

Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE 01376 520627 witham.gov.uk

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: Monday, 3rd April 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	K.	Atwill	(Chairman)
To be present.	Councillors			
		J.	Goodman	(Vice Chairman)
		J.	Bayford	
		P.	Heath	
		S.	Hicks	
		A.	Kilmartin	
		C.	Lager	
		M.	Lager	
		S.	Rajeev	
		M.	Weeks	

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 9th January 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 upon any item on the Agenda.

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 a verbal report from the Deputy Town Clerk on matters arising.

6. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE AND BUDGET REPORT

To receive the income and expenditure and budget reports for the period $\mathbf{1}^{st}$ November 2022 and 28th February 2023 attached at page 4 .

7. SECTION 106 FUNDING

To identify opportunities for funding through the Section 106 monies.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

To receive the Minutes from the Climate Change Working Group Meeting held 12th January 2023 attached at page 6.

9. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held 14th March 2023 attached at page 9.

10. PARISH PATHS PARTNERSHIP

To receive a verbal report regarding joining the Parish Paths Partnership.

11. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS

To approve the recommendation from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee and suggestion from the Climate Change Working Group to join Essex Wildlife Trust's wilder towns scheme.

12. WITHAM IN BLOOM

To receive a report attached at page 13.



13. TREE GROUP

To receive the Minutes of the Tree Group Meetings held 24^{th} January and 7^{th} March 2023 attached at page 15.

Nikki Smith Town Clerk

HA/GK/SS 27.3.2023

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27/03/2023

16:18

Witham Town Council Current Year

Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 11)

ITEM 6

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		2021/2	2022	2022/2023						
		Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
<u>400</u>	Environment		_							_
1401	Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650	1,810	1,650	4,650	4,650	0	0	0	0
	Total Income	1,650	1,810	1,650	4,650	4,650	0	0	0	0
4400	Operations PAYE/LGPS	115,000	129,058	126,714	138,371	150,962	0	0	0	0
4420	Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	4,000	1,758	4,000	4,035	4,035	0	0	0	0
4425	Lighting Maintenance & Utility	2,500	3,377	4,000	4,910	4,910	0	0	0	0
4431	Toilet Block - Town Park	7,650	7,019	7,650	7,274	8,200	0	0	0	0
4432	New Tree Planting	2,000	2,000	2,000	1,961	2,000	0	0	0	0
4433	Tree Maintenance	9,000	4,500	9,000	3,905	9,000	0	0	0	0
4436	Dog Bin Maintenance	2,000	95	600	430	430	0	0	0	0
4437	Dog & Bench Schemes	1,200	1,628	1,200	4,490	4,490	0	0	0	0
4444	Fleet	4,000	5,188	4,000	5,095	5,400	0	0	0	0
4445	Open Spaces General	1,500	4,291	1,500	1,810	1,975	0	0	0	0
4446	James Cooke Wood	2,000	624	2,000	400	1,620	0	0	0	0
4447	River Walk	3,000	3,372	3,000	1,786	3,000	0	0	0	0
4448	Whetmead LNR	2,000	27	2,000	172	1,000	0	0	0	0
4451	NIL	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4452	River Walk Signage	3,000	3,780	3,000	0	2,000	0	0	0	0
4453	Litter Bins	1,500	0	3,000	1,963	1,963	0	0	0	0
4454	NIL	1,000	6,588	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4455	Witham in Bloom	12,200	11,819	12,200	13,038	13,038	0	0	0	0
4457	Waste Disposal	0	0	1,000	1,925	2,100	0	0	0	0
	Overhead Expenditure	175,550	185,123	186,864	191,565	216,123	0	0	0	0

27/03/2023

16:18

Witham Town Council Current Year Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 11)

Page 2

Budget Actual Total Actual YTD Projected Committed Agreed EMR Carried Forward			2021/2022			2022/2023				•	
Description Plus Transfer from EMR Description Plus Transfer from EMR Description Descri			Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed	Agreed	EMR	
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve (173,900) (177,078) (185,214) (186,915) (211,473) 0 Total Budget Income 1,650 1,810 1,650 4,650 4,650 0 0 0 0 0 Expenditure 175,550 185,123 186,864 191,565 216,123 0 0 0 0 0 Net Income over Expenditure -173,900 -183,313 -185,214 -186,915 -211,473 0 0 0 0 0 plus Transfer from EMR 0 6,235 0 0 0 0 0 0 0 0		400 Net Income over Expenditure	-173,900	-183,313	-185,214	-186,915	-211,473	0	0	0	C
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plus Transfer from EMR 0 6,235 0 0 0 0 0 0 0		Expenditure	175,550	185,123	186,864	191,565	216,123	0	0	0	C
		Net Income over Expenditure	-173,900	-183,313	-185,214	-186,915	-211,473	0	0	0	(
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve (173,900) (177,078) (185,214) (186,915) (211,473) 0		plus Transfer from EMR	0	6,235	0	0	0	0	0	0	C
		Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(173,900)	(177,078)	(185,214)	(186,915)	(211,473)		0		

