



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE
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witham.gov.uk

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Tuesday 22nd July 2025** Time: **7.30 p.m.**

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

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present: Councillors:

J.	Martin	(Chairman)	L.	Headley
J.M.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)	T.	Hewitt
E.	Adelaja		J.	Robertson
J.C.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 14th April 2025 (previously circulated).

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.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the Clerk's Report on matters arising attached at page 4.

6. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE

To receive the income and expenditure reports for the year ended 31st March 2025, with exception report and for the period 1st April 2025 to 17th July 2025 attached at page 5.

7. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee meeting held on 4th June 2025 attached at page 11.

8. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive Witham Tree Group minutes held in April and June 2025 attached at page 15.

9. HIRE OF OPEN SPACES POLICY

To receive and review the Hire of Open Spaces policy attached at page 19.

10. COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS OF WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL OPEN SPACES POLICY

To receive and review the Commemorative Items of Witham Town Council Open Spaces Policy attached at page 20.

11. SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY

To receive and review the Snow Clearance Policy attached at page 22.

12. BIODIVERSITY POLICY

To receive and review the Biodiversity Policy attached at page 23.

13. ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT REPORT

To receive a report attached at page 25.

14. ALLOTMENT SITE MANAGEMENT POLICY

To receive and review the Allotment Site Management Policy attached at page 26.

15. BLACKWATER LANE PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY

To receive a report attached at page 31.

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

17. RIVER WALK PEDESTRIAN BRIDGES

To receive a report attached at page 33.

18. RIVER WALK

To receive a report attached at page 39.

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- Essex Fire Services attended a fire on the River Walk near to Ebenezer Close on 15th July 2025. The site was accessed via the Ebenezer Close gate and the padlock was cut off. The fire was in a grassed area next to the dual footpath/cycleway which has burnt a large section of grass. On a site visit on 16th July staff also discovered smoldering grass which they dealt with. A report was also received that there had been a fire near to the same area on Tuesday 8th July 2025 which caused some damage to the meadow land area leading down towards Bramble Road.

Reports have been requested from Essex Fire to obtain further information about the incidents.



- Braintree District Council have been completing the first phase of the town centre improvements with the replacement of all litter bins, painting of benches and car park railings, the installation of three wayfinding monoliths and two new noticeboards.
- A small group of staff and members went to Crossing Temple heritage orchards for an information visit on 15th July 2025 for research purposes for further consideration of creating a community orchard on the River Walk

Advice:

To receive and note.

15/07/2025

Witham Town Council

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08:59

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/03/2025

Agenda Item 5

Month No: 12

Cost Centre Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
<u>400 Environment</u>							
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	2,410	1,650	(760)			146.1%	
Environment :- Income	2,410	1,650	(760)			146.1%	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	184,609	190,313	5,704		5,704	97.0%	
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	7,813	8,400	587		587	93.0%	
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	6,688	6,000	(688)		(688)	111.5%	
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	1,430	12,000	10,570		10,570	11.9%	
4432 New Tree Planting	3,026	3,035	9		9	99.7%	
4433 Tree Maintenance	5,798	5,855	57		57	99.0%	
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	340	600	260		260	56.7%	
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	2,174	1,200	(974)		(974)	181.2%	
4444 Fleet	5,820	6,000	180		180	97.0%	
4445 Open Spaces General	1,904	1,645	(259)		(259)	115.7%	
4446 James Cooke Wood	587	2,000	1,413		1,413	29.4%	
4447 River Walk	13,702	3,000	(10,702)		(10,702)	456.7%	
4448 Whetmead LNR	1,352	2,000	648		648	67.6%	
4452 River Walk Signage	1,720	1,965	245		245	87.5%	
4453 Litter Bins	1,000	1,000	0		0	100.0%	
4455 Witham in Bloom	13,927	14,000	73		73	99.5%	
4457 Waste Disposal	679	1,000	321		321	67.9%	
Environment :- Indirect Expenditure	252,571	260,013	7,442	0	7,442	97.1%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(250,161)	(258,363)	(8,202)				
Grand Totals:- Income	2,410	1,650	(760)			146.1%	
Expenditure	252,571	260,013	7,442	0	7,442	97.1%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(250,161)	(258,363)	(8,202)				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(250,161)	(258,363)	(8,202)				

Income and Expenditure Exception Report – Environment Committee 22nd July 2025

	Budget	% Spent	Year End	Reason
Lighting Maintenance & Utility	£6,000	111.5%	£6,688	Some additional repairs to streetlights has exceeded the budget.
Dog and Bench Schemes	£1,200	181.2%	£2,174	Income received from scheme of £2,410
Open Spaces General	£1,645	115.7%	£1,904	Includes £728.29 spent on Bee Squared project seeds which was covered by
River Walk	£3,000	456.7%	£13,702	£11,811.25 spent on resurfacing of Pattison Close path has been funded by Section 106 contributions

There follows a detailed list of payments

Witham Town Council

Monthly breakdown of Receipts and Payments

Cost Centre 3 (Between 01/04/2025 and 31/03/2026)

