



TOWN COUNCIL MEETING

**Meeting held on Thursday 18th January 2024 at 7pm in the Council Chambers,
10 Melrose Road, West Mersea, Colchester CO5 8JD**

In attendance:

Cllr. S. Weaver (Mayor)	Cllr. B.Hart
Cllr. R. Jenkins	Cllr. M. Parsons
Cllr. B. Holmes	Cllr. T. Gibbons
Cllr. D. Boylan	Cllr. C.Powling
Karen Kuderovitch, Town Clerk & RFO	9 Members of the public

24/1.	<p>RECORDING OF MEETING</p> <p>Chairman requested anyone present to identify their intention to record the meeting. The Town Clerk indicated she was recording.</p>
24/2.	<p>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</p> <p>All Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests (pecuniary/nonpecuniary) they have in items of business on the meeting's agenda either at this point or during the agenda item. They are reminded that they will need to repeat their declaration at the appropriate point in the meeting and leave the room if the interest is a prejudicial one. Unforeseen interests must be declared similarly at the appropriate time. If not already done so, they are also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer of the interest within 28 days of the meeting.</p> <p>Cllr.Powling identified himself as a Colchester City Councillor.</p>
24/3.	<p>APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE 🙇</p> <p>Cllr. S. Jarvis -work commitments. Councillors to voted to accept absence and the reason given.</p>
24/4.	<p>PUBLIC PARTICIPATION</p> <p>The Mayor requested the Town Clerk advise all present of the correct procedures. The Town Clerk referred to the Standing Orders as follows:</p> <p>SECTION 3</p> <p><i>e) Members of the public may make representations, answer questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda. Priority will be given to members of the public wishing to share information relating to items on the agenda.</i></p> <p><i>h) In accordance with standing order 3(e), a question shall not require a response at the meeting nor start a debate on the question. The chair of the meeting may direct that a written or oral response be given.</i></p> <p><i>j A person who speaks at a meeting shall direct his comments to the Mayor of the meeting.</i></p> <p><i>A reminder to Councillors that all discussions to come through the Mayor.</i></p> <p><i>There is no allowance in SO for MOPs to join in the meeting after the public session has closed. Any pertinent information can be emailed at the resident's convenience.</i></p> <p>A period of up to 15 minutes (maximum of 3 minutes per person) for members of the public to ask questions or submit comments about items on the agenda.</p> <p>Priority will be given to those members of the public wishing to share information relating to items on the agenda.</p> <p>MOP1 – made reference to West Mersea Village Appraisal (2008-2009) and the 1947 Planning Act in reference to a direct route through Oakwood Avenue & The Link. The resident suggested that the issue had been raised previously with Council. Feasibility study. Will Council now discuss this issue?</p>

	<p>MOP 2 – matter raised at Finance & Strategy Meeting on 16th January 24 – the need to publish in advance of meetings reports & papers, allowing public participation. The minutes of 14th September 2023 were referred to.</p> <p>A suggestion was made that a lot appears to be happening but reports are not coming to Council. A concern was raised whether the Town Council had enough information to take a decision and a lack of Action Plan and no finance information was available on the web site. A suggestion was made more funds needed to be allocated to the Neighbourhood Plan.</p> <p>MOP 3 – referred to covering up of the bathing rafts. A reference was made to cars in the ditch at the bottom of Strood Hill and suggested water from Dawes Lane was adding to the issue. A reference was made to New Years Day toilets being closed.</p> <p>– questions on democracy and transparency and residents have the opportunity to be involved in decision making that affect their lives. The resident stated he was sceptical about a Council made up of largely co-opted members and voices disappointment of the co-opted members in attendance and referred to the Deputy Mayor being absent since September. Transparency – no clear Strategy document and the Mayor had asked for time for Councillors to bed in.</p> <p>MOP 4 Reference made to the financial statement which had been published today and made general comment about lack of finance information.</p> <p>The Mayor stated that an immediate response would not be forthcoming, but all members of the public’s questions would be responded to.</p> <p>The Mayor offered anyone further to speak (no-one was forthcoming) and the Mayor moved onto the Agenda.</p>
24/5.	<p>COUNTY AND CITY COUNCILLORS REPORTS</p> <p>To receive reports from our County and City Councillors.</p> <p>The Mayor welcomed Cllr. John Jowers. Cllr Jowers reported:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Village appraisal – has no power and did not come with any statutory power. WMTC has a neighbourhood plan and suggested strengthening of the plan. • One way system proposed 20 years ago (Mill Road out & Oakwood in) – makes sense but Essex County Councils position is does not warrant expend. • Precept – suggested documents and discussions need to be taken by Town Council before releasing to members of the public. • Section 114 notices discussed. • Mersea Island is a beautiful place to live, suggested members of the public not to run it down but to be more optimistic.
24/6.	<p>APPROVAL OF MINUTES 🖱</p> <p>Minutes of the Town Council meeting of 7th December 2023 were approved and signed. Proposed: Cllr. Powling, Seconded: Cllr. Hart. All n favour.</p>
24/7.	<p>SANDERLING REACH – COMMERCIAL AREA 🖱</p> <p>Town Clerk reported that the new proposal for 4 x 2 bedroom and 2 x 1 bedroom affordable housing units had been accepted by Town & Country. A planning application was advised to be forthcoming and Council could not comment until the planning application has been received. The Town Clerk had contacted the Rural Community Council for Essex (RCCE) for advice on Housing Trusts. Clerk to further report at the next meeting.</p> <p>The Mayor added that there appears to be a mis-conception in the reference by some residents they are Alms houses for the elderly. The housing would be open to anyone in need.</p> <p>Cllr. Powling suggested an open public meeting once the planning application was received for any interested parties to make comment.</p>
24/8.	<p>MAYOR’S REPORT</p> <p>The Town Clerk appointment has taken place. There have been some external queries on the process</p>

