



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

MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Tuesday, 29th October 2024**

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

Present: Councillors:

L.	Barlow	(Town Mayor)
P.	Heath	(Deputy Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
L.	Headley	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	
B.	Taylor	
E.	Williams	
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)
L.	Bamigbele	(PA to the Council)

And four members of the public.

111. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Fleet and Martin.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

112. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meetings of Town Council held 30th September 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

113. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared at this time.

114. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public explained that today, being half term holidays from school, the town centre was particularly busy and noisy especially as there had been a busker. She was concerned that this was unwelcoming for those who were neurodiverse and asked what action the Town Council would be able to take to protect vulnerable people. Members understood the problem and it was suggested that this could be discussed informally but considered that this might prove to be outside the Town Council's capabilities.

Councillor Heath undertook to ascertain from the District Council's Live Well and Wellbeing strategies what might be possible.

The Town Mayor thanked the resident for raising her concerns.

Another member of the public wished to raise two points, the condition of the footpath/cycleways on the River Walk and the Community Centre in Maltings Lane. He was pleased that the footpath between Moats Farm and Saxon Drive would shortly be repaired but was concerned about the condition of the footpath, how often it would have been inspected and the length of time it had taken to be repaired.

The Town Clerk advised that the footpaths had been surveyed and none had been reported as being dangerous. She explained that gradually the worst ones would be repaired as and when Section 106 monies became available. In answer to a question regarding the frequency of inspections the Town Clerk said that she was unable to advise but the Deputy Town Clerk would be able to do so. The Town Mayor said that to resurface the whole of the River Walk footpath/cycleways would cost over £1m but if there was an area of concern she said that it should be reported to the Town Council.

The Council was asked about the new Community Centre at Maltings Lane and the financial arrangements being made. Would the Town Council be the freeholder and what would be the tax implications for residents? Members said that this announcement had only just been made and the information was not yet in the Public Domain. The Town Mayor said that at the next available Meeting a formal resolution could be made to move this item into the Public Domain and the information released. He considered that the centre would be good news for the town but was surprised that this was a District Council project which the Town Council would be expected to run.

The Town Mayor thanked the member of the public for his comments.

115. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Essex County Councillor Playle explained that this was his week for repairs under the Members' led pothole scheme with repairs being undertaken in Newland Street and Maldon Road. He was pleased to report that he had received an email from the North Essex Parking Partnership revising its plans to abolish the free one-hour parking in Newland Street but discussions were still taking place regarding how payment could be made for additional hours' parking.

Members were pleased that the one hour free parking would remain but were concerned that an App might be required to pay for any additional parking.

Braintree District Councillor Taylor was pleased to announce that solar panels and LED lighting would shortly be installed at the Leisure Centre. A meeting was trying to be arranged between the Cabinet Member and the Chief Executive Officer of Eastlight.

Braintree District Councillor Heath reiterated that a specific response was awaited from the North Essex Parking Partnership. He said that the announcement was unexpected but good that the one hour's free parking would remain. He said that he had attended the House of Commons regarding devolution and an official announcement would be made by 25th November. He considered that this would be an exciting opportunity.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

116. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 25th September to 23rd October 2024 were received.

The Town Mayor explained that she had been unable to attend the Veteran's Coffee Morning but would be going to their next one on 4th November. Another event she attended was the Boys' Brigade's Community Heroes' award's evening.

She thanked everyone who had attended the Barn Dance which was a wonderful event.

RESOLVED That the details be received and information noted.

117. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk explained that she had sent a letter to all Members regarding the Councillors' Grant Scheme and £500 each was now available to support local organisations.

Members were also reminded about the Remembrance Service at 11 a.m. on Monday, 11th November at the War Memorial.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk's report be received and information noted.

118. RISK REGISTER 2024/2025

Members were asked to approve the Risk Register for 2024/2025.

Comment was made that risks were less impactful if more mitigation was in place.

RESOLVED That the Risk Register for 2024/2025 be received and approved.

119. SEXUAL HARASSMENT PREVENTION POLICY

A Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy was received.

The Town Clerk explained that in line with new protections a specific policy was required.

RESOLVED That the Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy be agreed and reviewed annually.

120. POLICIES

Members were asked to agree amendments to the following policies –

(a) Dignity at Work

An amended Dignity at Work policy was received.

Comment was made that this was an important policy as both Councillors and staff need to be dignified and respectful. The role of Councillors was recognised by Government and miscreants could be suspended or expelled.

RESOLVED That the amended Dignity at Work be approved.

(b) Officer, Member Relations Policy

An amended Officer, Member Relations Policy was received.

RESOLVED That the amended Officer, Members Relations Policy be approved.

121. ESSEX POLICE REPORT

A report was received regarding police activities.

Members spoke about the importance of reporting incidents to police rather than on social media. It was noted that anti-social behaviour had increased because of the half term school holidays with more young people out and about but response times were quicker with increased CCTV cameras, the community specials and the street warden.

Concern was expressed that residents were living in fear and not wanting to speak out. Problems at ASDA were cited and the opinion given that police were not supporting staff or the community specials.

The Town Clerk said that a Dispersal Order would be in place for Halloween and police resources increased.

Members spoke about young people on scramble bikes, with no lights or helmets and that the riders were aware that police would not follow them. It was agreed that this was a big issue and the suggestion made that central government and the Home Office should support more police resources. The Town Clerk said that she would invite Inspector Phil Jackson, to the next Community Committee Meeting.

RESOLVED That the report be received and information noted.

122. EASTLIGHT GROUND MAINTENANCE

A response was received from Eastlight regarding ground maintenance issues and Members asked to note that Chris Ward, Estate Safety Manager would be attending the Town Council Meeting in January 2025.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

123. COMMITTEE REPORTS

(a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 7th and 14th October 2024**
Minutes 121 to 148 (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 held 14th October 2024**
Minutes 18 - 36 (inclusive)

Councillor J.C. Coleman, as Vice Chairman of the Environment Committee, gave his Report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Environment Committee be received.

124. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public be excluded from the remainder of the Meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

125. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

There being no further business the Town Mayor closed the Meeting at 8.45 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Town Mayor

NS/GK/1.11.2024