

175. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P.M. Ryland who had a previous engagement and Councillor C.S. Livermore who would be late as he had a hospital appointment.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

176. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 1st September 2020 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor in due course.

177. INTERESTS

Councillors M.C.M. Lager and Mrs S.C. Lager declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 183 – Delegated Decisions, as a planning application referred to a neighbour's tree being felled.

178. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr Ross Playle commented on the new procedure to obtain blue badge renewals as set out in Councillor D. Louis' report, he asked if the Town Council would be able to promote this information.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Playle for his comments and said that this would be done.

179. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Members recorded their thanks to Councillor D. Louis for his report and noted his support for the Blackwater Rail Trail project. The Town Clerk explained that there had been a short meeting with Essex County Council and another scheduled in a few weeks' time.

Members asked when the potholes, which had been reported as part of the Member-Led Initiative, would be repaired. Councillor J. Abbott explained that they would have already been inspected and categorised for repair according to their severity. Those of a minor nature would be repaired as part of routine maintenance and the worst ones repaired quicker.

Councillor J. Abbott then spoke about the major resurfacing at the Grove junction with The Avenue. He said that as part of the Member-Led Initiative he had reported 13 pot holes in Witham Northern. The Local Highways Panel had met recently and there were five schemes for Witham on the list including Lawn Chase re-lining and the zebra crossings for Cressing Road and Rickstones Road. He had spoken to the County Council Cabinet Member about funding as it would take until 2026 for the current schemes to be completed. The Local Highways Panel is not sustainable as only £1.45m has been allocated to the Braintree District.

He then spoke about the recycling centres and would raise at the Full Essex County Council Meeting in October the discrepancies of the types of waste and vehicles allowed to access centres as he considered residents should have the same access. He said that he had also been in contact with Network Rail regarding fly tipping onto the Braintree Branch line and was confident that this would be cleared. Members then spoke about collections of large items from homes and whether the District Council could provide a free collection. Councillor J. Abbott added that it was depressing to see fly tipped items that could have been recycled. He said that it was the Cabinet Member's decision in 2016 to disallow certain items not to be recycled at the Witham Centre. Members requested that a letter be written to Essex County Council asking that Witham's Recycling Centre be allowed to take the same items as Braintree.

Councillor J. Abbott said that there had been an A12 Forum meeting. He said that this was a once in a generation opportunity to get the detail right with regard to cycleways, etc.

Members asked Councillor J. Abbott whether he would be able to use his influence to get the white lining at Lawn Chase resolved as residents had waited three years. Councillor J. Abbott

said that he had sent an email fully supporting this issue and urging for completion of the work. He said that a contribution towards funding the project might assist.

The Town Mayor thanked both Councillor J. Abbott for the information and Councillor D. Louis for his written report.

Whilst the above item was being discussed Councillor S.E. Hicks arrived at the Meeting.

180. APPOINTMENTS

The Town Mayor expressed her thanks to Ron Ramage who had made the decision to resign as both a Town and District Councillor in order to have the time to come to terms with his bereavement.

(a) Deputy Town Mayor

A nomination for Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin to serve as Deputy Town Mayor for the remainder of the Civic Year was received.

RESOLVED That Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin be elected to serve as Deputy Town Mayor for the remainder of the Civic Year 2020/2021.

(b) Chairman of the Community Committee

A nomination for Councillor Mrs S. Ager to be Chairman of the Community Committee was received.

RESOLVED That Councillor Mrs S. Ager be elected to serve as Chairman of the Community Committee for the remainder of the Civic Year 2020/2021.

