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MINUTES

WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL

Date: **Monday, 2nd September 2024**

Present: Councillors:

L.	Barlow	(Town Mayor)
E.	Adelaja	
P.	Barlow	
J.C.	Coleman	
J.M.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
L.	Headley	
J.	Martin	
R.	Playle	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	

Councillor

T.	Williams	(Braintree District Council)
N.	Smith	(Town Clerk)
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

77. **APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Heath, Hewitt, Sloma, Taylor and Williams.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

78. **MINUTES**

The Minutes of the Meetings of Town Council held 5th August 2024 and from the Extraordinary Meeting held 27th August 2024.

Councillor Fleet explained that he had been marked absent but had no recollection of receiving the summons for the Extraordinary Meeting. It was agreed to check but in the meantime the Minutes would be signed off and any amendment made later. ¹

¹ Checks have been made and the summons to the Meeting was correctly sent to Councillor Fleet.

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meetings of the Town Council held 5th and 27th August 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Town Mayor.

79. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at this time.

80. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

Braintree District Councillor Williams said that he would give an update at the next item.

81. ESSEX COUNTY AND BRAINTREE DISTRICT COUNCIL UPDATE

Essex County Councillor Playle was pleased to announce that as part of the Members' led scheme, work would be undertaken on both the roadway and footway in Mill Lane and Colchester Road. He had been out with Witham Wombles litter picking and considered the litter by Colemans Bridge to be atrocious. He said that it was important to keep the gateways to the town tidy but understood the safety implications. As well as asking for the litter to be cleared, he had asked Colemans Quarry to go further with their sweeper and remove the gravel which had been scattered in the area. He said that Braintree District Council and the police had moved quickly in relation to the illegal encampments. He hoped that incursions would be limited or stopped completely. In September the County Council was running a discount on compost bins. As part of Visit Essex there would be free tickets available on 16th September for attractions in October. A number of Members had assisted in funding the Templars Fun Day which would take place this Saturday, 7th September 2024.

Braintree District Councillor T. Williams wanted to give an update. He said that Member's grants which were set in April were still available. He had given £200 towards Popcorn, £400 towards Mill Lane Bowls Club and money towards children's boxing classes at Maltings Lane. Requests would still be welcomed but funding was now limited. He said that District Council had £35,000 towards Investing in the Community with small grants available. Likewise, £11,500 had been invested in the Prosperity Fund for town improvements. The Witham Park had been upgraded. He referred to the Changing Places toilet in the Town Hall and the Skate Park which was nearing completion. He said that the long awaited town centre improvements would hopefully begin shortly as licences had now been obtained. He referred to the quality of grass cutting by Eastlight which was not good enough and that the District Council's Cabinet Member would be discussing this matter with the Chief Executive Officer of Eastlight.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

The Town Mayor thanked Councillor Williams for his comments.

82. TOWN MAYOR'S ENGAGEMENTS

Details of the Town Mayor's engagements attended for period 1st to 27th August 2024 were received.

The Town Mayor said that it had not been particularly busy in August. She wanted to thank staff for their hard work at both the Teddy Bears' picnic and Music on the Brain.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

83. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

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

The Town Clerk reported that an extra layer of concrete had been necessary at the skate park which was now drying. In answer to a question it was explained that because a mini-wheels section for younger children had been added the project had been delayed so work was unable to start until the school holidays. The mini-wheels had been added after consultation with the skateboarders and Section 106 funding had been used. The Town Clerk said that the official opening would take place on the 5th October 2024. Members recognised that this was an excellent facility which was originally built in 2011 following consultation with the Youth Council.

The Town Clerk said that it was hoped to hold a Town Council stall at the Street Festival and asked Members to volunteer to assist.

Finally, the Town Clerk explained that the builders would be in this week to finish some work to the Changing Places toilet then the work could be signed off by the Buildings Inspector.

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

84. EASTLIGHT

Members discussed the issues raised by a member of the public at the previous meeting held on 5th August 2024.

Members agreed that not only was the level of grass cutting unacceptable but it was very difficult to contact the right person at Eastlight to ensure work was carried out.

Members agreed that the Town Council should be proactive although it was not in the Town Council's remit it had a responsibility to Witham's residents. It was understood that there used to be regular meetings twice a year with senior officers as the District Council had oversight when it had been Greenfields. Members discussed whether to invite a member of Eastlight to a meeting.

RESOLVED That the Town Clerk liaise with the Chief Executive of Eastlight and request regular contact with a staff member attending a Town Council Meeting.

RESOLVED That Braintree District Council be asked whether the regular meetings with Eastlight had ceased and if so, could they be reinstated.

85. CONCLUSION OF AUDIT

A letter from PKF Littlejohn LLP and Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate were received.

Members congratulated the Town Clerk on a clean audit.

Members noted that the Financial Scrutiny Panel would meet on Thursday, 5th September 2024.

RESOLVED That the letter and Section 3 of the External Auditor Report and Certificate be received.

86. COMMITTEE REPORTS

- (a) **Planning and Transport Committee held 5th and 19th August 2024**
Minutes 67 to 90 (inclusive)

Councillor P. Barlow, Chairman of the Planning and Transport Committee, gave a report of the Meetings en bloc.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Planning and Transport Committee be received.

- (b) **Community Committee held 19th August 2024**
Minutes 19 to 35 (inclusive)

Councillor J.C. Coleman, who was Chairman for the Meeting, gave a report en bloc.

RESOLVED That the report be received.

87. 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 left the Council Chamber.

It was agreed to take the Town Clerk's continued report next.

88. TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Town Clerk gave a report.

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

RESOLVED That the petition against the closure of the Halifax and Lloyds Bank be allowed to be sited in the Information Centre.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

89. COMMITTEE REPORT – CONTINUED

Community Committee held 19th August 2024
Minute 36.

Councillor J.C. Coleman continued his Report.

RESOLVED That the Report of the Community Committee be received.

90. LAND TRANSFER

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

91. **FOREST ROAD POND**

A report was received.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

92. **ASSET 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 8.58 p.m.

Councillor L. Barlow
Town Mayor

NS/GK/4.9.2024