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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 14th February 2022**

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

Present:	Councillors	A.	Kilmartin	(Town Mayor)
		S.	Ager	
		K.	Atwill	
		P.	Barlow	
		J.	Goodman	
		S.	Hicks	
		C.	Lager	
		M.	Lager	
		T.	Pleasance	
		S.	Rajeev	
		J.	Williams	
		R.	Williams	

Also in attendance:	Clr	R.	Playle	(Essex County – Northern)
		N.	Smith	(Acting Town Clerk)
		V.	Goldspink	(Events' Officer)
		G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

187. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Bayford who was working, Councillor Jay and Councillor Livermore who were unwell and Councillor Weeks who had a previous engagement. Essex County Councillor Louis had sent his apologies as he had a previous engagement and Councillor Playle would be late as he had an earlier Meeting.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

188. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 17th January 2022 be received, confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

189. INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

190. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

191. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

A report from Essex County Councillor D. Louis was tabled which had been circulated to Members.

The Town Mayor said that a Full District Council Meeting would be held next Monday, 21st February 2022.

District Councillor Hicks said that the Green Party had objected to 20/02060/OUT – Phase 4 Land North East off Rectory Lane, Rivenhall. They had carried out a litter pick of the area so they were well informed of the constraints of the site. He added that residents from Juniper Crescent had heard that the Town Council was taking over the cemetery and were concerned about over hanging trees.

Councillor M. Lager said that at the Full District Council Meeting on 21st February 2022 the Collection Fund would be discussed. Town and Parish Councils had in the past been given a refund on the over-collection of rates acquired by the District Council. For the Town Council this was between £7,000 – £8,000 and had been taken into account during the budget process but it is understood that the District Council had taken the decision not to refund this over-collection. He suggested that District Councillors should seek to over-turn this decision.

It was agreed that a letter should be written to the Leader of Braintree District Council, seeking re-instatement of the Collection Fund, for District Members to sign.

192. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements for period 18th January to 14th February 2022 were received.

The Town Mayor explained that she had only attended one official event at Chatten Free School and encouraged Members to attend her Civic Service in April.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

193. NATIONAL ANTHEM

A request was received from the Town Mayor to sing the National Anthem at the start of Full Town Council Meetings for the rest of the Civic Year in celebration of the Queen's Platinum Jubilee.

Members agreed that this suggestion should not be pursued.

RESOLVED That the suggestion be received but not pursued.

194. ACTING TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Acting Town Clerk's report on matters arising was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

195. QUEEN'S JUBILEE

A presentation was received from the Events' Co-ordinator detailing the plans for the Queen's Jubilee celebrations.

The Events Co-ordinator gave a run-down of the proposed event which included competitions, workshop, dancing and singers as well as food and drink stalls. She explained that costs had risen because of the demand for entertainment and there would be a shortfall in funding of £1,000 to achieve everything the Queen's Jubilee Working Group would like to include. The event on the River Walk would be on Thursday, 2nd June 2022 from 4 to 10 p.m. closing with the Lighting of the Beacon.

Members agreed that this would be a special one-off event to celebrate the Queen's Jubilee and welcomed the proposals. It was considered that the budget should be increased to £7,000 to give the Events' Officer flexibility in organising the celebrations.

RESOLVED That the presentation be received, the proposals accepted and the budget increased by £2,000 to £7,000.

196. WITHAM FESTIVAL

A presentation was received from the Events' Co-ordinator proposing plans for the Witham Festival.

The Events co-ordinator outlined a possible format for the Witham Festival in the High Street from 4 p.m. There would be a Disney Princess musical show and children encouraged to attend in fancy dress, two workshop sessions, story telling/puppetry, face painting and bubbles plus environmental/educational acts which could include polar bear, lion or sloth and an inflatable whale. After dark she suggested there could be acts such as snow globes or globots/LED robots. She explained that the Festival would be for all ages and continue to 10 p.m. at night.

Members liked the concept but felt a 4 p.m. start time was too late for younger children.

RESOLVED That a Witham Festival be held on Saturday, 17th September 2022 between 2 and 8 p.m. in the High Street based on the presented ideas.