	Budget	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Variance
PAYMENTS															
Environment															
Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme															
Operations - Salaries & NI	20,038.00	11,929.64	12,635.80	16,352.98	6,946.63									47,865.05	152,442.95
Equipment Supplies & Maintenance	2,400.00			423.79										423.79	7,976.21
Dog & Bench Schemes	1,200.00			29.29										29.29	1,170.71
Lighting Maintenance & Utility	17,000.00	694.74	768.96	794.59										2,258.29	14,741.71
Tree Planting	3,000.00														3,000.00
Tree Maintenance	5,000.00				1,600.00									1,600.00	3,400.00
Toilet Block - Town Park	13,000.00	120.24	63.78	8,828.45										9,012.47	3,987.53
Dog Bin Maintenance	600.00														600.00
Litter Bins	1,000.00														1,000.00
Open Spaces General	2,500.00	58.32	56.47	235.70	195.40									545.89	1,954.11
River Walk Signage	2,000.00			1,720.45										1,720.45	279.55
James Cooke Wood	2,000.00														2,000.00
River Walk	7,000.00		655.00											655.00	6,345.00
Whetmead LNR	2,000.00		562.53											562.53	1,437.47
Witham in Bloom	14,000.00			154.35	35.96									190.31	13,809.69
Fleet	6,500.00	164.08	535.45	335.95	129.40									1,164.88	5,335.12
Waste Disposal	1,000.00														1,000.00
S106 Receipts															
S106 Expenditure			4,868.00		315.00									5,183.00	-5,183.00

Monthly breakdown of Receipts and Payments

Cost Centre 3 (Between 01/04/2025 and 31/03/2026)

Budget	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Variance
286,508.00	12,967.02	20,145.99	28,875.55	9,222.39										
													Total:	71,210.95
													Variance:	215,297.05

There follows a detailed list of receipts

Witham Town Council

Monthly breakdown of Receipts and Payments

Cost Centre 3 (Between 01/04/2025 and 31/03/2026)

	Budget	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Variance
RECEIPTS															
Environment															
Dog & Bench Sponsorship Schemes	650.00	50.00	20.00	1,170.00	1,150.00									2,390.00	740.00
Operations - Salaries & NI & LGPS															
Equipment Supplies & Maintenance															
Dog & Bench Schemes															
Lighting Maintenance & Utility															
Tree Planting															
Tree Maintenance															
Toilet Block - Town Park															
Dog Bin Maintenance															
Litter Bins															
Open Spaces General															
River Walk Signage															
James Cooke Wood															
River Walk															
Whetmead LNR															
Witham in Bloom															
Fleet															
Waste Disposal															
S106 Receipts															
S106 Expenditure															

Monthly breakdown of Receipts and Payments

Cost Centre 3 (Between 01/04/2025 and 31/03/2026)

Budget	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Total	Variance
1,650.00	50.00	20.00	1,170.00	1,150.00										
													Total:	2,390.00
													Variance:	740.00

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MINUTES

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

Date: **4th June 2025**

Present:	Councillors	P	Heath	
		T	Hewitt	(arrived 2.15pm)
	Co-optees	S.	Black	(Witham and Countryside Society)
		J.	Casement	(Witham Wombles)
		J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		J.	Goodman	(Vice Chairman and Local Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		S.	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

One member of the public was present.

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Fleet, and P Shuttleworth. Cllrs Coleman and Ramage was absent.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Barry Fleet be appointed Chairman.

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN**

It was **AGREED** that John Goodman be appointed Vice-Chairman.

4. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

5. **MINUTES**

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

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6. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

The resident was concerned about the poor condition of the fence between 1 Bridge Street and the River Walk. Since the conifers had been cut back earlier in the year, the fence was now clearly visible and hanging over the River Walk land owned by Witham Town Council. The resident expressed safety concerns if the fence collapsed and would like the Council to respond. The Chairman noted the resident's concerns and it was agreed to address the issue later in the meeting.

7. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received.

8. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members were pleased with the results of the Cut and Collect policy on Mill Lane, which was clearly showing results, and expressed a desire to see this expanded to other areas such as the meadow on Chipping Hill. The Deputy Town Clerk, together with the Operations Manager, explained that it was very time consuming for the Open Spaces Team to Cut and Collect such a large area and that in the past there had been volunteers to help with the raking of the grass, but there was a desire to increase meadow creation. Jane Casement and John Palombi volunteered to help and it was suggested that the Scouts may wish to take part. Members felt that volunteers could be found to assist and that putting a request in The Voice magazine might find additional volunteers.

Cllr Hewitt arrived at 2.15pm

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

9. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update.

Full grass cutting season has arrived and the Operations Team are up-to-date. The team have been cutting back the nettles from the footpaths from Ebenezer to Maldon Road as well as clearing the daffodils from the spring. A new bin has been installed at the Maldon Road end of the River Walk, several dog bins have been repaired and three trolleys removed from the river. Unfortunately, there has been a lot of vandalism this quarter including graffiti and a smashed noticeboard close to Pattison Close. There have been three events on the River Walk which have all been a great success, including The Easter Trail, VE Day Beacon Lighting and The Dog Show.

