



Witham

town council

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

MINUTES

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

Date: **5th December 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)
J.	Goodman	(Local Interests)
J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)

Officers

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

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt.

26. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

27. MINUTES

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

28. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No public were in attendance.

29. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received by the Council.

30. CLERK'S REPORT

Members were further informed that in addition to the six trees planted near Chipping Dell, two trees had been planted on the River Walk close to Guithavon Road. Members were also advised that ecology assessments of James Cooke Wood and the Closed Churchyard are due to be carried out in spring 2024 to be used as a basis for future management plans.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

31. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update. The Operations Team have recently planted eight trees on the River Walk and flowering shrubs at Whetmead, are half way through their meadow mowing and have been involved in Witham's Halloween, Remembrance Parade and Christmas events. The only outstanding autumnal job is hedge cutting as the soil has been too wet recently to withstand the weight of the platform required.

During the winter period, the team will continue felling dead and diseased trees at James Cooke Wood, infill the man-made river bank erosion at Whetmead and continue to remove ivy from gravestones and undertake restorative pruning at the Closed Churchyard in addition to general maintenance at the allotments.

Members were advised that the Operations Manager will be viewing a mower in the next few days to potentially replace the defunct Ransomes Parkway mower and reassured Members that river erosion is monitored regularly. It was also noted that Essex Highways are aware that new directional signage for James Cooke Wood is still outstanding.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

32. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE SECTION 106 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

Members were advised that the nature trail posts will be installed before the A12 widening scheme commenced and should not be affected by any works. Concern was expressed about the height of the etching posts and that a step may be necessary in front of each post if they were too tall for children.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

33. SECTION 106 FUNDING AND OPEN SPACES

Members were informed that there was a tight deadline for the spending of Section 106 money to be used for James Cooke Wood and that quotes had been sought for a boardwalk over a boggy area of the site. Depending on the chosen option, additional funds would be spent on a noticeboard and other improvements were being considered.

A second Section 106 funded project was proposed for an area close to River View where a bee haven flower bed with bee posts is due to be created by the Bee Friendly Trust in the spring,

Members were invited to put forward any ideas for projects in future years which would enhance Witham's open spaces.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

34. A12 WIDENING AND WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE

Members were informed that funds would be available following the A12 widening scheme and ideas were being collated. A bird hide was suggested as an addition to the list.

The proposal of artwork underneath the bridge was particularly well received and Members were subsequently interested in knowing what was planned for the design of the bridge by the entrance to Whetmead. It was **AGREED** that this would be investigated.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

John Goodman left the Chamber at 14.46.

35. WATER QUALITY OF WITHAM'S RIVERS

Members were further furnished with an interpretation guide to understanding the data and it was **AGREED** that Members would review the information for the next meeting. Members recognised that the information was complex and it was further **AGREED** that Essex Wildlife Trust would be approached for additional help in understanding the impact of the information.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

36. WITHAM POND ENHANCEMENTS UPDATE

Members were informed that the suggested floating island is being recommended for inclusion in The Potential Open Spaces Improvements Document 2024 held by Braintree District Council which would potentially permit Section 106 money to be allocated to this project in the future, if approved. Members were advised that there is strict criteria for projects and notification of acceptance onto the list would be known in summer 2024. If the project was accepted and funds available a more detailed analysis of floating islands for Witham pond would be conducted.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

37. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

38. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee would be held on Tuesday 5th March 2024 at the earlier time of 1.30pm.

Meeting concluded at 3.12pm.

SP/06.12.23

Signed by Chairman.....

DRAFT