

Witham Town Council  
Town Hall, Newland Street,  
Witham, Essex, CM8 2FE.  
01376 520627  
www.witham.gov.uk  
deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk



## AGENDA

Meeting of: **Witham's River Walk and Nature Reserves Management Working Group**

Date: **Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018** Time: **3.00 pm**  
Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 FE.**

	B.	Fleet	(Chairman)
Councillors:	J.C.	Goodman	
Mrs	J.	Williams	
	T.A.	Pleasance	
	S.	Taylor	Braintree District Council
	A.	Potter	Braintree District Council
	J.	Palombi	Witham & Countryside Society
Mrs	J.	Lloyd	Witham & Countryside Society
	A.	Chick	Rotary Club
	M.	Davy	Environment Agency
Mrs	S.	Manning	
	C.	Frost	Witham Town Council
	D.	Rowling	Witham Lions
	R.	Ward	
	B.	Wilmer	
	D.	Smith	

**1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

To receive apologies for absence.

**2. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

To receive the notes from the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 ([attached](#))

**3. INTERESTS**

To receive any declarations of interests that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this Agenda.

**4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment upon any item on the Agenda.

**5. OPEN SPACES SUPERVISOR'S REPORT**

To receive the Open Spaces Supervisor's report.

**6. DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S REPORT**

To receive the Deputy Town Clerk's report.

**7. COMMEMORATIVE TREE SCHEME**

To discuss the current status of the Commemorative Tree Scheme and consider the way ahead.

**8. BLUEBELL & SNOWDROP PLANTING**

To consider a proposal from Councillor P.M Ryland for the planting of bluebells or snowdrops in James Cooke Wood.

**9. OPEN SPACES ADVERTISING LEAFLETS**

To receive new draft leaflets for review for Town Council managed open spaces (to be tabled at meeting)

**10. BENCHES**

To consider the reinstatement of benches at strategic locations following a number of suggestions and concerns raised by members of the public.

**11. GROUP MEMBERSHIP**

To review the Membership of the current Riverwalk & Nature Reserves Management Group and consider the way ahead including the appointment of new Members and expulsion of persistent absentees.

**12. PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION 2018**

To reconsider the future and form of the Town Council photography competition. Members should consider forming an action plan and schedule of events for any future competitions to be overseen by the Riverwalk & Nature Reserves management group.

**13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

An opportunity for members to raise any other business they wish to have discussed or included upon the next Agenda.

**14. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

To note the date of the next meeting on the **Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> April 2018 at 3:00pm.**

## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Witham's River Walk and Nature Reserves Management Working Group**

At Witham Town Council held 18<sup>th</sup> October 2017 at 3pm in the Council Chamber

### PRESENT:

Councillors- J.C.Goodman, P.Horner, T.A. Pleasance, B. Rose and Mrs J.Williams,

B.Fleet (Chairman), Mrs S. Manning, A Watts,J. Palombi, P.Shuttleworth, D.Smith, A. Watts and one other local resident

Staff: - M.Squire, ,Town Clerk and C.Frost, Open Spaces Supervisor

### 14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

An apology for absence was received from B. Woolmer.

### 15 .MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 5<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2017

The minutes of the previous River Walk & Nature River Walk & Nature Reserves Management Group were received and noted.

### 16. INTERESTS

No notice of interests were received.

### 17.QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A local resident complained about an area of land (adjacent to Saxon Drive and the River Walk) where weeds had not been cut back. It was thought that this particular strip of land belonged to the District Council. The Town Clerk would pursue this matter with the District Council. The local resident left the meeting. \*

### 18. OPEN SPACES SUPERVISOR'S REPORT

C. Frost provided an update.

#### Whetmeads

- The Environment Agency had cleared the reeds from the River Brain by the A12 underpass to the River Blackwater. Local residents were concerned of the potential implication of habitat loss for local wildlife. e.g. damsel flies are particularly vulnerable as they lay their eggs at the end of August/early September. It was agreed to consult the Environment Agency well in advance to review the next clearing cycle in order to protect the natural habitat.
- Footpath marker posts are to be installed soon.

- The new sign for Whetmead Nature Reserve is to be placed at either the entrance at Maldon Road or Whetmead Car park. Under the A12 Bridge was a possibility on the opposite side of the river to the path and on the wall next to the river, which may keep the sign vandal-proof.
- A litter bin is to be placed in Whetmead car park. It was thought a green bin would be more in keeping than a spare black bin. Other potential areas included next to the A12 bridge and on top of the plateau next to the wooden bench.
- The proposal to install two new sleeper benches where the two rivers meet on the opposite of the grass path to the river bank was agreed. These will replace the old ones, that have now been removed after the erosion of the river bank.