Regular maintenance has been continuing at James Cooke Wood and an intensive litter pick with a rolling road closure was carried out along the road boundary. Two bat / bird boxes and an owl box have been installed amongst the trees.

There has been the usual maintenance at Whetmead but unfortunately there has been significant vandalism to the etching posts and noticeboard.

The team are slightly behind with the Closed Churchyard but will catch up in the next week. Two bird / bat boxes and an owl box have been put up amongst the trees.

At the allotments, several plots have been cleared and in April the station was planted with summer bedding plants.

Following on from the question raised by a member of the public, the Operations Manager agreed that the fence was an eyesore but that it did not pose an immediate public health and safety issue as it was bordered by nettles. It was noted that there were still more trees to be managed but this was planned for after the bird nesting season, although concern was raised that the roots of the remaining trees might make installing a new fence difficult.

Members felt that a polite letter to the resident expressing the Council's concerns would be prudent and that one of the Town Councillors could liaise with the owner about possible solutions. It was agreed that the situation would be monitored and that approaching Braintree District Council for enforcement might be considered in the future.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

Members **AGREED** to ask one of the Town Councillors to liaise with the owner of 1 Bridge Street about the fence and this would be followed up with a letter from the Town Council if it was felt necessary.

10. BIO BLITZ EVENT

Members were informed that the event would feed into the River Walk Management Plan by recording the species which live there now, with a view to repeating the event in the future to monitor change. If successful, the Council will consider carrying out a Bio Blitz at the other managed open spaces. The Deputy Town Clerk further informed Members that both families and individuals were welcome and that there would be a different approach to each on the day.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

11. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE PHOTOGRAPHY POINT

The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that this had been an idea from a member of the Open Spaces Team. While Members had concerns about vandalism and agreed that care would be needed with positioning, it was considered that this was an excellent idea.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

12. SECTION 106 FUNDING AND OPEN SPACES

Members were informed that additional bird and bat boxes could be considered too.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

13. COMMUNITY ORCHARD

Members were advised that the idea was to plant a heritage orchard and that this would be a long process. Members thought it was an excellent idea, would improve biodiversity and that Chipping Hill Meadow was a good position for the orchard. It was further suggested that advice could be sought from Cressing Temple, where there is a Jubilee Orchard, and the East of England Apples and Orchard Project. Members also thought that there was potentially scope for sponsoring of the trees by residents to help with funding.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

Meeting concluded at 3.00pm.

SP/16.6.25

Signed by Chairman.....

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Agenda Item 8

April 2025 Tree Group Minutes are as follows -

Present : Eric Teverson, Stanley Brailey, Richard Hawkes, Graham Wingrove, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Allan Waight, Mark Austin.

2 Minutes of 4th March accepted.

3 Matters arising - none.

4 Planting plans

a] Meeting with Andrew Digby of BDC -- this went very well; he supports further planting at Rickstones Recreation Ground although we will need to walk the site with his colleague Levi White to confirm species and siting, and Richard will contact Levi; Andrew agreed that there was substantial space along the railway side of the Allectus Way estate though he will check whether there are any plans for a cyclepath to link to the Redrow estate;

Planting round the Alan Road playground was supported;

Town End Field - it was agreed that we could plant another six trees there [previous planting have done well due to the wet ground];

We would need to flag up to Jamie Carvalho of ECC that we are working on schemes with BDC, assuming funding would be available;

b] Memorial Park - we need to check if any further losses, and certainly two replacements are needed;

c] Lockram Lane - awaiting news from Mark;

d] Street trees - Barry to follow up with Jamie in due course;

e] Possible sponsored tree from local business person, Barry to confirm in due course.

5 Watering - plan to start on the 1st May, so Eric will check that the bowser is in working order; the whips are probably going to need watering too.

6 Maintenance - we need to remove cages at Town End Field, and review the trees at Pasture Road , Forest Road & Templars.

7 Rivenhall Oaks - awaiting an update from Mark.

8 Finance

a] Stanley confirmed the current balance;

b] Discussed payments due to us and that we should consider a deposit account;

c] Barry has renewed the public liability insurance with Zurich Municipal, at £168.81 as last year, and Stan will arrange reimbursement.

9 Wwebsite & publicity

a] Website - no news as yet; it now directs enquirers to community group sites , not including us;

b] It was agreed that we should have a whatsapp group for notifications re watering etc.;

c] Eco fair on 10th May - we are hoping to have a stall, to be run by Janet Hawkes using the stall that Allan has in store and the leaflets created by Richard, and other information; staffing to be resolved.

10 Any other business

a] Bulb planting - our daffodil planting has been very successful , so it was agreed that we should do some more in the autumn. Barry suggested at the Spa Road site where the sloping bank will display them very well; it was also suggested that bluebells could be introduced at the Memorial Park;

b] Andrew Digby had forwarded the Tree Council newsletter to us, and Barry will forward it on to those who have not already seen it.

11 Next meeting - Tuesday, 3rd June, at Eric's , 7.30 pm.

Tree Group Minutes – 3rd June 2025

Present : Eric Teverson, Richard Hawkes, Stanley Brailey, Mark Austin, Barry Fleet.

