WEST MERSEA TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE COUNCIL MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 5TH NOVEMBER 2026

In attendance:

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

Members were informed of the recent death of Ralph Barton, former editor of Mersea Life, and recognised his significant contribution to the West Mersea community and local publications over many years.

26/261 To receive apologies for absence and a vote of acceptance to be taken

Apologies received and accepted from Cllr Williams, Cllr Davidson and Cllr Perera.

26/262 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.
Cllr Webster declared a non-disclosable interest as a member of Community Speed Watch and noted in relation to item 26/274 that one of the contractors providing a quotation had previously replaced her windows.
Cllr Baker declared an interest as a member of Community Speed Watch.
Cllr Hinderwell declared as interest as a member of the Tennis club.
Cllr Akker declared an interest in item 26/268 -to receive an update from the working group.

26/263 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- Questioned the value of the Council adopting the Civility and Respect Protocol, arguing that it would have little meaning unless councillors consistently adhered to its principles in practice. Raised concerns regarding councillor conduct, accountability, and leadership, with a call for higher standards of behaviour.

MOP2- Mersea Island Community Speed Watch Group applied for funding for high-visibility jackets and a second body-worn camera to improve volunteer safety and support expanded operations.

MOP3- Expressed concerns about the potential use of ChatGPT, noting that important details could be omitted when information is summarised. They advised caution when using AI for official records and documents to ensure all relevant information is retained.

MOP4- Raised concerns that election notices allow insufficient time for local media to publicise councillor vacancies and suggested extending the nomination period. The Elections Officer confirmed requests for longer timescales will be considered.

26/264 To receive County and City Councillors report

Report received from Cllr Martin Parsons: -

- The Government is reconsidering proposals for local government reorganisation in Essex, with a decision on the future structure expected in early 2027, while Colchester City Council elections will still take place in May 2027.

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- Colchester City Council is expected to submit its Local Plan by the end of the year, as delaying submission could leave the authority vulnerable to speculative development and higher housing targets.
- Recent changes to planning legislation have significantly reduced councillors' ability to call planning applications before committee, with more decisions now being made by planning officers rather than elected members.

Report received from Cllr Carl Powling: -

- Noted that all items had been covered by Cllr Parsons.

26/265 To confirm minutes of the Council meeting of 1st October 2026

It was resolved unanimously to approve the minutes of the Council meeting of 1st October 2026.
Proposed: Cllr Akker, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/266 To confirm minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting of 6th October 2026

It was resolved unanimously to approve the minutes of the Extraordinary Council meeting of 6th October 2026.
Proposed: Cllr Baker, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/267 To agree and approve a list of payments

A list of payments was approved.

26/268 To provide an update from: -

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

An update was received.

26/269 To receive the Town Clerk's report

- Feldy View Woodland Cemetery annual cut completed
- Willoughby ladies broken toilet main door lock replaced
- Wellhouse bollard reinstated
- 15-20 dead trees removed from the boundary between Glebe 1 and Glebe 2
- Firs Road Cemetery posts replaced
- Willoughby toilet door locks (x8) replaced
- Stumps removed
- Coast Road disabled lock broken, pending replacement
- Trampoline has a broken slat, contractor visiting
- Church Green Lime tree impulse tomography testing on 05/11/26
- Annual hedge cutting (final year of contract) has started
- 6x dead trees adjacent to the tennis courts will be removed this month
- Road plainings added along the path from Glebe 1 to Glebe 2 behind the tennis pavilion
- Coast Road path installation 07/12/26 (approx. 1 week)
- Coast Road path fencing installation 14/12/26
- Worknest Health and Safety audit visit scheduled for 10/11/26

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26/270 To agree entering into a 5-year contract with Worknest at an annual cost of £1,725.00 + VAT, subject to an annual uplift of 3%, to expiry in 2031

It was resolved unanimously to agree entering into a 5-year contract with Worknest at an annual cost of £1,725.00 + VAT, subject to an annual uplift of 3%, to expiry in 2031.
Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/271 To retrospectively approve the £800.00 payment for the civic event buffet, authorised under delegated powers as expenditure within the agreed civic budget

It was resolved unanimously to retrospectively approve the £800.00 payment for the civic event buffet, authorised under delegated powers as expenditure within the agreed civic budget.
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Weaver. All in favour.

