



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

### ANNUAL MEETING OF THE TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 13<sup>th</sup> May 2024**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham.**

Present: Councillors

S.	Ager	(Retiring Town Mayor)
L.	Barlow	(Deputy Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
P.	Heath	
T.	Hewitt	
A.	Sloma	
B.	Taylor	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Admin. Assistant)

And five members of the public.

#### **1. ADDRESS FROM THE TOWN MAYOR**

Councillor Ager thanked the Town Council for the opportunity to be the Town Mayor. It had been an exceptionally busy and enjoyable year. She listed some of her highlights including her visit to Aßlar but explained that she enjoyed best of all the events held in the town and the opportunity to meet Witham's residents. She thanked the Town Clerk and her secretary and those who had deputised or supported her during her year in office.

#### **2. ELECTION OF TOWN MAYOR FOR 2024/2025**

The retiring Town Mayor invited nominations for Town Mayor to serve for the Civic Year 2024/2024.

Councillor Ager was thanked for all she had done in the past year and congratulated on her achievements.

Councillor L. Barlow was nominated as Town Mayor.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor L. Barlow be elected to serve as Town Mayor of Witham for the Civic Year 2024/2025.

The former Town Mayor presented Councillor L. Barlow with her Badge of Office and in return she presented Councillor Ager with her Former Mayor's badge. The Mayor then presented the consort with his collaret.

**3. DECLARATION OF ACCEPTANCE OF OFFICE**

The Declaration of Acceptance of Office was duly signed by the Town Mayor and witnessed.

**RESOLVED** That the Declaration of Acceptance of Office be accepted.

**4. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors B. Fleet, L. Headley, J. Martin, R. Playle and R. Ramage. Late apologies were received from Councillor E. Williams who was unwell.

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

**5. INTERESTS**

Councillors L. and P. Barlow declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 16(d) – Witham Carnival Association, as they know many of its members.

**6. APPOINTMENT OF DEPUTY TOWN MAYOR FOR 2024/2025**

The Town Mayor invited nominations for a Deputy Town Mayor to serve for the Civic Year 2024/2025.

Councillor P. Heath was nominated as Deputy Town Mayor.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Heath be elected to serve as Deputy Town Mayor for the Civic Year 2024/2025.

The Town Mayor then presented Councillor Heath with his Deputy Town Mayor collaret.

Councillor Adelaja left the Council Chamber.

**7. DISPOSAL OF TOWN MAYOR'S APPEAL 2023/2024**

Members were asked to authorise the disposal of the Town Mayor's Appeal for the Civic Year 2023/2024 to Chatten School PTFA and the Witham Foodbank.

**RESOLVED** That authority be given to release the sum of £1,200 from the Town Mayor's Appeal to be shared between her nominated charities of Chatten School PTFA and Witham Foodbank.

**8. TOWN MAYOR'S ALLOWANCE CIVIC YEAR 2024/2025**

Members were asked to authorise payment of the Town Mayor's Allowance set at £2,000 for the Civic Year 2024/2025.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Mayor's Allowance of £2,000 for the Civic Year 2024/2025 be confirmed.

**9. MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Witham Town Council Meeting held 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Town Council Meeting held 29<sup>th</sup> April 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

**10. APPOINTMENT OF LEADER OF THE COUNCIL**

It was proposed that Councillor P. Barlow remain as Leader of the Council.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow remain as Leader of the Council for the Civic year 2024/2025.

Councillor Adelaja returned to the Council Chamber.

**11. APPOINTMENT/ DISSOLUTION OF COMMITTEES**

Members were asked to consider the future of the Climate Working Group.

Members considered the suggestion to disband the working group but the view was put that this could be a retrograde step, particularly at this time. Another view was to ask the Environment Committee to consider the best way to promote items.

The Town Mayor suggested that as the Advisory Groups had been set up with the purpose of reducing the burden on main Committees the Climate Working Group should be retained.

