



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE  
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## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020** Time: **7.00 p.m.**

Present:	Councillors	Mrs	S.C.	Lager	(Town Mayor)
		Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	(Deputy Town Mayor)
		Mrs	S.	Ager	
			K.L.	Atwill	
			P.R.	Barlow	
			J.C.	Bayford	
			J.C.	Goodman	
			S.E.	Hicks	(arrived 7.05 p.m.)
			M.C.M.	Lager	
			C.S.	Livermore	(arrived 7.50 p.m.)
			T.A.	Pleasance	
			Miss	M.L.	Weeks
		Braintree District Councillor		Mrs	S.
	J.			Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
Miss	N.			Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
Mrs	H.			Andrews	(Assistant Proper Officer)
Mrs	G.			Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And two members of the public.

### 209. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Miss C. Jay who had a previous engagement, Councillor R. Williams who was working, and Councillor C.S. Livermore who would be late as he had an earlier meeting.

Essex County Councillors J. Abbott and D. Louis, and Braintree District Councillor W.J. Rose had also given apologies as they had other Meetings to attend.

**RESOLVED** That the apologies be received and accepted.

**210. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor in due course.

**211. INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

**212. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

Mr Ross Playle referred to Minute 221 – Street Naming, and suggested that streets could be named after the characters from Dorothy L. Sayers’ books.

The Town Mayor thanked Mr Playle for his suggestion which would be considered later in the Meeting.

**213. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE**

A report from Essex County Councillor D. Louis had been tabled. <sup>1</sup>

Councillor Mrs S. Wilson said that she and Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin had had a good meeting and discussed the need to expand cycle routes. She was concerned that the new health centre was not progressing.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Mrs Wilson for her report.

**214. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT**

The Town Clerk’s Report on matters arising was received.

It was explained that the proposed Christmas lights for the River Walk had a lead time of four weeks and with the current lock-down the decision had to be made to cancel rather than risk public funds.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Clerk’s Report be received and noted.

**215. DELEGATED DECISIONS**

The Delegated Decisions for the period 6<sup>th</sup> October to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Delegated Decisions be received and agreed.

**216. COVID-19: EMERGENCY PROVISIONS FOR GOVERNANCE**

The Covid-19: Emergency Provisions for Governance were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Covid-19: Emergency Provisions for Governance were received and agreed.

**217. TOWN MAYOR’S ENGAGEMENTS**

Details of Town Mayor’s Engagements to 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2020 were received.

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<sup>1</sup> Since the Meeting Councillor J. Abbott’s report had been circulated to Members.

**RESOLVED** That the details be received and noted.

**218. MILL LANE STORES**

Members were informed that the Heart of Witham Group were seeking the Town Council's support in principle for the Mill Lane Stores to become the Witham Museum.

Members generally welcomed the idea but agreed that further information would be required before the suggestion was supported.

**RESOLVED** That further information would be required as to how the Witham Museum would be achieved, funded and run before the Town Council could give support to the Heart of Witham's proposal.

**219. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION GROUP**

A request was received from Councillor T. A. Pleasance to step down from the Town Centre Regeneration Group and Members were asked to appoint a Member in his place.

It was pointed out that a second Member would be required as there was a vacancy following the resignation of Councillor R.P. Ramage from the Council.

A proposal was put to appoint Councillors M.C.M. Lager and R. Williams onto the Group but Members considered that with Councillor Williams' work commitments and the meetings being held during the day it would be better to co-opt him and appoint another Member.

**RESOLVED** That Councillors P.R. Barlow and M.C.M. Lager be appointed to serve on the Town Centre Regeneration Group.

**220. ACCESS TO GP SERVICES**

Members discussed the impact on access to GP services in Witham during the Covid-19 restrictions.

The consensus of opinion was that access to Fern House Surgery was very difficult as patients had to queue in the cold. In the main the other surgeries offered better service and it was agreed that Fern House surgery should be the focus of the Town Council's attention.

**RESOLVED** That a letter be written to Fern House Surgery about customer services and the need to ensure privacy when talking to the receptionists and a warm, dry place to wait rather than queuing outside to speak to a receptionist or await an appointment.

**RESOLVED** That a letter be sent to the Clinical Commissioning Group about the problems at Fern House Surgery and whether there is a protocol for customer service.

**RESOLVED** That a Media Release be issued raising the Town Council's concerns regarding customer service at Fern House.

**221. STREET NAMING**

A report was received about street naming.

Members recognised there were two issues to consider – a name for the street by Old Ivy Chimneys and that the remaining names from the War Memorial which are currently used for street naming were decreasing.

#### Old Ivy Chimneys

It was explained that as the developer had used the name Old Ivy Chimneys for the apartments another name for the actual road would be required. It was usual to provide three names to the District Council who would check that they complied with the Post Office rules.

After discussion it was agreed that as well as the Roman connection, Belsham should be put forward to commemorate the late Roy Belsham who had done so much for the town.

**RESOLVED** That the names ‘Belsham’, ‘Chimneys’ and Villa be suggested to Braintree District Council and the developer as suitable names for this road.

#### Future Street Naming

Members thought names which reflect the town’s history should be used such as late dignitaries and leading citizens, for example Helen Court which was named after Helen Pitchforth. The suggestion of using characters from Dorothy L Sayers’ books could be considered in due course for areas in North Ward such as the new development at Conrad Road.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and information noted.

## 222. **MEETINGS**

Members were asked to consider a report concerning future Town Council Meetings.

It was suggested that as Town Council Meetings are currently being held once a month it might be appropriate to hold the informal committee meetings once every three months rather than every two months as at present. This would mean there would not be the problem with Community meetings coming directly between Town Council and Policy and Resources. In addition this would allow Planning Applications and Transport Committee to meet on the alternate week to allow Members’ expertise on planning not to be lost.

In answer to a question the Town Clerk explained that it was not effective of Members’ time to hold a second Town Council Meeting in January just to consider the Budget and Precept which could be covered at the normal Meeting.

Members were broadly supportive of the suggestion and whilst recognising that a three month cycle could delay business a delegated meeting could be arranged if necessary.

**RESOLVED** That the proposed Meeting schedule for the new year be agreed on the proviso that a delegated meeting be convened if business required.

The Town Clerk explained that he proposed to write to Priti Patel, MP and Secretary of State, concerning the problems caused by not including the third tier of local government in the current legislation which would have allowed Committees to meet virtually and make decisions during the current restrictions.

**RESOLVED** That from the new year Planning Applications and Transport Committee meet fortnightly via Zoom.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Clerk would write to Priti Patel, MP explaining the problems caused by not including Town and Parish Councils in the legislation so that Committees could make decisions virtually.

**223. 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.

**224. LEGAL MATTERS**

A report was received from the Town Clerk.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 9.05 p.m.

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager  
Town Mayor

JS/GK/26.11.2020