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MINUTES

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

Date: **5th March 2024**

Present:	Councillors	B	Fleet	(Chairman)
		S.	Ager	
		P.	Barlow	
		P.	Heath	
		R.	Ramage	
	Co-optees	S.	Black	(Witham and Countryside Society)
		S.	Brailey	(Witham Tree Group)
		J.	Casement	(Witham Wombles)
		J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		H.	Smith	(Open Spaces Team)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

39. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt and John Goodman.

40. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

41. MINUTES

The minutes were **AGREED** and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

42. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No public were in attendance.

43. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received by the Council.

44. CLERK'S REPORT

Members were advised that the River Walk drainage work would consist of a French Drain close to the entrance at Ebenezer Close with ditches also being created at two other points on the Glebe area of the River Walk where water drainage is an issue.

Members were further informed that Essex and Suffolk Water would contact successful candidates for their grant application by the end of March.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

45. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

A member of the Operations Team provided a verbal update.

The recent long spate of wet weather had proved challenging. On the River Walk, a new memorial bench has been installed at the Duck Pond, new finger posts have been added to the post near Guithavon bridge, a new noticeboard fitted at the Bramble Road entrance and the Listening Bench has been repaired following vandalism. In addition, the culvert fencing by Pattison Close has been replaced and spring bulbs planted along sections of the River Walk. There are plans to add a knee rail fence around the recently created Bee Haven by Helen Court to allow the planting to become established.

At James Cooke Wood, tree surgeons have recently completed thinning an area of the wood as part of the plan to reduce the trees by 30% to open up the forest floor and extend the life of the woodland. Further felling is still required. A new boardwalk has also been installed in the corner of the site over the boggy ground and the driveway entrance has been repaired as well as new bulbs planted near the carpark.

At Whetmead, the Open Spaces Team have repaired the bank erosion with cement bags and topsoil, installed a new noticeboard at the entrance and planted shrubs in the areas where the new nature trail posts are to be placed.

The allotments are having their tap casings replaced in the near future and the cement bases have been created in preparation for the work, while knee railings across the site have been repaired and, in the carpark, replaced by bollards.

The Churchyard had the crowns of their trees raised and spring pruning will begin shortly.

Members were further advised that a new mower had been purchased ready for the grass growing season.

Cllr Ager entered the Chamber at 1.45pm.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

46. WATER QUALITY OF WITHAM'S RIVERS

Concerns were expressed about the impact on rivers of the upcoming repealing of certain EU standards post Brexit and it was **AGREED** to review the river quality quarterly and maintain contact with the Environment Agency.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

47. ESSEX WILDER TOWNS AND RIVERS

Members were invited to volunteer for water survey training and Cllr Heath expressed an interest.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

48. JAMES COOKE WOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Members were pleased with the recent boardwalk and there was agreement that some carpark alterations are needed. Members were further informed that a new road sign for the carpark was still outstanding with Essex Highways.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

49. WHETMEAD NATURE TRAIL

Members were shown an example of a nature post with a draft copy of the accompanying booklet and advised that the trail would be installed ready for the Easter break.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

50. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee would be held on Tuesday 4th June 2024 at 1.30pm.

Meeting concluded at 2.21pm.

SP/06.3.24

Signed by Chairman…….