

# WITHAM LOCAL COMMITTEE MINUTES

**Date:** 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009  
**Time of Meeting:** 7:15pm – 9:42pm  
**Venue:** Public Hall, Collingwood Road, Witham  
**Chairman:** Councillor T J W Foster  
**Contact Point for further information:** Linda Morgan, Locality Co-ordinator

## Membership Present:

Councillor J E Abbott	Yes	Councillor J E B Gyford	Yes
Councillor Ms L Barlow	Yes	Councillor Mrs S A Howell	Yes
Councillor D L Bebb	Apologies	Councillor P J Hughes	Yes
Councillor G Cohen	Yes	Councillor M C M Lager	Yes
Councillor J G J Elliott	Yes	Councillor S J Lambourne	No
Councillor R Elliston	Yes	Councillor A M Meyer	Yes
Councillor Dr R L Evans	Left at 7:50	Councillor R G S Mitchell	Yes
Councillor T J W Foster	Yes	Councillor Mrs J M Money	Yes
Councillor Mrs M E Galione	Yes	Councillor R Ramage	Yes

## Officers/Speakers Present:

Chris Fleetham	Corporate Director, Braintree District Council
Jo Albin	Head of Housing, Braintree District Council
Tim Lucas	Housing Research & Development Manager, Braintree DC
Paul Partridge	Head of Operations, Braintree District Council
Linda Morgan	Locality Co-ordinator, Braintree District Council
Melanie Ward	Locality Support Officer, Braintree District Council

## Representatives of the Witham Local Community also in attendance: -

Mr Shamik Rao & Mr Rao Snr	Witham News
Christopher Goodey	Mr Rao's Representative
John Palombi	Witham & Countryside Society
Tony Stote	Witham Resident
Paul Ryland	Witham Town Centre Strategy Group
Mhairi Wiley	Black Notley Community Association

### 41. Declarations of Interest

Personal interests were declared in the following items: -

**5.3** Councillor Barlow as Vice Chair of Governors to the new Rickstones Academy.  
**Additional Item - land disposal** Councillor Hughes as Member of Silver End Parish Council.

In accordance with the Code of Conduct all Members remained in the meeting for these items and took part in the debate and decision thereon unless otherwise stated under the item.

### 42. Minutes

The minutes of the Committee meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2008 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

#### **43. Question Time**

The following comments were raised: -

**John Palombi** asked if there was a consultation process for the regeneration of the Town Centre, or if there is a schedule of works listed for the Witham & Countryside Society to comment on. The Chair referred Mr Palombi to Andrew Epsom, the Lead Officer associated with the Regeneration project for answers on the consultation process.

**Mr Palombi** also enquired if the Local Committee would be able to fund additional printing of the Witham Town Trail leaflet. The Chairman suggested that Mr Palombi should approach his Ward Member to put forward a funding request.

**Tony Stote** requested an update on the progress of parking in the Town Centre. Paul Partridge stated he was currently working with the Head of Law and Governance to produce a Bye Law to cover this area.

**Mr Goodey** extended his thanks to those that attended a sub group meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> January to discuss Mr Rao's trading status at the Station, and Cllr Lager as facilitator. Mr Goodey had been sent a copy of the notes of that meeting and issued his amendments to those notes. He complained that he had been denied access to the minutes, an action that he described as discriminatory.

**Paul Ryland** wanted an undertaking that the public would be able to buy a newspaper at Witham Station, as there was a need for this service. The Chairman replied that he was unable to give that undertaking but that the Committee was looking at the options, an item that appears a little later on the agenda.

**Paul Ryland** also commented on the some ideas for the redevelopment of the town, which in his view should include the station area, a food store to the south end of the town and new medical facilities. Individual traders need to be considered to keep the town alive and bring people into the centre. Once the swimming pool project was under way, there would be scope for other leisure facilities in the area.

#### **44. Feedback from a Meeting of the Sub-Group held on 7<sup>th</sup> January 2009.**

At the Committee Meeting on 18<sup>th</sup> November it was agreed that a further meeting of the sub-group should meet to discuss Mr Rao's trading situation.

