



Witham Town Council understands that organisations that refuse to adapt are consigned to the past, and is leading the way on ensuring that Town & Parish Councils now only stay relevant, but increase their relevance in the 21st century. Through a considered programme of structured introspection and internal scrutiny, the Town Council is setting the foundations for considerable future development.

Development of Staff & Councillors.

Witham Town Council is working towards achieving the Investors in People accreditation, and a key business plan objective of the Policy & Resources Committees continues investment in Human Resources and member development. With an annual, considerable budgetary commitment to both internal and external training for officers and Members, the Council recognises the perpetual benefits of broadening skills and empowering itself to aim higher than ever before. Recently, the Council has established weekly question and answer sessions with clerks and Members for a free exchange of information followed by in-house training on a specified subject to help Members understand the myriad of duties, regulations and budgetary implications of projects. With further work being undertaken by the Council to formalise the member development programme into a structured CPD arrangement, the Council aspires to be leading the way on closer than ever officer and Member relations.

Managing the Performance of the Body Corporate

The Town Council has recently adopted its very own Uniform Project Management Process, designed in accordance with PRINCE2 principles. This allows the Council to manage more complex business than it previously could via improved stakeholder communication and engagement and clearer definitions of roles and stage-by-stage evaluation of a project's business case. The Council also performs extensive scrutiny of its balances, earmarked reserves and financial statements at each Policy & Resources Committee, analysing reasons for over and underspending on particular budgets and making virements to free up funding for other projects that are progressing. The Council provides an annual report via The Voice newsletter to all local citizens and satellite settlements to ensure that the public are aware of the work the Council is performing.

Managing the Performance of individual staff members to achieve the business plan.

Management of staff performance is underpinned by the Annual Appraisal Process conducted by the Town Clerk and Staffing & Accommodation Sub-Committee. However, in addition to ensuring that every staff member's needs are met and are empowered to carry out their jobs effectively, staff work under a culture of 'collective responsibility' to deliver the Council's business aims. Each staff member understands how their role contributes to the bigger picture and subscribes to the philosophy that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. To this end, the Town Clerk acts as the director and problem solver on a day-to-day basis whose principal job is to resolve administrative blockages and advise staff on appropriate courses of action when required. Underpinned by a Deputy & Assistant Clerk, a staff body of 13 employees work in three defined teams focussing on administration, community and operations. Staff are party to weekly team meetings and a monthly whole staff meeting to promote the free exchange of information, new ideas and re-cap decisions made by the Council at various committees. At the very heart of achieving the Council's business plans is a solid emphasis on porous communication between all officers. Whilst structure and chain of command is key to ensuring order is maintained, an open door policy of management and emphasis on an ability for staff to criticise managerial decisions without fear of repercussion is absolutely fundamental to the promotion of confidence in employees, which is reflected in growing efficiency for the delivery of complex projects entirely in-house. Within the staff body of the Town Council, nobody is out of bounds to anybody and information is freely shared in recognition that small office environments can easily sink under overbearing organograms and "bunker" mentality.