



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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Monday, 24th July 2023** 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	S.	Ager	(Chairman)
	J.C.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)
	E.	Adelaja	
	J.M.	Coleman	
	B.	Fleet	
	L.	Headley	
	J.	Martin	
	R.	Ramage	
	A.	Sloma	
	B.	Taylor	

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk & Proper Officer
18th July 2023

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 3rd April 2023 (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 REPORT

To receive the income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st May 2023 and an exception report attached at page 5

7. HIRE OF OPEN SPACES POLICY

To receive and review the Hire of Open Spaces Policy attached at page 8

8. COMMEMORATIVE ITEMS ON WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL OPEN SPACES POLICY

To receive and review the Commemorative Items on Witham Town Council Open Spaces Policy attached at page 9

9. SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY

To receive and review the Snow Clearance Policy attached at page 10

10. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held 30th May 2023 attached at page 11

11. WITHAM TREE GROUP

(a) Report to Town Council

To receive a report from Witham Tree Group covering their activities for the 2022 – 2023 season attached at page 15

(b) Tree Group Minutes

To receive the Tree Group minutes for the meetings held April, May and June 2023 attached at page 17

12. TREE MANAGEMENT REPORT

To receive a recommendation report from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee attached at page 25

13. WITHAM IN BLOOM

To receive a report regarding town centre floral displays and to consider re-instating Witham in Bloom attached at page 26

14. PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP REPORT

To receive and consider a report on Essex Highway's Parish Paths Partnership attached at page 28

15. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

To consider and approve the Climate Action Plan recommendation from the Climate Change Working Group attached at page 31

16. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

TO RESOLVE that under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling within Schedule 12A (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

17. SECTION 106 AGREEMENT – WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE

To receive a report attached at page 32

HA/GK/18.7.2023



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

Issue:

To receive and note –

- Drainage works have been completed on the River Walk between Ebenezer Close and Bramble Road which has proved successful. Further enquiries are now taking place regarding water issues on the path near to Ebenezer Close gate and towards Chipping Hill.
- The line markings have been completed on the River Walk to distinguish between cyclists and pedestrians. A small section is to be done once the drainage issue has been resolved by Ebenezer Close gate end of the River Walk.
- Witham Town Council have joined Essex Highways Salt Bag Scheme following enquiries made with residents and businesses. Currently 14 businesses, 1 Residents' Association and 4 individual residents have signed up to join. The scheme will be advertised again in the next edition of the Witham's Voice and through other advertising methods to encourage more participants.

Advice:

To receive and note

HA/17.07.2023

[Back to Agenda](#)

Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 2)

	<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2023/2024</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
400 Environment									
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650	4,650	1,650	2,520	0	0	0	0	0
Total Income	1,650	4,650	1,650	2,520	0	0	0	0	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	126,714	150,656	177,454	26,582	0	0	0	0	0
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	4,000	4,035	8,000	237	0	0	0	0	0
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	4,000	5,268	4,000	302	0	0	0	0	0
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	7,650	7,396	10,500	106	0	0	0	0	0
4432 New Tree Planting	2,000	2,001	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4433 Tree Maintenance	9,000	8,870	5,000	-4,019	0	0	0	0	0
4435 River Walk Project Management	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	600	430	600	15	0	0	0	0	0
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	1,200	4,490	1,200	72	0	0	0	0	0
4444 Fleet	4,000	4,997	6,000	584	0	0	0	0	0
4445 Open Spaces General	1,500	1,810	2,500	1,281	0	0	0	0	0
4446 James Cooke Wood	2,000	1,597	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4447 River Walk	3,000	2,781	3,000	686	0	0	0	0	0
4448 Whetmead LNR	2,000	574	2,000	4,541	0	0	0	0	0
4452 River Walk Signage	3,000	1,044	3,000	1,907	0	0	0	0	0
4453 Litter Bins	3,000	1,963	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4455 Witham in Bloom	12,200	13,038	12,700	847	0	0	0	0	0
4457 Waste Disposal	1,000	1,946	1,200	0	0	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	186,864	212,895	254,154	33,140	0	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Witham Town Council

Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 2)

	<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2023/2024</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(185,214)</u>	<u>(208,245)</u>	<u>(252,504)</u>	<u>(30,620)</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		
Total Budget Income	1,650	4,650	1,650	2,520	0	0	0	0	0
Expenditure	186,864	212,895	254,154	33,140	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(185,214)</u>	<u>(208,245)</u>	<u>(252,504)</u>	<u>(30,620)</u>	<u>0</u>		<u>0</u>		

Environment Committee Income and Expenditure Exception Report

Heading	Budget	% Over	YTD	Reason
Open Spaces General	£2,500		£1,281	£1,169 listening bench. Funding of £1,129 received from BDC Councillors Community Grant. Credit recorded separately in sundry receipts
Whetmead LNR	£2,000	227%	£4,541	New Noticeboard & New Steps – Full Section 106 funding received from BDC (S106) to cover both. Credit recorded separately in sundry receipts
River Walk Signage	£3,000		£1,907	New Noticeboard £1,907. Funding of £1,147 received from BDC Councillors Community Grant. Credit recorded separately in sundry receipts

[Back to Agenda](#)

Hire of Open Spaces Policy

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



Policy Overview

1. Hire and use 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

2. 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 areas has occurred.
3. 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.
4. 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.

