

WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 23 JULY 2026

In attendance:

Cllr R Jenkins (Mayor)	Cllr J Akker	Cllr D Baker
Cllr D Boylan	Cllr N Hinderwell	Cllr C Powling
Cllr S Weaver	Cllr M Williams	
Kirsty Wadsworth (Town Clerk)		

The Mayor asked out of respect for the 41-year-old mother who tragically lost her life yesterday, her 15-year-old daughter who also passed away, and their family member (7-year-old) who remains in a critical condition, that those who are able please stand for one minute's silence. This is to honour their memory and reflect on the impact of this devastating incident. Thank you.

26/180 To receive apologies for absence and a vote of acceptance to be taken

Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Webster and City Cllr Davidson.

26/181 To record declarations of interests

Members are invited to declare any relevant interests. Notwithstanding this item, Members may subsequently declare an interest at any point during the meeting

Cllr Powling declared he was a Colchester City Councillor and on duty, requiring his phone to stay turned on.

26/182 Public session (15 minutes, 3 minutes per speaker)

Priority will be given to those members of the public wishing to share information relating to items on the agenda. Once the public session is closed, members of the public are not permitted to speak

MOP1- Raised concerns following the tragic incident on the beach, asking that the Council discuss installing clearer beach safety signage at their next internal meeting. Highlighted past fatalities, the general lack of public understanding about tides and rip currents, and the need for visual, child-friendly warnings placed at an accessible height.

MOP2- Thanked the Mayor for his thoughtful remarks and reflected that the past 24 hours had shown both the best and worst of society, including instances of disgraceful online hate. He asked councillors to consider creating a book of condolences to reflect the community's shock, sorrow, and its wish to show support to the bereaved family.

MOP3- Noted that the coroner is expected to issue firm beach-safety recommendations and that standard Coastguard and RNLI signage is already available. Outlined longstanding concerns about parking pressures, emphasising historic access rights for local medical practice and the impact of recent changes and rising demand on the Co-op car park. He proposed that the Town Council explore creating a new community car park—potentially via village green deregistration and Section 106 funding—to support key local services. He added that the British Legion's offer of one hour's free parking is only a temporary measure, as the Council has no control over the land.

MOP4- Raised 3 matters: proposing a trial one-way system around the town centre following the bus route to create additional short-stay free parking for residents, visitors and traders; recommending that the Council's Policy on Complainants be amended to ensure it does not restrict individuals raising legitimate concerns about breaches of legislation, statutory duties or public safety; and providing detailed advice regarding signage and safety on the foreshore, including the removal of WW2 defence blocks via a marine contractor with support from relevant public bodies, highlighting current safety risks to beach users and watercraft, referencing past incidents and prosecutions, and emphasising the Council's responsibility to ensure adequate warnings and mitigate hazards.

26/183 To receive County and City Councillors report

Report received from County Cllr Chris Perera: -

- Judicial review on local government reorganisation ongoing; major cost concerns.
- Mixed views on the 100-day plan; GP provision for Mersea highlighted as critical.
- Essex Housing Committee proposed; net-zero commitments potentially dropped for savings.
- Opposition to Wethersfield Asylum Centre expansion; support for veterans' village.
- Increased pothole repairs and highways investment; contractor performance questioned.
- A1331 link road enabling large housing growth; infrastructure concerns for Mersea.
- Motions on oak tree protection, housing targets withdrawal, and safeguarding Green Belt supported.
- Significant issues with school placements; exploring expanded bus provision off-island.

Report received from City Cllr Martin Parsons: -

- Council has requested an urgent review of signage.
- Government housing targets cannot be ignored; rules keep shifting toward developers.
- Councils risk losing planning powers if they lack a local plan or refuse too many applications. Basildon, Uttlesford and Epping Forest have already had powers removed.
- Developments over 150 homes must now be referred to the Secretary of State.
- Without a local plan, large schemes (400–500 homes) could be approved by default.
- Island policy was approved in June.
- Regulation 19 consultation likely to be considered at the August meeting.

Report received from City Cllr Carl Powling: -

- Councillors support issuing a formal thank-you statement.
- Government warns housing cannot proceed without secure water supply.
- Meeting being arranged with Anglian Water on supply and infrastructure. Anglian Water exploring desalination and upgrades at Ardleigh/Colchester.
- Ongoing issues with Anglian Water roadworks causing major disruption.
- Co-op parking stay increased to 60 minutes; aim is 90.
- Measures introduced to stop all-day beach parking in Co-op car park.
- Tablet to be installed at doctors/dentists for easier parking registration; review in September.

