Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
01376 520627
witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 31st March 2025**

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

Present:	Councillors:	L.	Barlow	(Town Mayor)
		P.	Heath	(Deputy Town Mayor)
		E.	Adelaja	
		P.	Barlow	
		J.C.	Coleman	
		J.M.	Coleman	
		B.	Fleet	
		L.	Headley	
		T.	Hewitt	
		J.	Martin	
		R.	Playle	
		R.	Ramage	
		J.	Robertson	
		B.	Taylor	
		S.	Hughes	(District Youth Worker)
			And one Support Worker	
		N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
		G.	Kennedy	(Committee Secretary)

192. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Williams.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and noted.

193. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 3rd March 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME QUALITY

194. INTERESTS

Councillor J.C. Coleman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 196 – Essex Youth Services, because of his involvement with Witham Hangout.

Later in the Meeting at Minute 196 – Essex Youth Services, Councillor R. Ramage declared a non-pecuniary interest as he had given a grant from his District Council scheme to the Witham Boxing Club.

195. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

196. ESSEX YOUTH SERVICES

Councillor J.C. Coleman had declared an interest and during the item, Councillor Ramage declared an interest.

The Town Mayor welcomed Sue Hughes, District Youth Worker, and her colleague to the Meeting to talk about their work in the town.

Sue explained that she covered the whole of Braintree District and was responsible for the three youth buildings in the three towns which included Parkside. She said that a colleague's ill health issues had meant she had been covering Chelmsford as well until recently.

She said that Parkside was very busy and listed the groups which met there including Majorettes, Pop Corn and Youth Offenders. She knew there was a serious anti-social behaviour issue in Witham, so detached sessions using the bus had been organised. She had spoken to businesses in the town, so she was aware of these and other problems. She said that she was currently working with the library and was trying to organise those being tutored there to move to Parkside, which would be a better environment for studying. She said she was trying her best to alleviate problems, but they were only a small team, and she had to obtain funding for detached sessions. She was working with organisations in the town such as the Boxing Club and Team Kinetics.

She considered that there were two main groups causing problems, an older group pushing boundaries and then a younger group. They were looking at ways to support them and had worked at the skate park with the bus. She asked Members to email problems and information to her.

In answer to a question, Sue said that she works with police and both Maltings and Rickstones Academies. She sign-posted young people to facilities available to them. She was unable to provide a breakdown of numbers involved but considered them currently low but this would increase with the lighter evenings. Members asked about interaction with Pop Corn and Sue said that she had regular contact but probably only once a month.

Sue said that she had no plans to visit Witham's Hangout, the youth club which operated from the Rugby Club, as she did not want to double up on work that was already happening. She was told that by working with these youngsters at the Hangout, two had gone back into school. They had worked with social services and parents, along with the police to achieve this. She was told that between 45 and 60 youngsters come on a Wednesday which was challenging for volunteers who had to deal with complex behavioural issues. Sue said that she was working with partners to improve behaviour and hoped to be working with the community specials at detached sessions. In answer to a question Sue explained that she worked 37 hours a week, with two support workers working 18½ and nine hours respectively but there was no budget for Witham as such. Their salaries were paid and she was given funding for the upkeep of

Parkside. Funding for detached work had to be obtained but they work with other organisations which use Parkside for one to one or group sessions. They work with lots of charities and organisations and can assist with DBS checking, training and support. Sue explained that in addition they work with the Youth Justice System who use Parkside. She reiterated that they no longer provide front line delivery and she had to look for outside funding for specific projects.

Members were disappointed that there was so little funding to provide an adequate Youth Service.

The Town Mayor thanked Sue and Ben for attending the Meeting and reminded Members that Sue would be giving a presentation at the Annual Town Meeting on Wednesday, 9th April which would be another opportunity to ask questions.

Councillor J.C. Coleman left the Council Chamber.

197. <u>ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE</u>

Essex County Councillor Playle said that Essex County Council had submitted an interim report on devolution which could be shared. He explained that the parking restrictions on the Courts Estate would become operational on 4th April 2025. He said that the Members' Led Scheme would be extended to controlled crossings and eventually include zebra crossings.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Playle for his report.

