



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

AGENDA

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday 7th April 2026** Time: **7.30 p.m.**

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

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present: Councillors -

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)	L.	Headley
J.C.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Mayor)	J.	Martin
E.	Adelaja		R.	Playle
L.	Barlow		R.	Ramage
P.	Barlow		J.	Robertson
J.M.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor
J.	Goodman		E.	Williams

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

NS/GK/JB – 27.03.2026

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Town Council held 9th March 2026 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

To receive any declarations of interests that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this Agenda.

4. QUESTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC

Members of the press and public will be invited to address the Meeting.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. TACKLING SPEEDING/20s PLENTY

To receive an update from the Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee.

6. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

To receive details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 3rd March 2026 to 23rd March 2026 attached at page 4.

7. FRIENDS OF WITHAM ST. JOHN CIC

To receive a letter of thanks from Friends of Witham St. John CIC attached at page 6.

8. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

To receive a verbal report from the Town Clerk on matters arising.

9. INVESTMENTS

To consider Town Council's investments attached at page 7.

10. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY

To receive a report from the Financial Scrutiny Panel attached at page 10.

11. HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY MANUAL

To receive and adopt the Health and Safety Policy Manual (circulated separately).

12. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: 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.

13. LAND TRANSFER

To receive a report attached at page 17.

14. MALTINGS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

- a). To receive the monthly progress report attached at page 18.
- b). To receive a report from the Town Clerk attached at page 22.



**LIST OF MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS BETWEEN
3rd March 2026 to 23rd March 2026
Councillor Paul Heath**

Wednesday 4th March 2026

Attended PFE Express Limited to partake in the Royal Visit.

Thursday 5th March 2026

Attended Chatty Café in the Heritage Room at Witham Town Hall, engaging with the public.

Friday 6th March 2026

Attended Witham Town Football Club's Bingo with the Mayor evening.

Sunday 8th March 2026

Attended Witham Town Council Mayor's Civic Service at St Nicolas Church.

Wednesday 11th March 2026

Attended the Tea for Helen, Helen Rollason Cancer Charity event at Yvonne Stewart House.

Thursday 12th March 2026

Attended Chatty Café in the Heritage Room at Witham Town Hall, engaging with the public.

Sunday 15th March 2026

Attended Maldon Town Mayor's Civic Service at the United Reform Church, Maldon.

Attended Sunday Cinema at the RBL (Three Coins in the Fountain)



Wednesday 18th March 2026

Attended Maltings Academy with the Town Clerk to discuss Town of Culture with Students.

Attended the pop up stall in Newland Street with the Town Clerk engaging with the public regarding the Town of Culture bid.

Thursday 19th March 2026

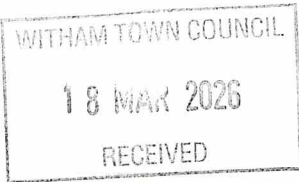
Attended Chatty Café in the Heritage Room at Witham Town Hall, engaging with the public.

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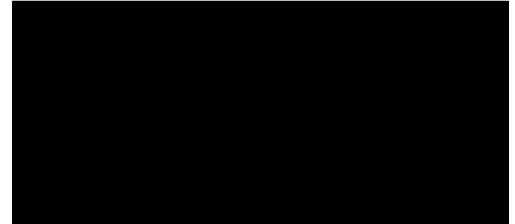
Friends of Witham St. John CIC

Spring Lodge, Powers Hall End, Witham, Essex, CM8 2HE
email: friendsofwithamstjohncic@outlook.com

Agenda Item 7



Letter of thanks from Friends
of Witham St John




*Councillor Paul Heath
Town Mayor,
and Witham Town Council*

14.03.26.

