



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 20th February 2024**

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

Present: Councillors L. Barlow (Chairman)
 E. Adelaja
 S. Ager
 J.C. Coleman
 B. Fleet
 L. Headley
 R. Playle
 R. Ramage

Also in attendance: Cllr. P. Barlow

 Chief Insp M. Richards (District Commander – Essex Police)
 Sergeant S. Jesse (Community Special – Essex Police)

 N. Smith (Town Clerk)
 G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)
 J. Reeve (Finance Assistant)

And two members of the public.

62. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Heath; and Councillor Williams who was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and absence noted.

63. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 13th November 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

64. INTERESTS

Members of the Labour Group declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 68(a) – Grant Aid – Witham Allstars Majorettes, as the group had used the Labour Hall to practice in the past.

65. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The members of the public spoke about speeding issues in Hatfield Road and Maldon Road. They complained that Hatfield Road was narrow by Maltings Lane and vehicles travel too fast. It was explained that there were no repeater speed limit signs to slow motorists. They asked the police what they could do to assist.

66. ESSEX POLICE

The Chairman welcomed the District Commander, Chief Inspector Martin Richards to the Meeting.

Chief Inspector Richards wanted to acknowledge the support of the Town Council in particular the Chairman and the Town Clerk who attended the recent Special Constabulary Awards Night. He said that it was especially important for the Specials to be recognised for the hours they gave up to undertake police duties.

He then turned to the issue of speeding and road safety which he considered needed to be remedied in partnership with Essex County, Braintree District and Witham Town Councils. He supported the use of Community Speedwatch which could be blended work with the Specials. He added that if a road was too fast, then County Highways would need to devise ways to slow the traffic down. He said that he would ensure that speed checks would be made on these two roads and would report back to the Town Council.

He then spoke about the three police priorities of road safety, violence and anti-social behaviour. In answer to a question he explained that reports following deaths or serious injuries on the road, filter through so that the Traffic Division would investigate, then it would be passed onto the County Council. Once speed checks were carried out, details would be reported back for appropriate action such as a Speed Indicator Device being installed.

Chief Inspector Richards said that it was now the second full year since COVID-19 that crime had generally dropped although abuse within the home had increased along with online crime and anti-social behaviour. He reported on offences in the Braintree District where the basic trend was a drop in crime. He considered this was a legacy from the Safer Streets initiative which was making a difference. He reported that there had been an increase in thefts of motor vehicles and scooters but the perpetrators had recently been arrested. He added that there had been an increase in burglaries but following police action for another incident, he had been caught.

He then spoke about the response hub with two town team officers who should be spending seven hours a day in Witham with the patrol car parked on the street so as to be visible. He thanked the Town Council for allowing the use of the Town Hall.

He spoke about the number of hours put in by the Specials. He said that the Street Warden was blending in well with police and dealing with low level offenders and that he should be patrolling with the police. He said that it was proposed to have an Inspector's Tour around Witham in August.

He asked whether there had been a decision with regard to the Town Council sponsoring a Police Community Support Officer which would prove beneficial particularly as they would

be working different hours to Specials. The Chairman explained that a decision regarding PCSOs would be taken later this year with a view to sponsor from April 2025.

In answer to a question, he said that a weekly report was sent out, with good news stories and a reminder, for example, if burglaries were on the increase, to properly lock your doors. Austerity would not in itself increase crime as people tend to stay in. He said at the moment there was a problem with theft of keyless entry vehicles.

A discussion then took place about drugs and the Chief Inspector explained that there were the County Lines and local gangs. It was a case of disrupting the gangs with the use of intelligence and he spoke of the importance of reporting incidents. He added that schools in Witham were very happy to have police attend when the curriculum allows.

The Chairman thanked both Martin and Simon for attending and asked that congratulations be passed to Special Chief Inspector Lorne Campbell for his promotion.

Councillor Coleman left the Council Chamber.

67. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk's report was received. She added that the CCTV camera in the park toilet had been stolen but there was good footage and hopefully the perpetrators would be identified and taken to court. Comment was made that the 'pop-up' stall would be used to promote the issues of parking in Newland Street and lack of health facilities.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

68. GRANT APPLICATIONS

(a) Witham Allstars Majorettes

The Labour Group had declared an interest.

Additional information along with the original grant aid form were received.