197. MEETING WITH BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL

A report was received from Councillor M. Lager, Leader of the Council, regarding the recent meeting with Officers and Councillors from Braintree District Council.

Councillor Lager explained that since the Meeting he had received a letter from Councillor Butland, Leader of Braintree District Council. He said that a strong footing had been achieved for future discussions with potential projects identified. Another meeting would be held in April 2022. He said that the meeting had been positive and hoped for better future relationship with the District Council.

Members welcomed the move by the District Council and asked that Councillor Butland's letter be circulated.

Concern was expressed regarding the planning process and it was hoped that a similar meeting could be held to discuss these issues.

RESOLVED That the report be received and information noted.

198. MEETING SCHEDULE 2022 – 2023

A draft Meeting Schedule for 2022 – 2023 was received.

It was noted that no date had been set for Annual Town Meetings for either this year or next. It was hoped that a new format could be organised involving charities and organisations. Enquiries would be made of both the Public and Royal British Legion Halls and dates set for April 2022 and 2023.

RESOLVED That possible dates and costings be ascertained so a decision could be taken on a venue for this year's Annual Town Meeting and a date set in April for next year's Meeting.

It was suggested that it would be better to have the Strategy Meeting in September/October before the Committees set a budget.

RESOLVED That the Strategy Meeting be held in September/October rather than December.

Councillor Goodman asked if the AGM currently set for 9th May 2022 could be moved.

RESOLVED That the AGM be moved to Monday 16th May 2022.

RESOLVED That the Meeting Schedule with the above amendments be agreed.

199. CYCLEWAYS REVIEW GROUP

A Recommendation from the Environment Committee - That a Cycleways Review Group be set up to scrutinise and promote the delivery of linked up cycleways was received and Members asked for volunteers.

The suggestion was made that the title should be the Cycling Development Group and it should consider signage, surface dressing, as well as route development. Members would be co-opted as needed and the Group would report to Planning and Transport Committee.

RESOLVED That a Cycling Development Group be set up comprising of Councillors Atwill, Barlow, C. Lager and Rajeev; and Essex County Councillor Playle.

Councillor Pleasance then left the Meeting.

In view of the time it was agreed that Standing Orders should be suspended to allow for business to continue.

RESOLVED That Standing Order 2x be suspended to allow business to continue.

200. ARMED FORCES COVENANT

Members were asked to consider the Town Council signing the Armed Forces Covenant in support of those who have served in the Armed Forces and their families.

Members agreed that whilst wishing to support the Armed Forces and their families, this matter would need further consideration and suggested that it be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

RESOLVED That this matter be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for further consideration.

Councillor Ager left the Meeting.

201. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 17th and 31st January 2022**
Minutes 199 to 222 (inclusive).

Councillor Goodman, as Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee gave his report of the Meetings en bloc.

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

- (b) **Environment Committee held 31st January 2022**
Minutes 31 to 42 (inclusive).

Councillor Goodman, as Chairman of the Environment Committee gave his report of the Meeting en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

202. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE (CONTINUED)

Councillor Playle had been detained at an earlier Meeting so it was agreed that he could make his report.

Councillor Playle said that there had been a number of bus cancellations and delays. He had been assured by First Bus and Stephensons that the issues should have now been resolved. He said that season ticket holders could claim compensation for cancelled services. Councillor Playle said that Essex County Council had set its budget with an increase of 4.09% to cover social care costs and there would be a £2m fund for a Members' pothole scheme.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Playle for his report.

203. 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 (S5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

204. LEGAL MATTERS

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

205. APPOINTMENT OF TOWN CLERK

A recommendation was received from the Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee regarding the appointment of Nikki Smith as Town Clerk, Proper Officer, Responsible Finance Officer and Data Protection Officer.

Members were informed that she had the requisite knowledge and skills to be appointed and had formulated exciting ideas to take forward the Council's business.

RESOLVED That Nikki Smith be appointed as Town Clerk, Proper Officer, Responsible Finance Officer and Data Protection Officer.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 9.55 p.m.

Councillor A. Kilmartin
Town Mayor

NS/GK 17.2.2022