*Dear Sir,
I am writing on behalf of Friends of Witham
St. John CIC & St. John Ambulance Witham & Tiptree
Division, to thank you most sincerely for
the grant awarded to us.*

*Your continual support is of great help
to us and enables the Division to continue
with their aim of serving the community.*

Yours sincerely

 *Chair
Friends of Witham St. John CIC*

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Officer Report: Treasury Investments
1. Purpose of Report

This report updates Members on the Council's current investment holdings in Unity Trust Bank, Lloyds Bank 92-day notice and the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, including balances, interest rates, credit quality and key risks.

2. Treasury & Investment Policy – Key Points

2.1 The Council's Treasury & Investment Policy (Policy No. WTC/003) is made under the Local Government Act 2003 and associated Government guidance and CIPFA's Treasury Management Code.

2.2 The Policy sets the Council's priorities for investments as:

- first, security of reserves;
- second, liquidity (access to funds); and
- third, yield (the level of return)

2.3 The Policy provides that:

- All investments must be in sterling with UK-registered institutions or UK-government-backed funds.
- The Council will only invest with banks and building societies it defines as "High Credit Quality", i.e. with at least A (Moody's) or BBB (Standard & Poor's/Fitch).
- The Council may invest in the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund, subject to it maintaining the required credit quality.
- No investment will exceed 12 months in term.
- The current/instant access balance should be maintained at approximately one-half of the annual precept, with all other funds held in fixed deposits or notice accounts of varying lengths.

2.4 The 2026/27 precept is £1,112,027; this implies a policy benchmark of around £550,000 in current/instant access balances, with remaining funds held in longer-notice or fixed arrangements.

3. Current Investment Position

3.1 As at March 2026, before the first precept instalment is received, the Council's main investment balances are:

- Unity Trust Bank – instant access savings: approximately £350,000.
- Lloyds Bank – 92/95-day notice account: £100,000.
- CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF): £190,000, with a further £104,000 due to be invested shortly, taking the CCLA holding to around £294,000.

3.2 The Council is due to receive the first instalment of the 2026/27 precept (approximately £550,000) in April. In the first instance, this will be received into the Unity current/instant access arrangements, temporarily increasing Unity balances to around £900,000 unless and until funds are reallocated.

3.3 On that basis, and before any further decisions are taken, Unity would be significantly above the £550,000 policy benchmark for instant access, while Lloyds and CCLA together would hold a smaller proportion of the Council's overall funds.

4. Interest Rates and Performance
4.1 Unity instant access

- Unity's instant access business savings rate has recently been reduced, and is currently around 2.10% gross/AER on the relevant balance tier.
- This provides same-day liquidity but a comparatively modest return compared with other options available to the Council.

4.2 Lloyds 92/95-day notice

- Over the period September 2025 to February 2026, the Lloyds 95-day notice account has typically paid rates in the range 2.63%–2.73%.
- Access requires a notice period (92/95 days) before withdrawal, which is suitable for funds not required for day-to-day cash flow.

4.3 CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

- The officer comparison report shows that between September 2025 and February 2026, the CCLA PSDF consistently delivered higher interest than Lloyds, with yields generally in the 3.7%–4.0% range over that period.
- CCLA's latest fact sheet for the PSDF indicates a current yield of around 3.7%–3.8% annual equivalent yield on the relevant share class.
- The Fund offers daily liquidity in normal market conditions, while providing a diversified portfolio of short-term deposits and money-market instruments.

4.4 In summary, recent data show that CCLA has delivered a meaningfully higher yield than both Unity instant access and the Lloyds notice account, while Unity remains the lowest-yielding but most liquid option.

5. Credit Quality and Risk

5.1 Unity Trust Bank

5.1.1 Unity Trust Bank is a UK-regulated bank focusing on social impact banking. Fitch Ratings has assigned Unity an investment-grade long-term credit rating of 'BBB-' with a stable outlook.

5.1.2 This rating meets the Council's definition of "High Credit Quality" (minimum BBB) under the Treasury & Investment Policy.

5.1.3 The Financial Services Compensation Scheme (FSCS) cover is not applicable to councils with a budget over 500,00 euros.

