



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 9<sup>th</sup> August 2021**

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

Present:	Councillors	S.	Ager	(Chairman)
		C.	Lager	
		M.	Lager	
		T.	Pleasance	
		M.	Weeks	
		R.	Williams	
Also in attendance:	Cllr.	S.	Rajeev	
Essex Police:	Sgt.	S.	Jesse	Community Special
	Sgt.	S.	Mugridge	
Citizens Advice:		R.	Fahie	Braintree, Halstead & Witham
		D.	Whatton	Trustee
		N.	Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		H.	Andrews	(Assistant Clerk)
		L.	Brimston	(Events Co-ordinator)
		G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

The Chairman welcomed Councillor Sindhu Rajeev to the Town Council.

### **16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Jay who was isolating and Councillor J. Williams who was unwell.

**RESOLVED** That the apologies be received and noted.

### **17. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee Meeting held 17<sup>th</sup> May 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

**18. INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

**19. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There was no member of the press or public present.

**20. GUEST SPEAKER**

The Chairman welcomed Rachel Fahie to the Meeting to talk about the work of the Citizens Advice (CA) and Derek Whatton, Trustee.

Rachel explained that the CA is able to offer independent and often complicated advice to residents which is impartial and free. There is a phone first facility from 10 am – 4 pm, five days a week. Face to face meetings were suspended at the start of the pandemic but video conferencing was now available. The volunteers work a total of 200 hours a week to keep the phone lines open. 900 Witham residents had been supported in the last year with advice ranging from benefits, debt management, housing and employment issues. She thanked the Town Council for its grant which was critical to the local service.

Rachel then gave a case study which showed the complexity of employment issues and the help they had given to ensure an employee was given the agreed wages without bogus deductions from other agencies. In answer to a question Rachel explained that they encourage clients to report such situations of attempted fraud to the police. Such issues would also be raised at a national level.

She said that CA was continuing to closely monitor the situation and work to meet clients' needs.

The Chairman thanked Rachel for her report.

Councillor C. Lager presented the CA with a cheque for £7,345.87 which she had raised as part of her Town Mayor's Appeal.

Derek thanked Clare and the Town Council for their support.

Rachel and Derek then left the Meeting.

**21. ESSEX POLICE, PSCO & SPECIAL CONSTABLE UPDATES**

The Chairman welcomed Community Special Sergeant Simon Jesse and Sergeant Steve Mugridge to the Meeting.

Community Special Sergeant Jesse spoke about his recent report and the success of the Dog Show last month which had given them the opportunity to engage with the public and children in particular. He said that it had been difficult to meet residents as not so many people were out and about.

Sergeant Mugridge said that they were engaged in a two week clamp down on e scooters, vehicle crime and anti-social behaviour. He said that they were trying to attend the Activate events in the park for young people between the ages of 11 and 16 years of age and spoke of the importance of friendly engagement with young people. He added that there had been an increase in vehicle crime.

In answer to a question Community Special Sergeant Jesse explained that some people do not realise that e scooters cannot be used on public highways and in the first instance would be

dealt with by words of advice but then the scooter would be seized if used again. It was noted that there had been an upsurge in the use of nitrous oxide but it was explained that this in itself was not a crime. Steve said that users would be advised of the risks.

Members expressed their thanks to all the Community Specials and were impressed with the remarkable amount of time they gave to their roles.

Community Special Sergeant Simon Jesse and Sergeant Steve Mugridge then left the Meeting.

## **22. CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk's Report was received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the Pop-Up stall on Saturday had to be cancelled because of bad weather. Braintree District Council had organised an event in the Park on Tuesday, 10<sup>th</sup> August 2021 with the Street Scene team and Community 360. The Town Council would also take part.

Councillor R. Williams explained that it was overly optimistic to expect the Silver Cinema to recommence in September as the library was not yet open for events. He said that a team of people to assist at the cinema was required and offers of help should be directed to him.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and information noted.

## **23. COMMUNITY INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT**

The committee income & expenditure report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 - 30<sup>th</sup> June 2021 was received.

The Chairman considered that it was important to use the money allocated.

**RESOLVED** That the income and expenditure report be received and noted.

## **24. 40<sup>th</sup> ANNIVERSARY OF THE TOWN COUNCIL**

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that next April would be the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Town Council and Members were asked whether they wished to celebrate the event.

Members views were divided as to whether this anniversary should be celebrated. A suggestion was made that a parade should be organised.

**RESOLVED** That draft plans to celebrate the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Town Council be brought to the next Community Committee.

## **25. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS UPDATE**

The Events Co-ordinator gave an update on Town Council events.

She explained that the Dog Show had been very successful with lots of positive feedback and almost £200 raised for dog charities. Members said that people were very appreciative of the event particularly as it had been held on the River Walk.

The Events Co-ordinator said that whilst the children's free Halloween event at James Cooke Wood would take place unfortunately because groups and organisations were not yet meeting, the evening event for adults had to be cancelled.

She said that Christmas was in the early stages of planning and the road closure for the Christmas Market had been applied for. In answer to a question she said that the Rotary Club no longer had the resources to provide the town Christmas tree and this was now organised by the Town Council.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and information noted.

## **26. TOWN CLOCK**

A report containing proposals to renovate the Town Clock was received.

Members considered that it was vital that the clock should be restored and that a decision on gold paint or leaf be made on durability.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the quotation for restoration of the Town Clock be accepted with the decision of whether to use gold paint or leaf be based on longevity.

## **27. ALLOTMENTS**

A report was received regarding the Cut Throat Lane allotments which had been in the ownership of the Town Council since 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2021.

The Assistant Clerk said that both a lot of administrative and ground work had been carried out. The Open Spaces Team attended the allotments once a week to carry out maintenance and a good relationship with the allotment holders had been formed.

She said that the Tenancy Agreement had been based on the District Council one and once agreed by Members would be sent to allotment holders. Members stressed the importance of joining the National Association. Members were informed that as it was National Allotment Week there would be posts on the Town Council social media sites.

Members agreed that the Tenancy Agreement should have a pro-rata rate for tenants taking an allotment later in the year. Concern was expressed about the use of weed killer and bonfires on the allotment site albeit a communal one.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and information noted.

**RESOLVED** That the Tenancy Agreement be adopted with suggested changes regarding weed killer and bonfires, following consultation with the tenants.

## **28. CLIMATE AUDIT PANEL**

Recommendations from the Climate Audit Panel were received.

Members considered that it would not be possible to run CCTV purely on solar power.

**RESOLVED** That an investigation be carried out as to whether it would be possible to have solar powered CCTV cameras with back up electricity.

**RESOLVED** That the Youth Working Group correspond with local schools to explore climate priorities with children.

**RESOLVED** That the Community Committee review pesticides as part of setting its allotment management policies.

**RESOLVED** That the recommendation for the Community Committee to explore the scope for installation of communal composting facilities was unnecessary as this had already been achieved.

**29. 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.

**30. INFORMATION CENTRE STATISTICS**

A report on Information Centre statistics was received.

A discussion took place about the ‘Welcome to Witham’ packs and the need for an updated map to be produced.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**31. SOCIAL MEDIA STATISTIC REPORT**

A report was received on social media statistics.

Members spoke about the need to be proactive with social media.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**32. COMMUNITY SPECIALS**

A report was received on the Community Specials.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.45 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager  
Chairman

NS/GK/11.8.2021