



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | Essex | CM8 2FE

OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

AGENDA

WEDNESDAY 4TH MARCH 2026, 2.00PM

MEMBERS:	Councillors	B.	Fleet (Chairman)	OFFICERS:	H. Andrews
		J.M.	Coleman		S. Dyer
		J.C.	Goodman (Vice)		S. Puckey
		P.	Heath		
		R.	Ramage		

CO-OPTEES:	S.	Black	-	(Witham & Countryside Society)
	J.	Casement	-	(Witham Wombles)
	J.	Palombi	-	(CPRE)
	P.	Shuttleworth	-	(Local Wildlife Interests)

1) APOLOGIES

To receive apologies for absence.

2) INTERESTS

To receive any declaration of interest.

3) MINUTES

To receive the minutes of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee held on 3rd December 2025 attached at page 3.

4) QUESTIONS AND STATEMENT FROM THE PUBLIC

An opportunity for members of the press and public present to comment upon any item on the agenda or raise new concerns.

5) CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the Clerk's Report attached at page 5.

6) OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

To receive the Operations Manager's verbal report on recent open spaces activities and to answer any questions put by members.

7) S106 PUBLIC ART PROJECT – RIVER WALK SCULPTURES

To receive a report on the River Walk Sculpture project attached at page 6.

8) REVIEW OF JAMES COOKE WOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN

To carry out a review of the James Cooke Wood Management Plan to ensure that all desired outcomes are being worked towards and decisions are being taken in accordance with this plan - circulated separately.

9) LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY EVENT

To receive a verbal report.



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MINUTES

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

Date: **3rd December 2025**

Present:	Councillors	J	Goodman	(Vice-Chairman)
		P	Heath	
	Co-optees	S.	Black	(Witham and Countryside Society)
		P.	Shuttleworth	(Local wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		S.	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

23. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fleet, J Casement and J Palombi. Cllr Ramage and Cllr J M Coleman were absent.

24. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

25. MINUTES

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

26. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members of the public present

27. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. The Deputy Town Clerk further advised that the photo post had been used already and the photographs were available to view on the website.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

28. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update and reported that the Operations Team were up-to-date with their work across open spaces. Notable actions this quarter included a successful community cut and rake day at Mill Lane Meadow, the installation of new bait bins at the pond and a new photography post at Whetmead.

The Operations Manager further advised that a fallen tree in the river, close to the Kingfisher nesting site, will be investigated for potential removal and that the erosion in the same area is a long-term problem requiring professional advice. It was also clarified that the bee hotels were intended for solitary bees and that the bee haven on Glebelands was opposite a CCTV camera to deter vandalism.

It was noted that there had been no complaints about motorised bikes on Whetmead this year but the idea of a V-gate, between Whetmead and the concrete bridge, would be considered if the problem returned.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

29. REVIEW OF THE RIVER WALK MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members were still happy with the Management Plan but suggested including the freehold acquisition date and potentially referencing the cut and collect at Mill Lane Meadow.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the management plans were available on the council's website and, following discussion, it was agreed that the documents would be made available in the Information Centre and a notice on the council's noticeboards would signpost residents to the documents.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

30. RIVER WALK BIODIVERSITY

Members welcomed the activities within the report and were keen to get more children involved in the monitoring activities.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

Meeting concluded at 2.45pm.

SP/3.12.25

Signed by Chairman.....



Clerk's Report: Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee

To note:

- The resurfacing and repair works required to Witham Town Council pedestrian bridges is scheduled to start during the Easter holidays. Weather dependent, it is planned that the bridge near Bramble Road will commence on 30th March 2026 to coincide with the school holidays so as to cause minimal disruption.
- Following tree surveys covering Whetmead and Witham Town Council land off of Blackwater Lane, all recommended works have now been completed. All works recommended from the River Walk 2024 tree survey have also been completed. The Oak monolith in the closed churchyard requires further reduction to 6 metres above ground to prevent failure and this will take place when ground conditions improve. Two new trees have since been planted near Helen Court and three new trees are planned to be planted at Whetmead when conditions improve.
- Plans are in place to hold another Bio Blitz Day in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust. It is hoped to hold it on Thursday 28th May (school half-term week) at Whetmead Nature Reserve

Advice:

To receive and note.

Officer Report: Section 106 Public Art Project – River Walk sculptures

To note:

Progress continues on the River Walk wooden sculptures project with discussions underway with the commissioned artist, Simon O'Rourke, to finalise designs and installation arrangements.

It has been agreed that six totem style engraved poles, three bee sculptures and seven further wildlife sculptures will be created and installed at various points along the River Walk – final designs to be agreed. The totem poles will be approximately two metres tall and will be used as welcome posts at prominent entrances to the River Walk. The bee sculptures will be installed in three of the bee friendly planted areas – Helen Court, Guithavon and near Bramble/Glebe areas. The remaining wildlife sculptures are planned to be installed in the locations shown on the map provided separately, but may be subject to change.

Conversations have taken place with the artist regarding our concerns of future vandalism. It is planned that a protective UV sealant will be applied to each sculpture which will reduce sun bleaching of the wood and help ease graffiti removal. Installation locations have been selected with visibility in mind and nature trail cameras are being considered for extra monitoring.

The current schedule for installation is mid-April and the artist will provide videos and social media updates throughout the creation of the sculptures which can be shared to generate interest and highlight progress on this project.

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 – Potential vandalism concerns.

Advice:

- To receive report and provide any feedback or suggestions.