**RESOLVED** That the Climate Working Group should be retained but meet during the day instead of the evening.

**12. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO COMMITTEES**

Nominations were received to appoint Members to serve on the following Standing Committees for the Civic Year 2024/2025 –

(a) Community Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Community Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	E.	Adelaja
	S.	Ager
	L.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	B.	Fleet
	L.	Headley

P. Heath  
R. Playle  
R. Ramage  
E. Williams

(b) Environment Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Environment Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors E. Adelaja  
S. Ager  
J.C. Coleman  
J.M. Coleman  
B. Fleet  
T. Hewitt  
J. Martin  
R. Ramage  
A. Sloma  
B. Taylor

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Policy and Resources Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors L. Barlow  
P. Barlow  
J.C. Coleman  
B. Fleet  
L. Headley  
P. Heath  
J. Martin  
R. Playle  
R. Ramage  
B. Taylor

(d) Planning and Transport Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Planning and Transport Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors E. Adelaja  
P. Barlow  
J.C. Coleman  
J.M. Coleman  
L. Headley  
T. Hewitt  
J. Martin  
R. Ramage  
A. Sloma  
E. Williams

(e) Staffing Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Staffing Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	L.	Barlow
	P.	Barlow
	B.	Fleet
	P.	Heath
	J.	Martin
	R.	Playle

Councillor Adelaja left the Council Chamber.

**13. APPOINTMENT OF STANDING COMMITTEE CHAIRS/VICES**

Nominations were received to appoint Chairman and Vice Chairman and make appointment of such to each of the following:

(a) Community Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor L. Barlow be appointed as Chairman and Councillor P. Heath be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Community Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(b) Environment Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J. Martin be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J.M. Coleman be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(c) Policy and Resources Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J. C. Coleman be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Policy and Resources Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(d) Planning and Transport Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as Chairman and J.C. Coleman as Vice Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

(e) Staffing Committee

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as Chairman and Councillor J. Martin be appointed as Vice Chairman of the Staffing Committee for the ensuing Civic Year.

Councillor Adelaja returned to the Council Chamber.

**14. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO SUB-COMMITTEES**

Nominations were received to appoint Members to serve on the following Sub-Committees:

(a) Estimates Sub-Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Estimates Sub-Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	E.	Adelaja
	L.	Barlow
	P.	Barlow
	B.	Fleet
	P.	Heath
	J.	Martin

(b) Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	S.	Ager
	P.	Barlow
	B.	Fleet
	P.	Heath
	T.	Hewitt
	R.	Ramage

**15. APPOINTMENT OF MEMBERS TO ADVISORY COMMITTEES**

Nominations were received to appoint Members to the following Advisory Committees:

(a) Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group for the ensuing Civic Year -

Councillors	S.	Ager
	P.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	B.	Fleet
	P.	Heath
	L.	Headley
	J.	Martin

(b) Improving Healthcare Facilities Working Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Improving Healthcare Facilities Working Group for the ensuing Civic Year -

Councillors	S.	Ager
	P.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	J.M.	Coleman
	L.	Headley
	R.	Ramage
	B.	Taylor

(c) Section 106 Steering Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Section 106 Steering Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	S.	Ager
	L.	Barlow
	P.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	B.	Fleet
	P.	Heath
	R.	Playle
	B.	Taylor

(d) Financial Scrutiny Panel

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Financial Scrutiny Panel for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	E.	Adelaja
	P.	Barlow
	B.	Fleet

(e) Cycling Development Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Members be elected to serve on the Cycling Development Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	L.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	P.	Heath
	R.	Playle

(f) The Voice Editing Panel

**RESOLVED** That the following Councillors be elected to serve on The Voice Editing Panel –

Councillors	S.	Ager
	J.C.	Coleman
	B.	Fleet
	R.	Playle

(g) Climate Change Working Group

**RESOLVED** That the following Councillors be elected to serve on the Climate Change Working Group for the ensuing Civic Year –

Councillors	S.	Ager
	L.	Barlow
	J.C.	Coleman
	J.M.	Coleman
	B.	Fleet
	L.	Headley
	A.	Sloma
	E.	Williams

**16. APPOINTMENT TO OUTSIDE BODIES AND REPRESENTATIVES**

Members were asked to appoint Members to the following representative positions:

(a) Braintree Association of Local Councils

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J.C. Coleman be appointed to serve on the Braintree Association of Local Councils and Councillor P. Barlow, act as his deputy.

(b) Chamber of Commerce

It was explained that the Chamber of Commerce had not met for a while but two representatives would be appointed for when the meetings recommence.

**RESOLVED** That Councillors P. Barlow and R. Ramage be appointed as the Town Council representatives on the Chamber of Commerce.

(c) Citizens Advice

The Town Mayor explained that the Citizens Advice had merged last year so the Trustees' Meetings had changed but there was still a valuable role to fulfil as a representative to ensure that the funding the Town Council gave would be spent to support the residents of Witham. It was therefore suggested that the representative on the Citizens Advice should be the Chairman of the Community Committee.

**RESOLVED** That in future the Chairman of the Community Committee be appointed as the representative to the Citizens Advice.

(d) Witham Carnival Association

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

**RESOLVED** That Councillor P. Barlow be appointed as the representative on the Witham Carnival Association and that Councillor S. Ager be his deputy.



