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MINUTES

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Monday, 28th February 2022**

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

Present:	Councillors	S.	Ager	(Chairman)
		J.	Bayford	(Vice Chairman)
		M.	Lager	
		M.	Weeks	
		J.	Williams	
		R.	Williams	
Also in attendance:	Cllr	P.	Barlow	
	Cllr	S.	Hicks	
Essex Police	S/Sgt	S.	Jesse	(Community Special)
Essex Police	S/Const.	C.	Eaketts	(Community Special)
Witham Industrial Watch		N.	Jesse	(Director)
Witham Industrial Watch		A.	Cousins	(Business Improvement Manager)
		N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
		V.	Goldspink	(Events Co-ordinator)
		G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

54. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C. Lager and Livermore who were unwell, and Pleasance who had a previous engagement.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

55. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 1st November 2021 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the (previously circulated).

56. INTERESTS

Councillor R. Williams declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 63(a) – Grant Aid Request, Witham Carnival Association, as he manages its website.

Councillor Barlow declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 63(b) – Grant Aid Request, Witham BB, as two of his grandchildren are members of the organisation.

57. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the press or public present.

58. GUEST SPEAKERS

The Chairman welcomed Neil Jesse and Adrian Cousins from Witham Industrial Watch (WIW) to the Meeting.

Mr Jesse thanked Members for the opportunity to talk about WIW. He said that the WIW was set up by a group of businessmen in 2004 and were successful at achieving Business Improvement District (BID) status as an effective network of communicating, improving security and tidying the industrial estates. There were five volunteers on the Board of Directors on WIW which was a non-profit organisation.

Mr Cousins said that he was appointed as Business Improvement Officer in 2019. Since setting up WIW, 82 CCTV cameras had been installed, 8 defibrillators, security patrols, gritting during icy weather, landscaping and litter collection. The current BID runs until 2024 and when the last vote was taken 88% of businesses were in favour.

Mr Jesse stated that he hoped retail and town centre businesses would form a BID.

Members congratulated the WIW on the work they had undertaken to improve security and deter crime on the estates. It was agreed that there was potential for a retail BID. It was hoped that WIW would promote Community Specials and that renewable energy measures could be installed across the industrial estates.

The Chairman explained that she would be attending the next WIW members' meeting on 25th March 2022. She thanked both Mr Jesse and Mr Cousins for their informative presentation.

59. ESSEX POLICE

Sergeant Jesse introduced the newest recruit, Special Constable Claire Eaketts who had been out on patrol with other officers from last year.

The Chairman welcomed S/C Eaketts and presented her with a Witham Town Council badge.

S/Sgt Jesse explained that following the introduction of Community Beat Surgeries, sessions had been held with specials on a Saturday at The Hub and on a Tuesday at the Town Hall with regular police officers. He said that police try to engage with residents and had tried evening meetings and coffee with cops but people prefer using social media and want an immediate response rather than to wait for a surgery. Numbers attending had been low and it would be reviewed in March.

S/C Eaketts said that as a bank manager she was in a position to give information on how to protect oneself from scams, rogue traders, etc. both on the telephone and online.

S/Sgt Jesse said that following a hit and run incident they had been able to recover a stolen vehicle and prosecution was being instigated. He had been able to attend two Witham BB sessions and would do more in the future. There was still a clamp down on electric scooters as Witham does not have an approved scheme.

Members commented that the surgeries were probably not popular as the police were succeeding. They remembered why the Community Special scheme had been set up following unacceptable anti-social behaviour.

The Chairman thanked S/Sgt Jesse and S/C Eaketts for their report and hoped they would be able to participate in the ‘pop up’ stalls, which would be arranged.

60. TOWN CLERK’S REPORT

The Town Clerk had nothing further to report.

61. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st January 2022 was received.

The Town Clerk explained that currently there was a predicted £6,000 underspend on the Community budget.

RESOLVED That the Community Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st January 2022 be received and information noted.

62. GRANT AWARDING POLICY

The Grant Awarding Policy was received and Members asked to agree the level of part funding required.

