

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 12 DECEMBER 2024

In attendance:

Cllr S Weaver, Mayor	Cllr D Baker	Cllr D Boylan
Cllr N Hinderwell	Cllr R Jenkins	Cllr T Webster
Petra Palfreyman, Locum Clerk	Cllr Robert Davidson (CCC)	Cllr Dr Martin Parsons (CCC)
10 members of the public		

24/268 RECORDING OF MEETING

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

Cllr Hinderwell, Cllr Webster and the Clerk confirmed they would be recording the meeting. The office recording device was also used.

24/269 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr Greenleaf, Cllr Powling and Cllr Williams. A vote of acceptance was taken with all in favour.

24/270 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Webster declared that she was a member of Mersea Speedwatch.

24/271 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

MOP 1 - Stated they could not understand why the Council wanted the Dawes Lane open space and the money should be spent on something else.

MOP 2 - Objected to actions to coppice the Coast Road trees and works to an Ash Tree in West Mersea Park. Also requested a meeting of the Waterside committee.

MOP 3 - Stated the Council is not moving forward with their actions. Also that SAR's and FOI requests are still outstanding.

MOP 4 - Reflected on Dawes Lane and the Neighbourhood Plan and stated that view coming on to the island (Northern Boundary), which should be a woodland strip to provide a natural screen and a wind break is within the settlement boundary and should not be developed beyond that, and the rural and coastal landscape should be protected.

MOP 5 - Wanted the Council to be aware of the review of the Colchester City Council (CCC) Local Plan as they are tasked with increasing the dwelling supply by over 40% and that the infrastructure must be in place first. The plan states we have a high level of opportunity for development. Access on and off the island is becoming more of an issue and 56% of the tides are predicted to cover the road.

To receive reports from County and City Councillors

Cllr Dr Martin Parsons

- The Strood is a protected landscape characteristic.
- CCC has a priority to tackle the climate/global emergency regarding biodiversity/net zero.
- Infrastructure motion – Cllr Powling spoke and raised the sewer issues. The problem is more infrastructure = more houses etc.
- Sewage works needs an upgrade and also issues with the water supply and doctors surgery.
- The Local Plan doesn't have any housing allocations put in. The next meeting will look at the evidence base document of 1300 pages.

- NPPF (National Planning Policy Framework) was published today and is 82 pages long. This is the laws that will determine the local planning. Local councils will lose their control over planning. It does say that undeveloped coastal landscapes should be protected.
- The housing allocation has increased from 940 houses to 1300 houses per year, which is a 41.13% increase.
- The White Paper on the local government reorganisation to ensure housebuilding goes ahead is being published soon. There will be devolution from Whitehall to Essex and a move to unitary councils and councils such as Colchester will merge with county level authorities and there will be a Mayor of Essex. Town and Parish councils should not be affected.
The Local Plan will continue as it is needed for the local area.

Cllr Robert Davidson

- The reorganisation of the Local Government will be a minimum of 3 unitary councils such as Tendring, Braintree and Colchester with a population of around 500 000.
- There will be an elected Mayor of Essex that will have more powers and be in charge of an Essex wide Local Plan.
- We will lose some local control and if a site is allocated a developer will be able to build without planning permission from the local authority.
- Wivenhoe, Mersea and Tiptree will almost certainly be given more housing allocations.
- Verge cutting will be stopped for May.
- The Trees for Years scheme will not go ahead this year.
- Five new diesel waste collection freighters for waste collection have been purchased.

24/272 To confirm minutes of the Council Meeting of 12 September 2024 – Matters arising

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of 12 September 2024.

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

24/273 To confirm minutes of the Council Meeting of 31 October 2024 – Matters arising

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of 31 October 2024.

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

24/274 To consider Planning Applications received and to receive notifications of Planning Decisions

Planning applications

(a) 242180

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

This Council has no comment to make.

(b) 242110

Application for variation of condition 2 (drawings) following grant of planning permission 232161. Russets, 62B Firs Chase, West Mersea

This Council has no comment to make.

