



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 28th May 2024**

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

Present: Councillors L. Barlow (Chairman)
P. Heath (Vice Chairman)
E. Adelaja
J.C. Coleman
L. Headley
R. Playle (arrived 7.23 p.m.)
R. Ramage
E. Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr P. Barlow

Sergeant S. Jesse (Community Special – Essex Police)
S. Hardy (Witham Frist Responders)
W. McCough (Witham First Responders)
T. Townsend (Witham Hub)

N. Smith (Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)
J. Reeve (Finance Assistant)

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fleet and Councillor Playle would be late.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

2. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 20th February 2024 were confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

3. INTERESTS

Councillor Ramage declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 9(c) – Witham Hub Grant Application as his daughter is involved in The Hub.

Councillors L. Barlow and P. Barlow declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 8 – Witham Carnival, as they know members of the Carnival Association.

Councillors P. Barlow and Headley, and later in the Meeting, Councillor Playle declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 9(b) – Templars Community Association, as they are invited to their meetings.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Tina Townsend explained that she was at the Meeting to answer any questions in relation to the grant application from The Witham Hub.

5. ESSEX POLICE

S/Sergeant Simon Jesse explained that he had been focusing on speed surveys. He said that they were not allowed to undertake covert checks as he needed to be visible to motorists. He was pleased to announce that the number of Specials in Witham had risen to four again. He said that shoplifting was a major problem in the town and all shopkeepers needed to report incidents. In answer to a question, he said it was likely there would be a spike in anti-social behaviour because of the half-term holidays.

Members commented that stores needed to work with Essex Police and that senior officers as well as the Police and Crime Commissioner should be pushing for stores to do this. A comment was made that Crime Stoppers could be used to report incidents anonymously.

Members congratulated Sergeant Jesse on his recent award for the best Special Community Officer for building up reassurance and visibility in the community.

6. GUEST SPEAKERS

The Chairman welcomed the Witham First Responders to the Meeting.

Steve Hardy, acting co-ordinator, and Will McGough introduced themselves. Steve explained that they are a group of six who work as volunteers with East of England Ambulance Service and respond to 999 calls to help patients suffering strokes, epilepsy and heart attacks when it is vital to get to patients quickly. They said that they can get to a call within minutes to administer oxygen, secure airways and use the defibrillator when ambulances could take longer. In April the responders were on call for 95 hours and answered eleven 999 calls to include helping patients with epilepsy and severe bleeding. When they are in people's homes they can also refer patients to the right agency such as the fire service, if they are in danger. It was explained that they can also give free defibrillator training and they go to events to publicise their work and seek volunteers. They are a charity in its own entity and they fund raise and seek grants to buy their own equipment and uniforms. In answer to a question, they explained that when someone rings for an ambulance, depending on the location and answers to questions, the dispatcher can press a button to put them on stand-by and then the phone directs them to the location where help is needed. They are not trained to tend to babies but can be called for children who are two and over. They also carry out weekly checks on the defibrillators on the Industrial Estate and throughout the town.

The Chairman thanked Steve and Will for their presentation and stated that information would be passed on to the editor of Witham's Voice to publicise the work of the First Responders.

7. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report on matters arising was received.

She explained that with the dissolution of Parliament on 30th May 2024, there were a number of activities, such as the pop-up stall, which could not run. She had circulated details to all Members to ensure they followed election rules.

Members were pleased to see that Section 106 funding had been granted for the mini-wheels addition to the Skate Park.

In answer to a question in relation to the Charter Market, the Town Clerk explained that the Traffic Regulation Order for the suspension of parking bays in Newland Street was valid for 18 months before a permanent one could be agreed. It was proposed that the Events Coordinator would be able to expand and improve the market.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

8. WITHAM CARNIVAL

Councillors L. Barlow and P. Barlow had declared interests.

The Town Clerk explained that there was an agreement that Town Council staff could be paid to marshal at the Carnival but no staff members were available this year. She asked if it would be appropriate that if the association had to pay for marshals then the Town Council reimburse the sum it would have used.