Cllr Lager stated that he would refer to Mr Goodey's amended notes of the meeting at a later date and encapsulate the substance of what was discussed to find a way forward and a possible solution for all parties involved.

Various options had been put forward but the use of the pavement near the juice bar was seen to be the favoured option. Cllr Lager had received a letter from Essex County Council, which explained that shortening the bus stop would no longer be an option. Cllr Lager commented that it would now be down to Mr Rao to take forward the viable options found for him to continue trading in the station area. Mr Goodey stated that is was the intention of Mr Rao to pursue the issue of trading outside the juice bar as an option, which would include converting Mr Rao's van to trade from the opposite side directly onto the pavement..

#### **45. Local Committee Funding**

##### **45.1 Budget Update**

The Committee noted the budget position to date.

## **45.2 Bids for Grants from the Witham Local Committee**

### **Black Notley Community Association (BNCA) Kitchen Refurbishment**

Mhairi Wiley presented the bid on behalf of the BCNA. The Association wished to replace the dated kitchen as it was in disrepair. Over a thousand members and regular visitors use the hall, which is a focal point of the village. The use of a fully equipped kitchen would encourage groups to hold more social functions in the hall and encourage existing and new groups to use the facilities.

In response to Members questions Ms Wiley stated that the kitchen refurbishment would form part of on going works to the hall including the current installation of a disabled WC. The funding request would cover the cost and installation of kitchen units. Volunteers would paint the interior walls.

Members agreed that an admin error in the report meant that volunteer hours totalling £50 would need to be taken off the total cost of project to make the application for grant £7,560.

**Decision:** Members agreed to fund the bid for £7,560 for Kitchen Refurbishment.

## **45.3 Disused Toilet Block at the A12 exit to Hatfield Peverel.**

Cllr Meyer wished to raise this item for possible funding to re-develop the unsightly area by the A12 at Lynfields as it gave the town a bad image on approach. Information has since been received that the County Council are to demolish the block and landscape the area, which means that this item no longer needed to be brought to the Committees attention.

Members were informed that the Highways Agency had consulted Witham Town Council on proposals to widen the road in this area.

**Decision:**

Members agreed that this area would be best suited to being landscaped.

## **46. Local Issues**

### **46.1 Affordable Housing Strategy**

Joanne Albin and Tim Lucas from Housing Services presented the report.

The Affordable Housing Strategy is based on the Strategic role of the Council since the change over of housing stock to Greenfields Housing Association. The Strategy had been created to ensure that all local & sub-regional housing strategies join up and link in with draft Core Strategy 'One District – One Vision'. The Action Plan document is the key referral document as it sets out a working plan to deliver affordable housing to the area. The estimate is that they are likely to achieve between 25-30% affordable housing over the next 15 years, to include developing more affordable housing in villages including exception sites in smaller villages. The final draft will be taken to Cabinet in March.

Members raised the following issues:

- How can properties remain as affordable housing when people buy then sell on at a profit, pricing people out of the market?
- Where houses are built, there would need to be major investment to provide local services such as schools, surgeries, and shops. The roads and traffic infrastructure in a lot of the key villages are already saturated.
- There was no mention whether Witham town could support additional housing.

Maltings Lane is a mess. The services can't cope with the demand of the site.

- Consideration for older peoples needs requires an action plan to better match the accommodation available.

*Jo Albini responded that a new strategy was due out this year, which would look at the types of accommodation including supporting older peoples needs.*

- Would extensions to village envelopes be considered if there were still development opportunities within the envelopes?
- Would the potential for development outside key villages extend to smaller villages and services?
- Do Capital costs consider running costs? The supply of services such as oil to remote and rural areas would be more costly.
- The Council needs to ensure that new housing has high levels of insulation and solar panels. Sustainability should be incorporated as an affordable need.

