

## **Witham Town Council Community Engagement Statement**

Witham Town Council is the local level of government for Witham, placing the needs and aspirations of residents at the heart of all its work. The Council is committed to defending local interests, promoting strong community cohesion, and ensuring Witham remains a vibrant and inclusive town.

### **Engagement with the Community**

Witham Town Council operates an open-door policy for all public enquiries, whether through correspondence, emails, telephone calls, or visits. The Town Hall remains a central hub for the community, serving as an anchor for the Newland Street Conservation Area and proudly hosting the town's Information Centre—one of the last such centres in Essex. The centre continues to provide a wide range of services, from providing recycling and free dog waste bags to acting as an emergency safe space for those in crisis. Friendly and knowledgeable staff are available to answer queries or signpost to relevant authorities and organisations.

The Town Hall regularly hosts 'drop-in' police surgeries, enabling residents to raise concerns face-to-face with local officers. The building is also used by the NHS for Retinopathy Clinics and Diabetic Prevention Clinics and as a Banking Hub throughout the week for Barclays, Halifax and Lloyds Bank, making it a truly multi-functional community space.

Witham Town Council organises a diverse calendar of free and inclusive events throughout the year, fostering community spirit and providing opportunities for residents of all ages to come together. Recent and upcoming events include:

- Easter Trail
- Witham Dog Show
- Witham Music Festival
- Halloween Trail
- Witham Christmas Fayre and Christmas Grotto
- VE-Day Beacon Lighting and Celebrations
- Teddy Bears' Picnic
- Witham Street Entertainment Festival
- Remembrance Parade

These events are held in Witham's picturesque outdoor spaces and as well as the town centre, and are designed to be accessible and enjoyable for all.

The Council works closely with local partners such as the Witham Hub or The United Reformed Church, which hosts craft stalls and provides a warm space during the Christmas Fayre, and



supports initiatives that address community needs, including cost of living support and warm hubs.

### **Leadership in Planning for the Future**

Witham Town Council actively engages with the public through a growing social media presence, and ensures transparency by publishing all committee papers and updates on its website and social channels. Residents are encouraged to attend all Council and Committee Meetings, where they can raise concerns or comment on proposals. The Annual Town Meeting, held each April, provides an open forum for residents to discuss issues important to the town, suggest ideas, and ask questions. The 2024 meeting focused on youth engagement, reflecting the Council's commitment to involving all age groups in local decision-making and this year's meeting tackled the issue of anti-social behaviour and crime in Witham.

The Council responds proactively to local concerns, such as healthcare provision and parking. For example, following feedback about the proposed closure of St Peter's Hospital in Maldon and the reduction of free parking in Newland Street, the Council held public consultations, worked with the NHS, and launched petitions that gathered significant community support.

Witham Town Council is currently developing a Neighbourhood Plan to protect the town from speculative development and ensure that future growth brings clear benefits to the community.

### **Commitment to Ongoing Engagement**

The Council is dedicated to continuous improvement in community engagement, regularly reviewing its approach and embracing new methods to reach all residents. The council intends to reintroduce its pop up stalls to discuss issues that may arise during the coming year with the intention of improving further residents quality of life. Through events, partnerships, transparent governance, and active listening, Witham Town Council strives to ensure every resident has a voice in shaping the future of Witham.

To be reviewed at AGM 2026