



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 13th November 2023**

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

Present: Councillors

L.	Barlow	(Chairman)
P.	Heath	(Vice Chairman)
E.	Adelaja	
S.	Ager	
J.C.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
R.	Playle	(arrived at 8 p.m.)

Also in attendance: Cllr P. Barlow

Essex Police Sergeant

S.	Jesse	(Community Special)
J.	Allen	(Witham Hub)
T.	Townsend	(Witham Hub)
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public.

41. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors R. Ramage and E. Williams; and Councillor R. Playle who would be late.

42. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 21st August 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

43. **INTERESTS**

All Members of the Labour Group declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 49 – Witham Allstars Majorettes, as they used to use the Labour Hall for their practising.

Councillor Fleet declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 50(a) – Grant Updates – Templars Community Centre, as he is a member of the Witham Tree Group which assisted in the tree planting scheme and a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 54 – 2024 – 2025 Draft Budget and Corporate Strategy, as a grant to the CA was detailed and could be used to pay their rent to the Public Hall of which he is a Trustee.

Councillor Ager declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 51 – Mayor’s Cadet, as the current Town Mayor.

Councillors L. Barlow and P. Barlow declared non-pecuniary interest in Minute 50(b) – Grant Updates – 2nd Witham Boys’ Brigade, as their children and grandchildren were members of the organisation.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 50(a) – Grant Updates – Templars Community Centre, Councillors P. Barlow and Playle declared non-pecuniary interests as they were involved with the association.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 54 - 2024 – 2025 Draft Budget and Corporate Strategy, Councillor P. Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest as he would be attending the CA Annual General Meeting on 22nd November 2023.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 59 – Charter Market, Councillor Headley declared a pecuniary interest as she occasionally has a stall at the market and then left the Council Chamber whilst the matter was discussed.

44. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A lady attended to complain about the Tuesday Charter Market, she was the owner of a shop in Newland Street. She stated that she believed that motorists do not want to pay for car parking and just want to pop into nearby shops. She stated that the problem with the market was the unreliability of traders and the position of individual stalls being inappropriate. She considered that the market should be in a car park leaving the road for motorists to park. She had been told that the stall holders are charged just £10 whilst taking trade from nearby shops who had to pay high rent and rates.

The Chairman said that the Town Council is not in control of the Charter Market nor does it own car parks. She was aware of the issues but there would not be a simple solution. She thanked her for bringing this issue to the attention of the Town Council.

45. ESSEX POLICE

The Chairman congratulated Special/Sergeant Simon Jesse on his High Sheriff’s Award. He said that he was very fortunate to be rewarded for doing something he enjoyed and hoped to encourage others to become a Special Constable.

S/Sergeant Jesse said that they had been undertaking speed checks in The Avenue and that there would be potential to look again at Speed Watch once the new street warden was in post. He was disappointed that large groups of teenagers had gathered at Halloween, letting off fireworks in the Spa Road area which was unacceptable. A dispersal order had been put in place and through CCTV cameras some perpetrators had been identified and parents spoken to. He considered that education was the key.

The Chairman thanked Sergeant Jesse for his report.

46. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

Members said that an issue of paying District Council's green bin charges was raised at the last pop-up stall. Members of the public who did not have internet access were struggling to pay. It was explained that there was a dedicated phone line and payment accepted over the phone, by cheques or BACs payment but the issue would be taken up with the District Council.

Members were disappointed that it would not be possible to run the Home Alone scheme this Christmas. Members thanked the Town Clerk for all her work in progressing the CCTV extension.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

47. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman welcomed Tina Townsend and Jane Allen to the Meeting to talk about future plans at The Hub.

Jane Allen gave a presentation on the proposed HOLD project to fill gaps in the help available for the community. She wanted help to always be available, through advice and support, with drop in opportunities to deliver a range of services. She said that early intervention was required to assist families in crisis and reduce the level of suffering. She stressed the importance of enabling people's pride, dignity and confidence. She spoke about the problems of getting help through CA at present whilst The Hub could provide immediate help sourcing items or grants. The Hub provided a warm, safe environment and staff have empathy, understanding and respect. She said that staff can help with filling in forms, providing food parcels and signposting to other services. She then explained the groups currently running and how they reached into schools. She emphasised safeguarding aspects to ensure that everyone was safe.