26/272 To consider and approve a three-month trial subscription to ChatGPT at £20.00 per month, with a review report to be submitted to Council at the end of the trial period and a recommendation on whether to continue with an annual subscription

Following discussion, ***it was resolved*** by majority not to proceed with the trial subscription at this time. The Clerk was instructed to consult the Council's IT adviser for advice on the suitability, risks, and potential benefits of using artificial intelligence tools within the Council's operations and to report back to the Council with their recommendations.

26/273 To consider and approve the quotation from GLC for cleaning services to the Council-owned public conveniences on 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th December, at a cost of £1,366.40 plus VAT, including enhanced Bank Holiday rates applicable on 26th and 28th December

It was resolved unanimously to approve the quotation from GLC for cleaning services to the Council-owned public conveniences on 26th, 27th, 28th, 29th and 30th December, at a cost of £1,366.40 plus VAT, including enhanced Bank Holiday rates applicable on 26th and 28th December
Proposed: Cllr Boylan, Seconded: Cllr Powling. All in favour.

26/274 To approve the quotation for the supply and installation of 14 white uPVC windows, including trickle vents and obscure glazing at Fairhaven toilets:
Option A - £4,780.00 + VAT
Option B - quote pending
Option C - quote pending

It was resolved unanimously to approve Option B the quotation for the supply and installation of 14 white uPVC windows, including trickle vents and obscure glazing at Fairhaven toilets.
Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. Cllr Boylan abstained. All in favour.

26/275 To receive an update on options for self-closing gates and approve the quotation for the supply and installation and of two self-closing gates in School Gardens at a cost of £2,825.00 + VAT

It was resolved unanimously to approve the quotation for the supply and installation for one self-closing gate on the roadside entrance to School Gardens (costings to be adjusted accordingly). It was further agreed that the Council's Health and Safety Adviser be consulted to determine whether a second self-closing gate is required.
Proposed: Cllr Jenkins, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/276 To consider and approve a grant application of £387.85 from Mersea Island Community Speed Watch

It was resolved unanimously to approve a grant application of £387.85 from Mersea Island Community Speed Watch.
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Jenkins. All in favour.

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26/277 To agree retrospectively for the Town Clerk to attend the CouncilWise "Procurement for Town & Parish Councils" online training course at a cost of £60.00 + VAT, funded from the approved training budget and agreed in conjunction with the Mayor

It was resolved unanimously to agree retrospectively for the Town Clerk to attend the CouncilWise "Procurement for Town & Parish Councils" online training course at a cost of £60.00 + VAT, funded from the approved training budget and agreed in conjunction with the Mayor.
Proposed: Cllr Webster, Seconded: Cllr Hinderwell. All in favour.

26/278 To approve for the Town Clerk to attend an online training course on Parish and Town Council Elections, at a cost of £36.00 + VAT, funded from the approved training budget

It was resolved unanimously to approve for the Town Clerk to attend an online training course on Parish and Town Council Elections, at a cost of £36.00 + VAT, funded from the approved training budget.
Proposed: Cllr Powling, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

26/279 To consider and agree the preferred type of replacement posts (oak or recycled plastic) for the Glebe View / Wellhouse Open Space area, and to agree the most cost-effective approach to installation, including whether the work should be undertaken by the groundsmen or an external contractor

It was resolved unanimously that the preferred option for the replacement 4" x 4" posts would be recycled plastic composite posts. It was further agreed that a quotation be obtained from a contractor for the installation of the posts.
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Webster. Cllr Powling abstained. All in favour.

26/280 To review and agree to undertake a comprehensive water-safety risk assessment for West Mersea Town Council owned beach, together with a corresponding risk assessment relating to the potential deployment of the council-owned bathing rafts

It was resolved unanimously to agree to undertake a comprehensive water-safety risk assessment for West Mersea Town Council owned beach, together with a corresponding risk assessment relating to the potential deployment of the council-owned bathing rafts
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

26/281 To receive the final Tennis Club Lease, approve its execution, and agree that the lease be signed at the Council meeting by the authorised signatories on behalf of the Council

This item was deferred.

26/282 To consider and approve the quote for a bridge from Glebe 2 to the farmer's field at a cost of £7,379.42

It was resolved unanimously to obtain a like for like quote and to request our health and Safety advisor assess the bridge when they complete their audit.
Proposed: Cllr Hinderwell, Seconded: Cllr Webster. All in favour.

26/284 To review the draft business case for the Glebe project

The draft business case was reviewed.

Meeting closed at 9.10pm.

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