5.2 Lloyds Bank

5.2.1 Lloyds Banking Group is one of the UK's largest retail and commercial banking groups. Fitch currently assigns Lloyds a long-term Issuer Default Rating of 'A+' with a short-term rating of 'F1'.

5.2.2 This rating is comfortably above the Council's "High Credit Quality" threshold in the Treasury & Investment policy.

5.2.3 As with Unity, local authority deposits with Lloyds are not expected to benefit from FSCS protection, so the Council's exposure is to Lloyds' own creditworthiness.

5.3 CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund

5.3.1 The CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) is a pooled cash fund for public bodies, authorised and regulated by the FCA and managed by CCLA Investment Management Ltd.

5.3.2 Fitch has affirmed the PSDF's money-market rating at 'AAAmmf', indicating very high credit quality and low sensitivity to market risk, with the fund investing only in instruments with strong short-term or long-term ratings (typically A- or better).

5.3.3 Under the Treasury & Investment Policy, the Council may invest in the PSDF provided it maintains this high quality; that condition is currently satisfied.

5.3.4 PSDF investments are **not** covered by FSCS. Risk is instead diversified across a portfolio of banks and short-dated instruments, subject to stringent credit and liquidity limits.

6. Overall Risk Position

6.1 Concentration and counterparty risk

6.1.1 Once the first precept instalment is banked, Unity Trust Bank would temporarily hold around **£900,000**, well above the £550,000 policy benchmark for instant-access balances and representing a significant concentration with one institution.

6.1.2 After the planned £104,000 top-up, the CCLA PSDF holding will be around £294,000, which will make CCLA the Council's largest single investment outside Unity.

6.1.3 Lloyds currently holds a more modest £100,000, providing some diversification into a major UK clearing bank

6.2 Liquidity risk

6.2.1 Unity provides same-day access to funds and remains the Council's primary liquidity buffer.

6.2.2 The Lloyds 95-day account provides limited liquidity due to its notice requirement, but is appropriate for funds that are clearly not needed for day-to-day operations.

6.2.3 The CCLA PSDF offers daily dealing in normal market conditions, but, as with any pooled fund, dealing could theoretically be constrained in stressed markets. This is considered a low-probability risk, but cannot be ruled out entirely.

6.3 Guarantee position

6.3.1 Across all three arrangements (Unity, Lloyds and CCLA), Members should note that the Council's balances are **not** covered by any comprehensive deposit guarantee; protection ultimately depends on the strength and diversification of the underlying counterparties and the Council's own limits on exposures.

6.3.2 The Council's approach of using multiple counterparties and products (instant access, notice, and pooled fund) is consistent with managing risk through diversification, but the temporary spike in Unity balances around the precept receipt will increase short-term concentration with that institution.

7. Policy Compliance and Member Considerations

7.1 The current counterparties – Unity Trust Bank, Lloyds Bank and the CCLA Public Sector Deposit Fund – all meet the "High Credit Quality" requirements set out in the Treasury & Investment Policy.

7.2 The planned investments remain within the Policy's requirement that all investments be sterling-denominated, with UK-registered institutions or UK-government-backed funds, and with a maximum term of 12 months.

7.3 The principal area for Members' consideration is asset allocation rather than counterparty eligibility; specifically:

- The extent to which Unity balances should be held above or brought back towards the £550,000 "one-half precept" benchmark once the precept is received.
- The relative balance between Lloyds (a higher-rated UK clearing bank with notice restrictions) and CCLA (a diversified AAA-rated money-market style fund with daily liquidity and higher yield).

7.4 In light of the information above, Members may wish to reflect on:

- Their preferred balance between security, liquidity and yield for the coming year;
- Whether any upper limits should be set for individual counterparties (Unity, Lloyds, CCLA) within the existing Policy; and
- Whether they are content with the current planned CCLA exposure (c. £294,000) relative to Unity and Lloyds, given the higher yield but lack of FSCS-type guarantee.

