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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 12th January 2026**

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

Present: Councillors:

P.	Heath	(Town Mayor)
J.C.	Coleman	(Deputy Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	(arrived 7.35 p.m.)
L.	Barlow	
P.	Barlow	
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
J.	Goodman	
L.	Headley	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

143. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Martin, Sloma, Taylor and Williams.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

144. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 25th November 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

145. INTERESTS

Councillor Goodman declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 157 – Maltings Lane Community Centre as he knew a supplier.

146. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

147. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Essex County Councillor Playle said that the County Council would not request a postponement of local elections until after the Government had made a decision with regard to the Local Government Review. He said that with the resignation of the Witham Southern Member he would pick up any highway issues. He noted that the Government had introduced a RAG system of rating for repair of potholes and Essex had a green rating. He said that as part of the Member-led scheme the pavements in St Nicholas Road and Chipping Dell would be resurfaced by the end of February 2026. The North Essex Parking Partnership meeting to discuss the proposed charges for parking in Newland Street would be held on 19th March 2026 at City Hall. He confirmed that there was an ability to live-stream the meeting.

Councillor Adelaja arrived at the Meeting.

In answer to a question, Councillor Playle said that Forest Road would be resurfaced in the next financial year.

Braintree District Councillor Heath said that in the spring, the District Council proposed to hold a regular road show in Witham to explain the new bin system.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

148. TACKLING SPEEDING/20s PLENTY

The Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee was pleased to announce that the Speed Indicator Device was now in place in Hatfield Road and working well. Additional sites for the SID were being considered.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

149. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 19th November to 31st December 2025 were received. The Town Mayor said that he had a fantastic December and attended five carol services.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

150. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk had nothing to report.

151. TOWN COUNCIL INTERIM AUDIT REPORT 2025 – 2026

The Interim Audit Report for 2025 – 2026 was received.

Members spoke about the Auditor's comment that the fidelity cover was below the recommended level which was a decision that the Town Council had made over the years as stringent measures were in place to reduce risk. The Financial Scrutiny Panel would look at this and costings to increase the cover.

RESOLVED That the Interim Audit Report for 2025 – 2026 was received.

152. PRECEPT 2026 – 2027

The Minutes of the Estimates Committee held 16th December 2025 were received along with recommendations to Town Council.

Members commented that the proposed budget would consolidate previous successes with a focus on the community. There would be a smaller increase of just 12p this coming year which would be spent in Witham for the benefit of its residents.

In answer to a number of questions the Town Clerk explained that there was an increase in Central Services training budget as additional training would be required once the Maltings Lane Community centre was running, that the Town Council paid up to £5,000 in expenses for Community Specials and £1,000 for recruitment advertising and the Town Council was tied into a three year insurance deal. The premium had increased because of an insurance claim and the Town Hall had been revalued.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Estimates Committee held 16th December 2025 be received and noted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for Admin & Central Services for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for the Community Committee for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for the Environment Committee for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for the Policy and Resources Committee for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for the Planning and Transport Committee for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed budget for Maltings Lane for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the proposed reserve balances for 2026/2027 be accepted.

RESOLVED That the Precept for 2026/2027 of £1,112,027.00 be approved with a net increase in the Band D Property of £6.26 to £117.52.

153. CIVILITY AND RESPECT

The Civility and Respect, Councillor's Statement of Assurance was received.

The Town Clerk explained that the Town Council had signed the pledge and now individual Councillors were being asked to sign. There was no commitment for standing Councillors to sign but Members considered it would be prudent to do so.

RESOLVED That the Statement of Assurance be received and noted.

154. LOCAL GOVERNMENT REORGANISATION UPDATE

Members recognised that the closing date for the Government Consultation was yesterday. A number of Members had responded as individuals and a discussion took place whether there would be any merit in making a late submission and whether the Town Council should support the three or five unitary council model.

The view was put that by supporting the five model, Braintree would be with Colchester and Tendring where there had already been close involvement in the proposed garden community plan. It was considered that there could also be more opportunity for devolved options. An opposing opinion to support the three model was put along with the view that it was now too late to respond in any event.

Members were informed that two thirds of the County Council budget was spent on adult social care and children's services and the three model would create savings however if these services were under the control of the Mayor of Essex this would not apply.

Concern was expressed regarding the cost and staffing of local elections and how this could be funded. The matter had been raised but no answer given. The view was put that the reorganisation was being rushed through and that after 2028 the District Council would no longer exist.

After further discussion it was agreed to write supporting the five unitary council model.

RESOLVED That the Town Council write in support of the five unitary council model, explaining that the system should not be over-bureaucratic and demonstrate existing community ties; and there had been no clear indication as to how local elections would be supported.

155. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That 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.

156. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

157. MALTINGS LANE COMMUNITY CENTRE

Councillor Goodman had declared an interest.

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

158. GERSHWIN PARK

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

159. **LOVE YOUR BUS GRANT**

A verbal report was received.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.31p.m.

Councillor Heath
Town Mayor

NS/GK/13.1. 2026

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