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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday, 11th August 2026**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, Essex**

Present: Councillors

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	
P.	Barlow	
B.	Fleet	
J.	Goodman	
L.	Headley	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	

Essex County Councillor	J.	Morris	(Witham West and Rural)
Braintree District Councillor	T.	Williams	(Central)

N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
J.	Brown	(P.A. to the Council)

52. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J C Coleman, J M Coleman and Martin. Councillors Adelaja and Sloma were absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

53. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 15th June 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Town Mayor.

54. INTERESTS

Councillor Playle declared a non-registrable interest as a Member of Essex County Council.

55. QUESTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present.

56. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

The Town Mayor welcomed Essex County Councillor John Morris, Witham West and Rural, to the meeting.

Councillor Morris reported that Essex County Council had increased road repairs by 30%. He said that consideration was being given for a veteran's village to provide support which would include a hospital and suitable sites were being considered with talks taking place with Essex University in Colchester. He said that the Council were liaising with the Home Office with regards to Weathersfield and that £3 million had been saved scrapping Net Zero and moving forward they wanted to save more. He advised that he was meeting with the Mayor, Councillor Paul Heath, next week to walk around Witham.

Councillor Morris was asked that with climate change accelerating, what was the Council's strategy to protect the public. He said that the Council was being practical and confirmed that advice was sought from experts. This had been an exceptional year and they were trying to ascertain what would benefit the public most. Councillor Morris was asked on the latest update on Woodend Bridge. Councillor Playle advised that work to strengthen the bridge was due to be undertaken in the Autumn to allow two-way traffic.

Councillor Heath reminded members that Councillor Morris was at the meeting as a member of Essex County Council and if members had specific questions they should contact him prior to the meeting.

Essex County Councillor Playle advised that they no longer have direct access to Highways and have to go through members' enquiries. He said that speed cameras were going to be installed before the end of the year on the B1018 for safety reasons. He would continue to push for vegetation to be cut back, especially along Hatfield Road which had been deemed to be non-urgent by Essex Highways. The road resurfacing around the town would continue and that issues with the electronic display board at the bus stop outside the Town Hall was trying to be resolved and a new bus shelter with seating was to be installed outside Morrisons Daily in early October.

Councillor Heath welcomed Braintree District Councillor Toby Williams who gave an update with regards to the waste collection service. He advised that the system was starting to settle down with recycling up by 120% and general rubbish was down by 19%. He advised that there had been issues with collections due to weather and that larger families did not have enough space in their recycling bins; the council was looking into how these problems could be alleviated. Comment was made that slots at the recycling centres were full as residents have had to take their recycling there which was then incinerated.

Councillor Williams advised that they had signed off the Witham Town park play equipment and had tried to ensure that these do not overlap with school holidays. He understood that Redrow was starting work on the play parks at the Mulberries from today.

With regards to Witham Town improvements, Councillor Williams advised that there was no licence from Essex Highways to improve the lighting, but improvements to monoliths were

expected soon and graffiti had been removed. He was pleased to report that the leisure centre in Witham was offering free swimming slots during the summer school holidays.

Councillor P Barlow questioned when Lockram Lane toilet improvements would finally be completed, given that they are currently closed again and were not being regularly cleaned. Councillor Williams agreed that the improvement programme had not been good enough and they were trying to get the issues resolved as quickly as possible.

The Town Mayor thanked the Councillors Morris, Playle and Williams for their reports.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

57. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 18th May to 5th July 2026 and 6th July to 2nd August 2026 were received. He added that the engagements were thoroughly enjoyable.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

58. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk reminded members of the forthcoming Summer Fayre being held on 22nd August 2026 along the River Walk. This was a new event being held from 12 noon to 5pm with around 90 stalls selling food, cakes and 3D models to pet supplies, books, plants and more. It would be similar to the Christmas Fayre and she added it would be nice to see members at the event as there would be a Witham Town Council gazebo.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

59. YOUTH SERVICES

A report was received and Members asked to consider whether they wished to support the establishment of a youth club at the new Community Centre.

The proposed club would be aimed at an older age group (11-18 year olds). The Town Clerk advised that this club would be for three hours a week straight after school with the possibility of holiday clubs in the future. Members agreed that to work with Essex County Council Youth Services for the first year would be the best, less costly option.

RESOLVED That the report be received and that a youth club be established at the new Community Centre through Essex Youth Services for an initial one-year period with the opportunity to build a trained volunteer base for longer-term community delivery.

RESOLVED That the costs for the equipment and delivery of the project be taken from the General Reserve.

60. ELECTION COSTS AND TERM

The Town Mayor advised that there was very little control over election costs imposed by the District Council. The costs for the election earlier this year was at least £60,000. He said that unless there was an assurance from Central Government to go to the polls after an extended term of five years, the Town Council would be liable for all election costs in four years' time.

Members supported the Mayors' arguments also stating that the costs could potentially bankrupt some Parish Councils.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Town Mayor seek an assurance from Central Government to extend town and parish councils' term to five years to tie in with Unitary elections and therefore share costs.

61. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

A report was received detailing Members' Attendance at Meetings.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

62. ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

A report was received from the Town Clerk as at the recent Environment Committee Meeting only 3 of the 10 appointed Members were present and subsequently the Meeting declared inquorate.

Members were reminded of the importance of the role of all Councillors who had been elected to represent the constituents of Witham and that they were summoned to attend Meetings. It was unfair of fellow councillors or staff not to attend Meetings. Where meetings cannot proceed, the Committee would be unable to consider and determine matters which sit within its delegated remit.

Members made a suggestion of the possibility of having a substitution policy in place for the Environment Committee to enable future Meetings to be held. The Town Clerk suggested that a new Standing Order could be agreed with 24 hours' notice being given if a Member was unable to attend. It was requested by Members that the Chairman be given discretion in exceptional circumstances to allow a substitute with less notice.

RESOLVED That the Environment Committee be retained and Standing Orders be amended to allow substitution for the Environment Committee with 24 hours' notice except in exceptional circumstances when the Chairman could make a substitution decision.

63. 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.

64. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

65. WITHAM COMMUNITY CENTRE

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

66. PUBLIC ART

A report was received.

Councillor Ramage left the Council Chamber.

The Deputy Town Clerk reported that the Artist had now developed the Sky Pod/Sky Sphere concept as the preferred design. He had already worked with local schools to generate initial ideas and designs for the glass artworks and further engagement with local groups and residents was planned.

Councillor Ramage returned to the Council Chamber.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

67. RIVER WALK LAND

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.58 p.m.

Councillor P. Heath
Town Mayor

NS/GK/JB/14.08.2026