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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday, 2nd May 2023**

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

Present: Councillors

J.	Bayford	(Town Mayor)
J.	Goodman	(Deputy Town Mayor)
S.	Ager	
P.	Barlow	
P.	Heath	
S.	Hicks	
A.	Kilmartin	
C.	Lager	
M.	Lager	
T.	Pleasance	
S.	Rajeev	
M.	Weeks	
R.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the last Town Council Meeting of the Administration. He thanked Councillor Goodman as his Deputy and thanked Members for their help and support throughout the year. He asked for his thanks to be passed to his Secretary for her help during the year.

228. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Atwill and J. Williams. Councillor Jay was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

229. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 17th April 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

230. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this time.

231. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

232. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

No reports were given.

233. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period April 12th to April 25th 2023 were received.

Councillor Goodman explained that he had also attended the North Essex Regional Final of the Speak Out Challenge on 27th April 2023 at the New Rickstones Academy which had been excellent with 15 students talking for three minutes each on a subject of their choice.

RESOLVED That the Town Mayor's Engagements be received and noted.

234. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk explained that Braintree District Council had been in contact regarding refurbishment of the skate park at Spa Road and input would be required from the Town Council on the final design. Completion would be by June 2024. Users of the skate park had been consulted earlier.

The Town Clerk stated that a contractor had been appointed regarding the town centre regeneration.

There would be an online meeting on Thursday 4th May 2023 to discuss Housing Needs Assessment. Members of the Neighbourhood Plan Group agreed that a 3 p.m. meeting would be the best time.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk's report be received and noted.

235. COMMITTEE REPORTS

Planning and Transport Committee held 17th April 2023

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Councillor Goodman, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Planning and Transport Committee be received.

236. BRAINTREE ASSOCIATION OF LOCAL COUNCILS

Councillor M. Lager, Town Council's representative on Braintree Association of Local Councils (BALC), promoted the organisation. The association had been resurrected after

COVID and identified issues of concern to lobby the County and District Councils. In addition they have four seats on the Local Highways Panel and recommended that the next Town Council representative seeks to be on the panel. BALC meets quarterly with a speaker and in the past has had the Chief Constable of Essex give a presentation.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Lager for his report.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

237. END OF ADMINISTRATION REPORT

Councillor M. Lager, as Leader of the Council, spoke about the achievements during this Administration through the work of Members, staff and volunteers. He spoke of the underpinning values of respect, courtesy and good manners. He referred to the problems created by COVID and issues caused by the national economy. He was pleased that the Town Council now owned the River Walk and Allotments. Much needed work to the cycleway/footpaths on the River Walk would be funded through Section 106 monies. He thanked the Tree Group for their support and referred to the major tree works that had been undertaken. He spoke about the Climate Change Working Group and its plans to protect the environment. He then referred to all the events that now take place annually and the support given to the Silver Cinema and carnival. He was pleased that the Town Council had been able to support the recruitment of special constables and the work they had done in reducing anti-social behaviour. It had been disappointing that despite lobbying the NHS health improvements for the town had not progressed. Likewise progress on devolution had stalled after the pilot scheme with Essex County Council.

He thanked his fellow Councillors and staff for their work throughout the past four years particularly during COVID and also remembered Cllr Ryland and Cllr Livermore who had died.

Other Members then had an opportunity to remember not only the past four years but the achievements the Town Council had made since its conception with the move to the Town Hall, the support it had given throughout the years to local charities and organisations, the installation of CCTV cameras and the running of additional events. Frustration of not being able to achieve improvements to the health facilities in the town was reiterated. Mention was made of the town coming together against the proposed development at Gimsons.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

238. PAYMENT AUTHORISATION

A report was received on payment authorisation after the upcoming elections.

Members agreed that it made sense with so many Councillors not standing for re-election that the Town Clerk be given delegated power to approve necessary payments.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Responsible Financial Officer be able to authorise any payments deemed necessary to enable the continuation of work until signatories are changed with Unity and Lloyds Bank.

239. 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.

240. FUNDING REPORT

The Funding Report was received.

RESOLVED That the Funding Report be received and noted.

241. LAND TRANSFER UPDATE

The Land Transfer Update was received.

RESOLVED That the Land Transfer Update be received and noted.

The Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.27 p.m.

Councillor J. Bayford
Town Mayor

NS/GK/9.5.2023

Draft