<u>RESOLVED</u> That the report be received and noted.

198. <u>TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS</u>

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 25th February to 26th March 2025 were received.

<u>RESOLVED</u> That the details be received and noted.

199. <u>TOWN CLERK'S REPORT</u>

The Town Clerk explained that there would be an online meeting on Thursday, 3rd April between 3 and 4 p.m. relating to devolution and she would make the Council Chamber available to Members should they wish.

<u>RESOLVED</u> That the information be received and noted.

200. <u>TWINNING ASSOCIATION</u>

A background history to the Twinning Association which was set up in 1986 was given. It was hoped that a reciprocal invitation could be given to the Mayors of Waldbrol and Asslar to attend the Street Festival in September.

Concern was expressed as to the value of these visits in these times of economic pressure. A long discussion then took place as to how the Mayors could be accommodated and entertained when there was just £500 in the Twinning budget which would normally be used for the Mayor to attend the Unification Celebrations in Germany.

After further deliberation it was agreed in principle that the Mayors of Waldbrol and Asslar could be invited to attend the Street Festival.

LOCAL COUNCIL AWARD SCHEME QUALITY

RESOLVED That in principle the Mayors of Waldbrol and Asslar could be invited to attend the Streel Fesitval.

Whilst this matter was discussed Councillor J.C. Coleman returned to the Council Chamber.

201. FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

The Financial Risk Assessment and recommendations from the Financial Scrutiny Panel were received.

RESOLVED That the Financial Risk Assessment and recommendations from the Financial Scrutiny Panel be received and noted.

Councillor Robertson left the Council Chamber.

202. EARMARKED RESERVES

A report on suggested Earmarked Reserve Movements was received.

It was agreed to take each suggested EMR in turn.

Proposed Creation on new VAT EMR

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council needs to be registered for VAT but HMRC had still to give guidance. It was thought that £25,000 was owed and it was therefore proposed that this sum should be earmarked.

RESOLVED That £25,000 be put into a VAT EMR.

Councillor Robertson returned to the Council Chamber.

Town Sign

The Town Sign needed remedial work where it had rusted but there was no budget for this work. There was currently £6,000 in the Street Lighting EMR and Members agreed that this could be used to fund the work.

RESOLVED That the remedial work to the Town Sign be funded from the Street Lighting EMR and the Town Clerk permitted to authorise any other reasonable work required.

Councillor Headley left the Council Chamber.

Events Control Account

Details of movements to and from the Events Control Account were received.

RESOLVED That the movements be received and noted.

Neighbourhood Plan EMR

Members agreed to transfer £14,000 to the Neighbourhood Plan EMR.

RESOLVED That £14,000 be transferred to the Neighbourhood Plan EMR.

Twinning

The suggestion was made that underspends in Civic Reception and Christmas Expenses could be put into a Twinning EMR. The Town Clerk advised that there was £500 in the Civic Reception budget and £1,000 in Christmas Expenses.

Members then discussed the proposal and voted on a motion to put the underspend in a Twinning EMR which failed.

The Town Clerk advised that there was no need to vote on returning the monies to the General Reserve as this would automatically happen at the end of the financial year.

Councillor Headley returned to the Council Chamber.

203. ABSENCE FOR LEAVE

The Town Clerk advised that Councillor Artur Sloma was feeling better but had asked for a slightly longer Absence for Leave.

RESOLVED That Councillor Sloma be given three months Leave of Absence.

204. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 3rd and 17th March 2025**
Minutes 248 to 272 (inclusive).

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave his report en bloc.

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

(b) **Policy and Resources Committee held 17th March 2025**
Minutes 69 to 76 (inclusive).

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee, gave his report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Policy and Resources Committee be received and noted.

205. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

206. OPEN SPACES ACCOMMODATION

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

207. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

208. FUNDING REPORT

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

209. MALTINGS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

Councillor Headley was absent from the Council Chamber whilst this item was discussed.

210. HERITAGE GARDEN

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 9.28 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Town Mayor
NS/GK/7.4.2025