[Back to Agenda](#)

- 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 the responsible and accountable person for the 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 bye-laws 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 18/07/2022

Review date: 18/07/2023

POLICY NO: WTC/013 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 8

Witham Town Council: Commemorative items on Witham Town Council open spaces

1. 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.
2. 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.
3. Commemorative items such as flowers, vases, wreaths or ornaments not permitted to be left on or around these benches or trees or on any areas on Witham Town Council land. This directive is confirmed in the terms and conditions of the Commemorative Bench Scheme application.
4. Any such commemorative item placed on Witham Town Council managed land will be removed by the Operations Team at the Council’s discretion.

Approved: 18/07/2022

Review date: 18/07/2023

POLICY NO: WTC/22 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

[Back to Agenda](#)

Agenda Item 9

Witham Town Council: Snow Clearance Policy

1. This policy relates to Witham Town Council's snow clearance procedures to be carried out by Witham Town Council's Operations Team.
2. 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 –
3. **Town Hall** – The public pavement in front of the Town Hall is the responsibility of Essex County Council and any snow clearance and gritting should be left to them. Witham Town Council's Operations Team will 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.
4. **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.

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.

Approved: 18/7/2022
Reviewed: 09/01/2023
Review date: July 2023

POLICY NO: WTC/27 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

[Back to Agenda](#)



Agenda Item 10

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

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

Date: **30th May 2023**

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)
 P. Shuttleworth (Local Wildlife Interests)

 Officers H Andrews (Deputy Town Clerk)
 S Dyer (Operations Manager)
 S Puckey (Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

 Member of the Public John Goodman

1. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from J Palombi.

2. **APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**

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

3. **APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN**

It was **AGREED** that Cllr Susan Ager be appointed Vice-Chairman.

4. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

5. **MINUTES**

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

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

There were no questions.

7. **CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS**

No written representations were received.

8. **CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members were further informed that the new line markings on the River Walk were now complete and awaiting an official audit by the Town Council. It was noted that some members of the public felt that the cycle markings on the path approaching both sides of River View Bridge by Gimsons were misleading as cycling is not permitted over the bridge.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that enquiries are still ongoing with Braintree District Council regarding responsibility for the land by Lidl and Churchills. This will be on the agenda for the next meeting,

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

9. **OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update. Grass cutting was being carried out as per the River Walk management schedule and parts of the river had been cleared of debris ready for the Duck Race in July. A new culvert fence and noticeboard had been installed by the Duck Pond and 3 new trees had been planted on the River Walk. Additionally, the team had installed the new Listening Bench on Guithavon Green to replace the vandalised version.

At James Cooke Wood, the team have been removing dead and diseased trees over the winter period, as recommended by the Forestry Commission report. This work has allowed light to penetrate the canopy, improved overall tree health and successfully created greater bio-diversity on the forest floor. Members were informed that a couple of schools were known to use the wood as well as regular dog walkers.

At Whetmead, the team are keeping the paths clear and carrying out any remedial work. In addition, the parking bays have been clearly marked and the new North Steps have just been completed.

At the Closed Churchyard, the team have undertaken general maintenance. The Members were informed that ivy was gradually being cleared from previously covered graves and that the wildflower plugs had been planted and were so far doing well.

Routine maintenance was continuing at the allotments and summer station planting was expected to begin in the next fortnight.

Members **RECOMMENDED** that an event be held to mark the 30-year anniversary of the creation of James Cooke Wood either in the autumn or next year.

It was noted by Members that the pathway from Tithe Close to Powers Hall End was broken up and covered in weeds. It was believed that this was the responsibility of Essex Highways but it was **AGREED** that this would be looked into.

10. A12 WIDENING SCHEME AND WHETMEAD

The Deputy Town Clerk updated Members on the land offered and accepted as a replacement to that taken by the A12 widening scheme.

Members were informed that the Statement of Common Ground was likely to be signed that evening and that the current proposal was for work to begin in 2024 through to 2027. Members were advised that Whetmead will be closed to the public during most of this work. Members **RECOMMENDED** putting a plan in place to mark the re-opening of the nature reserve, following completion of the work.

Concern was raised about public footpath closures throughout the duration of work, and how these might be advertised. Members were assured that there would be regular forums ongoing throughout work to raise concerns of this nature.

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

11. RIVER WATER POLLUTION

Members discussed potential pollution levels in the River Brain and Blackwater and that, given the current national scandal surrounding river pollution, it might be advisable to investigate the situation in our own rivers. Members were informed that the Environment Agency undertake regular monitoring and it was **AGREED** that they would be contacted in the first instance for information.

12. TREE MANAGEMENT ON THE RIVER WALK

Members were concerned that several Willow trees had been felled as part of the Tree Management Programme and that, given the relatively short life of Willows, and the number of mature trees in our stock, it was likely that more would be felled in the next few years. Consequently, it was **RECOMMENDED** that the planting of young Willow trees be included in the River Walk Maintenance Schedule next winter.

13. WHETMEAD SECTION 106 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Members **AGREED** to receive the information and further **AGREED** to feedback on the nature posts by the end of June.

14. DUCK POND ENHANCEMENTS

Following the success of Tiptree's pond enhancements, Members would like to consider introducing reeds into Witham's Duck Pond to improve biodiversity.

It was **AGREED** that this would be investigated further and recommended to Environment Committee for consideration.

15. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members commented on the weeds on Newland Street, especially by the bus stop and were informed that this was the responsibility of Braintree District Council.

Members were concerned about rats in the River Brain by the Gauging Station but were informed that Braintree District Council regularly monitored the pond area location for vermin.

16. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee would be Tuesday 5th September 2023.

Meeting concluded at 3.05pm.

HA/SP/30.5.23

Signed by Chairman.....

[Back to Agenda](#)



Report to Town Council 2022 – 2023

The summer of 2022 once again proved to be challenging. Watering began in early April and continued weekly until late September. Despite this regular maintenance programme, we lost two trees. Closer examination suggested poor soil conditions at these two sites were probably the primary contributory factor. Before the autumn/winter planting season commenced we checked all trees for broken ties and posts and damaged cages and carried out remedial work need.

The planting season began with a very successful collaborative project on the Templars estate involving the local Residents' Association, Essex County Council, Witham Town Council, Braintree District Council and our wonderful supporters from Aegon. A total of 32 trees, including Japanese cherry trees around the children's play area, were planted. The success of this project may lead to further large scale projects funded through ECC including the area alongside the new cycle path from the Rivenhall Park Development, at Spa Road and Rickstones recreation ground. Extending the planting at Spa Road has been an objective for some time and using Town Council and Tree Group funds an initial tranche of 12 trees has been planted.

Following a request from a resident we completed a nine tree scheme at Cornel and Bryony Close using Town Council tree planting funds. Approval was sought from and readily granted by Eastlight, the landowners. The usual consultation with residents overlooking the planting sites was carried out before plans were finalised.

We planted two further memorial trees at the site off Flora Road by the underpass.

Chatten Free School for children with severe autism contacted the Tree Group for help with trees for a planned sensory garden. The use of Council funding for such school projects being barred by legislation, a Group member stepped forward to support this very worthy project and four trees with sensory appeal were planted.

Whips and small trees are particularly vulnerable to our hot dry summers and during the winter we replaced several at the site off Cut Throat Lane by the Electricity Sub Station.

Tree Group members visited Howbridge Junior School where we met children and their teacher to provide advice on a whip planting scheme planned by the school.

Shortridge Court Residents' Association contacted the Group for advice on a proposed tree planting scheme. However, a routine search for underground services revealed extensive pipelines running through the area where planting was proposed that prevented the project proceeding.

In January 2023 BDC invited views on its Healthy Housing Policy. The Tree Group took the opportunity to reflect on the need for tighter planning control of developers to ensure that trees planted are properly maintained to ensure their survival. In May we followed this up with details of a survey carried out by the Group of the condition of trees planted on the Rivenhall Park development that illustrated our concern that too many trees planted by developers are failing as a result of inadequate maintenance.

We have been monitoring plans for the widening of the A12 with increasing concern for the potential loss of mature trees currently offering protection from noise, pollution and a visual barrier to traffic movements. Replacement trees will take many years to put back that protection. When the time comes, we will endeavour to ensure that re-instatement of vegetation lost is with suitable trees maintained to ensure their survival.

We are aware of a growing appreciation by residents of the work we have been doing and with exciting plans for further major projects, we are looking forward to continuing to enhance our town with trees for the enjoyment and wellbeing of the people of Witham.

Allan Waight
Deputy Chairman
Witham Tree Group

June 2023

[Back to Agenda](#)

Tree Group minutes – 4th April 2023

Agenda Item 11(b)

Present: Eric Teverson, Stanley Brailey, Ken Davies, Allan Waight, Steve Harris, Richard Hawkes, Graham Wingrove, Mark Austin, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Jane Noble.

2 Minutes of 7th March accepted subject to correction - the BDC officer is Becky Baines, not as minuted.

3 Matters arising - Barry is due to meet the new ECC arboriculturalist shortly; Stanley advised that Shaun is understood to be returning to work on the 11th April.

4 Planting 2023/24

a] Barry reported on his successful meeting with Tom Moat of ECC climate change dept., visiting potential planting sites at Spa Road, Rivenhall cyclepath & Rickstones playing field. Tom agreed that they were all excellent sites and could fund all of them. However, we need to decide whether to do the planting over several seasons or it could all be done next season with a commercial contractor being used to do part of the work and subsequent watering. It was agreed that we would prefer to do it all ourselves in order to ensure that the trees thrive. Barry will advise Tom. The total number of trees under these proposals is 156. We would wish to do Spa Road first, followed by the cyclepath area, then Rickstones; it was noted that tree siting will be crucial at the last of these to avoid shading houses in due course... It may be necessary to have a key from BDC for access from Holly Walk to the cyclepath area.

On the subject of planting on ECC land, Tom had confirmed that the County Highways opposition has softened, particularly if a tree planting request is made via another County department [e.g. Tom].

The problem of developers was discussed; Barry had suggested that as part of the planning approval, it should be required that there should be an annual independent review of the trees planted, so that any losses can be dealt with early. [Allan will check with WTC whether they had in fact raised this issue with BDC, as discussed when we attended their Environment Committee.]

b] Eric was thanked for his stocktaking report.

c] We have received a request from Mr Ted Ellis to plant two trees in Luard Way next season. We agreed that we could do this subject to WTC's tree budget continuing and the usual underground services checks. Barry will advise Ted.

5 A12 widening - Allan is seeking clarification from the Highways Agency as to where trees would be lost and is awaiting their reply. The WTC had not been aware of potential losses by the industrial estate.

6 Memorial trees - we have been advised by Julie in the Information Centre of two enquiries. Barry will contact the individuals to explain how the scheme works.