1. Apologies - Allan Waight, Graham Wingrove.

2. Minutes of 15th April 2025 - accepted.

3. Matters arising

a) Ecofair, held in the precinct, staffed by Eric, Mark and Steve Harris ; possibility of some volunteers ;

b) Setting up WhatsApp groups discussed, two versions required, one for the committee and then for the watering etc. Mark will investigate.

4. Planting plans

a) Funding position - Barry reported on his conversation with our ECC contact, who confirmed that capital funding for new trees from the Urban Tree Challenge Fund has been suspended although the income for the watering of the trees already planted will continue until the end of the contracted periods ;

this means that except for the Town Council 's budget, future purchases will be subject to VAT so fewer trees can be purchased, and we also won't benefit from the discount given by the nursery to ECC.

It was agreed that we should aim to complete the planting at the Rickstones Recreation ground ; also plant at the Alan Road playground ; provide two replacements at the Memorial Park ; and possibly plant at least two and possibly eight along the cemetery entrance road ;

b) Rickstones Recreation ground - our planned meeting with Levi of BDC to agree siting and numbers is still to be organised ; Barry has reminded him about this ;

c) Street trees - during the conversation with Jaime Carvalho of ECC, Barry obtained his approval to replace the missing trees in The Avenue (total four), with us sourcing ;

d) Memorial Park - we need a minimum of two replacements. It was suggested that we should perhaps count how many there are on the park anyway ;

e) Potential sponsored tree - Barry will pass our leaflet to the potential sponsor ;

f) Site adjacent to Lidl - Eric & Barry had met Andrew Digby, Levi White & Andy Brewer of BDC on site. They wished to tidy up the area and were wondering if we could assist them with the planting and maintenance of a number of trees.

We advised that we probably could although Barry stated that BDC would need to be funding the tree purchase.

Barry also reminded them that the Town Council was interested in adding this area to the River Walk which is adjacent (not least because the public probably assume that it's already part of the River Walk and therefore run by WTC) - this was noted by Andy, who is Asset Management;

Andrew will draw up a proposal for consideration.

Barry advised Hayley, Deputy Town Clerk, of the meeting and the result;

g) Templars scheme - Barry reported on his site visit to check the condition of the trees. All are doing well so no immediate need to water ; there are some minor maintenance issues with tree ties and cages.

5. Rivenhall Oaks - Mark is going to check the frequency of the watering of the new trees recently planted and will also check whether they have planted enough to replace those lost ; he also advised that a significant number of trees have been felled by the developers, in preparation for phase 4 of the development.

6. Watering - we have been doing this for one month now so there was a general discussion about how it was going and logistics.

7. Finance

a) Halcyon Close tree watering - we have still not received any payment from BDC as a donation to our funds for last summer's work, as was agreed. Barry will raise again with our contact at BDC and if that doesn't work will ask one of our councillors for help ;

b) It was agreed that we would reimburse Steve Harris for the purchase of a tray for his car boot to stop water leaks when carrying water cans ;

c) Deposit account - Barry will obtain information from HSBC.

8. Community orchard - Barry advised that WTC are considering establishing one; when considering suitable species, the choice of appropriate root stocks would be important; it was agreed that the Tree Group could offer to assist with planting if that would be helpful.

9. Website - to be resolved.

10. Forest Road Residents Association have contacted us to understand what we are doing (they are interested in conservation issues). Barry has advised including that we have planted extensively in their area.

11. Any other business

a). Barry had been asked to help re the trees on Powers Hall End green by Mrs Paula Ellis. She has been watering the trees but is concerned about their condition because of cars being parked too close and strimmer damage.

Eric & Barry have inspected the trees and coincidentally the grass cutting team were on site at the time - certainly at least two had suffered strimmer damage including probably that very morning!

We will place strimmer guards around the damaged trees ; unfortunately, we do not have the capacity to add these trees to our watering round.

Barry has advised Mrs Ellis ;

b) Stanley has looked at a tree growing strongly in the River Walk at the buttercup meadow and believes it is a 'Caroline' poplar ;

c) BDC trees at Spa Road area need the side shoots removed. Perhaps this could be advised to Andrew Digby;

d) It was suggested that we should ask to have a poster on the Town Council notice board ;

e) There was a discussion about the the issue of trees growing vigorously and absorbing their cages - not a problem with our trees but seen elsewhere. Tends not to affect the health of the tree? ;

f) Veteran trees - Stanley & Mark will do more work on this when time permits.

12.

Next meeting - Tuesday, 8th July, 7.30pm at Eric's.



Witham Town Council: Hire of Open Space Policy

This policy underpins the hire and use of certain Open Spaces managed by Witham Town Council.

Policy Overview

- Hire of open spaces are considered on a case-by-case basis, depending on what a client wishes to hire a space for, to what extent and what purpose.

Charges for Hire

- In all cases regardless of length and extent of hire, a refundable damage deposit of **£100.00** must be made which will be returned if no damage to open spaces has occurred.
- An additional charge of **£50.00** is payable in cases where vehicular access is required, and prior arrangement and a clear indication as to the use of vehicles must be provided to the Council in conjunction with insurance schedules.
- Use of open spaces is charged at a flat rate of **£20.00** per hour for weekdays and **£30.00** per hour for use on weekends. Assessed on a case-by-case basis.