Advice: Consider whether any changes are required to the allocation of funds between Unity, Lloyds and CCLA in order to maintain an appropriate balance between security, liquidity and yield, and to manage concentration risk, and instruct officers accordingly.

NS/25.03.2026

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Financial Risk Assessment

CONDUCTED BY THE FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL

~~Interim Assessment~~ / End of Year Assessment

PANEL MEMBERS:

Councillor	P.R Barlow
Councillor	B Fleet
Councillor	E Adelaja

OFFICERS:

N. Smith	(Responsible Financial Officer)
N. Zaviazun	(Finance Assistant)

Panel date: 19th March 2026

The financial scrutiny panel was constituted by resolution to ensure a thorough and transparent process is in place to actively scrutinise the actions of officers who control the financial administration of Witham Town Council.

The panel exists to make recommendations to officers and suggest process changes and new processes where required, with any such recommendations being endorsed by the Policy & Resources Committee.

Summary of Recommendations:

Section 1: Budget Management

Section 2: Administration

Section 3: Policy & Internal Control

Section 4: Tenders

Section 5: Other Recommendations

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION ONE: BUDGET MANAGEMENT

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have the Council's Financial Regulations been followed?	√			No issues
2. Has each committee approved a draft budget and corresponding business plan for the current financial year?	√			
3. Did the Estimates Committee make recommendations to Full Council on each budget ahead of setting the precept?	√			
4. Have the budgets set by Council been followed by the relevant committees?	√			Overspend approved and adjusted by Community Committee
5. Has the Council followed due process in setting the annual precept?	√			
6. Has the Council kept within its respective committee budgets for the year to date?	√			Anomalies identified and addressed through exception reporting
7. Has each committee received a budget report as part of its agenda papers?	√			
8. Have regular reports on the financial status of the Council been made to the Policy and Resources Committee?	√			
9. Has the Clerk sought approval from the Council for expenditure and emergency expenditure outside of the Scheme of Delegation?		√		N/A – no such expenditure occurred
10. Have Members received recommendations on appropriate budget virements where required?	√			Community Committee budget virements approved and recorded in minutes
11. Are all earmarked reserves duly accounted for and up to date?	√			
12. Can officers provide the panel with an up-to-date analysis of the general reserves and balances of the Council?	√			

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION TWO: ADMINISTRATION

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have officers complied with Financial Regulations in terms of general administration?	√			
2. Have accounting procedures been followed in accordance with the Account & Audit Regulations 2015?	√			
3. Was the Annual Governance & Accountability Statement (AGAR) completed as soon as practically possible and referred to Council?	√			On track. New one soon
4. Have members considered a supporting set of accounts that correspond to the AGAR?	√			Preparing for AGAR
5. Have arrangements been made for an end of year or interim internal audit to take place?	√			Booked for May
6. Are adequate arrangements in place for the public inspection of documents including minutes and agenda papers?	√			
7. Is the financial scrutiny panel meeting as planned?	√			
8. Has the Policy & Resources Committee considered copies of receipts, payments and corresponding bank reconciliations?	√			Regular reports including receipts, payments and bank reconciliations presented to P&R Committee
9. Are reconciliation documents supported by a corresponding bank statement?	√			
10. Where used, have cheques received the correct number of signatures and all stubs countersigned?		√		None issued
11. Have BACS schedules been duly signed by the current number of signatures and corresponding payments countersigned?	√			
12. Have three signatures been sought for all expenditure in excess of £5,000?	√			
13. Is the petty cash account balanced with all supporting paperwork present?	√			
14. Has the RFO/Assist RFO countersigned each petty cash receipt?	√			
15. Do all receipts booked have a corresponding invoice present?	√			
16. Have all invoices for payment been initialled by signatories?	√			

