



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

Meeting of: **Town Council**

Date: **Monday, 18th January 2021**

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	
		Miss	C.	Jay	
			M.C.M.	Lager	
			C.S.	Livermore	
			T.A.	Pleasance	
Essex County Councillor			J.	Abbott	(Witham Northern)
Braintree District Councillor		Mrs	S.	Wilson	(Witham Central)
			J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
		Miss	N.	Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		Miss	H.	Andrews	(Assist. Proper Officer)
		Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public

The Town Mayor welcomed everyone to the Meeting. She expressed her regret on the death of Brian Wilmer who had been a passionate supporter of wildlife in Witham, stalwart member of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee and a wonderful wildlife photographer.

241. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor R. Williams who was working and Councillor Miss M. Weeks who was unwell. Essex County Councillor D. Louis had also given his apologies as he was unwell.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

242. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 14th December 2020 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor in due course.

243. INTERESTS

Councillors S.E. Hicks and Mrs A. Kilmartin declared non-pecuniary interests in Minutes 245 – Essex County and Braintree District Council Update and 246 – Essex County and District Councillors Community Funding, as Members of Braintree District Council.

244. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Mr Ross Playle congratulated Councillor Mrs S. Ager on organising the Home Alone at Christmas scheme which had been a great success.

245. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Councillors S.E. Hicks and Mrs A. Kilmartin had declared non-pecuniary interests.

Councillor Mrs S. Wilson explained that she had been in touch with the Planning Department at Braintree District Council concerning the new Hunnaball's Funeral Directors building in Newland Street. It would seem that the refurbishment was not carried out in accordance with the amended plans and was now being investigated.

Councillor J. Abbott explained that County Council budgetary process was coming to a conclusion and a lot of financial support had been given by the Government. Good information in relation to Covid 19 was being given out by both County and District Councils. Vaccination centres were now open with additional ones to follow, hopefully with another one in the Braintree District in addition to Great Leighs Race Course. He explained that it was a simple process to apply for an award through the Covid 19 Winter Fund which could assist with food, clothing or energy costs. The County Council was also supplying laptops for children to help in their education during the lock down.

He added that there had been the inevitable surface water flooding and in particular he referred to Rectory Lane and Forest Road which had occurred due to the new development. Good progress was being made in resolving this issue with Bellway Homes.

He said that he was part of the Climate Action, Cycle Routes and A12 Groups which were all moving forward positively.

Members commented that the Braintree Covid Testing Centre had had to be closed due to car park flooding and comment was made that there had been apparently a two hour delay at Braintree Community Hospital for vaccinations. Members welcomed the news that laptops were being provided for low-income families.

Councillor Mrs A. Kilmartin explained that she and Councillor Mrs S. Wilson had donated two notice boards for the Public Hall.

The Town Mayor thanked Members for their contributions.

246. ESSEX COUNTY AND DISTRICT COUNCILLORS COMMUNITY FUNDING

Councillors S.E. Hicks and Mrs A. Kilmartin had declared non-pecuniary interests.

(a) Covid 19 Winter Fund

Details of the Covid 19 Winter Fund were received.

Members discussed how best this fund could be used to assist local residents. A number of ideas were suggested including assisting Spring Lodge with payment of utility bills, funding PPE for voluntary drivers taking the elderly for their vaccinations and the Food Bank. Councillor J. Abbott said that it would be appropriate to make the local churches and the Food Bank aware of the scheme.

RESOLVED That contact be made with the local churches and the Foodbank to make them aware of the scheme.

(b) Braintree District Councillor’s Community Fund

Members were asked for ideas on projects that such funding could be used for.

A number of ideas were suggested including an updated Town Map on the District Council’s Notice Board and improving the access to Whetmead Nature Reserve.

RESOLVED That the matter be referred to the next Policy and Resources Committee’s informal meeting to compile a list of possible projects.

247. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

The Town Clerk had nothing to report.

248. COVID – 19: – EMERGENCY PROVISIONS FOR GOVERNANCE

Members were asked to receive and endorse the amended Emergency Provisions.

It was suggested under Financial Regulations that BACs schedules ‘will be emailed or delivered’.

RESOLVED That the Emergency Provisions be amended and adopted.

249. DELEGATED DECISIONS

The Delegated Decisions for the period 8th December 2020 to 5th January 2021 were received.

Attention was drawn to the decision not to proceed further with the installation of an access ramp to the front entrance of the Town Hall. The decision had been made because the Highways Authority would not authorise a ramp which would obstruct the footway. Councillor Miss C. Jay considered this to be a disgraceful decision which should be fought.

RESOLVED That the matter of a ramp at the front of the Town Hall be reconsidered by the Policy and Resources Committee at its next informal meeting.

RESOLVED That the Delegated Decisions be received and endorsed.

250. PRECEPT 2021 – 2022

The Notes from the Estimates Sub-Committee Delegated Decisions Meeting held 11th January 2021 were received.

Councillor M.C.M. Lager as Chairman of the Estimates Sub-Committee gave the reasoning behind the decision to increase Band D by a modest £5.00 per annum to allow the Council's Business Plans to come to fruition. It would mean that the General Fund would be under the recommended 50% of precept at the end of the Financial Year.

Members understood the reasoning but were concerned at this time of hardship with the pandemic whether a smaller increase could be achieved.

The Town Clerk advised that a smaller precept could be covered from General Reserves.

A counter proposal was made for a £2.50 increase but this was not carried.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and noted.

RESOLVED That Band D be increased by £5.00 per annum to allow the Town Council to provide better services and to fulfil its aspirations.

RESOLVED That a Precept of £679,744.00, a Band D equivalent of £78.80 be agreed.

251. PUBLIC DOMAIN

The recommendation from the Policy and Resources Committee to adopt the practice of officers deciding which subjects should remain in Private Session as allowed in the Local Government Act 1972 was received.

RESOLVED That officers decide which subjects should remain in Private Session as allowed in the Local Government Act 1972.

252. HOME ALONE FOR CHRISTMAS

A report was received from Councillor Mrs S. Ager concerning the success of the Home Alone at Christmas scheme.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Mrs S. Ager for organising the scheme and she in turn thanked everyone for their help.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

253. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's Engagements were received.

She explained that whilst she had not judged the Christmas Lights Competition on the Templars Estate she had awarded a personal prize for her favourite decorated front garden. She added that she had donated and cooked a turkey for the Home Alone for Christmas scheme.

Comment was made that there had been a very poor attendance by Members at the Town Carol Service.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

254. WITHAM'S RECYCLING CENTRE

A response was received from Essex County Council regarding vehicles authorised to use the Witham Recycling Centre.

Members considered the decision to designate Witham as a smaller site as unacceptable. It was agreed to pursue the matter and enlist the support of the MP.

RESOLVED That the response be received and the support of Priti Patel, MP, be sought to re-designate the recycling centre.

RESOLVED That the Town Mayor writes to the Braintree and Witham Times complaining of this decision and the waste of carbon resources in having to drive long distances to use other facilities.

255. 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.

256. LEGAL MATTERS

The Town Clerk explained that he had nothing to report.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

Before closing the Leader of the Council spoke of the pressures on staff at the moment and the need to consider the well-being of staff at these unusual times.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.40 p.m.

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager
Town Mayor

JS/GK/20.1.2021