ITEM 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 12TH JANUARY 2023 AT 6:30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT: - Councillors S. Ager, S Hicks, R Williams, J Williams

CO-OPTEES: - J. Palombi

Staff: H Andrews - Deputy Town Clerk

S Puckey - Open Spaces Admin Assistant

19. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies from Cllr C Jay were received and approved.

20. MINUTES

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

The meeting was advised that in response to item 14a in the Minutes, Motts Lane footpath is now complete.

21. CLERKS REPORT

The Deputy Town Clerk delivered a verbal report and informed the Members that the Council were in the process of completing the Carbon Calculator to work out their carbon emissions. Members were also advised that the Environmental Policy recommended by the Group had been approved and adopted by the Environment Committee.

The Members were also notified that Braintree District Council were having a Recycling Day on 9th February 2023 in Witham. Some Members requested more information and were interested in attending.

22. CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

The Chairman gave a verbal report and reiterated a desire to ask vendors at future events to use recyclable or reusable cups and cutlery. There was also a discussion about not allowing balloons at Witham events or instead using eco-friendly balloons, however there was acceptance that this might be an expensive alternative and therefore it should be advised rather than insisted upon.

The idea of Witham Town Council meetings being paperless was suggested, with all agendas and minutes being issued electronically. There was discussion around the legality of insisting on this approach and the potential to loan Councillors iPads / tablets at the start of their tenure like BDC with District Councillors. There was recognition that this would incur additional costs for the hardware and cloud usage and that this could be explored further.

The Chairman liked the idea of Litter Lotto but having considered it in more detail since the last meeting it was felt that this was not worth pursuing.

It was proposed that young people should have an input into the Council's climate change discussions and potentially a youth councillor could be invited to future meetings from local schools.

23. CLIMATE ACTION PLAN

The Climate Action Plan was discussed and the initial items on the plan agreed. Further ideas included:

- Investigating the feasibility of a rain-catching system on the Town Park toilets and the possibility of installing solar panels both on the Town Park toilets and on the Town Hall either at the back or in the period garden if planning permission was a concern.
- Bringing back wild flowers to the meadow on Mill Lane as this is currently being explored by the Open Spaces team.
- Reducing the frequency of renewing Town Council vehicles for the Open Spaces team.¹
- Requesting the use of recyclable materials by vendors at Town Council organised events.
- The Town Council's annual Seed Exchange programme in the Information Centre which allows residents to hand in unwanted seeds for use by others.

The Members felt it would be useful to review the Climate Action Plan document every two to three months.

The revised plan will be submitted to Environment Committee as a recommendation.

24. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS

Members felt that Witham Town Council undertake a lot of what the initiative encourages already but that advice and appropriate support could be beneficial in the future. It was **AGREED** that this suggestion could also be reviewed by the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee and recommended to the Environment Committee.

25. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members enquired whether the Information Centre were intending to carry on with the Seed Exchange in 2023.²

¹ The Fleet Review is part of the Environment Committee's corporate strategy and the frequency of renewing vehicles will be taken into consideration as a part of the review.

² It is confirmed that the Information Centre will hold another seed exchange during 2023, with plans to hold this annually.

26. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Due to the council elections in May, it was agreed that the next meeting would be held at the end of May or early June with the new administration.

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 19.15pm.

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Councillor S. Ager Chairman

SSP/HA/17.01.2023



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ITEM 9



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE 01376 520627 witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

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

Date: 14th March 2023

Present: Councillors S Hicks (Chairman)

K. AtwillC. LagerT Pleasance

S. Brailey (Witham Tree Group)
J. Casement (Witham Wombles)
B. Fleet (Tree Warden)
J Palombi (CPRE)

P. Shuttleworth (Local Wildlife Interests)

H Andrews (Deputy Town Clerk) S Dyer (Operations Manager)

S Puckey (Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

1. <u>APOLOGIES</u>

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

2. <u>INTERESTS</u>

No interests were declared.

3. MINUTES

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

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no public present.

5. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received.

6. <u>CLERK'S REPORT</u>

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

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

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

7. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

8. <u>A12 WIDENING SCHEME AND WHETMEAD</u>

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

9. WHETMEAD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

10. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS

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

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

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

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

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

12. <u>DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING</u>

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

Meeting concluded at 3.00pm

HA/SP/22.3.23

Signed by Chairman....





