



## **Governance Statement**

Witham Town Council demonstrates good governance to the public at large by operating a culture of maximum possible transparency and accountability to both itself and the public. This statement sets out how the Council governs its affairs in a way that ensures nobody is left feeling unsure what their local council is doing.

### **Governance**

The Council runs a rigorous system of internal control overseen by the Member led Financial Scrutiny Panel. The Council has committed itself to ensuring that governance is performed above the statutory minimum by subjecting itself to six monthly internal review. In addition, the Council plans its Corporate Strategy via a rigorous business planning process involving all key stakeholders. All business plans and draft budgets are examined in detail by the Estimates Sub-Committee whose purpose is to validate plans to ensure that the Council is allocating funds efficiently to the delivery of key projects.

### **Value for Money**

The Policy & Resources Committee presides over a 'continuous improvement' approach to the management of fixed overheads and administration costs, maintaining a lean body of staff and exploring innovative ways to reduce bureaucracy to discharge new initiatives at minimal cost without compromising on desired outcomes. The Council operates a rigorous tender procedure and extended procurement process for contracts exceeding £25,000, whilst longstanding suppliers are subject to periodic benchmark to ensure they maintain competitive in rapidly evolving markets.

### **Best Practice in meeting duties in relation to bio-diversity, crime and disorder.**

The Council is proud to have led the way in Essex Police Community Special Constable programme, being the first authority in Essex to achieve not just one warranted constable, but a team of four dedicated, warranted officers who have made an immensurable impact on crime and disorder over the past two years. Since the scheme's inception, special constables have moved on to become full time police constables, however through the Council's rigorous and fully funded recruitment campaign ran in partnership with Essex Police, new constables have replaced those which have moved on, meaning Witham Town Council has played its part to improve police numbers across the county as well as locally.

Witham Town Council is also the principal manager of key open spaces in Witham including a community woodland, local nature reserve and extensive River Walk that runs the entire length of the town and is known to all residents as the 'Jewel in the Crown'. Underpinned by ten-year management plans, the Council reaches out to the local community through its Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee to draw from local expertise and interest in open spaces, ensuring that the Council has genuine engagement from the public to help shape the spaces they care about the most. In preparing the 2<sup>nd</sup> generation River Walk Management Plan, the Council now intends to build upon its existing successes by achieving Green Flag Status. In addition to this ambition, the Council continues its work with the Essex Wildlife Trust on proactive management and improvement of the sensitive 'back channel' area, which provides safe habitat for endangered water voles.