



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

Meeting of: **Community Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 18th February 2025**

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

Present: Councillors L. Barlow (Chairman)
E. Adelaja
J.C. Coleman
B. Fleet
L. Headley
R. Playle
J. Robertson
E. Williams

Also in attendance: Cllr. P. Barlow
S/Sergeant S. Jesse (Community Special – Essex Police)
N. Smith (Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)

50. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Heath and Ramage.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

51. **MINUTES**

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Community Committee held 11th November 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

52. **INTERESTS**

Councillor Playle declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 58(d) – Mill Lane Bowls Club - Grant Aid request, as his father was a member.

Councillors L. and P. Barlow declared non-pecuniary interests in Minute 58(c) – Witham Carnival Association - Grant Aid request, because of their involvement with the association.

Later in the Meeting at 58(a) – Witham Boxing Club - Grant Aid Funding, Councillor Robertson declared a non-pecuniary interest as his son had attended the club.

Later in the Meeting at 58(c) – Witham Carnival Association - Grant Aid Funding, Councillors Playle and Williamson declared non-pecuniary interests as they knew the treasurer.

53. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

54. ESSEX POLICE

The Chairman welcomed S/Sergeant Jesse to the Meeting. He explained that he had not received any feedback to his January report. He detailed new members of the policing team and was pleased to report that the two Police Community Support Officers' posts had been confirmed until the budget was signed off in April. He said that the constant pattern of anti-social behaviour had continued over the past six months. The 11 to 14 year olds hung about ASDAs etc. as a group and he emphasised they were not a gang and were not armed. Braintree District Council and Eastlight would be engaging with the youths. There had been bin fires and an element of hate crime which was being dealt with but there was a lack of support by stores. Statistics would now show a spike as there had been more reporting. He said that he had undertaken speed checks in Rickstones Road where the crossing would be. He was also going out with a member of the public who had complained about speeding in Howbridge Road.

Members then asked questions as to whether 'egging' was a criminal act, which it is not unless there was damage such as a broken window and 'ghost' driving licences, whereby underage youths have points added before they can have an actual licence. S/Sgt Jesse considered that seizing electric scooters and destroying them was punishment enough unless they were repeat offenders.

Members then asked about the situation at the library. Staff were not there to be confronted but are now reporting incidents. There needed to be CCTV cameras in the library.

S/Sgt Jesse was unable to give statistics in relation to whether incidents were now being reported. He said that store workers prefer to talk to someone in person rather than report. Idling of car engines was also discussed and it was considered that schools should give advice to parents not to sit outside schools with their engines running.

The Chairman thanked S/Sgt Jesse for his report and giving his time to attend the Meeting.

55. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk had nothing to report.

56. POLICIES

(a) Grant Awarding Policy

The Grant Awarding Policy was received and Members asked to review.

Members discussed the limited funds available for grants and the suggestion was made that an earlier clause to not normally award for day-to-day running costs should be reinstated. Members were concerned that if funding was given to cover running costs what would happen after that money had run out. Sound business plans would be required. Members then debated

what would be meant by ‘normally’ and when it would be acceptable to make an exception. The Town Clerk said that funding was given to the Friends of St John for the upkeep of its building and to the Carnival Association towards its general running costs. Members considered that those organisations gave commensurate benefit. The Town Clerk also suggested that groups receiving funding should be asked to advertise that funding had been received from the Town Council.

RESOLVED That the Grant Awarding Policy be received and statements added to include that commensurate benefit value was required and that Groups be asked to advertise that the Town Council had awarded funding; and the policy revisited in a year.

(b) **Councillors’ Grant Scheme Awarding Policy**

The Councillors’ Grant Scheme Awarding Policy was received and Members asked to review.

Members agreed that this scheme would be less stringent and both capital and revenue costs could be sought. It was again agreed that Groups should be asked to advertise the Town Council’s financial assistance.

RESOLVED That the Councillors’ Grant Scheme Awarding Policy be received and amended to include that Groups be asked to advertise that the Town Council had awarded funding.

57. **PROJECT REVIEW FORMS**

(a) **Friends of Witham St John CIC**

A project review form was received from the Friends of Witham St John CIC.

RESOLVED That the project review form be received and noted.

(b) **Witham Carnival Association**

A project review form was received from the Witham Carnival Association.

RESOLVED That the project review form be received and noted.

58. **GRANT AID REQUESTS**

The Chairman suggested that as there was insufficient funds to award all the grants, each application should be discussed first and then a decision on how much could be awarded at the end.

Councillor Fleet left the Council Chamber at that point.

The Town Clerk explained that £14,000 was left in the Grant Funding budget although £8,000 had been ring fenced for the Carnival Association, leaving £6,000 remaining. Extra funding of £1,390 could be vired from the Easter Event, £1,500 from Community Safety, £1,090 from Twinning and £1,110 from Other Community Support giving an extra £5,090.

RESOLVED That funding of £1,390 be vired from the Easter Event, £1,500 from Community Safety, £1,090 from Twinning and £1,110 from Other Community Support.

(a) **Witham Boxing Club**

Councillor Robertson declared a non-pecuniary interest as his son had attended the Boxing Club.

A request for £8,325 grant aid funding was received from the Witham Boxing Club which would include £1,395 for additional fitness equipment, £2,250 for additional training wear/safety equipment and £4,680 for rent assistance.

Members agreed that this was a good initiative and whilst they supported funding the additional equipment they would not support the rent portion.

RESOLVED That agreement be given in principle to award a grant but not the rent portion.

(b) **Friends of Witham St John CIC**

A request for £3,500 grant aid funding was received from Friends of Witham St John CIC towards the maintenance of its premises.

Members agreed that Witham St John Ambulance Brigade was an invaluable asset to the town and commensurate benefit could be shown.

