



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
01376 520627
witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday 8th January 2024**

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

Present: Councillors:

S.	Ager	(Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
P.	Heath	
T.	Hewitt	
J.	Martin	
R.	Playle	(arrived at 8.04 p.m.)
R.	Ramage	
A.	Sloma	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

And one member of the public.

147. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

There were no apologies for absence but Councillor Playle would be late as he had a previous meeting.

RESOLVED That the apology be received and accepted.

148. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 28th November 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

149. INTERESTS

Councillor Fleet declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 157 – Precept 2024 – 2025, as a member of the Witham Tree Group.

150. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No comment was made by the member of the public present.

151. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

No comments were made by the Members of Braintree District Council but it was agreed to continue the update once Essex County Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

152. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 22nd November 2023 to 2nd January 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

153. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk had nothing to report.

154. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) Planning and Transport Committee held 12th December 2023

Minutes 151 to 173.

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee gave a report of the Meeting.

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

(b) Policy and Resources Committee held 12th December 2023

Minutes 26 to 39.

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee gave a report of the Meeting.

RESOLVED That the report of the Policy and Resources Committee be received.

155. INVITATION TO JÜTERBOG

An invitation to attend Jüterbog on 27th and 28th April 2024 to celebrate 850 years of its municipal law was received.

The Town Mayor was unable to attend but Councillor P. Barlow said that he would be willing to attend in her place.

RESOLVED That the invitation be received and Councillor P. Barlow attend.

156. PHOTOCOPYING OF AGENDAS

A motion was received from Councillor Heath regarding the reduction of paper copies of Agendas.

Members were very conscious of the need to avoid unnecessary waste of paper and to reduce printing costs but recognised the need for equality for anyone with a disability or unable to afford a laptop or tablet. The comment was also made that it would be helpful to have plugs available for recharging devices. After much discussion, the suggestion was made to amend the motion to include an exemption, approved by the Town Clerk, on a case-by-case basis.

RESOLVED That in an attempt to cut back on paper and copying costs, as well as being more environmentally friendly, it is proposed that those Members of the Council, with the exception of the Chairman of that particularly meeting, who seek a paper copy of an Agenda be charged 10p per side but the Town Clerk may authorise an exemption on a case by case basis.

157. PRECEPT 2024 – 2025

The Minutes of the Estimates Sub-Committee Meeting held 18th December 2023 were received along with recommendations.

The Leader of the Council reflected on the evolution of the Town Council and the successes made over the years including the acquisition of James Cooke Wood, the introduction of community support and the creation of a Youth Council. He spoke of the installation of new CCTV cameras and the employment of a street warden. He said that inter alia the Town Hall extension would be pursued and a Councillors' Grant scheme would be introduced to support small groups and organisations. He explained that to achieve these aspirations a further 26p a week bringing a Band D equivalent to £103.24. He reminded Members that all the money raised would be spent in Witham.

RESOLVED That the recommended budget for Admin & Central Services for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

Community Committee

In answer to a question the Town Clerk explained that the new CCTV system, including the new server, was working well and proving valuable. The Summer Events budget would cover several events, including the Witham Street Festival, for which further sponsorship would be sought.

RESOLVED That the recommended budget for the Community Committee for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Environment Committee

Councillor Fleet had declared an interest.

Members recognised it had not been possible to have an event to celebrate the 30th anniversary of James Cooke Wood because of the lack of parking and the need for major tree management. Members noted that the contract for lighting would need renewing in September but the Town Clerk explained that there were only limited unmetered supply providers and no one was yet

prepared to quote. Members were concerned about the increasing costs of cleaning and maintaining the public convenience in the park.

RESOLVED That the recommended budget for the Environment Committee for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Policy and Resources Committee

Members were supportive of the Members' Grant scheme.

RESOLVED That the recommended budget for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Planning and Transport Committee

Members noted the major increase in this budget which would include a new budget line for speed reduction measures as resolved by the Committee in December to include the purchase of a Speed Indicator Device and a Tru-Cam, which would be able to process not only speeding offences but check on car tax evasion.

RESOLVED That the recommended budget for the Planning and Transport Committee for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Reserve Balances

Members were informed that there had been a reduction in the reserves for the River Walk cycleway as Section 106 funding could be used.

RESOLVED That the recommended reserve balances for 2024/2025 be accepted.

Precept 2024/2025

The Leader of the Council explained that he had tried to reduce the precept to an affordable and acceptable level and that as the majority of houses in Witham were Band B they would be paying less than the proposed increase of 26 pence a week.

RESOLVED That the Precept for 2024/2025 of £942,473.57 be approved with a net increase in the Band D Property of £13.60 per annum to £103.24.

158. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE (continued)

The Essex County Councillor explained that the County Council had proposed a 2.99% increase in the general tax and 2.00% increase in social care provision. He said that this was the maximum increase it could set. Two thirds of the budget was used for social care and that the 2.00% increase would not be sufficient to cover the projected costs. The proposed increase in precept for a Band D property would be £1.30 a week and would be considered by Council in February. He said that there would be a review of the Local Highways Panels and ways to speed up the process. Likewise there would be a speed management review to decrease limits to 20mph, where there is public support. Repairs to potholes in Newland Street had been delayed to later this month.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

159. 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.

160. FUNDING REPORT

A Funding Report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

161. LAND TRANSFER UPDATE

A Land Transfer Update was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.55 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Town Mayor

10.1.2024