7 Developer planting - Mark will do a full survey of the new Rivenhall estate shortly when the trees leaf up, and will then advise his contact at Remus of the results.

8 Finance

- a) Ken confirmed the current bank balance;
- b) Barry will pay the public liability insurance premium shortly;
- c) Ken advised that we should keep some funds in reserve to pay for a new bowser in due course;
- d) Eric will value the stock of materials.

9 Watering - it was agreed that the first run of the season will be on the 27th April, in order to check that the pump etc. is working.

10 Publicity - Barry reported on his talk to the Witham & Countryside Society.

11 Any other business

a) Mark reported on a new Friends of the Earth map of tree planting opportunities with reference to the Braintree district - he has forwarded this to Becky Baines of BDC. Apparently BDC have conducted a full tree canopy survey, which is currently being written up to form part of a future tree strategy. She has indicated that there would be tree planting opportunities from the autumn.

Becky is interested in what we have done over the last year, and Mark will contact her re a possible meeting;

b) Barry reported that a tree of ours near Ouse Chase no longer has a cage and is being vandalised through bark stripping, so needs re-caging. Eric will go and inspect it;

c) There was a discussion about the rule for tree planting near gas pipes; Allan will write to Cadent for clarification.

d) Memorial Park signage - Stan had emailed Louise Harvey of BDC asking for an update, and will follow it up;

e) It was reported that a hedge line has been removed at the Redrow site with new whips planted behind; also other small trees had been cleared nearby on the A12 side - part of the widening work ?;

f) Mark commented on tree survival near the large pedestrian bridge over the rail line;

g) It was agreed that Mark would put a towing hook on his van so that he could tow the bowser as well as Eric.

12 Next meeting - 9th May, 7.30pm at Eric's. NOTE: this will be a double meeting to include the AGM.

Minutes of Tree Group held 9th May 2023

Present - Allan Waight, Ken Davies, Mark Austin, Eric Teverson, Richard Hawkes, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Stanley Brailey, Jane Noble, Graham Wingrove.

2 Minutes of the 4th April accepted.

3 Matters arising - Allan is awaiting a response from Cadent and will send a reminder; Allan has raised with WTC developer issues, i.e. did they pursue with BDC the matter of developers failing to maintain or replace trees ? ; Memorial Park signage outstanding.

4 Planting 2023/24

a] Schemes with ECC - our planting schedule for 2023/24 has been agreed with Tom Moat; Tom will be asked to liaise with BDC re planting alongside the Rivenhall cyclepath; would we need a key to access ? - possibly not as there may well be access from the new estate; Barry will also ask Tom to undertake a services check;

b] WTC budget - assuming that this will fund nine trees, and we plant two at Luard Way as discussed previously, we need to identify sites for seven more. Agreed that we would consider further at next meeting - suggestions please;

c] Sponsored/memorial trees - Mrs S Foskew has confirmed that she would like to proceed with a tree in memory of their daughter [possible alternative to Flora Road ?].

5 Meeting with Joe Beznosiuk of ECC - briefed him on our group and showed our schemes at the Memorial Park and Templars; ECC have a new strategy whereby they will survey Essex towns to identify where trees need planting or need felling or other works & proceed with doing the work; he is aware of problems with developers and are working towards addressing them [I suggested an annual review & this may form part of it]; problem may appear of central government loosening planning rules and few trees then being planted; he now decides tree applications for Witham, on behalf of BDC; street trees discussed. What would be the watering regime for new plantings ?

6 A12 widening - Allan has had an exchange of emails with the Highways Agency. The expansion is on both sides of the road , with trees to be removed and potential, losses; we have been sent maps with details; there is no indication re the replanting of trees or screening of properties; Gershwin footbridge - residents have requested a different location.

7 Developer planting - Mark has done a report of trees on the Rivenhall Park estate, detailing losses; the survey has been provided to the developers' site maintenance team; Allan will copy the survey to BDC for consideration as part of their ' Healthy Housing Strategy'.

8 Publicity - Jane is looking at possible style of leaflets; Richard will draft content; aim is to explain who we are and seek new members.

9 Watering & maintenance - Eric is not available for the 25th May or several dates in June; therefore Mark will arrange for a towing hook to be put on his van & we will reimburse him [c. £395 + new number plate];
maintenance - repairs done to Templars tree cages following mower damage; BDC deny being responsible but have agreed to leave grass around the cages; we need to mark cages in the Memorial Park to identify those that need watering [Eric, Richard & Barry, 11th May].

10 Finance - our current balance was confirmed at the AGM; Barry has renewed our public liability insurance with Zurich Municipal, to be reimbursed; it was agreed that , in addition to Jane becoming a signatory, it would be convenient for Eric & Richard to be appointed too.

11 Any other business

a] Mark has inspected the trees adjacent to the footbridge over the rail line and confirmed that they were growing satisfactorily;

b] re the willows felled on the River Walk, Chipping Hill, they should be replaced to help absorb the excess water in the area; also , other willows downstream are looking elderly, so new trees are needed; Barry to raise this with WTC.

12 Next meeting - Tuesday, 6th June, 7.30 pm , at Eric's.

Tree Group minutes for 6th June 2023 meeting:

Present: Allan Waight, Eric Teverson, Graham Wingrove, Steve Harris, Richard Hawkes, Mark Austin, Barry Fleet.

Steve was welcomed to his first meeting as a committee member.

1 Apologies - Jane Noble, Ken Davies, Stanley Brailey

2 Minutes of the 9th May accepted.

3 Matters arising - the need to replace willows in the Chipping Hill area of the River Walk has been noted by the Town Council's Open Spaces committee.