	<p>of the appointment (emphasising the process and not the appointment itself). The Mayor relayed that the Council took the appropriate advice and Council was under no obligation to advertise the position, internally or externally. The Town Clerk had been working for several months before being appointed as a permanent member of staff and in her time as a Locum Clerk, had proved to be a great asset to the Council. The Mayor hoped we could now move forward and carry on to be productive and work well together as a team. Councillor Jarvis had stepped down as Chair of Facilities and Environment (due to current work commitments) and concerned about not being available to give the time needed. The Mayor thanked everyone for their hard work over last few months, particular in Finance and the backlog. Special thanks to Cllr. B. Jenkins & The Town Clerk for their work to be in a position to consider the 24/25 budget.</p> <p>Looking ahead to 2024 being productive; coastguards compound, possible water bailiff in discussion with Colchester City Council, scheduling for Councillor surgeries, and the D-Day 80 commemorations.</p>
24/9.	<p>CLERK'S REPORT</p> <p>The Town Clerk reported as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on 2nd January 24 her office was found flooded. Thanks given to staff for dealing with the issue as the Clerk then tested positive for Covid. • Staff Meeting on 23rd January 2024. • Closure of the office on Tuesdays was proving successful, increasing the office staff capacity. • February meeting – looking at March newsletter and the comparative costs of production. Civility & Respect will be on the agenda. Hedge cutting tender document – Town Clerk asked for assistance in reviewing the document as some queries had been raised. The Town Clerk asked Cllr. Holmes to attend a site visit, together with the Health & Safety Advisor and the grounds team to assess the most urgent issues to be addressed. • Communications Policy review for February agenda. • Finance – a new finance page for the web site was under creation. The Town Clerk added in her experience, budget for precept figures are not publicly available until the full council had had an opportunity to review and approve. Once the decision has been made, papers would be published in due course. The web site should be easier to navigate. • Bathing rafts – these are to be covered as soon as possible. • Community Assets & Facilities Committee – a request for Councillors to consider the role of the Chair.
24/10.	<p>APPOINTMENT TO COMMITTEES 🙌,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Assets/Facilities Committee – Town Clerk reported resignation of the Chair (Cllr. Jarvis). The Mayor asked Councillors to consider the appointment. Cllr. Powling offered to Chair. The Mayor proposed Cllr. Jarvis, seconded by Cllr. Gibbons. All in favour. The Town Clerk thanked Cllr. Powling. Cllr. Boylan asked to be a member of the committee. Proposed: Cllr. Weaver, seconded Cllr. • MISA Representative – Town Clerk to clarify the resignation of a member (Cllr. Jarvis). Cllr. Gibbons and Cllr. Hart offered to take the positions of MISA representatives on behalf of the Town Council. Proposed: Cllr. Parsons, seconded Cllr. Weaver. All in favour. • To discuss & agree meeting dates for all Committees for 2024. It was agreed to arrange these via e-mail at the suggestion of the Town Clerk. Committees to meet and then schedule their 2024 meeting schedule.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Councillors were asked to indicate if they wish to join Committees. Cllr. Hart indicated he wished to join Community Assets & Facilities, Environment & Community Services, Planning & Highways. All in favour.
24/11.	<p>PLANNING APPLICATIONS 🖱️</p> <p>To consider planning applications received (separate document).</p> <p>a) 232849 Conversion of existing attached garage to form treatment room and cloakroom, associated alterations to front and rear elevations of existing garage and formation of disabled ramped access to front. Installation of solar PV panels to front and rear roof. 62 Kingsland Road, West Mersea – Plan link 232849. TC Comment: no objections – supported</p> <p>b) 232831 Erection of a Granny Annexe for ancillary use to the main dwelling. Whitings, 2 Haycocks Lane, West Mersea – Plan link 232831 (c) TC Comment: no comments - but a note to refer to Neighbourhood Plan (should now be standard on all responses)</p> <p>c) 232860 Proposed rear utility extension and link into existing garage. 15 East Mersea Road, West Mersea – Plan link 232860 (d) TC Comment: no objections, supported.</p> <p>d) 232872 It is proposed to construct two small glass roofed verandas, one to the rear of the existing house and the other to the front of the outbuilding/garage. It is also proposed to construct a small balcony at first floor level to one of the rear bedrooms. 98 Coast Road, West Mersea – Plan link 232872 TC Comment: no objections, supported.</p> <p>e) 240004 Application for prior approval for a change of use from agricultural building to residential accommodation. Barn North of, Ashlyn, 11 East Mersea Road, West Mersea – Plan link 240004 TC Comment: objections, not supported - refer to Policy WM1 outside settlement boundary - possible to put an agricultural occupancy clause to stop further development</p> <p>f) 232781 Conversion, extension and remodel of a commercial teaching pool, ancillary to the main dwelling, to provide one holiday let. 17 East Mersea Road, West Mersea – Plan link 232781 TC Comment: objections, not supported - refer to Policy WM7 & WM1</p> <p>To receive notification of planning decisions.</p> <p>PLANNING DECISIONS</p> <p>Applications passed</p> <p>(a) 231598 Demolish existing 3-bed bungalow and construct 3-bed chalet bungalow. 46 Victory Road, West Mersea - Decision link 231598 WMTC recommendation: West Mersea Town Council recommend refusal on the following grounds: - It is contrary to the Neighbourhood Plan Policy WM7 regarding loss of bungalows and chalets. - It is in conflict with Neighbourhood Plan Policy WM29 regarding design considerations. - It does not conform to Highways requirements and has been recommended for refusal by Highways.</p> <p>(b) 232508 Siting of two number single level portable cabins and reinstatement of existing access track to the rear garden. 24 Melrose Road, West Mersea - Decision link 232508 WMTC recommendation: It was resolved that refusal be granted in respect of this application, on the following grounds: - Affecting neighbours’ privacy being very close to the boundary. - Out of keeping with the area. - Potential loss of light/overshadowing for neighbours.</p> <p>(c) 232536 Proposed single storey side extension (annexe). 3 Windsor Road, West Mersea - Decision link 232536 Application refused (a) 231103 Full planning application for the retention of an existing building for use as a residential annex and adjustment to residential curtilage. 43 Seaview Avenue, West Mersea - Decision link 231103</p> <p>Town Clerk to issue a quick reference Planning document- still under review.</p>
24/12.	<p>TOWN CLERK OFFICE FLOOD</p> <p>Town Clerk reported:</p> <p>Thanks given to the office staff for acting so quickly and efficiently. The cause appeared to be</p>