*Tim Lucas stated that key services in the Core Strategy had some development options. Land opportunities were identified through the planning system. It is a site that identifies areas for affordable housing and viable places to develop in the future. Areas would only be developed where a need was found. A few exception sites exist where air source heat pumps were being used as a sustainable option.*

- Empty homes are key areas to look at.
- Development thresholds should be adhered to. This needs to be checked under planning permission. Councilor Abbott felt that the Tye Rd Developers were not adhering to this and requested that it be looked into.

*Tim Lucas would look into this and notify Councilor Abbott with his findings.*

- Districts are dictated to regionally which do not consider current infrastructures, which creates more market pressure to build on Greenfield sites. There is no spare capacity or current infrastructure in the key villages of Kelvedon and Hatfield Peverel. The local infrastructure has to be considered in the County Councils improvement plans for the A12 to avoid saturation of these areas..
- Information was requested on the rent/buy scheme and where to find details.

*It was pointed out that it was difficult to publicise the scheme as it differs per site. But people can apply via details on the Housing web site.*

- If small village envelopes were extended, would there be continuation to the rest of the village and provision of services linked?

*Extensions would only exist on site boundaries so new homes would still be linked to existing areas and services.*

- Would Brownfield site development have priority over other areas?

*Brownfield sites are Greenfield owned. A number of schemes are proposed for development, such as old garage sites. Affordable housing options have to follow mainstream developers, as it is down to them where sites are located.*

- If key service villages are extended, Parish Councils need be consulted.

*The Draft Core Strategy consultation would detail the need of smaller villages. Affordable Housing would not be considered on exception sites if there were opposition from the Parish.*

### **Update on Riverview**

An event was held in August and attended by all neighboring residents. A case was put forward to change the entrance. This was approved. Agreements are in the process of being drawing up with works due to start in March.

## **46.2 Consultation on 2009/10 Budget Proposals.**

Chris Fleetham gave a brief overview on the shortfall in the Council's budget due to current economic demands. He drew Members' attention to suggestions set out in the agenda report to reduce these shortfalls and keep costs down. Members were informed that Concessionary Fare tokens, Community Halls and Allotments had

been deleted from the proposals within the report. A few minor amendments and additions to savings had also been identified. Members were asked to comment and make suggestions on the proposals.

At the last Full Council, Cllr Gyford requested information from the Leader on the use of a two-tier system to gauge credit worthy arrangements. Chris Fleetham stated that a response had been drafted and would be passed on in time for the Scrutiny meeting on the 28<sup>th</sup> January.

Members generally agreed with proposals and made comments.

- The continuation of recycling was seen as a very positive step.
- Assurance would be required from the police that they were to continue funding Police Community Support Officers (PCSOs) if contributions were to cease.
- Members supported no increase in Members allowances, as they should take their share of the cuts.
- Sustainability of the pool was seen to be an after thought that should have been considered at the start of the project.
- Due to the landfill taxation it would prove to be a false economy if the Council implemented the change in green waste collection and it would be a step backwards to a successfully proven scheme.
- Members felt the proposals should have been made clearer and notice given to Members at a more timely opportunity to be considered fully.

**Decision:**

Members noted proposals and requested that their comments be considered before being taken to Cabinet on February 2nd 2009.

## **47. Witham Local Committee Action Plan and Priorities:**

### **47.1 Progress on Action Plan**

Cllr Foster had been unable to contact a representative from the Mid Essex Primary Care Trust (PCT) for an update on the progress of Witham's Priority C status through their Strategic Service Development Plan (SSDP).

Cllr Lager suggested that Olive Cowell should be contacted at ECC for the review of HGV signage and routing throughout Witham Town Centre and parking issues to be included on the next Witham Traffic Management Liaison Panel agenda.

Concern was raised over the Local Committee lack of clear local aims and objectives. Members agreed that an informal private meeting be arranged for all WLC members to attend to discuss a way forward. The two main areas for discussion will be

(1) The budget. Will the Committee continue as now with bids coming for various causes via ward members more or less on a first come first served basis or should we plan more in advance on the type of operation we want to fund? Should we have additional rules for example on criteria to be met and a requirement for some level of matched funding?

(2) The style of the meetings. Is the Braintree approach what the members as a whole would prefer?

