

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 10 APRIL 2025

In attendance:

Cllr S Weaver, Mayor	Cllr J Akker	Cllr D Baker
Cllr D Boylan	Cllr N Hinderwell	Cllr R Jenkins
Cllr Powling	Cllr T Webster	Cllr M Williams
Kirsty Wadsworth (Town Clerk)	Cllr M Parsons (CCC)	Cllr R Davidson (CCC)
18 members of the public		

25/118 Recording of Meeting

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

It was noted after taking advice from the Essex Association of Local Councils that in future the Chairman would verbally remind the meeting, and others present that the council would be recording the meeting and anyone else present may also record the meeting. We are not required to ask who is recording.

25/119 Apologies for absence

No absences given.

25/120 Declarations of interest

Cllr Powling declared he is a Colchester City Councillor.

25/121 Public participation

MOP1- Mentioned that the Courier carried an item about sewage discharge which was published 12 months in arrears. The local resident would like to know if sewage is being discharged into the sea before going for a swim and not 12 months later. Stated that it is the position of the Open Spaces Society that local planning authorities should require land/open space to be designated as a Village Green in terms of any development.

MOP2- Mentioned fixings on the path across the marsh by Coast Road and that these fixings appear to be stainless, so they should last.

MOP3- Reiterated that the land at Dawes Lane is significant in terms of a view from the Strood. Asked that the Councillors when making their decision be absolutely certain that it can never be built on before they decide not to buy it.

MOP4- Stated that WMTC are taking credit for the work which has been completed by the City Council with regards to landscaping the beds in the former Putting Green. Fears WMTC won't maintain the beds in the former Putting Green. The land between Fairhaven Avenue and the Esplanade is a disgrace and the hedging is now a hazard with regards to traffic accidents. Stated that during the last consultation an overwhelming majority of people were against the purchase of the land at Dawes Lane.

MOP5- Mentioned it is not clear what the legal status of the land at Dawes Lane will be if the Council does not purchase it. Would like a clear explanation of the different options between buying the land and not buying the land.

MOP6- Supports the 20's Plenty scheme. Does not want to see anything built on the land. It has a covenant which has been signed and agreed and is a legally binding document.

Also planning consent says it has to be open space. As with most developments in Colchester the land is now maintained by the developer or the developer's management committee. Questioned whether the residents should have to maintain all the open spaces if new houses are built.

MOP7- Has lived on the island for 25 years and in the process of purchasing a property which overlooks the open space. Concerned about the future. Stated that advice from the solicitor was that there will be more protection if the council owns the land rather than the developers.

MOP8- A local resident stated that in the consultation 81 people responded- 75 were against and 25 were in favour. In a population of approximately 7,000 people living in Mersea 61 people were against the council buying the land which is less than 1%. Stated that City Councillors have mentioned that the island will have future development, and that people should not be transfixed about maintaining costs and public access but about protecting future development. Contested that Cllr Hinderwell has a clear conflict of interest as he lives near the development and that he should declare his conflict of interest and withdraw from the vote on the purchased land.

25/122 To receive County and City Councillors reports

Cllr Davidson gave an update on the following:

- Apologies given for not attending due to a hip operation
- Questioned who will be responsible for what landscaping is completed and planted
- Local Government Reform - Hoping that Braintree, Colchester and Tendring will be the chosen area, but they may have to take on another district. May be 3 authorities in Essex, but nothing has been decided. Concern with Thurrock as it has massive debts. We need a council to evolve that will be sustainable and not have to tax more people.

Cllr Parsons gave an update on the following:

- The Government are pushing through to take power away from local councils on planning
- Compulsory purchase powers on farmland at farmland cost
- Government determined to meet manifesto schedule of 1.5 million houses in the next 4 years
- Governments Planning Advisor was sacked today
- Covenants are only enforceable on land as long as the original covenant holder lives
- Issues with sewage will continue to be raised
- Local plan should have gone on a process of an evidence bundle including the water cycle study, which is water supply and sewage. This was not done before site allocations were completed. The evidence bundle that was produced on sewage by external consultants claimed that West Mersea water recycling centre had got about 30 % spare capacity. Two possible explanations are that the upgrade still has not been done and secondly that they are using 115 litres of water consumption per day instead of 155-160 litres per day that ECC say is being used, a difference of 25-30%

Cllr Powling gave an update on the following:

- Cllr Powling has spoken with the local MP to arrange a meeting at Mersea with Anglian Water regarding the current state of sewage and the future of it. When the date is arranged the venue will be sorted.

25/123 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 13th March 2025 – Matters arising

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the 13th March 2025.

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

25/124 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 3rd April 2025 – Matters arising

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the 3rd April 2025.

Matters arising:

25/102: One of the toilet block payments at Fairhaven was agreed retrospectively

25/090: Financial regulations were deferred, as they are to be reviewed in the Annual Council Meeting as per our Standing Orders.

25/093: Request was made for a Finance Committee meeting to discuss the Auditor's report.

Proposed: Cllr Weaver Seconded: Cllr Williams. All in favour.

25/125 To receive a Finance update

RFO worked with the accountant on end of year VAT returns.

25/126 To approve and agree a list of payments

There were no payments to approve.

25/127 To receive the Town Clerk's report

- Park Inspection – Specialist contractor to assess and provide a quote for repairing high priority items listed on the park inspection report
- Asset Register is being reviewed and updated ready for the AGAR
- Bus shelter refresh has been completed
- Town Clerk has continued her EALC training
- Allotment lease waiting to be signed
- Insurance verified and checked with our provider to ensure we have the correct cover for the VE event

25/128 To review and agree the WMTC CCTV policy

It was resolved unanimously to defer agreeing the WMTC CCTV policy so that more clarity could be sought regarding the wording of the policy.