The Mayor spoke about ring-fencing the grant for next year's carnival which would come out of this year's budget.

Members considered that the Carnival consistently demonstrated benefit to the town and agreed that £8,000 should be ring-fenced.

RESOLVED That if required, money could be given to the Carnival to cover the costs of marshals if insufficient volunteers could be found.

RESOLVED That the sum of £8,000 be ring-fenced from this year's Community Grant Aid to allow funding for next year's carnival to be available.

Members noted that £7,000 was now left in the Community Grant Aid budget.

Councillor Playle arrived at the Meeting.

9. GRANT APPLICATIONS

(a) Citizens Advice

It was noted that Councillor L. Barlow was the Town Council representative for the Citizens Advice.

A grant application from the Citizens Advice was received.

Members were informed that the Chief Executive Officer had been unable to attend but would attend a future meeting.

Members discussed the grant application of £10,000 which was to deliver free debt advice to the people of Witham. The Witham CA had merged with South Essex so that more resources would be available to provide a better service. A long discussion then ensued concerning value for money and access to advice. It was suggested that funding should be deferred to a later date to answer questions and seek reassurance but then it was agreed that 50% of the grant could be paid directly.

RESOLVED That a grant of £5,000 be given to Citizens Advice and that the CEO be invited to a future Meeting to answer concerns before further consideration would be given to award the remaining grant.

(b) **Templars Community Association**

Councillors P. Barlow and Headley had declared interests and Councillor Playle declared an interest.

A grant application for £1,000 from the Templars Community Association was received.

Members congratulated the Association on reaching its 40th Anniversary and agreed on the award.

RESOLVED That a grant of £1,000 be given to the Templars Community Association towards funding their 40th Anniversary Fun Day.

(c) **Witham Hub**

Councillor Ramage had declared an interest.

A project review report and a new grant application from the Witham Hub was received.

Mrs Townsend explained that originally they had proposed employing one member of staff to run the Hold Project who would assist in form filling and sign posting members of the public to other agencies; however two people had been identified as suitable for employment but were volunteering until grants were available. The project would cost £22,000 per annum to take forward.

Members were supportive of The Hub and the proposal to expand its service but recognised that there was only £6,000 in the budget and that there would be no funding available for other community groups.

A long discussion took place as to how the Town Council could support The Hub within its limited budget.

RESOLVED That a grant of £6,000 be awarded to The Hub towards the cost of employing two staff members to work on the Hold Project.¹

Whilst this matter was being discussed Councillor Adelaja was absent from the Council Chamber.

¹ Since the Meeting, The Hub has decided to withdraw its grant application.

10. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

- (a) The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 31st March 2024 was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

- (b) The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 30th April 2024 was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

11. CONTROL ACCOUNTS

- (a) An update on the Event Control Account was received.

RESOLVED That the Event Control Account be received.

- (b) An update on the Charter Market Control Account was received.

The Town Clerk explained that the cost of the lease and the Traffic Regulation Order would be required.

RESOLVED That the Charter Market Control Account be received.

12. STREET WARDEN REPORTS

Reports from the Witham Town Council Street Warden were received.

Members agreed that the Street Warden was doing a fantastic job and made a visible difference to the town.

The Town Clerk commended the Street Warden particularly for his help in getting two homeless men off the street but said that funding for the post was only up until December.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Committee's comments relayed to the Street Warden.

Whilst the above item was being discussed Councillor Ramage was absent from the Council Chamber.

13. STRATEGIC PLAN

The Strategic Plan for 2023-2027 was received.

RESOLVED That the Strategic Plan be received and noted.

Councillor J.C. Coleman left the Council Chamber.

14. EVENTS 2024

Members were reminded about the D Day Parade and service on Thursday, 6th June 2024 culminating with the lighting of the beacon at 9.15 p.m.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

15. SOCIAL MEDIA

The social media statistics were received.

16. 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.

Councillor J.C. Coleman returned to the Council Chamber.

17. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report was received from the Information Centre Manager.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

18. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES

The Minutes from the Meeting of the Improving Healthcare Facilities in Witham Working Group held 2nd May 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.30 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/31.5.2024