(c) 242245

Extension and alterations to existing dwelling. 13 Firs Chase, West Mersea

It was resolved that refusal be granted in respect of this application, on the following grounds:

- Out of keeping with the street scene.
- Privacy issues for neighbours.

- Doesn't comply with CCC Local Plan DM15, DM13 & SP7, also West Mersea Neighbourhood Plan WM27.
- Neighbours' views should be respected.

(d) 242074

Part change of use from shop storeroom to pizza takeaway area. Additional information re wood fire oven and flue received. Island Supermarket, 46 High Street, West Mersea

This Council has no comment to make.

(e) 242391

Proposed single storey rear extension with general external façade changes and internal reconfiguration. Proposed enlarged front porch. Wendover, 8 Mersea Avenue, West Mersea

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

(f) 242322

Second storey extension to rear of existing balcony. 19 Shears Crescent, West Mersea

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

(g) 242368

Amendment/variation to S106 agreement.

Application to modify a Section 106 planning obligation to vary the Affordable Housing provisions at Schedule 1 of the agreement to provide for First Homes within the Intermediate Affordable Housing Tenure. 200351. Land at, Dawes Lane, West Mersea

This Council has no comment to make.

(h) 242440

Conversion, extension and remodel of a commercial teaching pool, ancillary to the main dwelling at 17 East Mersea Road to provide one holiday let. 17 East Mersea 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.

(i) 242447

Demolition of existing conservatory and garage with the construction of a two-storey rear/side extension and internal reconfiguration. Single storey garage and internal refurbishment of existing utility areas. 28 Rosebank 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.

Planning decisions

Applications passed

(a) 241348

Conversion of existing garage into ancillary guest room. 15 Queen Anne Road, West Mersea

- (b) 241900
Upgrade of existing site (replacement antennas, relocated dish), and associated ancillary development. Water Tower, Upland Road, West Mersea
- (c) 241819
Subdivision of the existing detached dwelling into two semi-detached houses. Kona, 9 Kingsland Close, West Mersea
- (d) 242066
Removal of existing conservatory with proposed single storey rear extension. 70 St Peters Road, West Mersea
- (e) 241902
Demolish existing porch and construct new front extension, rear extensions and side extension including fenestration alterations. 66 Firs Road, West Mersea

Appeal lodged

- (a) 241634 & APP/A1530/D/24/3355674
Variation to previously approved scheme 230920. Reconfiguration and relocation of Velux & 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 decision

- (a) 240053
The addition of a small first floor balcony to the North elevation overlooking farmland and the Strood and looking towards Peldon. This will be accessed from the first-floor bedroom via the French doors.
FYI our drawing also indicates the location of our proposed ground floor kitchen/diner extension which does not require planning approval as it is within size for a house nature.
6 Gunfleet Close, West Mersea

CERTIFICATE OF LAWFUL USE

- (a) 241973
Side extension to living room (retrospective). The Beeches, 75 Kingsland Road, West Mersea

24/275 To discuss and agree the options regarding the Dawes Lane Open Space and agree a way forward

The Council met with Mersea Homes earlier this week to run through a number of points and some of the objections raised. There are eleven acres of public open space, similar to the land already managed by WMTC. Based on the current costs of maintaining the land, it is estimated the maintenance cost would be approximately £14000, but the actual true cost is unknown.

The Council have a choice to accept the land and use and protect it or let a management company manage the land and not be connected to it. There will not be any loss to any S106 money. Having the land could mean that in the future we could expand the community land sites if needed and if the covenants allowed this. There are SUDs on the land which might inhibit any changes. Could the funds we would spend be used to better maintain what we already have. The management company would be set up for the 100 properties and paid for by them, but the land is still public open space available to all.

There was originally a \$106 sum of money if the land was offered to Colchester City Council, but they agreed a management company approach. The \$106 money available is £169K and around £59K to mitigate against the impact of the development, to the local doctor's surgery. The consultation results were 75% against and 25% in favour. In May 2024, a decision was made in a closed session without much information provided to the councillors that voted and was contrary to the Financial Regulations.