General Conditions

- At no point should the hire area be left unattended.
- No footpath or public right of way will be blocked or diverted by hirers.
- A designated point of contact must be provided who will be responsible and accountable person for hire.
- No alcohol may be sold on site without an appropriate licence supplied by the Licensing Authority and seen by Witham Town Council.
- Activity on any area of the River Walk hired must not impact in any way on the ecology of the site, with all natural environments not subject to any disturbance by the hirer.
- All byelaws of open spaces must be adhered to at all times when hired.

Exclusions

- The Council will consider waiving the hire charge fees for charity and non-profit community groups looking to hire an open space for an activity. Each application will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis.

Agreed and adopted P&R minute 46 14/10/2019

Last reviewed: 22/07/2024

Review date: 22/07/2025

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Witham Town Council: Commemorative items on Witham Town Council Open Spaces Policy

This policy relates to commemorative trees and benches on Witham Town Council open spaces – the River Walk, James Cooke Wood and Whetmead Nature Reserve. It updates the previous policy for the display of commemorative items on Witham’s River Walk which was approved on 27th January 2014. The revised policy refers to all Witham Town Council managed land.

1. Witham Town Council operate a Commemorative Bench Scheme for the River Walk, James Cooke Wood and Whetmead Nature Reserve. It also runs a Commemorative Tree Scheme for the River Walk which is currently dormant.
2. Commemorative items such as flowers, vases, wreaths or ornaments are not permitted to be left on or around these benches or trees or on any areas on Witham Town Council land. Appropriate flowers and wreaths are only permitted during anniversary and holiday periods upon permission granted by Witham Town Council. These will then be removed after a two week period. This directive is confirmed in the terms and conditions of the Commemorative Bench Scheme application.
3. Any such commemorative item placed on Witham Town Council managed land will be removed by the Operations Team at the Council’s discretion.

Adopted: Environment Committee minute no.12 12/07/2021

Last reviewed: 22/07/2024

Review date: 22/07/2025

POLICY NO: WTC/22 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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Witham Town Council: Snow Clearance Policy

This policy relates to Witham Town Council's snow clearance procedures to be carried out by Witham Town Council's Operations Team.

In the event of snow that needs clearing, it was agreed that the following areas will be cleared by Witham Town Council's Operations Team following a suitable risk assessment, the following to be added - **on the day, carried out by the Operations Manager**: End of addition.

1. **Town Hall** – The public pavement in front of the Town Hall is the responsibility of Essex County Council. However, as members of Essex Highways' Salt Bag Partnership Scheme, Witham Town Council's Operations Team will clear the public pavement outside the Town Hall as well as clear, salt and grit the driveway leading from Newland Street to the Town Hall car park and a walkway leading to the side entrance of the building and kitchen. This should minimise the risk of slipping by staff and visitors to the Town Hall. It is not considered necessary to clear the whole car park.
2. **Bridges** – The Operations Team will be responsible for the four bridges along the River Walk:
 - The bridge near Laurence Avenue leading across the river to Maldon Road Park has high usage and is particularly hazardous as it is shaded by large trees.
 - Two bridges between Bridge Street and Guithavon Road which may be used by students of Maltings Academy.
 - One bridge near Bramble Road, which may be used by children attending schools

All four bridges will be cleared of snow, salted and gritted. The priority order will be the bridge near Laurence Avenue, followed by the bridge near Bramble Road and lastly the two bridges between Bridge Street and Guithavon Road.

The following to be added -

3. **Glebelands area of the River Walk** – This area of the River Walk has natural springs, the water of which, on occasion, flows across the path. In winter this water freezes and provides an additional danger to members of the public, in an area which has high school-pupil footfall. On the occasions where additional water is on the pathways, these areas will be salted and gritted. End of addition.

Approved: Environment Committee minute 13 12/07/2021
Last reviewed: 22/07/2024
Review date: 22/07/2025

POLICY NO: WTC/27 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

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Witham Town Council: Biodiversity Policy

Witham Town Council acknowledges its duty under the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, section 40, to consider the conservation of biodiversity when carrying out its functions.

Introduction

Witham Town Council's Environmental Policy reflects that it is committed to reducing its environmental impact and creating a sustainable community for residents and future generations. The Council acknowledges and supports climate emergency declarations have been made by Essex County Council and Braintree District Council to become carbon neutral by 2030.

Objectives

Biodiversity denotes every living organism found in an ecosystem or habitat and is the variety of life on earth. The object of this policy is to provide clear objectives to ensure that Witham Town Council and its committees actively work towards conserving and enhancing the biodiversity of Witham and takes into account the impact on biodiversity when delivering its services, carrying out its duties and when considering all strategic decisions.

The Town Council own, manage, and maintain several open spaces which include, James Cooke Wood, Whetmead Nature Reserve, the Closed Churchyard, and the River Walk as well as two allotment sites. These provide opportunities for natural habitats which the Council is committed to protecting through its Biodiversity and Environmental Policies.