Tina Townsend then spoke about organisations and businesses that were committed to assisting with a one-day fund raiser and the importance of going out into the community to assist.

Members congratulated The Hub for its work and Jane and Tina were thanked for their presentation.

Councillor Adelaja was absent from the Council Chamber for part of the above item.

48. WITHAM COMMUNITY HUB

A grant aid request was received from the Witham Community Hub for £5,000 towards the HOLD project.

Members were disappointed that the CA was under so much pressure at the moment and asked what the District Council was doing to assist the vulnerable at this time. It was understood that the District Council provided 100% rate relief for The Hub and the County Council paid its rent. It was agreed that the Town Clerk should contact the District Council about what help they give to the vulnerable, with potential for an officer to attend a future meeting. It was understood that one of the Witham's District Councillors would be making a grant through their Locality Funding.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk contact Braintree District Council regarding community support.

RESOLVED That a grant of £5,000 be given to The Hub to support its HOLD project.

49. WITHAM ALLSTARS MAJORETTES

A grant aid request was received from Witham Allstars Majorettes.

The members of the Labour Group had declared an interest.

It was noted that funding was sought to finance six months' rent at Rickstones Academy and Members wondered how the project would continue after this time. The Town Clerk explained that numbers were reduced following COVID and that it was hoped to recruit new members so that the majorettes would become self-funding again.

Members were concerned whether this would be viable and that the proposed grant for such a small number of people would not be commensurate.

RESOLVED That a decision be deferred whilst better information including a business plan to include number projections was obtained.

Councillor Ager was absent from the Council Chamber for part of the above discussion.

50. GRANT UPDATES

Updates from the following grant recipients were received.

- a) Templars Community Centre

Councillors P. Barlow and Playle declared non-pecuniary interests because of their involvement in the association and Councillor Fleet had declared an interest.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

- b) 2nd Witham Boys' Brigade

Councillors L. Barlow and P. Barlow had declared interests.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

51. MAYOR'S CADET

A request to create a 'Mayor's Cadet' was received.

Councillor Ager had declared an interest.

Members agreed that this request should be welcomed.

RESOLVED That a 'Mayor's Cadet' be created.

52. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 30th September 2023 was received.

RESOLVED That the Income and Expenditure report be received and noted.

53. EVENTS CONTROL ACCOUNT

An update on the Events Control Account was received.

RESOLVED That the update be received and information noted.

54. 2024-2025 DRAFT BUDGET AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

The proposed Community Committee Budget and Strategy for 2024-2025 were received.

Councillor Fleet had declared an interest.

The Town Clerk explained that there was flexibility to change the proposed budget before the Estimates Meeting in December when its Members would be considered the whole budget for the Town Council. Members commented that the Silver Cinema budget might need updating.

Comment was made about the CA Debt Advice service and Councillor P. Barlow declared an interest as he would be attending its AGM on 22nd November 2023; mention was also made of the invitation to attend Jutterburg and a tentative budget for the visit. Members also noted the high cost of the Witham Festival and ways to make it more cost effective.

RESOLVED That the proposed Community Committee Budget and Strategy for 2024 - 2025 be received, accepted and taken forward to the Estimates Sub-Committee Meeting in December 2023 with the amendment to the Silver Cinema budget if necessary.

55. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media statistics were received.

Members welcomed the statistics.

RESOLVED That the social media statistics be received and noted.

56. SECTION 106 FUNDING

Members were asked to identify opportunities for funding through Section 106 monies but no comment was made.

RESOLVED That no opportunities were identified for funding through Section 106 monies.

57. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN WITHAM WORKING GROUP

The Minutes of the Improving Healthcare Facilities in Witham Working Group meeting held on 23rd October 2023 were received.

It was explained that there would be restructuring as the Health Service was currently running at a deficit so ambitions needed to be scaled back. It was noted that Dan Doherty, NHS Alliance Director for Mid Essex, would be attending a meeting next month to provide an update on any progress. It was disappointing to note that the Diagnostic Service had been positioned in Braintree and not Witham.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and information noted.

58. 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.

59. CHARTER MARKET

Councillor Headley declared a pecuniary interest and left the Council Chamber.

A verbal report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

Councillor Headley returned to the Council Chamber.

60. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report was received from the Information Centre Manager.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

61. WITHAM TOILET PROVISION

A report regarding the provision of toilets in Witham was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.28 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
NS/GK/ 16.11.2023