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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 30th September 2019**

Present:	Councillors	R.P.	Ramage	(Chairman)
		J.C.	Bayford	(Vice Chairman)
		P.R.	Barlow	
		M.C.M.	Lager	
	Mrs	S.C.	Lager	
		C.S.	Livermore	
		T.A.	Pleasance	
	Miss	M.L.	Weeks	
		R.	Williams	
Also in attendance:	Cllr	J.C.	Goodman	
		S.E.	Hicks	
	Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
Braintree, Halstead & Witham	Mrs	R.	Fahie	(Chief Executive Officer)
Essex Police	SPC	S.	Jesse	
		J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
	Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
	Miss	N.	Smith	(Assistant RFO)
	Miss	L.	Brimson	(Events Co-ordinator)

36. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors K.L. Atwill and P.M. Ryland who had previous engagements and Miss C. Jay who was unwell.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

37. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 5th August 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

38. INTERESTS

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager declared an interest in Minute 41 – Citizens Advice as it is one of the beneficiaries from her Charity. She reminded Members that she is the Town Council representative on Citizens Advice.

39. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

Councillor J.C. Goodman asked to be allowed to speak on Minutes 48 – VE Day 75, 51 – Community Reports and 53 – Bus Service 39.

40. POLICE UPDATE

The Chairman welcomed SPC Jesse to the Meeting.

The August update was received.

SPC Jesse explained that speed checks continued although they were not always possible to carry out on housing estates and then they would increase patrols and be a visible presence. He stressed that residents need to report incidents of speeding and note index plates so they could respond and give advice to motorists. The special constables had been to schools, pubs and bars to increase visibility. He said that whilst there had been no knife related incidents a knife amnesty bin would be useful to allow residents to dispose of knives safely. He explained that the Police cannot respond to social media and all incidents need to be reported either through 999 in an emergency, 101 or Crime Stoppers. He was pleased to report that a fourth member of the team had joined the Specials.

In answer to a question, SPC Jesse said that the police cannot connect to the CCTV cameras with their mobile devices. Members agreed that this needed to be rectified.

In relation to an incident reported earlier by Members, SPC Jesse explained that he had warned the motorcyclist about the nature of his riding by way of a verbal warning and if this is repeated a Section 59 Order will be issued and his motor bike confiscated.

Members then spoke about the issue of overnight thefts from vans. SPC Jesse explained that this was a serious problem and he could understand workmen being reluctant to empty their vans of tools each night. He said that extra locks and alarms could be fitted to vans and SMART water used to mark tools. It was suggested that information could be handed out to residents at the Pop-Up event in October at ASDA.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk be asked to advise on the safety issues for staff of providing an amnesty bin to dispose of knives safely.

RESOLVED That Police be lobbied so that local officers can connect with the CCTV cameras.

RESOLVED That the update be received and noted.

The Chairman thanked SPC Jesse for his informative report.

41. CITIZENS ADVICE

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager had declared an interest.

The Chairman welcomed Rachel Fahie, Chief Executive Officer of Citizens Advice (CA), to the Meeting to give a report.

Ms Fahie thanked Members for the opportunity to explain the issues which Witham CA deals with. She said that residents can seek impartial, independent advice with confidence from CA. This free advice is available for anyone in the district. She explained that the Advice Line is open between 10 am to 4 pm and face-to-face interviews can be arranged if further help is required. She said that all the advisers are trained volunteers giving 280 hours of service each week. In the year 2018-2019, 892 Witham residents had been helped along with others from the district. She listed the top issues as being benefits, debts and finance. She added that financial issues can be linked with helping underlying problems. There had been a radical overhaul of the way Witham CA worked making it more efficient. All the telephone advice was given from Witham with some interviews in outreach locations in Braintree.

Ms Fahie then gave two case studies – the first about a disabled client and problems with Personal Independence Payments (PIP); and the second about a young family needing assistance from a Family Law Solicitor.

Members then had an opportunity to ask questions. She advised that PIP is a nationwide problem and that Witham CA used to have housing issues as one of the top five problems and this had been replaced with Financial Capability. She explained that the CA can assist in achieving maximum benefit entitlements which can alleviate debt issues.

The Chairman thanked Ms Fahie for attending the Meeting and giving her report.

42. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk explained that he had just received a response from the Police, Fire and Crime Commissioner who had been exploring options regarding a suitable secure site for a locker. It was understood that the local district commander wanted all officers to go to Braintree Police Station before a shift for a briefing but Members considered that technology would offer a solution.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Chief Constable asked if the situation of Witham's Special Constables needing to sign on at Braintree could be resolved and a secure locker be provided in Witham.