Specific Biodiversity Actions

The Council will

- when commenting on planning applications, support designs which benefit biodiversity and consider whether the development would mean a loss of important habitats. Witham has two conservation areas and the Town Council monitors and reports contraventions to the Planning Authority as they occur.
- monitor the requirement for a 10% biodiversity net gain on all new relevant planning applications.
- look to include policies in support of biodiversity within the Neighbourhood Plan.
- continue to exclude the use of all pesticides on Council managed open spaces.
- discourage the use of pesticides on Witham's allotment sites.
- conduct all, non-urgent, hedge cutting and tree management outside of the bird nesting season.
- leave, where appropriate and safe to do so, fallen trees and deadwood in the River Brain and Blackwater to provide habitats for fish and river-born invertebrates.
- leave deadwood, where it is safe to do so, in our open spaces to provide habitat for beetles, woodlice and other insects.

- actively look to increase the biodiversity within its open spaces.
- promote biodiversity via the Town's social media, website and Voice magazine.
- work with local environmental voluntary groups and organisations such as Witham Tree Group.
- take into account Essex County Council's Local Nature Recovery Strategy.
- seek expert advice on possible actions in support of biodiversity such as Essex Wildlife Trust and the Forestry Commission.

Adopted: Meeting of the Policy and Resources Committee held 26.06.2023. Minute 6(c)

Reviewed: 22.07.2024 Environment Committee

Review date: 22.07.2025

POLICY NO: WTC056 – Environment Committee

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ITEM NO: 13

Officer Report: Allotment Management Report – rent charges
Issue:

Currently Witham Town Council allotments are charged at 48p per m² with tenants paying between £23.94 and £62.60 (average £52.13) at Cut Throat Lane and £56.16 at Wright Grove. The rent is increasing to 51p per m² in the year 2026/2027 as agreed at Environment Committee meeting of 22nd July 2024, minute 14 (average £55.39 CTL and £59.67 WG).

To put the rent in context the following are the charges at other allotment sites for the year 2025/26:

- Braintree District 55p m²
- Maldon 64p m²
- Colchester 50p m²
- Hatfield Peverel Allotment Association 40p m² + £6 membership

It is proposed that for the year 2027/2028, the cost is increased from 51p m² to 54p m² to take account of the increase in water costs which are anticipated and to cover the rising costs of plot clearance and waste disposal. This would take the average rental to £58.64 at Cut Throat Lane and £63.18 at Wright Grove.

It is a requirement that a year's notice is given to tenants to notify them of a proposed rent increase.

Impact Assessment

The Town Council has a statutory duty to consider the effects of its decisions on biodiversity, and crime and disorder in the area. As the Council has also formed a Climate Change Working Group, this should also be considered –

- (a) Biodiversity –no impact
- (b) Crime and disorder – no impact
- (c) Climate – no impact

Advice:

- To review the information and approve the rent increase to 54p per m² from 2027/2028.

SP/09.07.2025

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Agenda Item 14

Witham Town Council: Allotments**Policy Overview**

This policy explains the tenancy agreement and responsibilities for maintaining an allotment.

Introduction

The agreement sets out the terms and conditions that apply during a tenancy period when renting an allotment plot.

Management and use of allotment plots

1. The Tenant agrees to use the plot only for the cultivation of fruit, vegetables and flowers for the consumption and enjoyment by the Tenant and family.
2. The Tenant shall not carry out any business at the allotment plot.
3. The Tenant shall not sub-let the plot or hand over to another party to manage. The Town Council must be informed and the tenancy terminated.
4. Overnight stays on the allotment are prohibited.
5. The Tenant must keep the allotment garden tidy, free from rubbish, in a good state of cultivation and as free from weeds and long grass as possible. The tenant shall cultivate at least 75% of their allotment garden for the production of soft fruit, vegetables and flowers within a year of taking up their tenancy. Plots which have a large proportion of the ground with weed suppressant for long periods will be considered as non-cultivated.
6. The edges of the allocated allotment plot should be kept clear to prevent overgrown vegetation encroaching onto pathways and onto other plots. All pathways should be kept clear and tidy to ensure that the Town Council's Operations Team can carry out

cutting and maintenance work without obstructions.

7. The Tenant must keep in decent order all fences and hedges bordering their allotment plot.

8. The Tenant is only permitted to grow dwarf fruit tree species on the plot and these should not be planted near boundary paths. No other trees are permitted to be planted.

9. The Tenant should not cut or prune any trees or take, sell or carry away any mineral/gravel/sand or clay without written consent from the Council.

10. The Tenant should not damage any hedges, fences, gates, notice boards or other structures situated in the allotment site.

The following to be added -

11. Each allotment plot is numbered. Allotment holders are responsible for displaying their plot number clearly on their allotment. If the number and / or post are damaged or fall over it is the allotment holder's responsibility to reinstate the number / post. End of addition.

12. The Tenant is not permitted to deposit or allow to be deposited any refuse, waste or decaying matter (except reasonable quantities of compost and manure) in the allotment plot or hedges, ditches or other sections of the allotment site.