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

25/129 To review and agree the Internal Controls Policy

Following discussion, ***it was resolved*** unanimously to agree the Internal Controls Policy.

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

25/130 To vote on the proposed options with respect to Section 106

Option 1: Acquire CL1 and CL2 but not the public open space

Option 2: Acquire CL1 and CL2 and the public open space

Option 3: To acquire only the public space

Option 4: Decline it all

It was resolved unanimously to amend the proposal and vote on two options with respect to Section 106 agreement relating to land at the west of Dawes Lane

Option 1: Acquire CL1 and CL2.

Option 2: Acquire the public open space.

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

After discussion ***it was resolved*** unanimously to acquire CL1 and CL2.

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

Following a robust discussion, ***it was resolved by majority*** not to acquire the public open space.

Councillors voting to acquire the public open space: Cllr Boylan, Cllr Powling, Cllr Jenkins and Cllr Weaver.

Councillors voting not to acquire the public open space: Cllr Baker, Cllr Webster, Cllr Akker, Cllr Hinderwell and Cllr Williams.

- 25/131 To recommend to full council for West Mersea Town Council to explore the possibility of applying the 20's Plenty's scheme to applicable roads

After discussion **it was resolved** unanimously for West Mersea Town Council to explore the possibility of applying the 20's Plenty's scheme to applicable roads, where it is appropriate.

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

- 25/132 To discuss and agree the committee members for each committee and working groups

It was resolved unanimously to defer agreeing the committee members for each committee and working group until the May Annual Council Meeting, with the proviso that Cllr Akker would be added to the Community and Assets Committee until the new members are decided at the May Council meeting.

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

- 25/133 To agree the representatives for Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) and play parks

It was resolved unanimously to defer agreeing the representatives for Essex Native Oyster Restoration Initiative (ENORI) and play parks until the Annual Town Meeting in May.

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

- 25/134 Bradwell Monitoring Group

- (a) To re-establish a Monitoring Group for Bradwell
- (b) To agree Terms of Reference
- (c) To consider membership and appoint three Councillors

It was resolved unanimously to defer this agenda item 25/134 until the Annual Council Meeting in May.

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

- 25/135 To agree to renew and pay the RCCE membership at a cost of £133.50 + VAT

It was resolved unanimously to agree to pay the RCCE membership at a cost of £133.50 + VAT

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

- 25/136 To review the bathing rafts proposal and consider the next steps

The following items were discussed:

- The Glebe was visited to view the rafts – in fair condition.
- Need to liaise with the yard in Maldon to discuss fixings and costing.
- Need to investigate the costing of MMO licences.
- Costings will be sought to see if the project is viable and then this agenda item will be brought back to full council.

- 25/137 To consider installing a 'Welcome to Mersea Island' road sign which would be funded by Mersea Community Support 10 years of becoming a registered charity in September 2025

Installing the Welcome to Mersea Island sign was discussed and the difficulties associated with getting permission for Highways was noted. The idea is supported from the Council.

A letter is to be written to Essex County Council to say that West Mersea Town Council would like to support this sign and to ask them what the process entails.

25/138 VE Day 80 – to receive an update and agree the costings as detailed in the already agreed budget total

The following update was received:

- Insurance cover with our provider is all in place and has been verified by the Town Clerk.
- Health and Safety advisor to be contacted.
- Councillors agreed with the extra £1000 left in the budget being used to fund a superior firework display.
- The programme of events was discussed.
- Thanks were given to the organisers of the event.

Agenda item 25/140 was moved to give clarity to Agenda item 25/139

25/140 To receive an update on the CALC meeting (Colchester Association of Local Councils)

An update was received:

- Cllr Weaver as a representative of CALC attended a Zoom meeting.
- The next meeting with MP's was due to take place at the same time as the Annual Council Meeting in May.
- CALC are now looking to change the date of the meeting on the 15th May as some MP's may not be able to attend.
- Recommendation made by Cllr Weaver to leave the 15th May meeting in place.
- No date has been given as to when the consultation will start on the Local Plan.

25/139 To agree an alternative date for the Annual Council Meeting on the 15th May in line of an in-person Question Time at Langham in relation to the Local Plan and proposed development being held on the same date

No vote was required as the date of the Annual Council meeting does not need to be changed.

25/141 To receive an update from the Community Asset/Facilities Committee Chair

The following update was received:

- Allotment lease close to being signed.
- Tennis lease has had some minor alterations made by Councillors which now needs to be put forward to the tennis club for their agreement.
- Boardwalk is completed.
- Discussed getting an audit of our play equipment.

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

It was resolved unanimously to exclude the press.

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

25/143 To receive an update from the Personnel Committee

- RFO has been emailed in accordance with the Standing Orders asking for a meeting where a copy of her probation letter will be provided.
- A Personnel Committee meeting will be called - date to be confirmed, when availability of all the councillors has been verified.

- Emailed WorkNest with Paula Whitting's different contracts.
- There is an outstanding issue which will go on the Personnel Agenda for a recommendation, which will then go to full council to seek an agreement.
- Staffing for the Groundsman to go on next Agenda.
- Agreed at the last personnel meeting to advertise up to 5.5 hours for Paula's role.
- Question about the internal Audit- there is a need to get the burial register up to date for the end of year audit. Arrangements are being made to facilitate this being completed.
- Staff handbook to be reviewed and emailed to the personnel committee for comments and then agreed and sent out to all staff members.
- Quote obtained from Cllr Powling for the heater at Rushmere.
- Calls to be made seeking clarity on the wording on the CCTV Policy.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.