### **Bramble Road**

- The existing black litter will be replaced with a spare metal green bin.
- An old 'dog bin' has been replaced.
- A sleeper bench will be installed.

### **Ebenezer -**

- A Riverwalk entrance sign is required as it is unclear where the River Walk is at this point.
- A sleeper bench is needed near Glebe Crescent., looking down Bramble Road.
- Also at Moat Farm Chase there is nowhere to rest. Members were wary of potentially attracting anti-social behaviour and the siting of the bench does need careful consideration.
- An information board is needed as there is nothing there currently.
- Also, a fingerpost sign pointing to Bramble Road / RiverWalk / Town Centre.

### **Chipping Hill Bridge**

- The poor visibility looking right when crossing the road was noted and cutting back the hedge as much as possible has partially improved the situation. Any further work would involve standing on the road and hence 'Essex Highways' input and approval. Options considered were obtaining a licence from Highways or outsourcing the task to a third-party contractor. These suggestions would be put to the next appropriate Environment Committee meeting.

### **Additional Bench**

- Required between Bridge Street to Guithavon Road Bridge.

### **James Cooke Wood**

- The old rotten fence along the track leading to the fishing lakes needs to be replaced with hedge whips, i.e. a length of 180 metres at 10 whips per meter = 1,800 whips, guards and canes. Mixed hawthorn bare root 40/60cm pack of 250 = c£100. Total cost of project was estimated at c£2,600 in total. This work could be completed by

Conservation Volunteers/ Cofunds volunteers. The Town Council could investigate and potential supplies / grant funding.

### **Other matters**

- A survey would need to be made whether the kestrel boxes need replacing. The Essex Wildlife Trust may be able to help in this respect.
- The sign conveying byelaws needs replacing. e.g. no fires, no camping etc
- It was pointed out that the notorious ‘Himalayan Balsam’ had been sighted at Great Notley. This plant could potentially make the River walk banks unstable if it were to spread.

### **19. DEPUTY TOWN CLERK’S REPORT**

The Town Clerk presented the Deputy Town clerk’s report in his absence.

- Two new signs have been ordered for James Cooke Wood to replace the old damaged sign, and also a new sign for Whetmead.
- Six new dog warning signs for Whetmead have been delivered to replace the vandalised warning notices.
- The Whetmead entrance had been fitted with a new, reinforced lock as the previous one was damaged by vandals.
- The Group reviewed correspondence received re the Closed Churchyard from the Reverend Canon Sally Lodge, Area Dean of Witham regarding the proposals.
  - The Church would like clarification on two graves effected by the proposal and
  - an indication of whether the Town Council intends to move any buried remains and what steps would be taken regarding any relatives who may wish to visit the graves lost to the pound.

She would also be seeking advice from the Diocesan Registrar.

It was considered that there are no immediate graves in that area and that there is a natural dip in that particular spot. Contact would be made with the Church to check whether there are indeed any surviving relatives and establish who exactly they are.

- Due to the lack of response, the photography competition would be deferred until 2018. The competition should be advertised on the Town Council’s website.
- New Open Spaces leaflets would be produced in 2018.

### **20. TOWN TRAIL**

J. Palombi advocated an extension of the ~Town Trail to the River Walk, Whetmead, Closed Churchyard and James Cooke Wood. Thought needs to be give as to how and where the signs are fixed. The Witham and Countryside Society has no funding to implement the scheme. It costs about £12 per sign. The Town Park is also a future potential site. Sponsorship from local businesses could be one source of funding.

## **21. COMMEMORATIVE TREE SCHEME**

It was noted that with 108 tree plantings, there is no more room along the River Walk. 18 planting are already scheduled for this year alone. The Group were conscious that the green corridor should not resemble a wood. B. Fleet would refer to the Tree Group and revert to the next 'River Walk' meeting.

## **22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- Concern was raise regarding easy access to the River Walk and whether low posts and fencing maybe a solution. Logs may be also an alternative. Would these measures be adequate? How much would it cost and would this have an adverse effect on the environment? Should such measures be undertaken?
- Concern was raised regarding the large number of trees falling into the river. It was agreed that a member of the Environment Agency be asked to attend the next appropriate 'Riverwalk' meeting.

## **23. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The time and date of the next meeting was confirmed as Wednesday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2018 at

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 3.45 p.m.

B Fleet  
Chairman

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