RESOLVED That in principle the funding be granted.

(c) **Witham Carnival Association**

Councillors L. and P. Barlow had declared an interest.

Councillors Playle and Williamson declared non-pecuniary interests as they knew the treasurer.

A request for £8,000 grant funding was received from the Witham Carnival Association.

Members agreed that the carnival was a commensurate benefit to the town, giving an economic boost and developing the carnival court as ambassadors for the town.

RESOLVED That a grant of £8,000, as earmarked, be given to the Carnival Association.

Councillor Fleet returned to the Council Chamber.

(d) **Mill Lane Bowls Club**

Councillor Playle had declared an interest.

A request for £3,945 grant funding was received from the Witham Bowls Club to repair the clubhouse and for website design. The Town Clerk explained that the club had recently been given £1,000 as part of the Councillor Grant Scheme.

Members were supportive of giving a grant towards the repairs but thought that it would be inappropriate to give a grant towards the website.

RESOLVED That in principle a grant would be given to fund the repairs to the clubhouse.

The Town Clerk explained that following the virement of funds, the projects agreed could be covered with the sum of £895 remaining which it was agreed to be left in the Community Grant Fund.

She suggested to Members, with Councillor Grants still available, that they might wish to consider contacting Allstar Majorettes which did not meet the criteria for Grant Aid funding as they had no business plan and the grant was received in the wrong format.

RESOLVED That the sum of £3,645 be given to the Witham Boxing Club to purchase additional fitness and training equipment; that the sum of £3,500 be given to the Friends of St John CIC for maintenance of its building; that the sum of £8,000 be given to the Witham Carnival Association to run the annual carnival and the sum of £3,050 to the Mill Lane Bowls Club towards repairs to the clubhouse.

59. COMMUNITY COMMITTEE INCOME, EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

The Community Committee Income and Expenditure report for the period up to 30th November 2024 was received.

RESOLVED That the Community Committee Income and Expenditure report be received and noted.

60. COMMUNITY EARMARKED RESERVES

- (a) The Town Clerk explained that she proposed to take the Earmarked Reserves to the next Town Council Meeting so that underspends could be moved into next year's budget.

RESOLVED That the Earmarked Reserves be taken to the next Town Council Meeting on 3rd March 2025.

- (b) The Town Clerk requested to open and vire funds to a Town Clock EMR. She said that at present the service for the clock cost about £1,500 but it was estimated this would increase due to operational demands by Essex Highways.

RESOLVED That £1,500 be taken from the Town Clock budget to become the Town Clock Earmarked Reserves.

61. MEMBER'S MOTION REQUEST

A Motion Request was received from Councillor Jack Coleman regarding Community Engagement.

Councillor J. Coleman spoke of the importance of interaction with the community and advocated going out to meet groups and other associations. Members discussed the proposal but were mindful that not all Members had time to devote to this if they worked. The suggestion was made that 'pop-up' stalls could be held during the rush hour in the evening at the railway station. Ideas could be brought to the next Community Committee Meeting and a plan of action agreed. It was suggested that conversations could be documented so that the Council knew what residents wanted. It was agreed to play to Members' existing strengths and commitments and that a mandate for a flexible approach to consultation would result in reaching a wider audience.

RESOLVED That ideas on how to engage proactively with residents should be brought back to the next Community Committee Meeting

and then taken to the following Town Council Meeting to adopt as a formal process.

Councillors Adelaja and Playle left the Meeting at this point.

62. EVENTS' UPDATE

An events' update was received.

The Town Clerk explained that she had concerns about the VJ Day event and it was agreed to discuss the proposals outside of the Meeting.

RESOLVED That the events' update be received and noted.

63. STREET WARDEN'S REPORT

The Street Warden's Reports for October 2024 to January 2025 were received.

Members noted that despite the Town Council having no authority to assist rough sleepers both the Town Clerk and the Street Warden had assisted whenever possible.

The suggestion was made that Members might wish to go on patrol with the Street Warden but the Town Clerk said it was important to get some General Data Protection Training first.

RESOLVED That the Street Warden's Reports be received and thanked for his continuing good work.

64. SHOPS SAFE

Information on 'Shop Safe' was received.

Members suggested that a radio system would be a useful tool for shopkeepers and business owners particularly as the police on shift would have a radio too. It was suggested that leaflets could be taken to shops by the Street Warden to encourage them to take part. Members then considered whether it would be appropriate to include businesses on the Industrial estates although it was understood that they have different challenges. It was agreed that a radio in the library would be an asset and also one for the Information Centre.

RESOLVED That the information be received and circulated prior to discussions with interested parties.

65. SAFER STREETS SURVEY

Results of the District Council's Safer Streets Survey was received.

Members were concerned about how representative the survey was when only 74 people responded. It was agreed to challenge the results.

The Town Clerk explained that the Annual Town Meeting would concentrate on Community Safety.

RESOLVED That the results be received and Braintree District Council asked how they proposed to use the results.

66. SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media statistics were received.

RESOLVED That the statistics be received and noted.

67. 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 should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

68. INFORMATION CENTRE

A report from the Information Centre Manager was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received, the staff in the Information Centre thanked for their hard work and to use the opportunity of meeting visitors to ask questions.

69. IMPROVING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES IN WITHAM WORKING GROUP

The Minutes of the Meeting of the Improving Healthcare Facilities in Witham Working Group held 13th November 2024 were received.

In view of the time it was agreed to suspend Standing Orders.

RESOLVED to suspend Standing Order 3x to allow business to be completed.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

70. CHARTER MARKET

The Town Clerk gave a verbal report regarding the Charter Market.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 9.37 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Chairman

NS/GK/21.2.2025