(e) Passenger Transport Panel

It was noted that the Passenger Transport Panel did not meet regularly but it was important to have a representative to insist that Community Transport should have a higher profile.

**RESOLVED** That Councillor J.C. Coleman be appointed as the representative on the Passenger Transport Panel.

(f) LGBTQ+ Ambassador

**RESOLVED** That Councillors L. Barlow and J.C. Coleman be appointed as the LGBTQ+ representative.

**17. SCHEME OF DELEGATION**

Members were asked to approve the changes to the Scheme of Delegation.

**RESOLVED** That the changes to the Scheme of Delegation be accepted.

**18. ADOPTION OF STANDING ORDERS**

The Standing Orders were received and amendment approved.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Standing Orders be adopted.

**19. ADOPTION OF FINANCIAL REGULATIONS**

The Financial Regulations were received along with proposed amendments.

The Town Clerk explained that she had just received the new Financial Regulations from the National Association of Local Councils and rather than rush it was decided to take them to the Policy and Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Financial Regulations be adopted and the new Financial Regulations be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

**20. ADOPTION OF TOWN COUNCIL CODE OF CONDUCT**

The Code of Conduct for adoption for the Civic Year 2024/2025 was received along with proposals for amendments.

The Town Clerk explained that she had just received a new Code of Conduct from Braintree District Council and again suggested that this should be referred to the Policy and Resources Committee.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Code of Conduct be adopted and the new Code of Conduct referred to the Policy and Resources Committee for consideration.

**21. APPOINTMENT OF AUTHORISED SIGNATORIES**

Members were asked to agree that the Authorised Signatories continue for this Civic Year.

**RESOLVED** Councillors S. Ager, P. Barlow, J.C. Coleman, B. Fleet, P. Heath and L. Headley continue as signatories for the ensuing Civic Year.

**22. ASSET REVIEW**

The Town Council's assets were received.

The Town Clerk explained that the assets are annually reviewed and updated but there was no depreciation on items.

**RESOLVED** That the Town Council's Assets be received.

**23. APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERNAL AUDITOR FOR 2024/2025**

Members were asked to confirm that Heelis and Lodge would continue to provide the Council's internal audit for the financial year 2024/2025.

It was explained that there had been a tender exercise earlier in the year and Heelis and Lodge provided a more comprehensive audit as well as being the most cost effective.

**RESOLVED** That Heelis and Lodge be confirmed to continue to provide the Town Council's internal audit for the financial year 2024/2025.

**24. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STATEMENT**

Members were asked to receive and approve the Community Engagement Statement.

The Town Clerk explained that the Community Engagement Statement would be required so that the next level of Council Award could be obtained.

**RESOLVED** That the Community Engagement Statement be approved.

**25. TREASURY & INVESTMENT POLICY**

The Town Council's Treasury Investment Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that the policy had been amended to reflect movement of monies into an investment fund to obtain better returns at minimal risks.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Town Council's Treasury and Investment Policy be received and agreed.

**26. TIME AND PLACE OF ORDINARY MEETINGS**

Members were asked to adopt the updated Meeting Calendar for 2024/2025.

It was explained that the Local Government Act would prevent the use of Zoom meetings for Working Groups.

**RESOLVED** That the updated Meeting Calendar for 2024/2025 be adopted.

**27. YEAR END INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT 2023/2024**

The Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was received and Members noted that there had been no adverse comments.

**RESOLVED** That the Internal Audit Report for the financial year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 be received and noted.

**28. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL ANNUAL ACCOUNTS 2023/2024**

The Draft Annual Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Draft Annual Accounts for the year ending 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 be received and adopted.

**29. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) - SECTION 1 GOVERNANCE STATEMENT**

The Town Council's Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was received.

**RESOLVED** That the Annual Governance Statement for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 be received, approved and signed by the Town Mayor.

**30. ANNUAL GOVERNANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN (AGAR) - SECTION 2 ACCOUNTING STATEMENTS**

The Town Council's Section 2 Accounting Statements for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 was received.

**RESOLVED** That Section 2 Accounting Statement for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 be received, approved and signed by the Town Mayor.

**31. ANNUAL TOWN MEETING**

The Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting held 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Annual Town Meeting be received and noted.

**32. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

The Town Clerk explained that she had today received a report from Priti Patel, MP that had been circulated to all Members. Where relevant these would be taken forward by the appropriate Committees or Working Groups.

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

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.22 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow  
Town Mayor

NS/GK/16.5.2024