ITEM NO:	12	

Officer Report: Witham in Bloom

Issue:

The Witham in Bloom budget line currently covers the outside contract Witham Town Council has for planting and maintaining flowers in the town centre. This covers the planting, watering, feeding, maintenance and removal of floral displays as follows -

Summer planting

- 41 lamp post inserts
- 40 barrier troughs between Mill Lane and Newlands Drive car parks
- 31 stone trough planters
- 12 hanging baskets
- 2 x three tier planters
- 1 x town sign tub

Winter planting

- 40 barrier troughs between Mill Lane and Newlands Drive car parks
- 32 stone trough planters
- 1 x town sign tub

The budget for 2023/24 has been set at £12,700 but this budget line will be exceeded as the quote that has recently been accepted by our usual contractor for the new year is £14,140 due to rising costs so £1,440 over budget.

However, a full review of the flower planting is due to be carried out by staff and a report will be presented to Environment Committee early the new civic year. The current contractors have been carrying out planting every year since the original Witham in Bloom ceased in 2015 but an overhaul is now required. Potential cost savings can be made with the Operations Team being involved in planting planters that are accessible to them. This could include planting perineal drought resistant plants which will prove more cost effective and better for the environment. A hanging basket scheme can be introduced to businesses and a charge made to take part in the scheme so that flower planting colours are consistent throughout the town while reducing costs.

It is also a desire to consider reinstating the Witham in Bloom community scheme in the town again subject to sufficient volunteers being available to assist. Witham in Bloom was originally a highly successful scheme which involved all sections of the community but has not run since the organiser, Annie Northfield, retired in 2015. If successful Witham in Bloom can compete in regional and national competitions whilst inspiring the community to make positive changes in the town, creating pride in the environment and creating a clean, tidy and pleasant place to live, work and visit.

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 positive impact with introduction of perennial drought resistant planting for the future.

Advice:

- To note that the 2023/2024 Witham in Bloom budget will be exceeded due to increased costs by contractor.
- To note that a full review will be made of the current planting scheme by utilising Town Council staff and with a view to reinstating Witham in Bloom with the new administration.

HA/02.03.2023

ITEM 13

Tree Group Minutes – 24th January 2023

Present: Allan Waight, Eric Teverson, Richard Hawkes, Graham Wingrove, Mark Austin, Jane Noble, Stanley Brailey, Steve Harris, Barry Fleet

The chairman welcomed Steve who was attending as an observer, following his regular help as a volunteer.

- 1 Apologies Ken Davies
- 2. Minutes of 6th December were accepted.
- 3.Matters arising none.
- 4. Planting this season
- a). Templars and Cornel /Bryony projects completed;
- b). Bramble Road two dead trees replaced in the playground;
- c). Forest Road one dead tree replaced;
- d). Chatten Free School trial holes to be dug shortly to identify a site for the two remaining trees as the maps provided are unreliable. Planting will then be arranged;
- e). Memorial trees to be planted at Flora Road;
- f). Cut Throat Lane whips and gifted trees planted 19th Jan. The trees will need restaking because of the frozen ground; we will need to water the area this year to help establishment; g). Spa Road we will plant the remaining five town council funded trees there on the 26th
- h). Self funding it was discussed and agreed that we are in a position to purchase 6/7 trees, also to go at Spa Road. Agreed that Eric would use his discretion as to species, according to availability and price.
- 5. Maintenance the required work in The Avenue and the Town Park has been completed.
- 6.Developer planting Mark has received confirmation that replacement trees will be planted in Rivenhall Park in January; Mark has also suggested a new area for planting.
- 7. Future planning options we have previously identified Spa Road, Rickstones playground, Alan Road, Olivers Road (A12) & Rivenhall cycle path. We have been asked by Tom Moat of ECC about Conrad Road following an enquiry from the County councillor. Agreed that Barry will respond that we suspect that there is a problem along Conrad Road due to underground services (based upon our previous survey of the area) but that we can suggest alternatives of Spa Road and Rivenhall cycle path (John Ray walk). We can also do supplemental planting near the 'lozenges' in due course.
- 8 Finance Ken had confirmed the current balance and that we had been reimbursed by Templars Residents Association; a significant amount is owed to Eric but he suggested waiting until the end of the planting season when he will know the total. Barry will advise Ken:

We may receive a modest donation from Mrs L Bradbury who previously sponsored a memorial tree, Barry is in contact with her.

9 Website - Jane will try and tidy up the website to incorporate Allan 's suggestions, possibly in consultation with the expert at TCV; Richard will do a report on the plantings at Cornel and Bryony Closes, and the Bramble Road playground.

