

**WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL**

**MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 OCTOBER 2024**

In attendance:

Cllr S Weaver, Mayor	Cllr D Baker	Cllr M Greenleaf
Cllr N Hinderwell	Cllr R Jenkins	Cllr C Powling
Cllr T Webster	Petra Palfreyman, Locum Clerk	Cllr Dr Martin Parsons (CCC)
16 members of the public		

**24/212 RECORDING OF MEETING**

Chairman requested anyone present to identify their intention to record the meeting.

Cllr Hinderwell, Cllr Webster and the Locum Town Clerk confirmed they would be recording the meeting.

**24/213 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Cllr Boylan, Cllr Davidson and Cllr Jowers. A vote was taken with all in favour.

**24/214 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Cllr Hinderwell declared he is a member of West Mersea Tennis club and has a non-pecuniary interest. Cllr Webster declared she belongs to Neighbourhood Watch, Speedwatch and is a volunteer at the MICA. Cllr Powling declared he is a Colchester City Councillor and a member of Community First Responders.

**24/215 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

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.

MOP 1 – raised concerns to modify Schedule 3 of the planning application regarding the S106 fund on the Dawes Lane site and stated they are against the land being purchased by the Council.

MOP 2 – suggested there was an omission on the agenda for not giving an update on the Local Plan and requested the Council issued a statement saying where it stands on the Local Plan.

MOP 3 – queried the road access from Seaview Avenue to Sanderling Reach and stated it is now likely to be extended to December 2025, causing some safety issues over the pathway and in other areas. Also issues with quality control of the dwellings and that the site sales office could be developed into a bungalow. Also the public green space is paid for by the residents but is still owned by the developers and there are concerns this will be developed on, if it's not a designated village green or public space.

MOP 4 – requested that WMTC do something about the extensive planning requirements being imposed by central government. All S106 money was allocated to The Glebe but should be shared with doctors' surgery, play parks, MICA etc and the public should be consulted. There have been delays in the council responding to Freedom of Information requests and Subject Access Requests and a substantial VAT liability.

**24/216 To receive reports from County and City Councillors**

The Local Plan committee meeting, due for the end of October has been postponed. The revision of the National Planning Policy Framework is coming, with mandatory housing targets and a 40% increase for the Colchester Borough.

This will be included in the NPPF at the end of the year at which time CCC will be able to make their decisions. The call for sites and the public consultation has been pushed back until the end of summer. The recycling consultation decision will be published on 18th October 2024, regarding replacing black sacks for wheelie bins and plastic, card and can recycling in another wheelie bin. Glass would still be collected via the green bins. £1,000 from the Locality Budget is being offered for any two parishes towards vehicle activated speed signs.

24/217 To confirm minutes of the Council Meeting of 11 July 2024 – Matters arising

The Council **resolved to accept** the minutes of the 11 July 2024.

Matters arising: Cllr Jenkins queried whether the work on the toilets has been scheduled.

Proposed: Cllr Jenkins, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

24/218 To confirm minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 22 July 2024 – Matters arising

The Council **resolved to accept** the minutes of the 22 July 2024. No matters arising.

Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Powling. All in favour.

24/219 To confirm minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 8 August 2024 - Matters arising

The Council **resolved to accept** the minutes of the 8 August 2024. No matters arising.

Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

24/220 To confirm minutes of the Extraordinary Council Meeting of 19 August 2024 - Matters arising

The Council **resolved to accept** the minutes of the 19 August 2024. No matters arising.

Proposed: Cllr Jenkins, Seconded: Cllr Powling. All in favour.

24/221 To consider Planning Applications received and to receive notifications of Planning Decisions

#### Planning applications

(a) 241808

Single storey front extension with fenestration and new windows throughout.

7 Blackwater Drive, West Mersea.

It was resolved that consent be granted in respect of this application. Please refer to West Mersea Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

(b) 241819

Subdivision of the existing detached dwelling known as Kona (9 Kingsland Close) into two semi-detached houses. Kona, 9 Kingsland Close, West Mersea.

It was resolved that consent be granted in respect of this application. Please refer to West Mersea Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

(c) 241900

Upgrade of existing site (replacement antennas, relocated dish), and associated ancillary development. Water Tower, Upland Road, West Mersea.

It was resolved that consent be granted in respect of this application. Please refer to West Mersea Town Council's Neighbourhood Plan.

(d) 241902

Demolish existing porch and construct new front extension, rear extensions and side extension including fenestration alterations. 66 Firs Road, West Mersea.

This Council has no comment to make.

(e) 241952

Loft conversion including from hip to gable end, 3no. velux to front and 1no. dormer to rear, single storey side/rear extension and porch to new entrance. 25 High Street North, West Mersea.

It was resolved that refusal be granted in respect of this application; contrary to Neighbourhood Plan Policy WM7 - loss of bungalows.

Planning decisions

Applications passed

(a) 241624

Retrospective application for a drop kerb and driveway. 86 Coast Road, West Mersea.

(b) 241096

Outbuilding/shed. 13 Woodstock, West Mersea.

Applications refused

(a) 241457

Application for variation of condition 2 following grant of planning permission 230876. Creek Houses, 39 The Lane, West Mersea.