13. The Tenant is responsible for disposing of any non-compostable waste from their plot and removing it from the allotment site. The following to be added - No plastic bags of allotment waste (compostable or otherwise) are to be stored on a plot for more than 7 calendar days unless authorised by the Town Council. End of addition.

14. Tenants are not permitted to use carpets, Astroturf, or rubber underlay as weed suppressant due to the chemical content and the non-biodegradable nature of such items.

15. The Tenant should not cause any nuisance or annoyance to local residents in the vicinity of the allotments nor any other person visiting or working in the allotment site. Tenants are expected to be respectful of their allotment neighbours and each other.

16. Water consumption should be sensible by the Tenant and no alterations or additions are permitted to the water supply apparatus. The installation of water butts on plots is also recommended to encourage water conservation.

17. Any drought orders issued must be adhered to. The Council reserves the right to shut off the water supply and empty the pipes to protect the pipes from frost or for any other reason.

Health and Safety

18. No parking is permitted on allotment plots. Vehicles are permitted onto the site for parking and unloading in the designated car parks. (*Wright Grove Tenancy "No parking is permitted on allotment plots. Vehicles must use the designated car parking area only"*)

19. Gates to the allotment site must be secured at all times. Tenants must close the gates after entering or exiting the site and must lock the gates after exiting if the last to leave.

20. Dogs are permitted on to the allotment site only if they are kept on a lead around the grounds and must be kept under control within a Tenant's own plot throughout the duration of their stay. Owners must clear up after their pet and not permit the dog to become a nuisance to others. Any fouling must be removed and disposed of off-site. Failure to abide by Section 19 may result in a termination of the tenancy.

21. The use of weed killers, particularly glyphosate-based, is to be discouraged at the allotment site. Tenants are not permitted to use or allow the use of any chemical weed killer

which has a residual or long-lasting effect on the soil.

22. Tenants must comply with manufacturer's recommendations and take care to avoid any risk to people, animals and the environment when using chemical weedkillers. They must be stored safely, labelled correctly and used responsibly.

23. The Tenant is permitted to seek permission from the Council to keep chickens on their plot. Six hens are allowed but no cockerels. Other livestock is not permitted.

24. Tenants are not permitted to keep beehives on their allotment plots.

25. Tenants are permitted to have small bonfires on their plots which do not encroach onto adjoining plots. The use of incinerator bins is recommended. They must not be left unattended, must be extinguished as requested to do so if causing a nuisance and fully extinguished before the Tenant leaves the site.

26. No hazardous chemicals or materials are permitted to be stored on the plot.

27. The Council is not liable for the health and safety of any allotment holder or any persons brought onto the allotment site by an allotment holder. The Council does not insure the Tenant's possessions, crops, equipment or for personal injury to the Tenant or any other persons. The Council is not responsible for any vandalism, damage or loss.

Administration

28. From 22 June 2021, any new Tenant must reside in the Witham Town Council boundaries. If a Tenant moves out of the designated area, this will result in a termination of the tenancy.

29. From 22 June 2021, additional plots will not be allocated to those that already have an allotment plot in Witham and a hold current allotment tenancy with Witham Town Council.

30. On commencement of the tenancy, the Tenant is expected to begin work on the plot. If after three months, the Tenant has not started work, and dug or cultivated at least one third of the plot, the tenancy agreement may be terminated dependent on mitigating circumstances.

31. An allotment key is provided at the start of the tenancy. A £10 deposit is charged for the key which will be refunded when returned at termination.

32. The Tenant should inform the Council immediately of any changes to their contact details or address.

33. The annual rent charge will be due on 1st April each year at the start of the accounting period 1st April to 31st March. The annual rate charge will be notified prior to this date.

34. A deposit of 100% of the annual plot rent due will be charged at the start of the tenancy. This will be refunded at termination following inspection of the plot and confirmation that it has been left in an acceptable condition.

35. In any case of dispute between the Tenant and any other occupier of an allotment plot in the allotment site, the Council's decision shall be final.

36. The Tenant must obtain prior written consent from the Council to erect any structure on their plot and must provide details of the size and material of the proposed structure when obtaining permission. The Council does not accept any responsibility for thefts or damage to property left on allotment plots and these should be reported to the Police. The Tenant shall remove any structures at the end of the tenancy agreement, unless the Council agrees otherwise.

37. All Tenants will be informed if there are any changes to the allotment site in regards to maintenance works, changes to codes or keys for the site.

38. At the end of this agreement, the Tenant shall hand back the allotment plot in a reasonably clean and tidy condition, failure to do so may result in the Council not refunding the plot deposit and an additional charge may

be made to the Tenant to cover any additional clearance costs.

39. The Tenant shall keep the Council indemnified against all claims (including costs and expenses in connection with claims) against the Council from:

- any breach of the Tenant's obligations contained in this agreement
- the use of the plot
- any works carried out on the plot by the Tenant and
- any act of neglect or default by the Tenant or any person on the plot with the actual or implied authority of the Tenant.

