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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Monday, 16th September 2019**

Present: Councillors

T.A.	Pleasance	(Chairman)
J.C.	Goodman	(Vice Chairman)
J.C.	Bayford	
S.E.	Hicks	
Miss C.	Jay	
Mrs A.	Kilmartin	
M.C.M.	Lager	
Mrs S.C.	Lager	
C.S.	Livermore	
Miss M.L.	Weeks	

Also in attendance:

Essex County Councillor	D.	Louis	(Witham Southern)
	J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
Mrs G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)	
Mrs H.	Andrews	(Assistant Proper Officer)	

And one member of the public.

34. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Mrs S. Ager and R.P. Ramage who had previous engagements.

RESOLVED That the apologies for absence be received and accepted.

35. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 23rd July 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

36. INTERESTS

Councillor S.E. Hicks declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 48 – Braintree District Local Plan and Minute 49 – Local Highways Panel as a Member of Braintree District Council.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 41 – Highways Report, Councillor J.C. Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a resident of Chippingdell.

37. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr John Palombi spoke welcomed the new steps from the Catholic Bridge down to the Blackwater Rail Trail but was concerned that there was no ramp to allow access for people in wheelchairs or buggies. He considered that the Town Council should be aware if it wished to take ownership of the Rail Trail in the future.

The Chairman thank Mr Palombi for his comments which would be considered at Minute 39 – Town Clerk’s Report.

38. REPORT(S) FROM COUNTY COUNCILLORS

The Chairman welcomed Essex County Councillor Derrick Louis to the Meeting.

Councillor D. Louis thanked the Committee for the opportunity to speak. He explained that as part of a footway scheme for repairs that do not meet criteria he had submitted Humber Road and Ouse Chase. He had requested speed bumps in Constance Close and a speed survey to be undertaken. He said that redundant bus shelters from Gershwin Boulevard will be relocated in Maldon Road and Hatfield Road after being requested by the Town Council. He had also received a request for hedgehog warning signs. He said that the Local Highways Panel (LHP) would be looking at the requests for box marking Newland Street by Lawn Chase. He said that there would be a three month pilot to extend the part time working of the traffic lights in Maldon Road junction with Blue Mills to 9 p.m.

Councillor D. Louis said that large lorries which park up on the off-slip from the A12 to the south of Witham are unable to turn right to get back onto the A12 and it was hoped that an island could be moved to accommodate this manoeuvre. He said that reports would be given at the next LHP Meeting on 25th September 2019 on the zebra crossing for Chipping Hill School. He had received complaints regarding stone chippings in Spa Road and pot holes in Powers Hall End. The schemes for pot hole and footpath repairs are likely to be repeated annually.

Councillor D. Louis explained that he now had regular meetings with Councillor M.C.M. Lager and the Town Clerk. He had also arranged for them to meet with Councillor K. Bentley, Deputy Leader of Essex County Council and Cabinet Member for Infrastructure, to discuss the Town Council’s desire to take ownership of the Blackwater Rail Trail.

Members then had an opportunity to ask questions.

In answer to a question Councillor D. Louis explained that there would be a review of the pilot on the extension of the traffic lights in Maldon Road and asked for feedback on the impact so they could be adjusted accordingly. The comment was made that better signage was required for HGVs. Members were reminded that he was the Member for Witham Southern and matters concerning the north or central needed to be referred to Councillor J. Abbott. Members also mentioned the traffic lights over the A12 to the south of the town and asked that traffic should be prevented from flowing in the other direction. Councillor D. Louis said that he would raise this problem again.

The Chairman thanked Councillor D. Louis for his report.

Councillor J. Abbott had been unable to attend the Meeting but had given a written report which was read out. He too commented on the steps which had been installed at the Catholic Bridge. He supported the measures to calm traffic and remove difficult parking in Conrad Road. Crossings in Crossing Road and Rickstones Road would be going through the Local Highways Panel. He would continue to support these schemes and urge that funding be restored to relieve the backlog of schemes. He then referred to the Local Plan and the significant transport deficit that already existed locally and which would inevitably worsen given the very high level of development proposed. He was concerned about the postponement of work to the A12 which will be delayed until at least 2023. He would be presenting to the Local Plan Examination that a key consideration should be upgrading the Braintree branch line and sustainable access to it which would ease commuter parking pressure and congestion in Witham.

39. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk explained that approximately half of the Town Council street light inventory had been converted to LED and had been advised by contractors a minor variation in agreed specification would be needed for lights that were adjacent to the highway in higher locations to ensure light spread was adequate.

Members were informed that the criteria had now been received from Highways officers regarding Speed Indicator Devices. Average speeds need to be 5 mph or over for a device to be installed and this average was not reached on any of the speed surveys.

