



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

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**  
Date: **Tuesday, 29<sup>th</sup> March 2022**  
Place: **Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE**

Present: Councillors

M.	Lager	(Chairman)
P.	Barlow	
J.	Goodman	
M.	Weeks	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
C.	Strachan	(Assistant RFO)

### **51. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ager, Jay, J. Williams and R. Williams who were unwell, Atwill who was travelling abroad and Pleasance who had a previous engagement.

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

### **52. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 29<sup>th</sup> November 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **53. INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

### **54. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

There was no member of the press or public present.

### **55. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk's report on matters arising was received.

The Town Clerk explained that there had been a problem trying to fit the sound proofed partition for the Heritage Room as the floor was not level. She had sought a time extension from the Rural

Community Council for Essex whilst a new quote was obtained. She said that a further grant from the Changing Places Toilet scheme had been applied for from Central Government through Braintree District Council to improve the toilets on the ground floor at the Town Hall. It looked as though the application was successful and a grant of £60,000 would be available towards the renovations.

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

#### **56. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS**

Details of Members' attendance at Meetings were received.

The Town Clerk explained that as the apologies were now received and the reason accepted by Members this re-sets the clock for absences. She stressed that Members absent for a time would need to either ensure that they send their apologies for each Meeting or seek a leave of absence.

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

#### **57. ANONYMOUS LETTERS**

A draft policy regarding anonymous letters was received.

**RESOLVED** That the policy for Anonymous Letters be received, adopted and reviewed in two years' time.

#### **58. POLICY UPDATES**

##### **(a) Training Policy**

Members reviewed and agreed the Training Policy.

**RESOLVED** That the Training Policy be received, agreed and reviewed in a year.

##### **(b) Data and Document Retention**

Members reviewed and agreed the Data and Document Retention Policy. The Town Clerk explained that original documents on the server were backed up weekly.

**RESOLVED** That the Data and Document Retention Policy be received, agreed and reviewed in two years' time.

##### **(c) Extended Procurement Process**

Members reviewed and agreed the Extended Procurement Process but suggested that it be reviewed every two years.

**RESOLVED** That the Extended Procurement Process be received, agreed and reviewed every two years.

##### **(d) Freedom of Information**

Members reviewed the Freedom of Information Policy and suggested that the source of information which was already in the public domain should be identified.

**RESOLVED** That the Freedom of Information Policy be received and agreed with the source of information, which was already in the public domain, be identified.

(e) Registration of Gifts

The Registration of Gifts Policy was received and reviewed.

Members agreed that it was unreasonable for the Deputy Town Clerk to give permission to the Town Clerk to attend functions and similar events.

**RESOLVED** That the Registration of Gifts Policy be received and agreed with the paragraph relating to permission for the Town Clerk to attend functions be removed.

(f) Publication Scheme

The Publication Scheme was received and reviewed.

A suggestion was made that agendas and minutes should be more widely circulated but it was pointed out that the documents were available on the website and likewise other Councils' documents on theirs.

It was agreed that risk assessments should be removed from the list.

**RESOLVED** That the Publication Scheme be received and agreed with risk assessments removed from the document.

(g) General Privacy Notice

The General Privacy Notice was received.

Members considered that rather than activities paid for such as hiring Council services, it should read goods and services are paid for.

**RESOLVED** That the amended General Privacy Notice be received and agreed.

## **59. ARMED FORCES COVENANT**

Members were asked to consider the Town Council signing the Armed Forces Covenant.

Members noted that it would be necessary to specify what the Town Council would be doing and as there was not an armed forces community in Witham this would prove difficult to achieve. It was pointed out that the Town Council had a good working relationship with the Royal British Legion.

**RESOLVED** That the decision be taken that it would not be appropriate for the Town Council to sign the Armed Forces Covenant.

## **60. COUNCIL TAX COLLECTION FUND SURPLUS**

A letter was received from Braintree District Council regarding its decision not to share the surplus with parish and town councils.

Members were disappointed that the District Council had decided not to share the surplus particularly as Braintree and Bocking were unparished so its residents did not need to pay for concurrent functions unlike other residents in the Braintree District.

It was agreed that further information should be sought as to whether funding surplus was paid to Essex County Council and the Police before further consideration was given to this matter.

**RESOLVED** That the letter be received and information sought as to whether funding surplus was paid to Essex County Council and the Police.

## **61. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL**

The results of the Financial Scrutiny Panel were received.

Members were appreciative of the panel's work that demonstrated that appropriate checks and balances had been made.

It was suggested that it might be useful to look at obstacles which prevent activities.

**RESOLVED** That the results of the Financial Scrutiny Panel be received.

## **62. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

### **(a) BANK RECONCILIATION**

The Bank Reconciliations to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Bank Reconciliations to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **(b) SCHEDULE OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS**

The Schedule of Receipts and Payments to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Schedule of Receipts to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 totalling £162,006.99 and to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 totalling £42,294.01; that the Schedule of Payments for the Unity Trust Account for the period 1<sup>st</sup> November 2021 to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 totalling £408,714.00 and for Lloyds Bank for the period 1<sup>st</sup> February to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 and totalling £1,344.12 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

### **(c) BUDGET STATEMENTS AND EARMARKED RESERVES**

The Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 were received along with an Exceptions Report.

**RESOLVED** That the Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2022 be received.

## **63. CIVIC PROTOCOL**

A draft Civic Protocol was received.

In view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders.

**RESOLVED** That Standing Order 3x be suspended to allow business to be completed.

Members agreed that a Civic Handbook would be useful for Town Mayors and their Deputies as it would set out their duties. It was agreed that with some changes in wording to include Handbook in place of Protocol the document be adopted.

It was suggested that a similar handbook be produced detailing the purpose and function of the Leader of the Council post.

**RESOLVED** That a Civic Handbook be adopted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.45 p.m.

Councillor M. Lager  
Chairman

NS/GK/7.4.2022

Draft