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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday, 5th March 2024**

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

Present: Councillors:

S.	Ager	(Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor)
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
J.	Martin	
R.	Playle	(arrived 7.47 p.m.)
R.	Ramage	
A.	Sloma	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

178. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Adelaja, J.M. Coleman, Heath and Hewitt; and Councillor Playle who would be late as he had a previous engagement.

179. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 5th February 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

180. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

181. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No member of the press or public were present.

182. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Braintree District Councillors explained that at the last Council meeting they had been setting the District Council element of the precept.

The Town Mayor said that this item would continue once the Essex County Councillor arrived at the Meeting.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

183. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 30th January to 29th February 2024 were received.

The Town Mayor said that her quiz had raised £448 for her charities and it had been an excellent, enjoyable evening.

RESOLVED That the Town Mayor's engagements be received and noted.

184. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

A report was received from the Town Clerk.

The Town Clerk explained that she needed more Members to volunteer to run the 'Pop-Up' stall on Thursday when details about the public consultation on medical facilities and the petition against charging for parking in Newland Street would be advertised.

She reminded Members of the importance of regularly checking and responding to emails.

RESOLVED That the report be received and information noted.

185. RIDE LONDON 2024

Details of the Ride London 2024, Stage 2 route which will affect Witham on Saturday, 25th May 2024 was received.

Members were concerned about the disruption that would be caused. The Town Clerk said that further details would shortly be available.

RESOLVED That the information be received and an assurance sought that disruption in the town would be kept to a minimum.

186. ST PETER'S CLOSURE CONSULTATION PUBLIC MEETING

Details of the public meeting to be held on 11th March 2024 were received.

Members were informed that Chelmsford consultants were unaware that these closures would have an impact on Witham's residents. At present we are unclear whether all services would be replaced and where but there could be an opportunity to re-provide in Witham.

A Member had carried out a poll on Social Media with 800 people responding which would be a useful start as an informal consultation. He would urge those people to attend the consultation event on Monday.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

Whilst this item was being discussed Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

187. TOWN CENTRE REGENERATION

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that she had met officers that morning from Essex County and Braintree District Councils as there was a problem with licences before the town centre regeneration could commence. Applications for licences for litter bins, seats etc. would need to be made by both the Town and District Councils.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

188. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE (Continued)

Councillor Playle, Witham Northern, gave a report. He explained that £12m had been put into the budget for highway projects as part of the Member-led scheme. This would cover not only pot holes, but footways and jetting gullies. The Locality Fund had been renewed with grants of up to £5,000 for community projects. Members also had an opportunity to pool their £4,000, as part of the Local Community Fund, which last year was used for a grant to Witham Hang Out. He said that the booking system to use the Recycling Centre was working well and would continue on a permanent basis. He spoke about calling in the decision by North Essex Parking Partnership to charge for parking in Newland Street. He said that the committee would meet again on 21st March 2024 and there would be an informal consultation. It was hoped that the proposals would be quashed before going to statutory consultation.

In answer to a question, Councillor Playle said that for projects such as introduction of yellow lines or dropped kerbs, 80% of residents have to give support.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Playle for his report.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

189. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Planning and Transport Committee held 5th and 20th February 2024

Minutes 197 to 221 (inclusive)

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

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

(b) Community Committee held 20th February 2024

Minutes 62 to 76 (inclusive)

Councillor L. Barlow, Chairman of the Community Committee gave a report of the Meeting en bloc.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

190. 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 (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

191. COMMITTEE REPORT – CONTINUED

Community Committee held 20th February 2024
Minutes 77 and 78 (inclusive)

Councillor L. Barlow, continued her report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee be received.

192. FUNDING REPORT

A report was received.

The Town Clerk was pleased to report that work to create a Changing Places Toilet had now commenced.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

193. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

194. APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITOR

A report was received regarding the appointment of the Town Council's internal auditor for a period of three years.

Members were satisfied with the rigorousness of the audits carried out by Heelis and Lodge and therefore agreed to appoint as the internal auditor for the next three years.

RESOLVED That the report be received and Heelis and Lodge be appointed as the Town Council's internal auditor for the next three years.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.15 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Town Mayor

NS/GK/6.3.2024