(b) 241634

Variation to previously approved scheme 230920. Reconfiguration and relocation of Velux and Cadbrio windows to new first floor. Removal of existing French doors and replaced with new window. Retention of existing window at ground floor level. Relocation of entrance door to new porch to form covered entrance. 5 Fairhaven Avenue, West Mersea.

Appeal lodged

(a) 241050

Proposed extension of existing rear first floor balcony. Dunoon, 3 Cross Way, West Mersea.

22/222 General Power of Competence

To resolve to adopt the General Power of Competence until the next Annual Meeting, as defined in the Localism Act 2011 and SI 965 The Parish Councils (General Power of Competence) (Prescribed Conditions) Order 2012, having met all the conditions of eligibility, being;

- at least two thirds of the council must hold office as a result of being declared elected (i.e. not co-opted).
- the clerk must hold a recognised professional qualification (e.g. Certificate in Local Council Administration, Certificate of Higher Education in Local Policy) and have passed the 2012 CiLCA module relating to the general power of competence.

The Locum Town Clerk advised that the Essex Association of Local Councils had confirmed that if a qualified Locum Clerk was in post and there were enough elected councillors, the General Power of Competence could be adopted. Following discussion **it was resolved** by a majority vote to adopt the General Power of Competence.

Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Greenleaf. Abstained: Cllr Hinderwell and Cllr Webster.

22/223 To discuss and agree the revised quote for replacement Boardwalk at a cost of £67,115.62

The Council discussed the quotes, the tender process, planning permission and disabled regulations. Following discussion, **it was resolved** by a majority vote to ensure we can get the extra funding, review the disability regulations, check the planning permission, and confirm the final costs. Proposed: Cllr Greenleaf, Seconded: Cllr Powling. Abstained: Cllr Webster.

24/224 Dawes Lane Public Open Space: to discuss the options and agree which option to take forward

The Council discussed the options for the land and **it was resolved** unanimously that a public consultation was required, in line with the Council's Financial Regulation 14.4. It was agreed to hold a two-week consultation via the newsletter, Facebook and the website. Proposed: Cllr Greenleaf, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

At this point in the meeting it was 9.00pm with further business still to discuss. A brief conversation to extend the meeting by 30 minutes was held. Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

24/225 To agree a budget for VE Day 80 on 8th May 2025

Following discussion **it was resolved** unanimously to budget £10,000 for the VE Day 80 celebrations on 8th May 2025 and for the working group to meet as soon as possible. Proposed: Cllr Weaver, Seconded: Cllr Greenleaf. All in favour.

24/226 To consider inviting members from the Mersea Island Medical Practice, The Colte Partnership and the Patient Participation Group to a meeting with Councillors and to discuss questions for that meeting

The council discussed the invitation to a meeting for all the stakeholders, and **it was resolved** unanimously to invite members from all three groups. It was agreed to consider the questions for the meeting at a later date, in view of the time constraints of the Council meeting. Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Powling. All in favour.

24/227 To discuss the requirement and costs for chairman's training for the chairman of committees

Following discussion **it was resolved** unanimously to not pursue training for the chairman of committees and to update the training policy to specify the training permitted. Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

24/228 To receive a finance update, including VAT

Cllr Jenkins provided the report below:

<b>BANK BALANCES</b>	
NS&I	£173,411 (11 <sup>th</sup> July)
Barclays current account	£309,339
Unity current account	£59,792
Prepaid burials savings account	£50,310
VAT contingency savings account	£100,793
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£693,645</b>

## Income Projection and Shortfall

Income after 6 months is £183,655 under the annual target. Most budgeted income is likely to come in around where predicted with the exception of NEPP where the prediction of nett funds after the VAT and costs is likely to be around £52,000 - a shortfall of £39,600. Add to this the anticipated VAT bill for previous years and we have some £139,600 to fund from reserves, or savings in planned expenditure, or a combination of the two.

## Expenditure

To help alleviate the impact of the income shortfall and VAT bill we could look at the budgeted spend and agree to defer some of the projects/spend into next year.

Examples are:

Play equipment	£17,000
French drains	£6,000
Bike ramps	£3,000
Feldy View tear drop	£9,000
Sinking fund cemetery	£5,000
Cemetery entrance	£10,000
Christmas lighting	£9,000
White lining	£6,000
Footpath clearance	£4,000
Water Bailiff	£25,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£94,000</b>

This is not an exact science as there are so many variables. However, we are now beginning to see the end of most of the long running issues; this plus the Edge management system is now up to date so we can more clearly understand where we are against budget.

There is no doubt that the VAT problems have blown us of course but with careful handling we will be able to reach the year end without too many difficulties, and at the same time maintain our reserves at an acceptable level.

We need to ensure that all our debtors pay within the financial year and if we see any shortfalls in income stream we need to take further measures to control our expenditure.

24/229 To review the Tennis Club lease, discuss any amendments needed and confirm the next steps

The draft lease was presented for consideration and **it was resolved** unanimously to submit to a solicitor to review it and advise the Council.

Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Greenleaf. All in favour.

24/230 Mayor's Report

The Mayor thanked everyone for their continued efforts.

Meeting closed at 9.37pm.