10.AOB

- a). Allan raised the consultation on the BDC housing strategy. He will respond on our behalf to comment on the persistent failure of developers to maintain newly planted trees to the detriment of the environment and local amenities;
- b). Melanie of Templars Residents had been in contact as a local resident there had, following the completion of the recent major scheme on the estate, enquired about memorial trees. Barry will respond to explain how we run the memorial scheme;
- c). Barry advised about two significant issues reported in the national press:
- i) unlimited fines and prison sentences could now be imposed on landowners in England who illegally fell trees. This is because of the problem of felling trees without licence where the development value of land is high as the fines have been too low to deter developers;
- ii) trees have a far more important role in combating climate change than previously realised. It has been discovered that an area of forest weighs around twice as much as previously thought, which means that far more carbon is being stored in the trees, at 410 tons of carbon per hectare (previously estimated at 232 tons).
- 11. Next meeting Tuesday, 7th March, 7.30pm at Eric's house.

Tree Group Meeting 7th March 2023

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

- 1 Apologies Ken Davies
- 2 Minutes of the meeting of 24th January, 2023 agreed.
- 3.Matters arising Melanie, Templars Residents Association had acknowledged receipt of the details of the memorial tree scheme, which she would pass on to the interested resident.

4 Planting 2022/23

To note that planting was completed at Flora Road, Spa Road & Chatten Free School.

5 Watering

Richard 's report and recommended watering route accepted. We may need to attempt to refill at Armond Road despite the challenges of access, as an alternative to Bramble Road. We may need to start watering in mid April, as last year (provisionally 20th April).

6 Future planning

Barry is to meet Tom Moat of ECC shortly to discuss future projects so that funding can be considered.

7. Mayor's Environment Award

The Tree Group has been awarded this in recognition of our record of achievement, and most of us were able to attend the presentation on the 26th February. Barry will do a report for the website.

The Mayor is hosting an afternoon tea and three of us are invited to attend; it was agreed that we will be represented by Allan, Eric and Stanley.

8 Maintenance

Eric is planning to buy some strimmer guards and tree ties; he has also restaked the trees at the whip planting area by the electrical station; Stanley will do some spraying around trees when suitable.

9 Planting requests

- a) the Boys 'Brigade & Girls' Brigade have achieved their 50th anniversary of service in Witham and would like to plant two trees to commemorate this; Barry has explained the details of the scheme but unfortunately it appears that the BB & GB do not currently have the necessary funds;
- b.) the residents of Shortridge Court had the trees on their frontage removed having been advised that they were diseased, and their contractors have failed to source replacements so the residents asked if we could assist (they have funding in place). Unfortunately, when Allan did the services checks, he found significant issues, namely sewers at the back of the greens and a gas main running diagonally across the greens.

The gas pipe provider Cadent does not allow new tree planting within six metres of the pipes, so new trees do not appear achievable (although we understand that Cadent themselves will lay new pipework within one metre of existing trees!).

However, shrubs may be planted within three metres so this would be a viable alternative. Barry will advise the residents of the position.

10. Developer planting

Mark reported that at the Rivenhall development, the builders' contractors Remus were to plant by the end of January but have to date only replaced those dead trees at the front of the estate and another 20 elsewhere. Mark will do another survey when the trees come into leaf.

Lynfield elm - the current position remains unknown. Some shrubbery was being removed nearer the A12.

11. Finance - Ken had confirmed the current bank balance and the ongoing charges.

12 Website and publicity

Barry is to attend the AGM of the Witham & Countryside Society to provide an update on our activities;

Jane will find out how much a promotional sail would cost (maybe £80?); A5 size flyers are also thought to be potentially useful.

13 Any other business

- a) it remains a concern that no signage has appeared at the Memorial Park, even though we had understood that signs for each end had been made and possibly also a bench, leaving an interpretation board to be created. Barry has emailed Shaun to raise this and Stanley will contact another BDC person he knows;
- b) Allan has spoken to the community PC about deterring potential vandalism at the new planting at Spa Road, and agreed that we would let them know of any problems that arise;
- c) Stanley commented on the tilias planted by Churchills the trees are okay but the supports were poorly set in the ground ;
- d) Mark has raised with Paul Partridge of BDC the idea of residents adopting trees, which has been tried elsewhere; Mark has also spoken with Betty Baines of BDC climate change department, who asked about potential planting sites and Alan Road was mentioned. They will remain in contact; BDC are apparently awaiting the details of the new Environment Act.
- 14 Next meeting: Tuesday, 18th April, 7.30 at Eric's house.