

Community Statement

Witham Town Council is the 'local' authority, and the Council places this ethos at the very heart of its work, defending local interests and positively promoting strong community cohesion.

Engagement with the Community

Witham Town Council operates an open-door policy for all public enquiries whether they be through correspondence, emails, telephone calls or visits. The Town Hall acts as a principal anchor for the Newland Street Conservation Area and the Council proudly runs the town's Information Centre, one of the last such centres to remain open in Essex. Following redevelopment of the centre during the pandemic, footfall continues to grow as key services are provided, from recycling and free dog waste bags to providing an emergency safe space for those fleeing domestic abuse or suffering mental health crises. The welcoming staff are able to answer most queries or signpost to another authority or organisation that can. The centre is being used for fortnightly 'drop-in' police surgeries where residents can report concerns or take advice face-to-face. Due to its central location the Town Hall is used by the NHS as a Diabetic Retinopathy Clinic and as a 'Barclays Banking Hub' on Mondays and Fridays.

The Council has been able to provide a number of free events for children. The popular Easter Egg Hunt in April was followed in the Autumn with a Halloween Spooktacular. In the summer there was a music event for the King's Coronation, all these events were on the River Walk, owned by the Town Council. In December the Town Hall doors were open to Father Christmas and his elf once again providing free gifts for the children. Witham Christmas Fayre was also open with a street market in Newland Street with hundreds of residents and visitors attending, sampling food and mulled wine while enjoying the entertainment on offer. The United Reformed Church was a partner, hosting craft stalls and a warm place to eat whilst listening to carols.

Leadership in Planning for the Future of the community

The Council actively engages with the public via its growing social media presence including publishing all committee papers via its website and social media channels for maximum exposure of local issues taking place. Residents are encouraged to attend all Council and Committee Meetings to raise their concerns or comment on proposals. The Annual Town Meeting is called annually to enable local clubs and associations to showcase their work in the community as part of the councils reaching out strategy.

Following residents' concerns regarding the proposed closure of St Peter's Hospital in Maldon and lack of healthcare facilities in Witham the council held a public consultation and will continue to work with the NHS to ensure resident's voices are heard. The Council also took an active role in opposing the abolition of free parking spaces in Newland Street. In addition to writing to the Braintree District Council Scrutiny Committee querying its agreement with the North Essex Parking Partnership, having heard residents' concerns, the Town Council launched an online and physical petition, which combined generated nearly 2000 signatures.

The Council has also commenced the process of adopting a Neighbourhood Plan to protect the local community against speculative and irresponsible development and ensure that new development is of net benefit to Witham.

To be reviewed at AGM 2025