At an Extraordinary General Meeting on 9th September the Council resolved to look again at the Financial Regulations, all documents and hold an adequate consultation required to make an informed decision, which was agreed at 2 weeks.

The abbreviated version of the document from the landscapers could be used to gauge from contractors a more accurate cost for a business case. The SUDS are 1 metre deep depressions which collect water and let it out a controlled rate. The owners of the land must maintain the SUDs and keep them in good condition, but the pipe work will be adopted by Anglian Water or similar body, and there is no equipment to maintain. It was also confirmed that there is not a pump for surface water, near the Stable Close boundary.

Following discussion, **it was agreed** unanimously to defer the decision until such time we can publish a business case and cost the revised report from the landscapers.

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

24/276 To discuss the budget calculations for 2025/26 and agree the first draft

Cllr Jenkins ran through the draft budget according to cost centres and asked chairmen of committees to review their individual budgets and look to reduce the figures to keep the increase under 5%, with a view to meeting again before the next full council meeting. Some costs will be carried forward to next year where projects were not completed and are carried forward.

24/277 To discuss the continued use of the Seaview Avenue entrance to Sanderling Reach and consider any actions from West Mersea Town Council

The clerk advised she had contacted CCC planners who had advised they had spoken with the developers and thought they were likely to apply for an extension to use the Seaview Access for another calendar year. CCC have contacted ECC Highways to ascertain if this is a highway safety matter - i.e. is the temporary access now at the point that it is unsafe from a technical point of view. Later this week the clerk received another communication to confirm they have received a formal letter requesting an extension to end of December 2025 from City & Country, so should be reconsulting WMTC shortly.

It was agreed unanimously to ask Cllr Robert Davidson to call in this application or meet the planning officer to support our residents and ensure the health and safety of all is considered.

Proposed: Cllr Weaver, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. All in favour.

22/278 To set up working groups or whole council meetings

Council meeting dates for the coming year were discussed and it was agreed unanimously to change the May date to accommodate the VE Day 80 celebrations on 8 May 2025.

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

22/279 To discuss setting up a working group to review the Neighbourhood Plan and to discuss the impact of the emerging Local Plan and provide input to the consultation

It was agreed unanimously to set up a working group to provide input into the emerging Local Plan, review the Neighbourhood Plan, and invite members of the public to join the group. The CCC deadline is Spring 2026. Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

The group was agreed as Cllr Baker, Cllr Hinderwell and Cllr Jenkins and the following members of the public: John Akker, David Cooper, Ian Draper, Graham Farley and Chris Wood.

24/280 To agree the quote to coppice all trees from Coastguard's Compound to Trevor's Steps on SSSI in Coast Road at a cost of £3,456

Following discussion **it was agreed** by a majority to go ahead with the quote.
Proposed: Cllr Jenkins, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. Abstain: Cllr Webster.

24/281 To agree the quote for renewal of First Aid training for the Groundsmen at a cost of £405

Following discussion **it was agreed** by a majority to go ahead with the quote.
Proposed: Cllr Jenkins, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. All in favour.

24/282 To agree the quote for remedial works or complete removal of an Ash tree in West Mersea Park at a maximum cost of £900

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to go ahead with the quote most suitable for the tree. Proposed: Cllr Weaver, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

24/283 To consider the quotes for adding Council meeting recordings to the website

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to go ahead with the quote.
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

24/284 To consider increasing fees for the following:

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to increase the rates as follows:

- (a) Allotments - increase by 2.5% to the nearest 50p. Full plot £131.50, non-resident £151.00. Half plot £73.50, non-resident £84.00. Review again in January 2026. All subject to review with the freeholder and new lease
- (b) Gate licences - £34 single gate, £64 double gate.
- (c) Cemetery - 2.5% increase and the following prices held.
Table below.