26/184 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 11th May 2026

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the Council meeting of 11th May 2026.
Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/185 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 2nd July 2026

It was resolved unanimously to accept the minutes of the Council meeting of 2nd July 2026.
Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Boylan. All in favour.

26/186 To agree and approve a list of payments

There were no payments to approve.

26/187 To provide an update from: -

- (a) Committees
- (b) Working Groups
- (c) Representatives

An update was received.

26/188 To receive the Town Clerk's report

An update was provided.

- Tree work in West Mersea Park completed on 17th July except for the Holm Oak crown reduction, this is due to nesting birds.
- Wellhouse Park, emergency repairs carried out to the surface.
- Bridge between Glebe 2 and the farmer field, repairs done but it will require further work at a later date.
- Reymead Wood Oak tree, limbs to be removed on 24th July.
- Willoughby toilets, red cord emergency alarms and hand dryers to be installed (hopefully by 24th July).
- West Mersea Park, play equipment due to be installed w/c 27th July.
- Skatepark - grind rail pending.
- 30th July presentation evening for the Glebe 7pm plans can be reviewed, possible costings and answers.

26/189 To review and agree the following documents and policies: -

- (a) Biodiversity Policy
- (b) Closed Circuit Privacy Impact Assessment
- (c) Closed Circuit TV (CCTV) Policy
- (d) Community Engagement
- (e) Complaints Procedure
- (f) Co-option Policy
- (g) Customer Service Standard
- (h) Data Breach policy
- (i) Dignity at Work/Bullying and Harassment Policy
- (j) Habitual or Vexatious Complainants Policy

It was resolved unanimously to agree the above policies with the minor amendments to the Biodiversity Policy, Close Circuiut TV(CCTV) Policy and Co-option Policy.

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

26/190 To review and agree the following Terms of Reference with any amendments shown in red: -

- (a) Finance and Strategy Committee
- (b) Youth Activities / Events Working Group

It was resolved unanimously to agree the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Strategy Committee and the Youth Activities / Events Working Group.

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

26/191 To receive an update and agree the revised quotation to install a new footpath using a compacted gravel finish at Coast Road at a cost of £10,230.31 + VAT

It was resolved unanimously to agree the updated revised quotation to install a new footpath using a compacted gravel finish at Coast Road at a cost of £10,230.31 + VAT

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

26/192 To consider and agree adopting the Finance & Strategy Committee's recommendation to increase the staff mileage allowance from 45p to 55p per mile, effective from 1 April 2026, in line with HMRC guidance

It was resolved unanimously to adopt the Finance & Strategy Committee's recommendation to increase the staff mileage allowance from 45p to 55p per mile, effective from 1 April 2026, in line with HMRC guidance

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

26/193 To discuss Foreshore West Mersea signage and agree any necessary actions

The Council has issued a statement confirming that it will work collaboratively with all relevant stakeholders to identify the necessary actions relating to signage and public education. All in favour.

26/194 To consider and agree the Finance & Strategy Committee's recommendation regarding the IT support agreement:

Option A: 12-month agreement at £280.80 per month

Option B: 36-month agreement at £314.40 per month

It was resolved unanimously to agree the Finance & Strategy Committee's recommendation regarding the IT support agreement Option A at a cost of £280.80 per month.

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

26/195 To discuss West Mersea Town Council's potential contribution towards the cost of providing one hour of free parking at the British Royal Legion and agree any necessary actions

It was resolved unanimously that the Town Clerk should make an initial approach to the British Royal Legion (RBL) to explore a simple short-stay parking arrangement for residents and visitors needing access to local essential services.

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

26/196 To agree the quotation for new placemats for the Council Chambers: -

- Option A - £511.10
- Option B - £32.26
- Option C - £39.98
- Option D - £92.76
- Option E - £37.98
- Option F - £122.52

It was unanimously resolved to authorise the Town Clerk, under her delegated powers, to purchase suitable placemats at a cost not exceeding £400.

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

26/197 To approve a report from West Mersea Town Council's working party concerning discussion with Colchester City Council on Place Policies in the Local Plan and approve a further letter to Colchester City Council on the environment and preliminary discussions on Section 106 money

It was resolved unanimously to approve a report from West Mersea Town Council's working party concerning discussion with Colchester City Council on Place Policies in the Local Plan and approve a further letter to Colchester City Council on the environment and preliminary discussions on Section 106 money.

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

Meeting ended at 8.50 pm.

DRAFT