	<p>vandalism. The office has been cleared and dried and insurance items for replacement sent. The Town Clerk is currently able to work from her office. The Town Clerk asked for approval of the emergency works required for office fencing and hedge removal to make the office better secured.</p>
24/13.	<p>COASTGUARD COMPOUND 🖱️£</p> <p>Members reviewed the project plan & associated costs supplied by the Town Clerk. All four replacement benches had been sponsored and the contractor was able to start soon. The Town Clerk confirmed the tree works permission (height reduction) had been applied for. A suggestion for a herb garden was discussed and a view shared of whether this was part of the heritage. The Town Clerk advised in her experience they were a popular community facility and for £200 could be an asset to the area, to be further discussed. The slope was discussed and the Town Clerk suggested, following the advice from the H&S Advisor, a small sign could be erected highlighting the slope and recommended this course of action. The benches and fencing were also further discussed and views shared. An information board was discussed. The Town Clerk advised some items had been previously discussed and agreed by Council.</p> <p>The Mayor suggested removing the idea of a herb garden and various views were shared. The Town Clerk suggested once the works had been done, consulting with the community for their views. Cllr. Powling proposed not to erect a sign or proceed with a herb garden at this stage. The Town Clerk clarified the decisions made. Members considered the quotation received for installing finials to the fencing tops @ £1,000. Agreed. Members agreed the quotation for sanding and painting @ £1,500. Agreed. Budget to be allocated @ £8,000 Proposed Cllr. Powling, seconded Cllr. Holmes. All in favour.</p>
24/14.	<p>COMMUNITY PROJECTS/ACTION PLAN 🖱️</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Web site – Town Clerk reported on costs and enhancements, confirming the current web site hoster to be appointed. The web analytics would also asked to be included and the .org web would continue (re-direction to .gov). Council allocated up to £500 for these costs and agreed to proceed to a .gov website at a cost of £60 & VAT Proposed Cllr. Powling, seconded Cllr. Jenkins. All in favour. Compactor Bins – members approved the purchase of two bins (CCC to 50% fund) @ £8, 000. Proposed Cllr. Jenkins seconded Cllr. Holmes. All in favour. Cllr. Powling abstained from voting. Town Clerk reported on creation of Action Plan for public viewing – in progress for February 2024 meeting. Town Clerk report progress on all other community projects. Already covered in previous reports.
24/15.	<p>TRAINING/COUNCILLOR SURGERIES 🖱️£</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Town Clerk to suggest dates to be set for in-house Councillor training in February 2024. It was agreed to arrange this via e-mail. Members approved Project Management Course for 3 members of staff @ £270 & VAT, enabling office staff to be better informed to assist in project management. Proposed Cllr. Jenkins, seconded Cllr. Weaver. All in favour. Councillor Surgeries – members agreed a schedule to commence on the first Saturday April 2024, from 10am – midday. Details to be confirmed via e-mail and then published.
24/16.	<p>PROUD OF MERSEA 🖱️</p> <p>Town Clerk reported on requests made in a meeting with the group.</p>

