



# Witham

town council

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## MINUTES

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

Date: **14<sup>th</sup> March 2023**

Present: Councillors

S	Hicks	(Chairman)
K.	Atwill	
C.	Lager	
T	Pleasance	
S.	Brailey	(Witham Tree Group)
J.	Casement	(Witham Wombles)
B.	Fleet	(Tree Warden)
J	Palombi	(CPRE)
P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
H	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
S	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
S	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr S. Ager, Cllr J Goodman and S Black

2. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

3. **MINUTES**

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

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

There was no public present.

5. **CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS**

No written representations were received.

## 6. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members were informed that the tree work being undertaken is part of routine maintenance of the trees on the River Walk area.

It was noted that the garages at Ebenezer Close are in a poor state of repair and a disappointing entrance / exit to the River Walk. Members were advised that the garages are owned by Eastlight and it is believed that there is still a tenant renting one of them at present.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members that enquiries are still ongoing with Braintree District Council regarding responsibility for the land by Lidl and Churchills. There had recently been an accompanied site visit with BDC and the Town Council is now awaiting a response.

Members were advised that the old grazing field on Chipping Hill, by the bridge and next to the River Walk is owned by Witham Town Council and this is mowed once a year.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

## 7. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided an update. Routine maintenance was being carried out on the River Walk which included some of the tree work identified in the 2022 tree survey. This is in addition to the qualified tree surgeon work. New culvert fencing has also been installed by Maltings Academy and extended fencing by Pattison Close. Furthermore, two new recycled plastic picnic benches have been installed at Mill Lane, one of which has an extended top for wheelchair access. The Members were further informed that a newly repaired listening bench was due shortly.

At James Cooke Wood, the team have been taking out dead trees and pruning as required. The fence mounted bin in the car park has been replaced by a freestanding green bin, the fencing has been removed and replaced by wooden bollards following vehicle damage and a stolen "Keep Clear" sign has been replaced.

At the Closed Churchyard the team have carried out general maintenance. The Members were informed that the Yellow Rattle seeds have not germinated, but the team will still plant the wildflower plugs as planned followed up with weekly maintenance of the area.

The team filled a skip of rubbish at the allotments and upcycled the two old Mill Lane picnic tables by installing them in the communal area.

At the station, the team will be planting perennial shrubs in the single planters in April to help reduce costs and the tiered planters will have bedding plants as per last year.

Members reported that the back channel in the river is silting up again and requested it is added to the Operation's Team schedule. It was also reported that a tree on the River Walk by Armond Road had broken strappings which the Operations Team agreed to remove.

An enquiry was made by Members regarding the watering of the Jubilee Tree on Guithavon and it was noted that the Operations Team would be watering it regularly as this is a new tree.

**8. A12 WIDENING SCHEME AND WHETMEAD**

The Deputy Town Clerk informed Members about the land offered as a replacement to that taken by the A12 widening scheme. One area of land had been accepted as an appropriate replacement; however, the second area had been rejected due to poor access. The Members were informed that another meeting is scheduled to discuss how to proceed further.

Members were concerned that the area finally offered would not be equivalent to that lost.

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

**9. WHETMEAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT**

Members agreed that the steps needed replacing and it was noted that future development, following the A12 widening, should consider the possibility of mobility access.

Members put forward ideas for wildlife to include on the proposed information posts.

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

**10. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS**

Members **AGREED** that joining the scheme would be beneficial and would complement the work currently planned for the open spaces.

**11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

It was noted that the developers at Gimsons were clearing ground very close to the border of the land allowed.

It was noted that the secondary school children at Monday's Town Meeting had concerns about the amount of litter on the River Walk and that consideration should be given to the number and siting of bins. It was agreed that the Operations Team would note any litter hotspots.

Members were informed that the River Walk was mentioned in a 1972 article in a countryside magazine.

It was noted that there appear to be an increase in the number of rats and Muntjac deer around areas close to the River Walk.

**12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee would be in May.

Meeting concluded at 3.00pm

HA/SP/22.3.23

Signed by Chairman.....

DRAFT