4 Planning 2023/24

a) Essex County Council schemes - Tom Moat of ECC had confirmed that the funding application had been submitted to the Forestry Commission; potential future income from watering noted; Eric has visited the cyclepath and paced it out although precise planting positions & tree species to be decided; we assume that Tom will be doing services checks but Allan will do so too as it is believed that a sewage pipe may be in the area;

b) Town Council budget - dead trees need replacing at Forest Road, The Avenue [though previous tree roots may be an issue here], and at Bramble Road; the greensward behind Ramsden Mills was suggested as a possibility if we can establish site ownership;

c) Sponsored tree - feasibility of alternative site still to be checked;

d) Lawrence Avenue - we looked at this area years ago but thought impractical because of services, however, Allan will redo the checks.

5 A12 widening - discussion about probable tree losses and the proposed Gershwin footbridge.

6 Developer issues

a) Rivenhall Park - Mark has had no update yet from Remus re tree replacements;

b) Gimson's - three new trees have already died [are they watering the grass but not the trees ?];

c) Allan has submitted information to BDC for their 'Healthy Housing Strategy'; WTC may be recommending ten year monitoring and enforcement.

7 Publicity - Richard to draft the text for a leaflet.

8 Watering & maintenance

a) Barry advised that he is keeping a log of watering dates at the Templars site, anticipating that ECC/Forestry Commission may need this in due course;

b) Stanley has sprayed at the Memorial Park so we can find the irrigation tubes;

c) Eric has repaired/replaced tree ties at the Memorial Park.

9 BDC

- a] the graduate project officer Grace Allman may join us at our watering session this week to meet us;
- b] no further news was received regarding the Memorial Park signage.

10 'Elms of Essex' - Eric will deal with the request from Mr David More for photos of the Lynfield elm.

11 Finance

- a] Cash balance advised;
- b] Mark has had a tow hook attached to his van; cost of £395 reimbursed to him by cheque; invoice to be received for the records.

12 Any other business - none.

13 Next meeting - Tuesday, 11th July, 7.30 p.m., at Eric's.

Post meeting note: Stanley advised that -

- a] he has made contact with the cricket club , saying that we could assist with tree planting to screen the new houses if they fund the trees. They will let him know;
- b] there is a dead oak in Bramble Road [this is probably the same tree noted at 4b above];
- c] an alder near Asda has been damaged by a mower;
- d] he had contacted Shaun Taylor re outstanding matters but no reply [possibly now retired ?];
- e] he will need to purchase some more spray.

[Back to Agenda](#)

These are our minutes of the 11th July.

Present: Eric Teverson, Stanley Brailey, Richard Hawkes, Allan Waight, Graham Wingrove, Mark Austin, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies: Jane Noble, Steve Harris, Ken Davies.

2 Minutes of the 6th June accepted.

3 Matters arising - a picture of the Lynfield elm had been received from Mr More, as will appear in his book.

4 Planning 2023/24

It was agreed that we should view the various sites as part of the planning process.

a) ECC/Forestry Commission Urban Tree Fund. It is believed that ECC & BDC have liaised over land ownership approval but Barry will check; Allan reported on utility issues - Cadent, Essex & Suffolk Water & Power Network have no interest in the Rivenhall cyclepath area, ESP [the power firm re the street lighting] have yet to provide accurate details and no news from Anglian Water yet; Eric suggested we do whip planting on the rail line side at the same time as planting trees;

b) Town Council budget - it has been established that the green adjacent to Ramsden Mills is owned by ECC, so Barry has contacted Joe Beznosiuk of ECC for permission to plant;

c) Sponsored tree - planting near Pattisson Close now looks a possibility so Allan will do a services check;

d) Lawrence Avenue - Allan will do services checks.

5 Developer issues - Mark has received an unsatisfactory response from the developers' agents regarding maintenance of new trees on the Rivenhall Oaks estate, and Richard will draft a reply; Barry reported that Redrow appear to have planted some new trees by the roundabout entrance to their estate and then moved them back a couple of metres on the 7th July [making their survival even more doubtful without regular watering].

6 Report to the Town Council - our annual report is to be considered at their Environment Committee on the 24th July. Allan & Stanley will attend to respond to any questions.

7 Publicity - Richard is to draft the text for a leaflet; re the website, there had been a problem for people wishing to contact us and Jane is seeking to resolve this with the Conservation Volunteers [whose platform we use]; it was suggested that our email address should be added to the site to provide another contact point.

8 Watering & maintenance - whilst Eric has been away, Mark has been towing the bowser, and this has gone well [congratulations to Mark]; one of our trees in The Avenue had broken it's tie but Eric has repaired this; there has been some vandalism to our trees at Spa Road [branches broken] and this should be reported to the PCSOs as it occurs.

9 Memorial Park signage - Stan has been chasing Louise Harvey of BDC regarding this and will continue to do so.

10 Finance - we had given a cheque to Mark for the purchase of the tow bar for his van but the payment had not been credited to his account, apparently because of a bungled security check by HSBC, so a replacement cheque was given to him. We need to see how this appears on our bank statement.

