

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5 JUNE 2025

In attendance:

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| Cllr T Webster (Mayor) | Cllr J Akker | Cllr D Baker |
| Cllr D Boylan | Cllr N Hinderwell | Cllr R Jenkins |
| Cllr C Powling | Cllr S Weaver | Cllr M Williams |
| Cllr R Davidson (CCC) | Cllr M Parsons (CCC) | Kirsty Wadsworth (Town Clerk) |
| 11 members of the public | | |

25/173 Apologies for absence:

Apologies received from Cllr Powling and Cllr Williams.

25/174 Declarations of interest

None received.

25/175 Public participation

MOP-1 Welcomed Cllr Webster as the new Mayor and Cllr Jenkins as the Deputy Mayor. Reiterated the importance of the AGAR in terms of ensuring the Council's accountability. Noted the shortcomings relating to the completion of the 2023/24 AGAR and why some councillors are not serving on committees.

MOP-2 Stated that the reserve in the prepaid burial scheme was £50,000 and not £65,000 as printed on the agenda. The external auditor has been advised of this issue and made the necessary amendments. Other issues raised have not been acknowledged by the external auditor. Noted concerns over Village Green 241 S signage that wrongly infers rights of access and use where none do or should exist, which could have been avoided if previous work undertaken had been used.

MOP-3 Speaking on behalf of MISA concerns were noted. Press coverage suggested the Glebe project abandonment and that the working party may be dissolved. Questioned why this was not communicated to MISA before the statement was made. With regards to the Glebe benefiting the wider community it was noted that the Glebe is part of that community. Section 106 money states that the community contribution is to support Project A – a new multi use facility at the Glebe or project B- upgrades to the MICA. Aka what is WMTC formal stance on the refurbishment to the Glebe and the legal obligations of the landlord in relation to the condition of the building. Stated that after completion of 2023 survey issues have still not been addressed. Questioned issues around the lease negotiations and delays blocking fund opportunities enabling refurbishment. Asked when WMTC will reengage in discussions. Requests an urgent meeting.

MOP-4 Noted the state of the flower bed in the middle of the green, which has been neglected and continues to be neglected by ECC. Stated that the weeds in front and to the side of the library need to be sprayed. ECC owns this land.

25/176 To receive County and City Councillors reports.

Cllr Parsons gave an update on the following:

Cllr Davidson gave an update on the following:

- New mayor has been elected in Colchester.

- Planning documents are to be agreed for Tendring Community.
- Unlikely to get the A12 and A120 improvements if the money is allocated to the North of England.

25/177 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 15th May 2025

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the 15th May 2025.

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

25/178 To confirm minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting of 27th May 2025

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the 27th May 2025.

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

It was resolved to move agenda item 25/180- All in favour.

25/180 To note the Final Internal Audit Report 2024/25 and to consider recommendations

The Final Audit Report 2024/25 was noted, and the following recommendations were considered:

- For all councillors to initial invoices when approving payments.
- To provide a detailed photographic record of all assets.
- For the Council to take note of the government's Financial Services Compensation Scheme which gives a maximum level of protection of £85,000 invested in one institution.

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

Cllr Powling joined the meeting at 7.20pm

25/179 Financial year 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025

- To consider and approve Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- To consider and approve Section 2 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25
- To ensure that the Accounting Statements are signed by the Chairman

It was resolved unanimously to accept Section 1 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25.

It was resolved unanimously to accept Section 2 of the Annual Governance Statement 2024/25.

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

Thanks were given to the RFO for all her hard work.

25/181 To provide a formal response to the accepted objections requested in the Freedom of Information – Objections to 2023/24 AGAR:

- Objection 2: You object to the failure to follow financial regulations in respect of the review of bank statements in support of bank the reconciliation.
- Objection 3 and 9: You object to the approval process for the AGAR and the completion and the amendment of Section 2 of the AGAR.
- Objection 6h,7 and 8: You object to the response given in Assertion 8 (the failure of the council to consider the lack of earmarked reserves for potential liabilities when approving the AGAR), the earmarked reserves in relation to pre-paid burial scheme, of £65K which you assert is too low and the Council's failure to comply with VAT legislation in 2023/24 and prior years.

Objection 2: You object to the failure to follow financial regulations in respect of the review of bank statements in support of bank the reconciliation:

Following discussion, ***it was resolved*** unanimously to accept that the comments raised were correct and the AGAR was not completed accurately.

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

Objection 3 and 9: You object to the approval process for the AGAR and the completion and the amendment of Section 2 of the AGAR:

Following discussion, **it was agreed** unanimously that the Council upholds the comments as accurate.

