



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE  
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## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee**

Date: **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

Present: Councillors

S	Hicks	(Chairman)
J	Goodman	
C.	Lager	
S	Black	(Witham & Countryside)
S	Brailey	(Witham Tree Group)
B	Fleet	(Tree Warden)
J	Palombi	(CPRE)
P	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
H	Andrews	(Assistant Town Clerk)
S	Dyer	(Operations Manager)

### 18. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Atwill, Cllr Pleasance and J Casement.

### 19. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 were agreed and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

Members discussed the Gimsons Review Group and whether the potential river spoil problem and other issues were being pursued. It was noted that the Gimsons Review Group had met three times in addition to a site visit and enquiries were being made regarding issues raised. Concerns were raised regarding the remaining trees on the development which do not have Tree Preservation Orders on them as these would not have protection from felling by new occupants. It was **RECOMMENDED** that obtaining Tree Preservation Orders on remaining trees on the Gimsons development should be explored.

Members were advised that the review of the ground water issues on the River Walk near Ebenezer Close was still ongoing. Anglian Water are due to carry out work to open up their outfalls but that additional work will be required to re-dig out ditches in the area to potentially solve the problem.

It was noted that the ground investigations work at Whetmead was continuing for the proposed A12 widening project.

**20. CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk gave an update regarding the path near Helen Court. Members were advised that discussions had been taking place with Gimsons developers and it had previously been suggested that the hedge along River View may need to be removed to allow for the width of the new footpath. A recent site visit had taken place with officers, the technical manager of Bellways and an Arboricultural Consultant and it is now confirmed that the County Council have approved a 1.5m wide pavement and so the hedge will need to be cut back by 300mm along a 12m stretch. The hedge is on land owned by the developer but will be working with the Town Council to improve the hedge by removing excess ivy, filling gaps and improving the biodiversity. The hedge will also be extended by 10m towards the development entrance. The work will be carried out shortly ensuring that the official public footpath opens at the end of February 2022 when the diversion order expires.

**21. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Operations Manager advised that the Operations Team were up-to-date on all River Walk work, apart from the cutting back of a hedge near Saxon Drive which is delayed due to ground conditions. It was also noted that the grass near Helen Court would need time to recover from the damage caused by pedestrians.

Winter work is being carried out in James Cooke Wood with removing dead trees as part of the thinning process. A commemorative bench is due to be installed in memory of the late Cllr Paul Ryland and the base for this will be laid during February.

It was noted that the ground worked on for the A12 widening investigations at Whetmead will be reinstated once works are completed. The Operations Manager also confirmed that 50 tree whips were planted at Whetmead but were torn up within 24 hours of planting. 21 trees were recovered and have been replanted in scrub areas.

Work continues at the Closed Churchyard with cutting back of ivy from headstones, pruning vegetation and the wildflower area recently planted appears to be promising. Mixed bulbs have also been planted in this section and planting was assisted by supported learning students from Witham's Adult Education Centre. It was noted that positive feedback had been received from the church leader and that a new management plan was still required for the site. Members spoke of the potential to carry out species surveys to assist with producing the management plan.

Members were advised that the Operations Team are also currently working on the Town Council allotments clearing unworked plots so that they can be offered to those on the waiting list. New noticeboards and bins had recently been installed by the team and the site is soon to be fully occupied by tenants.

It was confirmed that the Operations Team carry out some Highways Devolutions tasks as part of their duties and any suggestion of tasks to be carried out could be reported for assessment.

Councillor C Lager left the meeting.

**22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Following discussions at the Environment Committee's meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022, a review will take place of footpaths along the River Walk to establish those that are not currently registered as Public Rights of Way.

The Green Flag award scheme was also discussed and it was noted that an application for the River Walk will be held in abeyance until the condition of the footpaths had been addressed and construction developments affecting the River Walk had been completed.

**23. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee will be set shortly but was likely to be in May 2022.

Meeting concluded at 2.50pm

HA/08.02.2021

Signed by Chairman .....