- a) Better engagement with the group- by meeting and staying in contact communication had improved.
- b) Assist with kit for the group – donations have been given and would be considered.
- c) Suggestion of further bins – after discussion, not to proceed at present.
- d) Lack of welcome to Mersea sign, offer of assistance. Damaged and dirty railings. After discussion, not to proceed as WMTC does not own the land. Further investigations to be made.
- e) Litter cameras – Town Clerk to investigate.
- f) Town Clerk & Mayor added to the database.
- g) Lack of access to West Mersea recycling centre – not WMTC remit.
- h) Council consider a litter picking hub – CCC initiative – next agenda, Town Clerk to email the details to Councillors.

Thanks were given to the group for the excellent service to the community.

24/17.

FINANCE 🇬🇧

- a) Payments approved to be made – signed off by Councillors.
- b) Review of Finance Report – members to review the Budget for 24/25 and approve the Precept figure for submission to Colchester City Council by 31st January 2024.

The Town Clerk asked the Mayor to request the members of the public to refrain from talking so that members could focus on finance, which she actioned.

A member of the public then interjected asking for a copy of the documents and questioned who was Chair? The Town Clerk advised again that the meeting was outside of the public session. The member of the public continued to disrupt the meeting. A second member of the public also then disrupted the meeting. The Town Clerk advised again that the public session was closed. The Mayor asked that the meeting be allowed to continue and reminded members of the public again that Council was in session. A demand was made by a member of the public and was disrespectful to the Mayor and the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk asked for permission to advise and the Standing Orders Section 2 was read as follows:

SO SECTION 2

DISORDERLY CONDUCT AT MEETINGS

a) No person shall obstruct the transaction of business at a meeting or behave offensively or improperly. If this standing order is ignored, the chair of the meeting shall request such person(s) to moderate or improve their conduct.