Inspections

40. Inspections shall be carried out periodically by Council Officers of allotment plots to ascertain whether the terms and conditions of the tenancy agreement are being met. The Tenant shall not in any way impede the Council in exercising its rights of possession and control over the plot and shall enable Council Officers to enter and inspect the plot at any time.

41. If the plot is deemed to be untidy the Tenant shall receive a warning letter requesting that the plot is cut back and tidied and advising them that there will be a re-inspection of the plot after 14 days, evidence of the condition of the plot will be supplied in the letter.

42. If the plot is deemed to not be cultivated or used correctly, as per Section 5, the Tenant shall receive a warning letter requesting that the plot is cultivated to the appropriate standard and advising them there will be a re-inspection of the plot after 14 days, evidence of the condition of the plot will be supplied in the letter.

43. Following the warning letter, if the plot is still not being used for its intended purpose and / or is overgrown with little or no evidence of cultivation to the appropriate standard, then the Tenant will be issued with a 30 calendar days' notice.

44. After the 30 days' notice, the plot will be reviewed by a Council Officer. Following the review, if it appears to the Council that the plot is still untidy, overgrown and / or showing that little or no cultivation work has been carried out, and there has been no contact from the Tenant or there are no mitigating circumstances, the Council will serve notice to terminate the tenancy agreement with immediate effect.

45. If a plot is deemed to be untidy or not cultivated to the appropriate standard for a second time within a 12-month period, the Tenant will be issued with a 30 day's calendar notice without the requirement for a 14-day warning letter.

46. Tenants that have concerns regarding the management of their plot, are encouraged to contact the Council to discuss suitable options to assist the Tenant, for example halving the plot to make it more manageable may be possible.

Termination of tenancy agreement

47. The termination of the allotment tenancy agreement may occur in the follow ways –

- The tenant can request termination in writing or by email to Witham Town Council informing the Council of their details and when they wish to end their agreement.
- On receipt of the Council's notice (43 or 44) following an inspection of the plot establishing that the failure to cultivate the plot and no action being taken after the 30 days' notice being issued, the agreement will terminate immediately.
- On the Council giving 30 calendar days' notice where the Tenant has failed to pay the rent for more than 40 calendar days after the due date whether legally demanded or not.
- On receipt of notice from the Council if there has been a breach of any terms and conditions of the agreement other than rent, the

agreement will be terminated immediately.

- On the Council giving six months' notice.
- On the death of the Tenant.
- On the request to allocate the plot to an immediate family member of the Tenant who has worked the plot. Each request will be considered by Witham Town Council on an individual basis and will be subject to all criteria included in the Allotment Tenancy Policy.
- On moving out of the Witham Town Council boundary. Allotment holders who took up their tenancy prior to 22nd June 2021 and who moved prior to 1st April 2025, are welcome to remain subject to adhering to the other tenancy policies.

48. On termination, the Tenant will receive a termination letter informing the Tenant that they have 7 days to remove all personal belongings from the plot and ensure that it is left in a clean and tidy condition. If the condition is not deemed acceptable, the deposit held will not be refunded and an additional charge may be made to the Tenant to cover any additional clearance costs.

49. On termination, the Tenant will be required to return the site key to the Council. The deposit of £10 will be held until return of the key to the Council.

50. If the full annual rent has been paid, a refund for the remaining months of their tenancy will be paid.

51. The plot will then be offered to the next available applicant on the waiting list.

52. All Tenants' information will be removed from the database, under GDPR, within 12 months of terminating the tenancy.

Whom Is the Policy Applicable to?

The Policy applies to Tenants allocated an allotment plot.

**Adopted: Community Committee 09/08/2021
minute 27**

Reviewed: 22.07.2024

Review date: 22.07.2025

POLICY NO: WTC041 ENVIRONMENT
COMMITTEE

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ITEM NO: 15

Officer Report: Blackwater Lane Public Right of Way
Issue:

Braintree District Council have a Section 106 project currently being worked on which was originally to look at installing a bridge across the river in Blackwater Lane leading towards Hutley Close and Carraways. Unfortunately, no tenders were received for the bridge so the funds are now being used to install a footpath surface on the Public Right of Way track (PROW 101) that runs alongside the river leading to the entrance of Whetmead.

The Section 106 criteria was for *the provision of new and/ or improved footpaths/ footways/ cycleways in the vicinity of the development including but not limited to the provision of a bridge over the River Brain to link to Blackwater Lane.*

The expiry date for the funds to be approved is November 2025 so it has been agreed that the BDC project will go ahead with the creation of the path. Witham Town Council own the freehold at this location as part of River Walk land. The natural aggregate surface being proposed will be an improvement on the PROW track which can get very muddy for pedestrians at times.

Braintree District Council, as part of the project, have asked whether Witham Town Council will maintain the path for the future. It should be constructed so there is minimal maintenance required.

Impact Assessment

The Town Council has a statutory duty to consider the effects of its decisions on biodiversity, and crime and disorder in the area.

- (a) Biodiversity –no impact
- (b) Crime and disorder – no impact

Advice:

- To approve that Witham Town Council will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance of the footpath at this section of the PROW 101.

HA/16.07.2025

The following is a map of the proposed area showing the route of the Public Right of Way in red