43. GRANT AID REQUEST

A grant aid request from the Witham Allstars Majorettes was received.

Members considered that a grant of £150 should be made.

RESOLVED That the Town Council awards a grant of £150 to the Witham Allstars Majorettes towards new costumes.

Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin left the Meeting.

44. COMMUNITY BUDGET

The Community Committee Budget was received.

Members spoke about the Puppet Festival budget and the Town Clerk explained that there was no overspend as sponsorship and other income makes up the difference.

The Town Clerk said that there is an underspend in the Community budget owing to staff vacancies earlier in the year.

RESOLVED That the Community Budget be received and noted.

45. BUS SHELTERS

A report, originally considered by the Environment Committee was received and Members were asked to consider recommending to Town Council that funding be vired to allow for replacement bus shelters.

Members were informed that all the redundant bus shelters in Gershwin Boulevard had been earmarked for elsewhere in the town and the Local Highways Panel would be unlikely to assist in replacements. Members agreed that bus shelter funding should be raised to £5,000 so that a new bus shelter could be purchased and the Town Clerk would make enquiries as to whether it would be cheaper to get one made locally.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That £4,500 be vired from the Community Team budget to the Bus Shelter budget.

46. PUPPET FESTIVAL

A report was received.

The Town Clerk was pleased to report that the Puppet Festival went smoothly despite the Events Co-ordinator only being in post for two months. The Arts Council had given a grant of £4,800 which had resulted in extra acts being booked and the United Reformed Church being used for the first time. Members agreed that the Festival had been a success and spoke about their experiences.

The Leader of the Council thanked all staff for giving up their Saturday and for their enthusiasm and energy. He suggested that the Events Group consider looking at the name of the Festival.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

Councillor P.R. Barlow left the Meeting.

47. SOCIAL ISOLATION

Members were asked to consider what the Town Council can do to tackle social isolation.

The Chairman read out an email from Councillor Mrs S. Ager who detailed problems with the elderly and housebound accessing facilities. She suggested that a directory of organisations should be compiled.

Members were informed that the Town Council actively engages with the elderly by organising the Silver Cinema once a month with 35 – 40 people attending and numbers increasing. The Town Luncheon also met three times a week at the Town Hall.

It was suggested that enquiries ought to be made to find out what happens in the redundant children's centres and at Parkside during the day as there would be opportunity to use. It was

not only the elderly who are lonely but younger people too. Members were informed that Greenfields Community Housing also provides activities for its residents.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

48. VE DAY 75

The Notes from the VE Day 75 Group Meeting held 23rd September 2019 were received.

Members were informed that a number of ideas had been considered including an event in the Park, with 1940s music and other entertainment. Other parties including the Royal British Legion and the Church would be invited to join the Group. An application for funding would be made to the next Community Committee.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and information noted.

49. YOUTH TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Notes from the Youth Task and Finish Group Meeting held 21st August 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and noted.

50. COMMUNITY SAFETY TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Notes from the Community Safety Task and Finish Group Meeting held 11th September 2019 were received.

The importance of getting the CCTV system extended was stressed and LINK had been provided with a map and would price up options in time for the next Meeting. The Town Clerk said that unspent money for the CCTV extension had been earmarked in the reserves.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and information noted.

51. COMMUNITY REPORTS

Reports from Members who are Town Council representatives on outside bodies were received.

Members were informed that there would be no Passenger Transport Panel report until the next meeting next year.

Members discussed the Luncheon Club's comment that noise reverberated round the Function Room now that the carpet had been replaced with a new hard floor. The Town Clerk was tasked to investigate noise absorption materials which could resolve this issue.

RESOLVED That the reports be received and noise absorption materials be investigated to resolve the issue of noise in the Function Room.

52. INFORMATION CENTRE

Details of Information Centre statistics for July and August 2019 were received.

The Town Clerk said that the biggest profit had been made in six years which was down to the Information Centre Manager's expertise.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

53. BUS SERVICE 39

Details of a public consultation to reduce bus service 39 from 25th July 2020 were received.

Members understood that the County Council would be unable to afford to subsidise running an empty bus and would not object to the proposals. It was considered by Members that local citizens who were to be directly affected by the proposed service changes be actively encouraged to respond to the consultation, however in recognition of the service not currently meeting cost-per-passenger guidelines, it was subsequently:

RESOLVED That no objections be made to the proposal to reduce bus service 39 from July 2020.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.30 p.m.

Councillor _____
Chairman

JS/GK/2.10.2019