Members were reminded that a decision on the initial application had been deferred for further information to be obtained. It would seem that following a recruitment drive 33 children were now on the waiting list to join the majorettes. Members were disappointed that the requested business plan had now been obtained.

Councillor Coleman returned to the Council Chamber.

Members discussed whether it would be appropriate to defer again to seek clarity in the figures but on balance decided not to make a grant at this time but to suggest that the majorettes approach the Rotary Club and make a bid under the District Council's small grant scheme.

RESOLVED That at this time, the Town Council would not award a grant as there was insufficient information but another application would be welcomed at a future date subject to better information being supplied.

(b) Witham Carnival Association

A grant application from the Witham Carnival Association was received.

The Town Clerk reminded Members that the Carnival Association was not required to have matched funding and that the Town Council would also provide marshals for the road closure.

Members agreed that the Carnival Association promoted the town.

RESOLVED That a grant of £8,000 be awarded to the Witham Carnival Association.

(c) **Friends of Witham St John CIL**

A grant application from the Friends of Witham St John CIL along with the project review report were received.

Members were informed that the Friends had been set up to fund the running of the Brigade premises at Spring Lodge.

It would be necessary to vire funds to support this grant.

RESOLVED That £1,500 be vired from the Community Safety budget and £500 from the Other Community Support budget.

RESOLVED That a grant of £4,000 be made to the Friends of Witham St John CIL to fund the maintenance costs of the premises.

69. GRANT AWARDING POLICY

Members were asked to review the Grant Awarding Policy.

It was considered that to achieve better diversity of applicants a period of time before another request for grant aid should be included in the policy. It was recognised that some organisations such as the Carnival Association and the Citizens Advice make an annual request.

RESOLVED That the following be included in the policy – ‘If the total amount of requested grants exceeds the budget, priority will be given to those who have not previously received a grant.’

RESOLVED That the amended Grant Awarding Policy be received and agreed.

70. DEMENTIA-FRIENDLY TOWN

A report was received from the Town Clerk asking Members to consider Witham becoming a ‘Dementia-Friendly Community’.

The Town Clerk explained that some dementia training had already taken place. Dementia-friendly buildings such as the Town Hall would be added to the document and then referred.

Members agreed that the proposal would fit into the Town Council’s ethos.

RESOLVED That the report be received and that Witham becomes a ‘Dementia-Friendly Community’.

71. EVENTS 2024

The Witham Events Timetable and proposals for a Summertime Stories event were received.

The Town Clerk was pleased to report that Holmes and Hills Solicitors would sponsor the Dog Show, Music Festival, Witham Festival and Christmas Fayre.

Members considered that the Summertime Stories would be a good way to expand on children's summer activities.

RESOLVED That the programme of events be received and the introduction of a Summertime Stories event be agreed.

Councillor Playle left the Meeting.

72. CONSULTATION REGARDING SERVICES AT ST PETER'S HOSPITAL, MALDON

Details of consultation events regarding services at St Peter's Hospital, Maldon were received.

A verbal report was received regarding the consultation event in Chelmsford on 7th February 2024 when it was explained that Witham did not have any of these patient services and residents would be disadvantaged. It was unclear whether or where such services would be re-provided. Maldon was easier to access whilst at least two buses were required to get to the other hospitals. The Town Clerk explained that she was trying to organise a public meeting.

RESOLVED That the details be received and a public meeting be pursued.¹

73. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

- (a) The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st December 2023 was received.

RESOLVED that the Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st December 2023 be received.

- (b) Details of the CCTV budget were received.

The Town Clerk explained that it was projected that the CCTV budget would be £12,000. There were problems with the camera by Morrisons which needed a new wireless receiver and dish as the original equipment was 15 years old.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

74. STREET WARDEN REPORTS

A report from the Witham Town Council Street Warden was received.

Members all agreed that the Street Warden should be congratulated on his work.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Street Warden congratulated on the good work he had been doing.

75. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media statistics were received.

¹ A Public Consultation had now been arranged for Monday, 11th March 2024 at 7 p.m. at the New Rickstones Academy.

RESOLVED That the social media statistics be received and noted.

76. 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.

77. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report from the Information Centre Manager was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

78. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

The Minutes from the Meeting of the Improving Healthcare Facilities in Witham Working Group held 20th November 2023 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.19 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/22.2.2024