Cllr. Jenkins ran through the draft budget for precept meeting, the contents of which had been considered at the Finance & Strategy Meeting on 16th January 2024 (which had been published in draft form). Cllr. Jenkins advised the documents being considered was the detail of how that precept figure was reached. Members reviewed the information, which included details of reserves, and the project allocations. Once approved, the detailed budget would be available on the web site. Councillors were asked if they had any questions and Cllr. Parsons made a suggestion in relation to pre-paid burials and where the funds were being kept. Cllr. Jenkins advised that a separate account would be opened for that purpose. Cllr. Jenkins and the Town Clerk were thanked for their hard work by the Mayor.

Cllr. Jenkins proposed that the precept for 24/25 would be 4.66% = £373,287.00 (23/24 figure 3.92% = £354,757.00). Cllr. Weaver seconded that proposal. All in favour. The Town Clerk thanked Cllr. Jenkins for his assistance to her.

- c) Emergency expenditure – none to report.
- d) Willoughby Car Park post – members approved expenditure of £1,090 & VAT. Proposed: Cllr. Powling, seconded, Cllr. Holmes. All in favour.
- e) WMTC Office security – members to considered and approve expenditure for hedge removal @



	<p>£520 & fencing @£1434.92. Proposed: Cllr. Powling, seconded Cllr. Jenkins. All in favour. The Town Clerk to send Councillors the plan of works.</p> <p>f) WMTC Office – members approved cost of removing stack pipe @ £670 & VAT. Proposed: Cllr. Powling, seconded Cllr. Jenkins. All in favour. Members approved an intruder alarm upgrade @ £247.05. Proposed: Cllr. Parsons, seconded Cllr. Powling. All in favour.</p> <p>g) Approved the quote for the cutting of the allotment hedge @ £425 & VAT.</p> <p>h) Approved the quote for the cutting of the Feldy View Woodland Cemetery hedge @ £425 & VAT.</p> <p>i) To approve the quote for works to prepare for the biodiversity project at Barfield Road Cemetery @ £1,250 & VAT. Cllr. Powling proposed all 3 quotes above be approved. Seconded: Cllr. Gibbons. All in favour.</p> <p>j) To approve the quote for 3 x information boards on Coast Road @ £3,490.02 & VAT – deferred to February 2024 so Town Clerk can clarify a query.</p> <p>Clerk reported any further finance information. Two VAT refund applications had been made. VAT April – June £13,197.84, July – Sept £11,901.02. The Town Clerk reported that she now had access to Unity bank to be able to load on payments for approval and Council would now start to utilise this account. A further signatory was required on Unity (February 2024). The Town Clerk gave her thanks to the Mayor and Cllr. Powling for their hard work in loading and releasing payments.</p>
24/18.	<p>ANNUAL TOWN MEETING 25TH APRIL 2024 🙌</p> <p>The Mayor asked for Councillors to think about key speakers and a theme for Annual Town Meeting 25th April 2024. February 2024.</p>
24/19.	<p>CONTACT FROM RESIDENTS/FREEDOM OF INFORMATION REQUESTS</p> <p>Town Clerk reported an issue had been raised about Wellhouse Hill and water (raised in the public session).</p> <p>FOI request – respondent had requested an internal review. The Town Clerk to administer.</p>
24/20.	<p>COUNCILLORS UPDATES</p> <p>Councillors were offered the opportunity to share information.</p> <p>Cllr. Hart raised concerns for a local homeless person.</p>
<p><i>The Town Clerk advised that the meeting had reached 2 hours. It was resolved to continue.</i></p>	
<p>EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC 🙌</p> <p><i>It was RESOLVED that due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted the public and press be excluded pursuant to Section 1 of the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960.</i></p>	
24/21.	<p>LEASES/LAND 🙌 £</p> <p>a) Changing Places Lease - Town Clerk to follow up.</p> <p>b) Land at Coast Road – finalised – Land Registry in progress.</p> <p>c) Legal costs budget was approved for Village Green 241.</p>
24/22.	<p>PERSONNEL 🙌 £</p> <p>Town Clerk reported:</p> <p>a) Staff appraisals & handbook. Completed & sent to Personnel. Suggestion of a third member of grounds staff – for Personnel to consider</p> <p>b) Recommendations from Town Clerk approved.</p> <p>c) Contact from resident t discussed.</p>