

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RIVERWALK AND NATURE RESERVES MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 17TH JANUARY 2018 AT 3:00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT:- Councillors Mrs J. M Money, Mrs J.A Williams, T.A Pleasance, P. Horner.

B Fleet (Chairman), B. Wilmer, J. Palombi, A. Chick, D. Smith.

Staff: J. Sheehy - Deputy Town Clerk
C. Frost - Open Spaces Supervisor

24. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J.C Goodman due to previous engagements.

25. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 18TH OCTOBER 2017

The notes of the previous River Walk & Nature Reserves Management Group were received and noted subject to the correct of B. Woolmer to B. Wilmer.

26. INTERESTS

The Chairman declared an interest in "Commemorative Trees" as a member of Witham Tree Group.

27. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were 4 members of the public present.

No members of the public wished to speak.

28. OPEN SPACES SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

C. Frost notified members that a series of Commemorative Trees at Moat Farm Chase which were subjected to vandalism had now been removed to another site located close to the former Brampton Sports Centre site.

C. Frost also updated members that a large accumulation of litter was present in the River near Helen Court mostly comprised of plastic waste and discarded bottles. It was noted that contractors on behalf of the Environment Agency had been present on site to perform river clearance towards Maldon Road end.

It was **AGREED** that a letter be written to the Environment Agency to highlight concerns over river bank clearance and the impact on local wildlife and for general policy on river bank clearance and for the Town Council to receive prior notification of any works taking place on the River Walk.

29. DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

Members were notified that the Environment Agency had been contacted to request that a representative once again attend the River Walk & Nature Reserves Management Group to ensure that communication is maintained between the Town Council. It was stated that a representative from the Agency would attend the next meeting in April.

30. COMMEMORATIVE TREE SCHEME

Dr. E Teverson of the Witham Tree Group provided a report to Members which suggested new planting sites on the River Walk for trees. Several areas were highlighted as being potential sites for planting including an area between Powers Hall End and Moat Farm Chase. The Tree Group had provided a series of tree planting suggestions taking into account the future form and shape of the River Walk. A series of tree planting sites was also suggested for Pattison Close, set widely to create an avenue of mature trees. It was noted that a preliminary soil test indicated a reasonable growing condition for new trees, but that further tests would have to be completed before any planting could take place.

It was **AGREED** that the report would be taken as a recommendation to the Environment Committee on 22nd January 2018.

31. BLUEBELL & SNOWDROP PLANTING

A suggestion was received from Councillor P.M Ryland for the group to consider strategic planting of Bluebells and Snowdrops in James Cooke Wood. It was noted that some plantings had taken place in previous years by community groups. It was considered that additional plantings could be of benefit to the group. A preliminary costing of £90.00 for 500 bulbs had been sourced.

It was **AGREED** that the planting of bluebells in autumn 2018 would be taken as a recommendation to the Environment Committee on the 22nd January 2018 for Members to consider according a budget for planting.

32. OPEN SPACES ADVERTISING LEAFLETS

Members received a newly formatted Open Spaces leaflet for Whetmead Nature Reserve. It was noted that leaflets were still yet to be produced for James Cooke Wood, The River Walk and Closed Churchyard as the Town Council was limited in the number of good quality photographs it possessed for each site.

It was **AGREED** that group Members could provide photographs for the completion of the advertising leaflets.

33. BENCHES

Members discussed benches in Witham and noted that a number had been removed over time due to vandalism and anti-social behaviour. It was suggested new locations could be considered for future bench installations as some members of the public had complained about a lack of seating on the River Walk. It was noted by Members that once remedial works had been completed to the duck pond on the River Walk, a series of new benches would be installed at this location and other areas, as previously agreed.

34. GROUP MEMBERSHIP

It was agreed the Witham Lions and Witham Tree Group would be approached to list new members for the group and members of the public present in the gallery would be extended an invite. It was noted that the membership of the group would also be under review as part of a wider review of the River Walk & Nature Reserves Management Group.

35. PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2018

Members considered the current Photography Competition and noted that some years had been met with success better than others. Members considered how to broaden the appeal. It was **AGREED** that the local academy schools would be contacted to gauge the interest of local students who may wish to be involved in the competition.

36. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

J. Palombi raised concerns over the advertised disposal of a strip of land by Braintree District Council and highlighted his concerns that the Town Council had raised no objection to the disposal. It was suggested that the Town Council request a public consultation be carried out into the disposal of the land. It was noted that the former Gimsons site is earmarked in the Local Plan for development.

It was **AGREED** that Braintree District Council would be contacted to ascertain who the purchaser of the strip of land was to provide clarity as to the impact of the River Walk.

Members were also notified of a series of fly-tips which had taken place on Blackwater Lane.

37. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The time and date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Wednesday 18th April 2018 at 3:00pm**