**Decision:**

Members agreed that an informal private meeting be arranged for all WLC members to attend to discuss a way to implement objectives.

**Action:**

Locality Coordinator to arrange an informal private meeting for WLC members.

**47.2 Reference from Planning Committee on 11<sup>th</sup> November 2008**

At the above meeting two gentlemen expressed concern at approval of a planning application relating to Units in the Grove Centre, Witham specifically the danger and congestion caused to traffic and pedestrians using Maldon Road by lorries gaining access to and exiting from The Grove Service Yard. Planning Committee suggested that the issue be raised with Witham Local Committee.

Cllr Howell informed members that she had visited the area and had witnessed the problems. She confirmed that lorries using the Service Yard were causing congestion and a possible danger in this area.

Cllr Lager suggested that this issue be taken to the Witham Traffic Management Liaison Panel to be put on their next agenda.

**Action:**

Olive Cowell to be contacted at Essex County Council to request that an item covering "access to The Grove Service Yard, Maldon Road, Witham" to be put on the agenda of the next available meeting of Witham Traffic Management Liaison Panel.

**47.3 Replacement Swimming Pool, Witham.**

A revised report was handed out to members at the start of the meeting.

A Programme Board had recently been established to oversee the work carried out on the Three Towns – One Vision project. It is suggested that the work of the Board could include the Witham replacement pool project.

Councillors Lager & Howell as members of the Three Towns – One Vision Programme Board agreed to feed back progress of the Witham Replacement Swimming Pool Programme to the Committee.

Replacement of the Bramston Sports Centre swimming pool is to be in conjunction with the construction of an educational academy. A decision has yet to be made on the location. The Council, in conjunction with Essex County Council and the Academies Enterprise Trust are looking to invest in the re-provision of leisure facilities in Witham. The District Council has joined the Design User Group, which has responsibility for delivering the new build project.

John Polombi as governor of Rickstones Academy informed members that a Business Case had already been put to Planning Committee. If members wanted to make any input they would need to contact Russell Everard, Head of Enterprise Culture & Leisure as soon as possible.

It was proposed and seconded that sustainability be included in the brief when presented to the programme board.

**Decision:**

Members agreed that:

- Councillors Lager & Howell should liaise with Witham Local Committee as members of the Three Towns – One Vision Programme Board.
- That sustainability is included in the brief when presented to the Programme Board.

**48. Land Off Joseph Gardens, Silver End**

To approve the disposal of Council owned land off Joseph Gardens, Silver End.  
The Chair agreed to receive this late item for consideration.

The land in question is an area of open space with a history of noise and nuisance complaints from local residents. The site had been locked every night to try and solve this problem but the Parish Council had been unwilling to take on the locking and unlocking duties. The site has been permanently locked since September 2007 with no complaints from the public. Local Ward Members confirmed the history of the site and had no objections to its disposal.

As this was a very late item, Members not familiar with the area felt that they couldn't make a decision and it was agreed that this item be brought back to the next meeting where members could assess with clarity.

**Decision:**

Item to be considered at the next Committee Meeting.

**49. Future Items**

To note the forthcoming items for the 24<sup>th</sup> March 2009: -

- Street Scene Litter Strategy
- Economic Development Strategy 2009-2013
- One District-One Vision Draft Strategy Progress report on Consultation

**Other Future Forthcoming items:**

Review of Community Halls - April

Housing Strategy - June/July 2009

**Decision:** The Committee noted the list of items for the next meeting.

**50. Any Other Business**

Cllr Galione reported that residents in her Ward were concerned over a licence being renewed allowing lorries to continue dumping soil at the Black Notley Golf Club. The presence and frequency of the lorries was proving to be a nuisance and danger in the village.

Cllr Lager stated that it was down to the environment agency to grant permission for another licence. A letter of protest had been written to Len Grindell at ECC and copied to Brooks Newmark, MP, objecting to the fact that no account of the applicant's previous conduct is taken into account when renewing such licences.

**The meeting concluded at 9:42pm**

T J W FOSTER

(CHAIRMAN)