11 Any other business

a) Allan spoke about his neighbour's attempt to fell three trees in his garden covered by the Grove estate TPO, and it was suggested that Allan submit an objection on behalf of the Tree Group; Allan advised that Forestry England now offer a calculation basis on their website so that one can work out the loss of stored carbon if a tree is felled, so Allan will do an article for the website;

b) Stanley advised that the Cricket Club had not responded regarding additional planting on their boundary, so no further action on this;

c) As it can be difficult to locate the irrigation tubes for watering when the grass is long, Stanley has been spraying round affected trees; it was agreed that it would be better to start earlier in the year, and that the Templars planting needs attention.

12 Next meeting - Tuesday, 15th August at 7.30 pm at Eric's house.



ITEM NO: 12

Officer Report: Tree Management Report

Issue:

At the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee meeting of 30th May 2023 (minute 12), it was recommended that the planting of young Willow trees should be included in the River Walk maintenance schedule.

During winter period of 2022/2023 a total of 25 trees were felled as part of planned tree maintenance on the River Walk following recommendations from an independent tree survey carried out in October 2022. The majority of these trees were in the Ebenezer/Glebe area of the River Walk with 2 further trees felled near to Guithavon Road. It is considered that, where possible and appropriate, tree replacement planting should be carried out when trees are felled.

It is suggested that funds should be taken from the tree maintenance budget to purchase and replant trees to replace some of those felled and increase our tree stock on the River Walk. Officers already used the remaining 2022/2023 tree maintenance budget in March 2023 to purchase two substantial trees which were planted in the Ebenezer/Glebe area of the River Walk (a Beech and a Chestnut). The River Walk also lost a substantial Poplar unexpectedly in the Guithavon area of the River Walk during 2022/23 and this was also replaced. A further tree (London Plane) was planted on Guithavon Green in November 2022 in memory of the late Queen.

It has been recommended to Officers that a mix of tree stock should be planted alongside the suggested Willow trees to ensure that there is a variety of tree species on the River Walk. Willows, Alders, Hornbeam and Whitebeam have been recommended for planting in waterlogged soil so may contribute to absorbing excess water in the Ebenezer/Glebe area which continues to be an issue.

The 2023/24 tree maintenance budget for the year is £5,000 with an additional £4,000 allocated in the earmarked reserves. £2,540 is already due to be spent so far on known planned tree works later in the year.

It is suggested that £1,000 from the overall tree maintenance budget should be used for tree planting on the River Walk to ensure that a reasonable amount of replacement trees can be planted. This will take place over the winter period so the budget can be revisited, if necessary, later in the year.

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 – positive impact with planting a variety of tree species.
- (b) Crime and disorder – no impact
- (c) Climate – Improvement to carbon reduction by offsetting tree felling with tree planting.

Advice:

- To approve spending £1,000 from the tree maintenance budget for tree planting on the River Walk.



ITEM NO: 13

Officer Report: **Witham in Bloom**

Issue:

Witham Town Council would like to resume the Witham in Bloom initiative, which ceased when volunteer, Annie Northfield, stepped down as leader of the group in 2015 after 15 years of success, including winning the Silver Award in the 2004 Anglia in Bloom competition.

Since 2015, Witham Town Council has taken over a much scaled down version of the scheme, through the funding of floral displays in various locations in the centre of town, including lamp posts, stone troughs and hanging baskets. Working with our partner, Skippers Maintenance, Witham enjoys summer blooms from July to October and, apart from the lamp-posts, these are replaced with winter bedding plants until the spring. WTC took on this mantle alone and unfortunately the group of volunteers has been lost. In 2023/24 the direct cost to the Town Council was £14,140 in addition to the lamp-column testing at £847.

In 2024, WTC would like to increase the coverage of the floral displays while reducing costs and encourage residents, community groups, schools and businesses to come forward and work together to enhance the appearance of the town for the benefit of everyone. Restarting Witham in Bloom in the community on a larger scale would offer a multitude of benefits including:

- Improved local surroundings – a more attractive and welcoming environment improves the quality of life for everyone. The result can reduce anti-social behaviour, attract visitors and increase footfall to the town with a potential boost to the local economy
- Community engagement – bringing communities together for a positive common goal, increases connectivity and communication locally. Working together to enhance local neighbourhoods can offer residents a feeling of community empowerment with a sense of belonging, ownership and civic pride. This has proven, in other areas, to reduce litter, graffiti and vandalism.
- Environmental benefits – planting can improve the air quality in the town and provide a habitat for bees and other pollinators. Furthermore, the event can be a catalyst for bringing attention to Climate Change, conservation, sustainability and recycling issues.
- Psychological – increasing exposure to nature, including flowers and plants is proven to increase people's mental health and wellbeing.

WTC are aware that attracting volunteers to take on the running of Witham in Bloom is likely to be a challenge and anticipates that it will need continued support in the first year or two but feel the potential advantages are worth following up.

During its peak, Witham in Bloom had strong engagement throughout Witham with business sponsorship, garden open days, school competitions and prizes for the best displays and WTC would like to encourage a team of volunteers to come forward, with WTC support, to restart the programme in 2024.

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 –potential improvement

- | |
|--|
| (b) Crime and disorder – possible reduction
(c) Climate Change– potential improvement |
|--|

Advice:

- To review the information and assess whether Witham Town Council should promote the re-instatement of an independent Witham in Bloom group.

SP/05.07.2023

[Back to Agenda](#)

Officer Report: Essex Highways Parish Paths Partnership
Issue:

At the Environment Committee meeting of 3rd April 2023 it was resolved that Witham Town Council join Essex Highways' Parish Paths Partnership (minute 48). It was suggested that the Council join this scheme in place of the Highways Devolution Scheme which finished on 28th February 2022.