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

Objection 6h,7 and 8: You object to the response given in Assertion 8 (the failure of the council to consider the lack of earmarked reserves for potential liabilities when approving the AGAR), the earmarked reserves in relation to pre-paid burial scheme, of £65K which you assert is too low and the Council's failure to comply with VAT legislation in 2023/24 and prior years:

After discussion **it was resolved** unanimously that the Council would challenge the earmarked reserves in relation to pre-paid burial scheme and accept assertion 8 - Section 1 should have been ticked in the second column.

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

25/182 To receive a Finance update

The RFO has been working to complete all the documentation for the AGAR.

A recommendation was put forward for the Finance Committee to consider steps to mitigate any future financial irregularities.

25/183 To approve and agree a list of payments

No payments to be approved.

25/184 To receive the Town Clerk's report:

- Library toilets – Gents toilet door and taps have been replaced. The toilet repairs for the ladies- the contractor is waiting for a quieter time to repair.
- Glebe shutters – the quote has been approved, and we are just waiting for a date for the work to begin.
- Tennis fencing repairs – The quote has been approved, and the materials have been ordered. We are now waiting for a date for the work to start.
- Willoughby toilets – painting the window bars and the external walls – waiting for a date for the work to start.
- Gate post by School Gardens is to be fitted with a new metal post – as a Health and Safety matter.

25/185 To confirm Committee Terms of Reference

- i. Community Assets/Facilities Committee
- ii. Environment & Community Services Committee
- iii. Personnel Committee
- iv. Planning & Highways Committee

It was resolved unanimously to approve the Terms of Reference (i-iv) for all Committees.

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

25/186 To agree to pay Councillor training:

- i. Cllr Webster - Chair Training at a cost of £409.50 (3x days at £136.50 per session)
- ii. Cllr Williams - Councillor training at a cost of £250 (2x days at £125 per session)
- iii. Cllr Akker – Committees and Delegated Powers Course at a cost of £84

It was resolved unanimously to pay Councillor Training for Cllr Webster, Cllr Williams and Cllr Akker.

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

25/187 To agree a quote for works to the isolation switches on the 11 Wallgate systems at a cost of £390+VAT

It was resolved unanimously to defer agreeing a quote for works to the isolation switches on the 11 Wallgate systems at a cost of £390+VAT until further clarity is sought concerning the isolators and their regulations systems.

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

25/188 To agree to pay by direct debit HMRC PAYE and VAT bills

It was resolved unanimously to agree to agree to pay by direct debit HMRC PAYE and VAT bills.

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

25/189 To review and approve the insurance premium renewal at a cost of £8,973.65 for 1 year or £8,258.99 for 3 years (including VAT)

It was resolved unanimously approve the insurance premium renewal at a cost of £8,258.99 for 3 years (including VAT)

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

25/190 Policy/Document Reviews

To review and agree the following policies and documents

- (a) Co-option Procedure and Co-option application form
- (b) Complaints Procedure
- (c) Customer Service Standard
- (d) Dignity at Work/Bullying and Harassment Policy
- (e) Training and Development Policy
- (f) Delegated Powers Policy
- (g) Lone Working Policy
- (h) Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy

It was resolved unanimously to agree the policies and documents (a-h) with the minor amendments.

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

25/191 To agree to change the date of the Council meeting from the 3rd July 2025 to the 10th July 2025

It was resolved by majority to change the date of the Council meeting from the 3rd July 2025 to the 10th July 2025

Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Akker. All in favour. Objected: Cllr Boylan and Cllr Powling. Abstained: Cllr Weaver.

25/192 Village Green 241 South sign:

- (a) To agree to amend the positioning of the sign from the post on the hard to the external wall of Coast Road toilets
- (b) To agree the disclaimer wording

It was resolved by majority to agree to amend the positioning of the sign from the post on the hard shoulder to the external wall of Coast Road toilets.

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

It was resolved by majority to agree the disclaimer wording – This is the indicative area of Village Green 241 South.

Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. All in favour. Abstained: Cllr Jenkins and Cllr Powling.

25/193 To receive an update from the Local Plan Working Group meeting held on 2nd June, including any recommendations made.

Following discussion, **it was resolved** by majority to send a letter to CCC regarding the environmental impact of new housing.

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

The following update was received.

- WMTC considers recent changes to planning law being proposed by the Government about adopting different environmental standards for housing developments below 50 houses and composition of planning committees. It is recommended that this be considered by the Environment and Community Services Committee following advice from the Working Group.
- WMTC is to write again to CCC about the earlier consultation on the Local Plan that took place last Summer with local Councils noting that a reply has not been received.
- WMTC to do what it can to prepare in advance for an update of the Neighbourhood Plan as the Local Plan work is advanced.
- Concerning recent proposals to planning guidance issues by the Govt, the Council is to consider these affecting smaller developments.

Meeting closed at 8.30pm.