The Town Mayor explained that since the lock-down she had completed a few engagements including a filmed interviewed by Revd Mark Ambrose of the United Reformed Church on what is involved being the Town Mayor, she raised the Pride flag, opened the renovated Information Centre and attended events at the War Memorial to mark 75th anniversary of VJ Day and 80th anniversary of Battle of Britain. She had helped at the recent Social Isolation stall at the Tuesday Market with Community 360 and been out with the Finding your Feet Walking Group. She had presented a National Boys' Brigade President's Award to Louis Ray who despite life challenging handicaps was a very active and cheerful member of the BB. She had also become a Phone Buddy for the Royal British Legion. She was sad to report that Roy Belsham a former Member of the Town Council had recently died and she had sent condolences to his widow on behalf of the town. Members recognised the service Roy had given to the community and the Deputy Town Mayor said that whilst there might not be space for her to attend his funeral she would enquire if she might do so.[1]

The Town Mayor said that she would be having surgery on Friday but hoped to be able to chair next month's Meeting.

181. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

[1] Whilst there was no space to attend the funeral, Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin in her capacity as Deputy Town Mayor, represented the Town Council by standing outside St Nicolas Church whilst the funeral procession passed.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

182. COVID-19: EMERGENCY PROVISIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

The Covid-19: Emergency Provisions for Governance were received.

Members discussed whether the Planning Applications and Transport Committee should also be having Zoom Meetings to discuss delegated decisions in line with other Committees.

RESOLVED That the Covid-19: Emergency Provisions for Governance be received and approved, and be reviewed at Town Council on 23rd November 2020.

183. DELEGATED DECISIONS

Councillors M.C.M. Lager and Mrs S.C. Lager had declared interests.

The delegated decisions for the period 18th August to 14th September 2020 were received.

RESOLVED That the decisions be received and noted.

184. HIGHWAYS REPORT AND LOCAL HIGHWAYS PANEL

A recommendation from the Environment Committee that the Highways Report and Local Highways Panel Minutes become the remit of the Planning Applications and Transport Committee was received.

RESOLVED That the Highways Report and Local Highways Panel Minutes become the remit of the Planning Applications and Transport Committee.

185. CHRISTMAS EVENTS

The Town Clerk explained that he had been evaluating the proposed Christmas Market and expressed concern regarding the number of people who might attend particularly if Witham's Market was the only such event in the area. Members agreed that it would be unsafe to proceed.

The Events Officer then talked about organising a festive, light display on the River Walk between Bridge Street and Pattison Close. It would be close to the Town Centre and easily accessible with the area lit up. It would run throughout December and into the New Year so residents would have plenty of opportunity to visit. The lights would be turned off at 11:00pm. The Town Clerk said that there was £22,000 unspent in the Events budget and such an installation would finish a dreadful year on a nice note.

Members were supportive of the plan and the Town Clerk gave an assurance that the installations would be insured. It was agreed that if restrictions lifted other events could be put into place such as a formal switch on of lights.

The Town Clerk said that he would explore the idea of lit Christmas Trees in Care Home gardens with the Deputy Town Mayor.

RESOLVED That the Christmas Market be cancelled.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk be delegated to proceed with ideas relating to other Christmas Events to include the light display on the River Walk.

Councillor C.S. Livermore arrived whilst this item was being discussed.

Councillor K. Atwill then left the Meeting.

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 (Section 4) of the Local Government Act 1972.

186. LEGAL MATTERS

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

187. CUT THROAT LANE ALLOTMENTS

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

188. DOG WALKING AREAS

A report from Councillor Miss C. Jay was received. She explained that she had received lots of support for the idea of secure dog walking areas.

Members agreed the idea in principle and suggested that the Office be asked to look at the practicalities of a scheme. The Town Clerk said that he would need to establish negotiation with the land owners who might disagree for the land to be used in this way. A business case would then be drawn up.

RESOLVED That the report be received and Members agree in principle for enquiries to made of land owners before a business plan can be agreed.

189. PUBLIC DOMAIN

Members agreed that Minute 188 – Dog Walking Areas, be moved into the Public Domain.

RESOLVED That Minute 188 – Dog Walking Areas, be moved into the Public Domain.

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

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager
Town Mayor

JS/GK/5.10.2020