



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 1st November 2021**

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

Councillors	S.	Ager	(Chairman)
	J.	Bayford	(Vice Chairman)
	M.	Lager	
	J.	Williams	
	R.	Williams	

Also in attendance:	Cllrs	P.	Barlow	
		J.	Goodman	
		A.	Kilmartin	
		T.	Drury	(WAOS)
		Sgt	S.	Jesse
		N.	Smith	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		L.	Brimston	(Events Co-ordinator)
		G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

33. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Jay who had a previous engagement, Councillors C. Lager, C. Livermore and T. Pleasance due to ill health, and M. Weeks due to employment commitments.

34. MINUTES

The Chairman pointed out that at Minute 25 – Witham Town Council Events Update, ‘not’ had been missed from the third paragraph, which should read ‘Halloween event at James Cooke Wood not take place’, as Members know it had since been decided to hold on the River Walk.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee Meeting held 9th August 2021, as amended, be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

35. INTERESTS

Councillors S Ager, P Barlow, J Bayford, J Goodman, M. Lager and J. Williams all declared non-pecuniary interest in Minute 42 – Grant Aid Request – Royal British Legion, as Royal British Legion Members.

36. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

37. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman welcomed Mr Trevor Drury from the Witham Amateur Operatic Society to the Meeting.

Mr Drury thanked the Community Committee for the opportunity to attend the Meeting. He explained that he had been a member of WAOS for 21 years and appointed Chairman earlier this year. He explained that the Society was set up in 1921 by residents wishing to perform musical works and with the first performance in 1922 would be celebrating its centenary next year. Originally the society's members were only adult with children recruited for specific roles but in 1995 when Oliver was performed it was decided to expand and a sub-society called WOW (Witham Operatic Workshop) was formed for children. He said that WAOS produced two shows a year and WOW one with over 4,000 attending in total. They have a close liaison with the Public Hall giving support at front of house and in the bar. Mr Drury added that young people have progressed through WOW into West End shows and become professional actors, often returning to share their experiences.

It was proposed to create a show linked to Witham and following research and discussions with local historians it was decided to produce a show based on James Cooke, a fatherless 16 year old hung for arson although the attacks continued after his execution. He said that a professional facilitator had been used at weekend workshops to set out the foundation, plot, outline and words. Songs had been written and music created. The shows would take place from 24th to 29th October 2022 with an in-house director.

Mr Drury asked for support from the Community Committee as he acknowledged the difficulty and challenges to get audiences for shows. Members noted the high cost of show production. He hoped that WAOS could work in partnership with the Town Council.

The Chairman thanked Mr Drury for his presentation and looked forward to seeing the show.

38. ESSEX POLICE, PSCO & SPECIAL CONSTABLE UPDATES

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

Sgt Jesse explained that Essex Police had recently focussed on enforcement of speed limits. Sgt Jesse said that this was the time of year when anti-social behaviour activity increased and confiscations of non-compliant electric scooters had been carried out. Members thanked Sgt Jesse for his work on Saturday at the Halloween event.

Members raised concerns over a recent planning application proposal concerning Collingwood Road and potential to introduce no parking and install cycle paths by narrowing the road. Sgt Jesse said that the width of Collingwood Road invites speeding and there was concern when people leave the Public Hall. Sgt Jesse informed the committee he would seek a view from Essex Police.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

39. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received.

RESOLVED That the Clerk's report be received and noted.

40. COMMUNITY INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The committee income & expenditure report for the period up to 30th September 2021 was received.

Comment was made that over 88% of the Community Safety/CCTV budget had already been used. The Deputy Town Clerk said that there had been a number of camera failures and vandalism, which accounted for this amount.

It was also noted that the Witham Dog Show was over-budget and that a virement should be made from the Community Day which could not be held. The Deputy Town Clerk said that virements would be made at the end of the Financial Year when a true figure was available.

RESOLVED That the income and expenditure report for the period up to 30th September 2021 be received and information noted.

41. ALLOTMENTS

(a) Cut Throat Lane Allotments Update

An update on the Cut Throat Lane Allotments was received.

Members were informed that final letters would shortly be sent to those allotment holders who were not cultivating their plots. Members noted a highly positive working relationship with the Cut Throat Lane Allotment Association who had been complimentary in the Town Council's initial handling of allotment administration since completing the repatriation of the site to local control.

RESOLVED That the update be received and noted.

(b) Allotment Policy

The Allotment Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the Allotment Policy be received and adopted.

(c) Allotment Appeal Panel

Members received a report, proposing establishment of an Allotment Appeal Panel.

