



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
01376 520627
witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Policy and Resources Committee**

Date: **Monday, 14th October 2019**

Present: Councillors

	M.C. M	Lager	(Chairman)
	R.	Williams	(Vice Chairman)
Mrs	S.	Ager	
	K.L.	Atwill	
	P.R.	Barlow	
	J.C.	Goodman	
	S.E.	Hicks	
Mrs	A.	Kilmartin	
Mrs	S.C.	Lager	
	R.P.	Ramage	
Miss	M.L.	Weeks	

Also in attendance:

Cllr	T.A.	Pleasance	
	J.	Sheehy	(Town Clerk)
Mrs	G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
Miss	N.	Smith	(Assistant RFO)

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor P.M. Ryland who had a previous engagement.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and accepted.

40. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 19th August 2019 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

41. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

42. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

43. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk added that there was still no movement of the working balance from Lloyds Bank to Unity Trust. Correspondence was being handled between banks in order to facilitate the movement of the Council's balances and it was noted that completion of this move would facilitate the end of making routine payments by cheque.

RESOLVED That the Report be received and noted.

44. COMMITTEES

A report was received and Members asked to consider the restructuring of Committees.

The Chairman commended the report to Members with the key principle that all Members have a right to contribute to decision-making, to approximately three Committee seats each and for political groups to have proportionate membership of Committees so far as practicable, these principles to be recorded in policy guidance for each Annual Meeting. He considered that Membership of the Policy and Resources Committee should be reduced to ten, Staffing and Accommodation Sub-Committee to six and Planning Applications and Transport become a full Committee with ten Members. The Town Mayor and Deputy Town Mayor would no longer be ex-officio Members of all Committee/Sub-Committees, while if the Council has a Leader he/she would be a member ex-officio of all Committees. Members considered that the Planning Applications & Transport Committee should have a Member from each Ward and the importance of keeping political balance was stressed.

RECOMMENDED TO TOWN COUNCIL That the report and recommendations be accepted and that the Planning Applications and Transport Sub-Committee becomes a full Committee and seat numbers altered accordingly.

45. TWINNING IMPLICATIONS

Members were asked to consider Twinning implications with Waldbröl and continuing links.

Members considered that whilst the Witham Twinning Association had folded and the Waldbröl one apparently looked likely to do the same, the twinning was between the two Councils and should continue. It was understood that the current Mayor of

Waldbröl would be standing down in the spring and it was suggested that the Town Council contact his replacement when appointed.

RESOLVED That civic links with Waldbröl continue and a letter sent to the new Mayor when in post.

Councillor Mrs S.C. Lager then left the Meeting.

46. HIRE OF OPEN SPACES POLICY

A policy in regard to the Hire of Open Spaces was received.

Members agreed that it would be sensible to charge £50 when vehicular access is required to cover the cost of a member of staff to allow access to sites. It was considered that paragraph 4 in relation to size of areas to be rented was ambiguous as costs should depend on the size of the section hired and that in the General Conditions all areas, not just the River Walk, should be included.

RESOLVED That the above amendments be made and the policy agreed and adopted.

47. CORPORATE STRATEGY PLAN AND BUSINESS PLAN BUDGET OVERVIEW

A briefing paper in regard to the Budget and Business Plan Overview was received.

The Chairman considered that this strategy would pull together the business plan and budget process and enable Committees to be accountable. He listed the main aims of the three Committees. He explained that it would be a short process to complete before going to Committees. Resources would need to be identified before the estimate process in January and final approval by Town Council.

Members expressed their concerns about the additional workload for Chairmen but recognised this strategy was borne from the desire for professionalism. The suggestion was made that a project leader should be appointed for each item. The Chairman thought this would not be onerous as staff would be able to take the issues forward. He added that the Chairmen would be meeting in a week's time to consider projects, whether there was capacity to carry them out and identify what resources would be needed. Concern was reiterated that the business plans would be over-ambitious and that the precept would be increased but the project not completed.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the strategy taken forward.

48. PUBLICATION SCHEME

An amended policy was received.

RESOLVED That policy be amended and agreed.

49. PRIVACY NOTE

An amended General Privacy Notice was received.