There are 33 official Public Right of Way footpaths (PRoWs) in Witham and 4 of these currently have an annual cut by Essex Highways.

Essex Highways' Public Right of Way Officer has been contacted and it has been agreed that Witham Town Council will take over the maintenance of Moat Farm Chase as this leads to the River Walk and was maintained by the Council during the Highways Devolution Scheme. It has also been agreed that upon receiving enquiries regarding overgrown PRoWs, the Council will contact Essex Highways for permission to carry out the necessary work.

However, the normal Service Level Agreements that are in place for this scheme currently only pays £0.19p per metre of vegetation trimmed. The proposal to utilise the remaining Devolution funds would mean that it would take over 20 years if just spent on vegetation cutting alone.

There is the possibility of using funds for improvements to signage on the PRoWs, surfacing and any other enhancements considered necessary. It has therefore been suggested that over the summer period, Members assess each Public Right of Way in Witham to establish if any enhancements are needed and whether Witham Town Council should consider taking over the vegetation cutting of particular paths. This will then be submitted to Essex Highways for approval and to start in the next financial year.

Despite the request made to Essex Highways to continue with the Highways Devolution Scheme which enabled the Council's Operation Team to carry out further tasks including additional vegetation cutting, graffiti clearance, bus shelter and signage maintenance, only the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme is the current option being offered to the Town Council. Members should also consider whether to continue with the scheme on the current terms.

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

Advice:

- To approve Members assessing each Public Right of Way in their ward and supplying feedback to Officers.
- To consider whether to continue with the Parish Paths Partnership Scheme.

£0.19p per metre strim

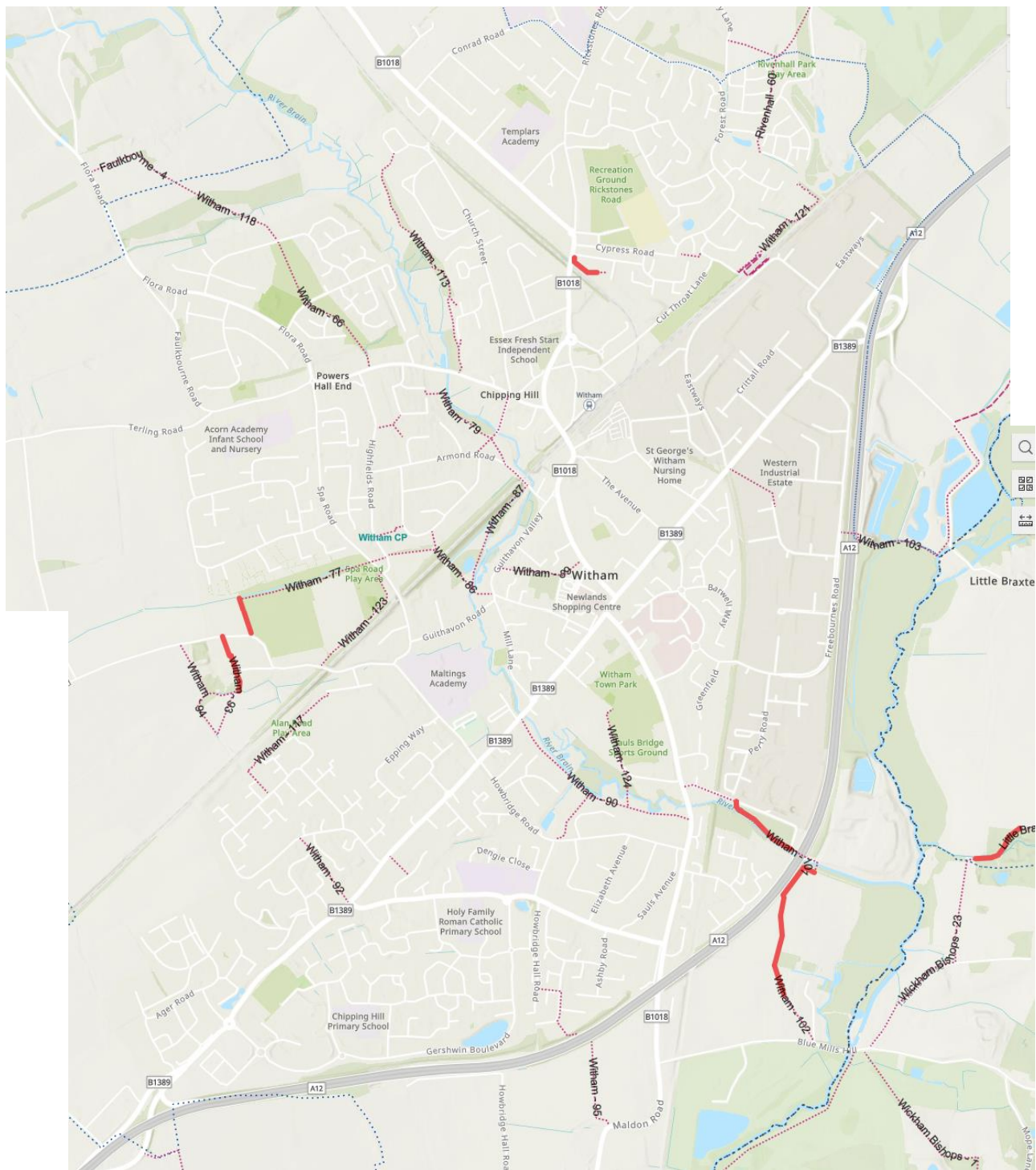
Location	PRoW ref	Length (m)	Essex Highways	Comments	Environment Committee	Cost
Blunts Hall to Ness Walk	76	120	Annual cut			£22.80
Blunts Hall Drive to Blunts Hall Rd	93	201	Annual cut			£38.19
Homefield Rd	67	105	Annual cut			£19.95
Benton Hall	102	106	Annual cut	Outside our parish		£20.14
Blackwater Lane towards Benton Hall	101	656	Annual cut	Partly outside our parish		£124.64
Moats Farm Chase	88	159	Not cut		Cut 31/05/2023	£30.21
Lockram Lane	89	296	Not cut		Cut 01/06/2023	£56.24
Chipping Dell	114	39	Not cut		Cut 29/06/2023	
						£7.41
Powers Hall Ed to Honeysuckle	66	553	Not cut	BDC responsibility		
Spa Rd/Rugby field	77	519	Not cut	Does not need a separate cut. (Hard surface path alongside green space already maintained)		£0.00
Stourton Close to Saxon Drive	78	94	Not cut			
River Walk Saxon Drive to Moats Farm Chase	79	314	Not cut		Already WTC	£0.00
Highfields Rd towards Stourton	80	55	Not cut			£10.45
Spa Rd/River Walk path by Asdas	85	162	Not cut	BDC responsibility		£0.00
Chelmer Rd to Asda River Walk	86	323	Not cut	Mostly BDC responsibility		£61.37
River Walk by Guithavon to Armond	87	621	Not cut		Already WTC	£0.00
River Walk Bridge St to Maldon Rd	90	705	Not cut		Already WTC	£0.00
Hatfield Rd to Town End Field	91	87	Not cut			£16.53
Hatfield Rd to Allectus Way	92	274	Not cut			£52.06
Blunts Hall Drive/Rd field	94	363	Not cut			£68.97
Howbridge Hall Rd to Gershwin Bld	95	275	Not cut			£52.25
Howbridge Hall Rd to Maldon Rd	96	328	Not cut			£62.32
Pattison Close to Howbridge Rd	107	193	Not cut	Does not need a separate cut (Hard surface path edge of River Walk so already maintained)		£0.00
Chelmer Rd to Highfields Rd	110	106	Not cut			£20.14
River Walk Ebenezer to Chipping Hill	113	864	Not cut		Already WTC	£0.00
Chipping Dell to River Walk	115	32	Not cut			£6.08
Mulberry Gardens to Cypress Rd	116	80	Not cut			£15.20
Alan Rd to Stevens Rd	117	509	Not cut			£96.71
Honeysuckle Way towards Faulkbourne	118	409	Not cut			£77.71
Newland Street to Stepfield	119	214	Not cut			£40.66
Motts Lane to Holly Walk	121	515	Not cut			£97.85
Blunts Hall Rd to Spa Rd via Rugby/Football Clubs	123	417	Not cut			£79.23
River View to Town Park	124	364	Not cut			£69.16