RESOLVED That the report be received and a decision deferred whilst the role of the Allotment Association in plot vacation was clarified by officers

42. GRANT AID REQUEST – ROYAL BRITISH LEGION

Councillors S Ager, P Barlow, J Bayford, J Goodman, M. Lager and J. Williams had all declared non-pecuniary interests.

A grant aid request from the Royal British Legion for £1,350 towards audio improvements at their hall was received.

RESOLVED That a grant of £1,350 be made to the Royal British Legion towards improvements to their audio system.

43. QUEEN’S JUBILEE BEACON LIGHTING

A report was received on the proposed Queen’s Jubilee Celebration.

The Events Officer explained that there would be an opportunity for employing local acts for entertainment.

Councillor Goodman had been involved with the last Beacon Lighting event to mark the centenary of the end of WWI and detailed the organisation of the event. It was suggested the Parish Church should be involved and the importance that any dignities were invited to attend in good time was stressed.

Members agreed that it would be a better idea to form an advisory committee to consider ideas.

RESOLVED That a new advisory committee, the Queen’s Jubilee Working Group, consisting of Councillors J Bayford, J Goodman, C Livermore, S Rajeev, J. Williams and R Williams be established and incorporated into the Council’s Scheme of Delegation.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

44. WITHAM SPOOKTACULAR TRAIL – 30TH OCTOBER 2021

The Chairman congratulated staff and Members who participated on the success of the first ever official Town Council Halloween event; the Spooktacular Trail.

The Events Officer explained that over 300 children had participated in this free event, which saw Members of the Council in full costume interacting with participants, handing out sweets and prizes to children. Members congratulated the high level of public participation and high calibre of entries into the fancy dress competition, which was hosted on social media for the first time.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

45. SOCIAL ISOLATION WORKING GROUP

(a) Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Social Isolation Working Group held 10th September 2021 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

(b) Closure of the Working Group

A recommendation was received to dissolve the Social Isolation Working Group.

The Chairman said that the Group was initially set up to encourage Members to take a more active part but as there had been little contact or ideas taken forward, she proposed that the Group be disbanded. Members were reminded that the Silver Cinema would be starting again this month and all Members were encouraged to assist including by attending Town Council pop-up stalls and outreach events.

RESOLVED That the Social Isolation Working Group be dissolved and ideas and proposals dealt with by the Community Committee.

46. YOUTH WORKING GROUP

(a) Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Youth Working Group held 7th October 2021 was received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

(b) Closure of the Working Group

A recommendation was received to dissolve the Youth Working Group.

Members agreed the value in closing the Group at this time.

RESOLVED That the Youth Working Group be dissolved.

47. COUNCIL EVENTS REVIEW GROUP

Members were asked to consider the dissolution of the Council Events Review Group.

RESOLVED That the Council Events Review Group be dissolved.

48. COMMUNITY SAFETY POLICY

Members were asked to consider adoption of the Community Safety Policy.

Attention was drawn to the four-point action plan to promote community safety. It was suggested that the collection of data should be considered possible through surveys to ascertain how safe the public felt. It was also suggested that additional devices to contact to CCTV cameras should be obtained for the community specials.

RESOLVED That the Community Safety Policy be adopted.

49. COMMUNITY AWARDS POLICY

Members were asked to consider terminating the Community Awards policy.

It was agreed that the policy should be terminated.

RESOLVED That the Community Awards policy be terminated.

50. DRAFT BUDGET AND CORPORATE STRATEGY

Members were asked to consider a draft Budget and Corporate Strategy for the Community Committee 2022/2023.

Members discussed plans for the Community Committee, which included the possibility of introducing new Christmas lights on the River Walk. The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that information from other Councils suggested that upwards of £100,000 would be needed to create a high quality event. Members were also informed of the higher risk nature of this type of event and that no outline business case had yet been approved by the committee or Council. Additional feasibility study would need to be undertaken to ensure that no disruption to the sensitive ecological profile of the River Walk would take place. Members considered that LED lighting of individual trees should be investigated.

RESOLVED That a proposed budget of £5,000 for an initial trial of lighting trees on a section of the River Walk with LED lights be referred for inclusion into the forward Corporate Strategy.

In view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Order 3x to allow business to be completed.

RESOLVED That Standing Order 3x be suspended so that business could continue.

Members then considered setting up a Community Speed Group. Members considered that funding of £2,300 to purchase speed gun, signage and hi-vis jackets would be needed.

Members stated an outreach programme for people moving into the town and a possible electric scooter hire scheme.

RESOLVED That the Corporate Strategy process take forwards these recommendations.

51. 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.

52. SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media statistics were received.

RESOLVED That the statistics be received and noted.

53. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report was received from the Information Centre Manager.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.48 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Chairman

NS/GK/3.11.2021