Members suggested that there be a sliding scale depending on the size of the grant requested. Micro grants under £250 would not require matched funding, grants up to £5,000 would require 25% of costs being raised and grants over £5,000 would need 50% of costs being raised.

Members agreed that it was unrealistic to expect that beneficiaries would all be residents within the town but that any grant must be paid into the organisation’s bank account.

RESOLVED That part funding be on a sliding scale with micro grants of under £250 not requiring any matched funding, grants up to £5,000 would require 25% of costs having been raised and grants of over £5,000 would need 50% matched funding, be agreed.

RESOLVED That the stipulation that beneficiaries must be resident in the town be removed and that it is stated that all grants must be paid into the organisation’s bank account and not that of an individual.

RESOLVED That the Grant Awarding Policy with the above amendments be agreed.

63. GRANT FUNDING REQUESTS

(a) Witham Carnival Association

Councillor R. Williams had declared an interest.

A grant-funding request was received from the Witham Carnival Association.

Councillor R. Williams explained that there had not been a carnival for two years and repairs to the float were now needed. He said that the carnival was an exceptional day with between two and four thousand people watching the procession and attending the park.

RESOLVED That a grant of £8,000 be made to the Witham Carnival Association so that this year's carnival may take place.

(b) Witham Boys' Brigade

Councillor Barlow had declared an interest.

A grant-funding request was received from the Witham Boys' Brigade (BB).

Councillor Barlow explained that BB had 150 boys and girls attending sessions including those with special educational needs.

Members calculated that there was a total of £5,758 available through grant aid, youth and community budgets. It was recognised that this was not the total sum requested but BB could apply in the new financial year.

RESOLVED That a grant of £5,758 be given to the Witham Boys Brigade to assist funding the 50th anniversary.

64. EVENTS

Members were asked to note the dates of the following events –

Saturday, 16th April 2022 – Easter Egg Hunt

Saturday, 2nd July 2022 – Dog Show.

The Events Co-ordinator stated that tickets to take part in the Easter Hunt would be released at the end of March and that stall holders were being sought for the Dog Show.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

65. QUEEN'S JUBILEE WORKING GROUP

The Notes from the Queen's Jubilee Working Group Meeting held 26th February were received.

Members were informed that whilst people were being encouraged to plant a Jubilee Oak on 11th March it was considered too late in the season so the Town Council tree would be planted in November on the green adjacent to Guithavon Valley Church.

RESOLVED That the Notes be received and information noted.

66. POP-UP STALLS

Members were asked to agree dates and venues for future pop-up stalls.

Members suggested suitable venues for the stalls and it was agreed they should be held monthly alternating between a Tuesday, when the police might be able to attend, and a Saturday. Members would be able to transport the gazebo and table themselves.

RESOLVED That monthly pop-up stalls be organised, alternating between Tuesdays and Saturday, circulating between Forest Road, Spa Road, by Aldi and in the Grove Centre.

67. ALLOTMENT APPEAL PANEL

A report concerning the Allotment Appeal Panel was received.

Members recognised that there could be occasions when an appeal panel would be required and Councillors Bayford and R. Williams volunteered.

RESOLVED That an Allotment Appeal Panel be set up consisting of Councillors Bayford and R. Williams.

68. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media statistics were received.

RESOLVED That the statistics be received and noted.

69. WINTER WONDERLAND

Members were asked to consider the viability of a Winter Wonderland on the River Walk.

The Town Clerk explained that the budget available for a Winter Wonderland would be insufficient to do justice to such an event. £25,000 would provide an archway, a few statues and a string of lights whereas other Councils spend over £100,000.

Members recognised the logistics of such an event on the River Walk and that the costs could not be justified.

The suggestion was put that consideration should be given to an earlier carol service so that young families might be able to attend.

RESOLVED That it be agreed not to hold a Winter Wonderland on the River Walk because of the high costs and logistics to stage such an event.

70. 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 (S5) of the Local Government Act 1972.

71. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Improving Healthcare Facilities in Witham Working Group held 25th November 2021 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

72. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report from the Information Centre Manager was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.25p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Chairman
NS/GK/3.3.2022

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