£1,146.27

£27,772.64 available from Highways Devolution balance.

If spent just on vegetation cutting this would take 24 years to spend.

We are due to assess all PRoWs over the summer to see if there are any enhancements needed, i.e. surfaces, wayfinding posts etc, and then will apply to ECC for approval of these.



Paths currently cut by Essex Highways (mid may – 31st July)

District	Parish	Type	Number	Cut_Length (m)
Braintree	PROW In Witham	Footpath	93	201
Braintree	PROW In Witham	Footpath	67	105
Braintree	PROW In Witham	Footpath	102	106
Braintree	PROW In Witham	Footpath	101	656
Braintree	PROW In Witham	Footpath	76	120

Cutting rates under the Service Level Agreement were updated in Spring 2023 to 0.15p/linear m for path that can be mown and 0.19p/linear m for path where access restrictions require a strimmer to be used.

[Back to Agenda](#)

Witham Town Council Climate Action Plan

Action	When by:	Responsible Party	Comments
Management Plan for Closed Churchyard. (Management Plans for James Cooke Wood and Whetmead Nature Reserve due in subsequent years)	March 2024	WTC	Improved maintenance regime.
Wildflower planting	June 2023	WTC	Continuation of wildflower planting trial in Closed Churchyard. To be extended to other open spaces if successful. Reduces carbon footprint.
Review of open spaces equipment using fuel energy	September 2023	WTC	Reduce carbon footprint.
Provision of further allotments on Rivenhall Park development	August 2023	Bellways	Encourages growing local produce and sustainability
Annual tree planting in Witham	Annually	Witham Tree Group/WTC	Continue to provide annual grant to Witham Tree Group for planting in Witham. Reduces carbon footprint.
Provision of further allotments on Mulberries development	March 2024	Redrow	Encourages growing local produce and sustainability.
Investigate the feasibility of installing solar panels on Council owned property	December 2023	WTC	Reduces carbon footprint
Investigate the feasibility of rainwater catching system on the Town Park toilets.	December 2023	WTC	Reduces carbon footprint
Review reducing the use of single-use items at Town Council events and encourage vendors to use recyclable products	September 2023	WTC	Reduces carbon footprint. Reduction of items to landfill
Continue with the Town Council's seed exchange project in the Information Centre	Annually	WTC	Encourages growing local plants and produce. Reduces carbon footprint.
Review using sustainable Christmas lights for Witham	December 2025	WTC	Reduce carbon footprint.