PROPOSED CEMETERY CHARGES FROM 1 APRIL 2025

FIRS ROAD CEMETERY (BURIALS)	Current £	Proposed 2.5% £
Burial with 50 year exclusive right (resident)	821.00	842.00
Reopen (resident)	506.00	518.00
Burial with 50 year exclusive right (resident child)	1.00	1.00
Burial with 50 year exclusive right (non resident)	1287.50	1320.00
Reopen (non resident)	855.00	876.00
GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE (ASHES)		
Interment with 50 year exclusive right (resident)	241.50	248.00
Reopen (resident)	121.50	125.00
Interment with 50 year exclusive right (resident child)	1.00	1.00
Interment with 50 year exclusive right (non resident)	355.00	364.00
Reopen (non resident)	178.50	183.00
MONUMENTS		
Headstone (burial)	97.00	99.00
Full kerb set (burial)	246.00	252.00
Monument or tablet (ashes)	48.00	49.00
Additional inscription	38.00	39.00
FELDY VIEW WOODLAND CEMETERY		
Burial with 99 year exclusive right (resident)	821.00	842.00
Burial with 99 year exclusive right (non resident)	1287.50	1320.00
Burial with 99 year exclusive right (resident child)	1.00	1.00
Ashes interment with 99 year exclusive right (resident)	715.00	715.00
Ashes reopen (resident)	121.50	125.00
Ashes interment with 99 year exclusive right (resident child)	1.00	1.00
Ashes interment with 99 year exclusive right (non-resident)	995.00	995.00
Ashes reopen (non resident)	178.50	183.00
OTHER FEES		
Preparation/completion of ashes plot for interment	75.00	75.00
Disinterment fee (all cemeteries)	255.00	255.00

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

24/285 To provide an update about the Town Clerk and Responsible Financial Officer vacancies

Cllr Weaver advised that an RFO has been appointed to start on 6th January 2025, working 12 hours per week and a full time Town Clerk has been appointed, starting on 20th January 2025.

24/286 To agree the quote for a new computer set up and installation for the Responsible Finance Officer at a cost of £1,482

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to go ahead with the quote.
Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Weaver. All in favour.

24/287 To approve the quotes for a new desk and drawer set for the new Responsible Financial Officer

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to set a £400 budget to purchase the desk and drawers. Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

24/288 To agree to request Cllr Martin Parsons offer of £1000 towards speed reduction equipment and if awarded, to grant the sum to Mersea Speedwatch

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to request the £1000 from Cllr Parsons and to work with Speedwatch to install speed reducing equipment.
Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. All in favour.

24/289 To agree to reopen the office on a Tuesday morning between 9am and 12pm, with immediate effect

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to reopen the office on a Tuesday with immediate effect. Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

24/290 To consider selling dog and food waste bags at councillor surgeries to improve access for residents that cannot get to the office during current opening hours

Following discussion **it was agreed** unanimously to sell dog and food waste bags at councillor surgeries. Proposed: Cllr Weaver, Seconded: Cllr Baker. All in favour.

24/291 To provide an update about the replacement to the Boardwalk, Coast Road

The clerk confirmed that permissions were in place from the MMO, Natural England and CCC planners. Production and fitting is planned for January.

24/292 To note the car parking increase proposals for 2025/26 have been approved by Colchester City Council

The clerk confirmed the car parking increases were approved by the North Essex Parking Partnership and will now be heard at the CCC budget meeting.

24/293 To receive an update from the VE Day 80 working group

Cllr Weaver confirmed the working group have met and agreed a schedule for the day starting at 4pm on Victoria Esplanade, to include food and drink stalls and entertainment, church bells at 6.30pm, Beacon lighting at 9.30pm. Their next meeting is in January 2025.

EXCLUSION OF PRESS AND PUBLIC To resolve 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

Press and public excluded: Proposed: Cllr Weaver, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

24/294 To discuss the costs relating to a Subject Access Request

The Clerk advised that to search the emails for the Subject Access request would cost £80 per hour. ***It was agreed*** unanimously to instruct the IT provider to go ahead with the searches of all council owned email addresses. Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Baker. All in favour.

Meeting closed at 9.35pm.