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
17. Are a range of signatories being used for all payments being made by the Council?	√			Six signatures
18. Has a mandate been sought by officers for any borrowing of funds including from the DMO (if applicable)?		√		N/A
19. Is the VAT control account in order and supported with a corresponding VAT file detailing return claim, dates of claims and items of expenditure being claimed for?	√			VAT claim to be submitted post 31.03.2026
20. Have all Direct Debit mandates been accounted for and duly signed by at least two signatories?	√			
21. Have all receipts payable to the Council been deposited on a best endeavour basis?	√			Frequent Post Office closures may cause delays; however, all receipts are banked at the earliest available opportunity
22. Do all paying-in books correspond with receipts present in the cashbook?	√			
23. Have payments to staff to defray expenses incurred on behalf of the Council been made?	√			Very few. Examples provided.
24. Are credit card statements supported by corresponding VAT invoices and all credit card expenditure made in accordance with financial regulations?	√			
25. Has the Council published a Privacy Notice which has been reviewed in the last twenty-four months?	√			Just reviewed at Full Town Council meeting
26. Does the Council possess a Data/Document retention policy and actively file, archive and dispose of data in accordance with that policy?	√			To be reviewed at Policy & Resources

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION THREE: POLICY & INTERNAL CONTROL

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Has the Council reviewed its schedule of hire charges within the last twelve months?	√			Ad hoc but also new Community Centre
2. Are all investments being managed in accordance with the Town Council's Treasury and Investment Management Policy?	√			Report to Policy and Resources Committee
3. Are all insurances schedules up to date and provide adequate cover for all services provided including fidelity guarantee insurance?	√			Fidelity Insurance increased
4. Is a current copy of Employer's Liability insurance present and in date?	√			
5. Can officers demonstrate that all vehicles have Vehicle Excise Duty, a current MOT paid and in date and up to date vehicle insurance?	√			Evidence provided
6. Is an up-to-date copy of the Council's registration with the Information Commissioners Office present and available for inspection?	√			
7. Have all internal payments (E.g Information Centre Payment Requests) been raised via an Internal Payment Request form?	√			
8. Examine the payments folders. Has each invoice been duly marked with an 'Approved for Payment' stamp and initialled by the approving officer?	√			Examined
9. Have all invoices been conspicuously marked with a four digit nominal code?				N/A Superseded
10. Can officers provide evidence that all BACS payments made in relation to salaries correspond to payroll schedules?	√			
11. Are all payments of sums due to HMRC correctly accounted for?	√			
12. Are all LGPS payments supported with a balancing PN11 return?	√			
13. Have all travel claims been duly marked with an 'Approved for Payment' stamp? Where parking or other expenses are claimed, are supporting tickets or receipts attached to the claim?	√			
14. Has a stock check been conducted for the Information Centre within the last twelve months?	√			Mainly done in March plus interim.
15. Have the financial regulations been reviewed by the Council in the last twelve months?	√			To be done at Annual Meeting

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION FOUR: TENDERS

Item	YES	NO	REC	Evidence:
1. Have any tenders in excess of £25,000 been made within the last twelve months?	√			Christmas lights example
2. Has capital expenditure made from the Earmarked Reserves been approved by the relevant committee?	√			Tree work
3. Have all sealed tenders been opened by an officer with a Member present and a record kept?	√			Christmas lights
4. Are all contracts awarded supported with an appropriate order letter and basic contract terms?	√			Related to value of contract
5. Are officers capable of demonstrating that value for money is being sought for general expenditure and procurement?	√			Evidenced
6. Has there been any incidents of contract dispute in the last twelve months and a record of disputes and outcomes kept?	√			Chubb invoice queried. Resolved. Credit note received.

FINANCIAL RISK ASSESSMENT

SECTION FIVE: OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the Panel is satisfied that appropriate financial controls are in place and operating effectively, with only minor areas identified for improvement.

Approved by the Financial Scrutiny Panel: (Councillor) _____

Endorsed by the Responsible Financial Officer: _____

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