Members agreed with the comment Mr Palombi had made with regard to a ramp being required from the Catholic Bridge down to the Blackwater Rail Trail and this would be taken into consideration at the meeting with Councillor Kevin Bentley on 15th October 2019.

RESOLVED That the Report be received and information noted.

40. ENVIRONMENT BUDGET

Details of the Environment Budget were received.

Members noted that the tree budget was over due to the additional work required in keeping the trees safe. The Town Clerk advised that the budget for devolved services could be vired to the tree budget. The importance of getting the budget right was stressed.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That £2,000 be vired from the devolved services budget to the tree budget.

RESOLVED That the details of the Environment Budget be received and noted.

The Town Clerk then left the Meeting.

41. HIGHWAYS REPORT

Councillor J.C. Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest as a resident of Chippingdell.

The updated Highways Report was received.

Members were informed that an application for parking restrictions in Chippingdell had been submitted on 27th June 2019.

RESOLVED That the Highways Report be received and information noted.

42. CONRAD ROAD – SPEEDING

Councillors S.E. Hicks and Miss M. Weeks gave a report regarding the 20's Plenty Campaign.

Members were informed that Councillor S.E. Hicks had met with the head teacher of Elm Hall school and surveyed traffic at 3 p.m. on a Friday afternoon. He said that parked cars caused problems, motorists were ignoring the pedestrian crossing and six minibuses for South View School added to the difficulties. It was thought that a petition from parents and residents to Essex County Council would be useful. Councillor M.C.M. Lager had attended the school that morning and there were no problems. He thought that a 20's Plenty scheme should be pursued but was not persuaded that a parking ban would assist as vehicles would speed.

Members considered that the old orchard in Conrad Road would be an ideal place to park the South View minibuses and an enquiry should be made to Braintree District Council who owned the land.

RESOLVED That the information be received and proceed with the 20's Plenty Campaign.

RESOLVED That Braintree District Council be asked whether the old orchard could be utilised for parking the South View school minibuses.

43. PLANNING APPLICATIONS AND TRANSPORT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee Meetings held 23rd July, 5th and 19th August; and 2nd September 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

44. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held 14th August 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

45. HIGHWAYS DEVOLUTION

The Assistant Proper Officer explained that the scheme had been slow to get off the ground as the Open Spaces Supervisor needed to attend a Street Works course and now appropriate road signs had been ordered. She explained that work adjacent to priority one routes through the town could not be undertaken. The Open Spaces team had completed the clearing of the footpath near Blunts Hall. She asked that Members inform her of work that was required along with a photograph.

Feedback would be given to the Essex Association of Local Councils.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

46. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION STEERING GROUP

The Notes from the Town Centre Regeneration Steering Group held 3rd September 2019 were received.

Members agreed that this had been a productive Meeting.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and noted.

47. DELIVERING DEVELOPERS' OBLIGATIONS TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Notes from the Delivering Developers' Obligations Task and Finish Group Meeting held 5th September 2019 were received.

Members had broadened the ambit of the Group to look at all the developers' contributions to not only the District Council but to Essex County Council and the NHS. The suggestion was made that the District Council should compulsory purchase the remaining housing site on the Maltings Lane development so that steps can be taken to get it developed.

RESOLVED That the new name of the Group be noted.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and noted.

48. BRAINTREE DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN

Councillor S.E. Hicks had declared an interest.

A report was received regarding the consultation.

Members recognised that this was an enormous document to consider. A difficulty was highlighted as the maps showed the proposed Garden Community at Marks Tey in different locations and likewise the proposed route of the A120.

Members agreed that the following points should be made in response to the consultation –

- Importance of infrastructure being in place early to include transport links, medical facilities etc.
- That the agreed route of the A120 should be shown as joining the A12 south of Kelvedon.
- There should be good connectivity with Witham so that early residents of the garden community can use the town's facilities.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the above points used in the response to the consultation.

49. LOCAL HIGHWAYS PANEL

Councillor S.E. Hicks had declared an interest.

An extract from the Local Highways Panel Meeting held 20th June 2019 was received.

RESOLVED That the extract be received and noted.

50. BUS SHELTERS

A report was received and Members asked to consider whether to increase the budget for the ten Witham Town Council owned bus shelters to allow for replacements.

Members discussed the redundant bus shelters on Gershwin Boulevard and that they should be utilised. It was thought that consideration should be given to look at the Bus Shelter budget at the next Meeting.¹

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

51. TREE GROUP

The Notes from the Tree Group meetings held 16th July and 12th August 2019 were received.

Members were informed that the results of the grant request for the Tree Group's bowser would be received in the next week or so.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.18 p.m.

Councillor _____
Chairman

GK/19.9.2019

¹ The Community Committee is responsible for bus shelters and the matter will be referred to its next Meeting.