



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 30th May 2023**

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

Present: Councillors

L.	Barlow	(Chairman)
P.	Heath	(Vice Chairman)
E.	Adelaja	
S.	Ager	
J.C.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
R.	Ramage	

Also in attendance: P. Barlow

Essex Police Sergeant S. Jesse (Community Special)

M. Garnham (Popcorn)
P. Kostas (Popcorn)

N. Smith (Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Playle and Councillor Williams was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 6th February 2023 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. INTERESTS

Councillor Fleet declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 7 – Citizen Advice – Grant Aid Application, as they work from the Witham Public Hall and he is a member of the Public Hall Trust.

Councillor P. Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 7 – Citizen Advice – Grant Aid Application, as he had served on its Management Committee.

Councillor L. Barlow explained that she had been appointed as the Town Council representative for Citizen Advice.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press and public present.

5. GUEST SPEAKER

The Chairman welcomed Mark Garnham and Paulina Kostas from Eastlight to talk about the Popcorn initiative, unfortunately, Carrie Chesterton had been unable to attend.

The presentation started with a short promotional video before Mark explained that Popcorn was an initiative that stemmed from Eastlight to combat social isolation and ignite change in the community. He said that isolation could affect all of us particularly the 16 to 24-year-olds being the loneliest with 61% feeling lonely at some stage. He referred to young people not returning to school after the pandemic that had become ‘ghost children’.

Paulina explained that Popcorn can provide a safe environment with no pressure or judgement where people of the same age can meet to discuss topics important to them. The ten-week session would be for 16 to 30-year-olds and they would run their own sessions.

Popcorn was run as a six-week pilot where it was hoped that confidence was gained and anxiety lessened. It was hoped to eventually run sessions in every town in Essex and they would be grateful for the Town Council’s support.

In answer to questions, it was explained that the pilot scheme had been held in partnership with the Youth Service at Parkside Youth Centre but ultimately it would be good to have their own premises. Mark was aware that the service could attract people with challenges but it could be used as a sign-posting service. Eastlight had agreed to invest in this community empowerment project by paying for all of the staff members for a year but now they would need to find funding. Initially, the sessions will be on a Wednesday evening with the potential to run extra sessions and volunteers would be welcomed.

RESOLVED That in principle the Town Council supports Popcorn and the work they are doing.

The Chairman thanked Mark and Paulina for their presentation.

6. ESSEX POLICE

The Chairman welcomed Special Sergeant Simon Jesse to the Meeting to give a report.

He explained to new Members that the Community Specials are based in Braintree but work in Witham. He said that the scheme had been set up five years ago and they try to have five Specials at any one time. At present there are just three Specials as they will often move into

the regular police force. He said that they are part-funded by the Town Council and were the first to be set up under this model.

S/Sgt Jesse explained that he writes a monthly report on the work that was undertaken which is then shared on the Town Council's website. He explained that the Specials attend all the community events and would be a visible presence. S/Sgt Jesse said that they are at the Hub every other Saturday which had proved very popular with lots more information now being shared.

S/Sgt Jesse then gave details of activities undertaken during the month including stopping a drug dealer's car in Maldon Road with a large amount of drugs and cash impounded. He stressed that if drug dealing was in process, people should ring 999. Information can be given during police surgeries, via 101 or Crime Stoppers.

The Chairman thanked Simon for his report and all the hard work that the Specials do for Witham; and congratulated him on the five-year milestone coming up.

7. CITIZEN ADVICE – GRANT AID APPLICATION

Councillors P. Barlow and Fleet had declared non-pecuniary interests.

The grant aid application from Citizen Advice, bank statements and supporting documentation were received.

Members recognised the vital work undertaken by the Citizen Advice.

RESOLVED That the Citizen Advice be given a grant of £10,000 towards the money advice service in Witham and that Rachel Fahie, the Chief Officer, be invited to give a presentation at the next Meeting.

8. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk's report on matters arising was received. The Town Clerk added that usually at the first Meeting of the civic year it would be usual to go through the Corporate Strategy but it had been decided to defer this until the next Meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

9. TEDDY BEARS' PICNIC

A motion was received to hold a Teddy Bears' Picnic on the River Walk during the summer holidays. Members recognised that families were struggling economically at this time and supported the idea of a free event.

A discussion took place about holding the event on a Saturday so those parents who are working during the week could attend but the Town Clerk explained that expecting staff to work so many weekends was a problem. She hoped that Members would be able to attend.

RESOLVED That the motion to hold a Teddy Bears' Picnic on the River Walk be approved and the suggestion to hold on a Saturday be explored.¹

¹ It is not possible to hold the picnic on a Saturday and the date of Thursday, 10th August 2023 has now been fixed.

10. POP UP STALLS

A motion was received to continue holding pop up stalls.

Members agreed that it would be beneficial to hold the stalls to raise awareness of the Town Council. New councillors would be paired with a more experienced councillor. Alternating between a Friday and a Saturday was suggested but Members needed to be mindful that they would need to pick up the gazebo, tables and chairs from the Town Hall during the week as staff would not be available on a Saturday.

RESOLVED That the Town Council would continue to hold pop up monthly stalls.

11. PRIDE

A motion was received to hold a Witham Pride event in 2024.

It was suggested that this would be a fantastic opportunity to celebrate diversity and inclusivity.

Members agreed that the Pride Flag should be flown during June for the remainder of the Administration subject to other flags being needed.

Members suggested that the first year should be a trial run without a parade but should be based on a family event, age-appropriate with a community-inclusive atmosphere.

RESOLVED That the Pride Flag be flown during June for the remainder of the Administration.

RESOLVED That the principle of holding a Pride event in 2024 be approved and a budget bid can be made.

12. JÜTERBOG

An invitation was received from Jüterbog to be part of their 2024 town festival.

The background of twinning with Waldbröl and partnerships with other towns were detailed. It was agreed that the information was vague and enquiries should be made to ascertain whether it would be an opportunity to send a delegation from the Academies.

RESOLVED That the invitation be received and additional information sought so budget implications could be ascertained.

13. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for 2022 – 2023 was received.

RESOLVED That the Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for 2022 – 2023 be received.

14. EVENTS CONTROL ACCOUNT

The Events Control Account Movements up to the 31st March 2023 were received.

RESOLVED That the Events Control Account Movements be received.

15. SOCIAL MEDIA

RESOLVED That the social media statistics be received and noted.

16. SECTION 106 FUNDING

Members were asked to identify opportunities for funding through Section 106 monies. It was noted £10,000 could be used for improvements of the Cut Throat Lane car park.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

17. FIVE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY OF THE WITHAM COMMUNITY SPECIAL CONSTABULARY SCHEME

Members were asked to consider how best to recognise the five-year anniversary of the Witham Special Constabulary Scheme.

Members thought that it would be an appropriate gesture to invite the Special Officers, with a guest, for a meal with the Town Mayor and her deputy.

RESOLVED That the Special Officers with a guest, be invited for a meal with the Town Mayor and her deputy.

18. 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.

19. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report was received.

Members congratulated the Information Centre Manager for her good work

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

20. SAFER STREETS INITIATIVE

A report was received.

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

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

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

21. COMMUNITY GARDEN

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.40 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/5.6.2023