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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 30th October 2023**

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

Present: Councillors:

L.	Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor in the Chair)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
L.	Headley	
P.	Heath	
R.	Playle	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

118. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Ager, Fleet, Hewitt, Martin, Ramage and Sloma.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

119. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of Town Council held 2nd October 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

120. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this time but at Minute 124 – Town Clerk’s Report, Councillors P. Barlow and Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as members of the Royal British Legion.

121. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press and public present.

122. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

The Essex County Councillor for Witham Northern, gave his report which included raising the issues of road closures and quality of work by Virgin Media with the new Cabinet Member, Councillor Tom Cunningham. He said that as part of a County Council tree scheme, he had ordered ten trees and if a Member had a suitable place to plant one they should let him know. He also mentioned the Recycling Centre consultation which would run to 19th November 2023. He spoke of the Devolution Bill which could mean extra funding for adult care and bus franchise. It was understood that the District Council briefing on this aspect was later in the week so it would be sensible to monitor the situation.

123. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 25th September to 22nd October 2023 were received.

The Chairman took the opportunity to thank both Members and Staff who took part in the Halloween event which was well attended.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

124. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk said that 330 children had attended the Halloween event and there had been positive feed-back.

She reminded Members of the Remembrance Day Parade on Sunday, 12th November 2023. She hoped Members would wish to walk and they should assemble at 2.20 p.m. at the top of The Avenue ready for a prompt lead-off at 2.40 p.m. There would also be a two minute silence at the War Memorial at 11 a.m. on Saturday, 11th November 2023.

Both Councillors P. Barlow and Williams declared non-pecuniary interests as members of the Royal British Legion.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

125. INTERIM INTERNAL AUDIT

The Town Council's Interim Internal Audit Report for the financial year 2023/2024 was received. Comment was made that it was proposed to become registered for VAT in this financial year and there would be an update in due course.

RESOLVED That the Interim Internal Audit Report be received and noted.

126. DIGNITY AT WORK

The Dignity at Work policy was received.

The Chairman commented that Members should read the document and be aware of the Town Council position with regard to bullying and harassment of officers. The Town Clerk confirmed that there had been no changes in legislation.

RESOLVED That the Dignity at Work Policy be approved and reviewed in a year's time.

127. MEMBER/OFFICER RELATIONSHIPS

The Member/Officer Relationships at work policy was received.

Members agreed that this was based on common sense and all people should be expected to be treated with respect.

RESOLVED That the Member/Officer Relationships at work policy be approved and reviewed in a year's time.

128. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that Officers had met with the National Highways contacts for an update on the A12 widening scheme which was currently awaiting the Inspector's decision, expected on 12th January 2024.

The Town Council had been asked for ideas so a detailed design could be drawn up to use designated funding. She reminded Members of the two pieces of replacement land. The northern section was mainly wooded and could be used for educational purposes. The second section to the south side of the river required more ideas. This area was beside the pond and could be managed as a wildflower meadow with interpretation boards. Other ideas were to improve the underpass with either murals or art installation, fencing, car park area and enhancement of the nature trail. There was also a possibility of seeking funding towards improvements on the River Walk.

Members suggested improvements to the access, publicity, safety improvements, CCTV and cycle parking.

Comment was made that the National Highways should be informed that the elm tree by Lynfield would be felled and that there would be an opportunity to plant Dutch Elm resistant root saplings from the original tree in that area.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

129. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 2nd and 16th October 2023**
Minutes 109 to 130 (inclusive)

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave his report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Planning and Transport Committee be received.

- (b) **Environment Committee Meeting held 16th October 2023**
Minutes 18 – 31 (inclusive)

Councillor P. Barlow, on behalf of the Environment Committee, gave a report of the Meeting en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

130. 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.

131. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

132. FUNDING

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.44 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/31.10.2023