

Witham Town Council

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AGENDA

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

Date: **Wednesday 19th April 2017** Time: **3.00 pm**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham.**

	B.	Fleet	(Chairman)
Councillors:	J.C.	Goodman	
	P.	Horner	
	W.J.	Rose	
	S	Taylor	Braintree District Council
	A.	Potter	Braintree District Council
	J.	Palombi	Witham & Countryside Society
Mrs	J	Lloyd	Witham & Countryside Society
Mrs	A.	Northfield	Witham in Bloom Conservation Group
	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. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes from the meeting of 18th January 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 ([attached](#))

7. WHETMEAD BOUNDARY WITH A12

To receive an update regarding the boundary of Whetmead Nature Reserve following discussion at the Environment Committee on 20th March 2017.

8. CLOSED CHURCHYARD POND PROPOSALS

To receive an update following a response from the Area Dean of Witham and to consider what action to take next.

9. WITHAM TREE GROUP TREE WHIPS

To discuss the planting of tree whips at the Whetmead Nature Reserve.

10. LOCAL NATURE RESERVE DESIGNATION FOR RIVER WALK AREAS

To receive a report on the designation of Local Nature Reserves and to consider what action to take next ([attached](#))

11. PHOTOGRAPHY COMPETITION

To consider the continuation of the photographic competition and set a theme and other associated criteria, dates for submissions and any other relevant components.

12. TOWN TRAIL

To receive an update from J. Palombi regarding the Witham Town Trail.

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 **5th July 2017 at 3:00PM.**

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE RIVERWALK AND NATURE RESERVES MANAGEMENT WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 18TH JANUARY 2017 AT 3:00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT:- Councillors J.C. Goodman, Mrs J. Williams, P. Horner. B Fleet (Chairman), J Palombi, A Chick.

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

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE.

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs J. Lloyd and B Wilmer due to previous engagements.

2. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held 19th October 2016 were received and noted.

3. INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were four members of the public present.

There were no items that any member of the public wished to speak about.

5. OPEN SPACES SUPERVISORS REPORT

C. Frost delivered his report to members of the group, stating that a number of members of the public had approached him at the James Cooke Woods concerned about the placement of benches, which are currently located in a central part of the site.

After discussion, it was **AGREED** by members that costs for an additional three benches for placement around the various walking routes would be sought in addition to the replacement and repair of a deteriorating gatepost towards the entrance of the site.

6. DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

The Deputy Clerk delivered his report to members of the group, stating that a backlog of work relating to the open spaces sites, caused by staffing changes, was now being cleared in anticipation of the group back on schedule by the next meeting.

7. WHETMEAD BOUNDARY WITH A12

The Deputy Clerk updated members of the group following correspondence received by the Town Council relating to a dog that had left the confines of the Whetmead Nature Reserve and was subsequently killed in traffic on the A12 road. It was thought by the group that fencing would be expensive and hard to maintain, and could not guarantee the safety of running animals.

After discussion it was **AGREED** that the liability to the Town Council surrounding the boundary and animal casualties be researched for a report back to the group.

8. COMMEMORATIVE TREE SCHEME

A report was received concerning the future planning of the commemorative trees scheme. It was agreed by members that future planning should be considered alongside the promotion of the scheme.

9. WHETMEAD WEED CUTTING AND NEW TREE PLANTING

Members received a request for consideration of additional tree planting and weed cutting on the Whetmead Nature Reserve. It was noted that a management plan was already in place for the nature reserve and it was subsequently **AGREED** the request be responded to by the deputy clerk explaining this.

10. FRIENDS OF THE RIVER WALK NOTES 7TH SEPTEMBER 2016

The notes of the Friends of the River Walk meeting, 7th September 2016 were received and noted.

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chairman raised concerns surrounding the entrance of Whetmead and suggested that new surfacing such as bark or crushed concrete would be of benefit to the area. C. Frost stated that the pathways had been renewed once previously with wood chipping to a good visual effect, but the work was lost when the adjacent river flooded and carried away the surfacing.

It was **AGREED** that consideration be given to the renewal of the pathways leading to Whetmead, for costings to be delivered to the next meeting.

The Chairman queried the status of walking posts and interpretation boards for Whetmead (**Ref Min. 6 19-10-2016**). The Deputy Clerk explained costings were now being put together for options to be considered and approved at the next meeting. It was noted that research into the feasibility of a pond in the Closed Churchyard, Witham, had been delayed by the change in staffing and it was subsequently **AGREED** that this item be raised on the next Agenda.

Following discussion of Nature Reserve status at the last meeting (**Ref Min. 9 19-10-2016**) it was **AGREED** that research into the classification and implications of Nature Reserve status on portions of the Riverwalk would be researched and raised as an item on the next Agenda.

12. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The date of the next meeting was noted for **April 19th 2017** at 3:00PM.

There being no further business, the Chairman closed the meeting at 4:05PM.

JS 19.01.17

Witham Town Council



Deputy Clerk's Report - Outside Spaces

- A back log of Risk Assessments for all outside spaces have now been completed with general and remedial works identified for each site. This list of works will be agreed with the Town Clerk and brought to the next meeting of the Riverwalk & Nature Reserves Management Group on 5th July for report and consideration by the group.
- Renewal of footpaths leading to Whetmead has been delayed in order to procure additional material to repair potholes at James Cooke Wood as well.
- The Culvert located at the north end of Whetmead discharging into the river black water is continuing to be monitored as occasional offensive odours seem to be emanating from this area.
- Following discussion on further promoting the Commemorative Tree Scheme, an advert was published in "The Voice" resulting in an additional 5 enquiries which have now paid.
- Following the acceptance of a quote by the Environment Committee, permission is now being sought from Braintree District Council as the freeholders of the River Walk to begin the reinstatement of the duck pond banks with a permanent solution.
- Quotes were obtained for new signage at Whetmead but all three quotes exceeded the budgetary capabilities of the Town Council when taking into account other projects and potential expenditure. Further options to build signage in house using raw materials will be researched into for report back to the next meeting.



River Walk Back Channel Nature Reserve.

Background Papers:

Discussions were held at the River Walk & Nature Reserves Management Group on 19/10/2016 and 18/01/2017 on classifying the entirety, or selected parts of the River Walk as a Local Nature Reserve.

Summary:

Witham Town Council has the power to designate an area as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) under the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949. The land must be in control of Witham Town Council, either through ownership, a lease, or an agreement with the owners. The ownership of The River Walk is currently held by Braintree District Council.

Guidance states that a site should be selected for its wildlife or geological interest and such areas are generally open green space, but LNR's can also be designated for brownfield sites, commons and other accessible greens. To declare a site as an LNR, a declaration must be submitted to Natural England which has been signed by the Town Council under its common seal. The declaration must be submitted with both a map showing the area and boundaries of the LNR and a management plan which details the following:

- How long the site will remain a protected LNR (21 years is the recommended minimum)
- Ownership of the land
- Any agreements or partnerships
- Why the LNR site was chosen
- Aims and objectives
- Biodiversity management and environmental education
- Community participation, access and visitor management
- Costs and funding arrangement

A public notice period is then initiated and announcement of the new LNR should be placed into the local paper. The declaration and maps must be open for inspection during the consultation period. Upon the designation of the LNR, it can then be formally opened. The LNR should be publically accessible where practical and visitors would not disturb wildlife. Visitor access can also be restricted unless the public have a statutory access right. The LNR may also be regulated by byelaws.

RECOMMENDATION:

The working group should consider the balance between the work involved in establishing an LNR and the benefit to the public and designated site. If the group wishes to proceed, a draft map and management plan should be considered.

JS/08/02/2017