RESOLVED That the General Privacy Notice be accepted.

50. REVENUE AND LOCALISM TASK AND FINISH GROUP

The Minutes from the Revenue and Localism Task and Finish Group Meeting held 11th September 2019 were received.

The Chairman detailed the Minutes drawing attention to the devolution of assets from the District Council.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

51. PERIOD GARDEN (TOWN HALL SITE IMPROVEMENT PROJECT)

A report on the Period Garden Project was received.

Members agreed that it would no longer be appropriate to call this the Period Garden Project and suggested the more appropriate name of Town Hall Site Improvement Project.

The Town Clerk reiterated that until planning approval had been given it would not be appropriate to list and dispose of the plants in the garden but plans were in hand to ensure that any planning application approved would be handled sensitively.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the project renamed the Town Hall Site Improvement Project.

52. COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES

A report was received.

Members agreed that it was important to be able to identify all the graves, ensure that they were well maintained and signposted. It would be necessary to ask St Nicolas Church Parochial Church Council to obtain a faculty for the sign in the Closed Churchyard.

Councillor T.A. Pleasance advised that last year the Royal British Legion had located all the war graves and laid poppy crosses for Armistice Day. Next year it was hoped to get school children to lay a small wreath on each grave. He said that there was a new scheme by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission called 'Eyes on, Hand on' and he suggested that the Town Council register for this scheme.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Town Council work in partnership with the Witham Branch of the Royal British Legion.

53. MEMBERS' ATTENDANCE AT MEETINGS

Details of Members' Attendance at Meetings were received.

RESOLVED That the details be received and noted.

54. FINANCIAL SCRUTINY PANEL

A report from the Financial Scrutiny Panel, which met on 4th October 2019, was received.

Members of the Scrutiny Panel considered a lot had been achieved from the meeting and that the accounts were in good order.

The Chairman thanked Members of the Panel for their time and expertise.

RESOLVED That the report be received, Members thanked and recommendations incorporated as they become appropriate.

Councillor T.A. Pleasance then left the Meeting.

55. EXTERNAL AUDITOR REPORT AND CERTIFICATE

The external auditor report and certificate were received.

The Town Clerk said that the Town Council had no choice in the appointment of an external auditor and the cost for them to look at the Governance Statement only was in the region of £1,200 to £1,500.

Members congratulated the Town Clerk on a clean audit and considered the points he made were valid. It was considered that representation should be made to the National Association of Local Councils with a copy sent to the Member of Parliament.

RESOLVED That the report and certificate be received and noted.

RESOLVED That the comments made in relation to the cost effectiveness of the External Auditor be referred to NALC and a copy sent to the Member of Parliament.

56. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

(a) BANK RECONCILIATION

The Bank Reconciliations to 31st August 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Bank Reconciliations to 31st August 2019 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

(b) BUDGET STATEMENTS AND EARMARKED RESERVES

The Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 31st August 2019 were received.

The Chairman reminded Members that recommendations would be made to Town Council to vire money if there had been an over-spend on particular budgets. The Town Clerk explained that ‘Notes’ were attached to the Accounts but it was impossible to reproduce them for the Agenda.

RESOLVED That the Budget Statements and Earmarked Reserves to 31st August 2019 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

(c) SCHEDULE OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS

The Schedule of Receipts and Payments to 31st August 2019 were received.

RESOLVED That the Schedule of Receipts to 31st August 2019 and totalling £31,141.36 and the Schedule of Payments to 31st August 2019 and totalling £146,331.00 be received, approved and signed by the Chairman.

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 following items of business due to the confidential nature, legal proceedings and commercial sensitivity.

57. CONRAD ROAD

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

58. RIVER WALK

A verbal report from the Town Clerk was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

59. ALLOTMENTS

A report was received.

Members agreed that to allow business to be completed Standing Order 3(x) should be suspended.

RESOLVED That Standing Order 3(x) be suspended to allow the Meeting to continue.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

60. **PUBLIC DOMAIN**

Members agreed that no item discussed in Private Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

RESOLVED That no item discussed in Private Session should be moved into the Public Domain.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9. 36 p.m.

Councillor _____
Chairman

JS/GK/17.10.2019