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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **19th October 2026** 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.	Robertson	(Chairman)	L.	Headley
J.M.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)	J.	Martin
J.C.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor
J.	Goodman		E.	Williams

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

HA/GK/14.10.2026

1. **APOLOGIES**

   To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. **MINUTES**

   To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 26th January 2026 (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 comments.

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 2026, and for the period 1st April 2026 to 30th September 2026 attached at page 5.

7. 2027 – 2028 DRAFT BUDGET

An opportunity for Members to comment upon the proposed Environment Committee Budget for 2027 2-28 attached at page 7.

8. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meetings held on 4th March 2026, 3rd June 2026 and 2nd September attached at page 8.

9. WITHAM TREE GROUP

(a) To receive a report from the Witham Tree Group covering their activities for the 2025 – 2026 season attached at page 16.

(b) To receive the Witham Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in February, March, April, May, June and August 2026 attached at page 19.

10. REVIEW OF POLICIES

The following policies are for renewal:

(a) Hire of Open Spaces policy attached at page 29.
(b) Commemorative Items on Witham Town Council Open Spaces Policy attached at page 30.
(c) Snow Clearance Policy attached at page 31.
(d) Biodiversity Policy attached at page 32.

11. ALLOTMENT MANAGEMENT

(a) To receive an Allotment Rental Charges Report attached at page 34.
(b) To receive and approve the Allotment Site Management Policy for renewal attached at page 35.

12. SCATTERING OF ASHES POLICY REPORT

To receive a report about the Scattering of Ashes Policy attached at page 40.

13. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE MANAGEMENT PLAN

To receive and adopt the Whetmead Nature Reserve Management Plan following recommendation from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee – circulated separately.

14. 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 the 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.

15. SECTION 106 REPORT

To receive a report, attached at page 41.

16. TREES

To receive a report, attached at page 42.

17. LAND IMPROVEMENT

To receive a report, attached at page 47.

Witham town council

ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- A new bench, bin and planter were recently installed in Collingwood road which have been funded by Section 106 contributions.
- Our social media posts for 'Wildlife Wednesday' posts are producing positive reactions for the public. Each week a photo or video is posted across our open spaces. One video posted over the summer of a muntjac deer chasing a rabbit had 605 likes on the post and almost 60k views.
- An application was recently made to Braintree District Council for their Community Tree Planting Grant Fund to purchase 20 substantial trees for the River Walk near Guithavon.
- Following lots of national incidents during the summer with people getting into difficulty in water, an emergency throwline board has been installed at Whetmead Nature Reserve. The throwline is housed in a locked container and the location and lock code have been shared with emergency services.

Advice:

To receive and note.

Back to Agenda

Witham Town Council

Summary of Receipts and Payments

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

15 Jul 2026 (2025 - 2026)

Item 6

Environment

		Receipts			Payments			Net Position	
Code	**Title**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**Variance**	**Budgeted**	**Actual**	**Variance**	+/- Under/over spend	
57	Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650.00	6,845.00	5,195.00				5,195.00	(314%)
58	Operations - Salaries & NI & LGPS				200,308.00	193,928.25	6,379.75	6,379.75	(3%)
59	Equipment Supplies & Maintenance				8,400.00	7,251.22	1,148.78	1,148.78	(13%)
60	Dog & Bench Schemes				1,200.00	6,133.85	-4,933.85	-4,933.85	(-411%)
61	Lighting Maintenance & Utility				17,000.00	8,382.43	8,617.57	8,617.57	(50%)
62	Tree Planting				3,000.00	2,998.78	1.22	1.22	(0%)
63	Tree Maintenance				5,000.00	5,000.00			(0%)
64	Toilet Block - Town Park				13,000.00	9,476.72	3,523.28	3,523.28	(27%)
65	Dog Bin Maintenance				600.00	455.00	145.00	145.00	(24%)
66	Litter Bins				1,000.00		1,000.00	1,000.00	(100%)
67	Open Spaces General				2,500.00	2,303.52	196.48	196.48	(7%)
68	River Walk Signage				2,000.00	1,805.86	194.14	194.14	(9%)
69	James Cooke Wood				2,000.00	549.75	1,450.25	1,450.25	(72%)
70	River Walk				7,000.00	3,790.05	3,209.95	3,209.95	(45%)
71	Whetmead LNR				2,000.00	1,613.61	386.39	386.39	(19%)
72	Witham in Bloom				14,000.00	13,843.69	156.31	156.31	(1%)
73	Fleet				6,500.00	5,917.65	582.35	582.35	(8%)
74	Waste Disposal				1,000.00	1,136.56	-136.56	-136.56	(-13%)
122	S106 Receipts		11,196.79	11,196.79				11,196.79	(N/A)
123	S106 Expenditure					23,353.34	-23,353.34	-23,353.34	(N/A)
	SUB TOTAL	**1,650.00**	**18,041.79**	**16,391.79**	**286,508.00**	**287,940.28**	**-1,432.28**	**14,959.51**	**(5%)**

Summary

NET TOTAL	**1,650.00**	**18,041.79**	**16,391.79**	**286,508.00**	**287,940.28**	**-1,432.28**	**14,959.51**
V.A.T.					15,907.94		
GROSS TOTAL		**18,041.79**			**303,848.22**		

Witham Town Council

Summary of Receipts and Payments

Cost Centre 3 (Between 01/04/2026 and 30/09/2026)

Environment

		Receipts			Payments			Net Position	
Code	Title	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	Budgeted	Actual	Variance	+/- Under/over spend	
57	Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650.00	2,770.00	1,120.00	1,200.00	2,321.54	-1,121.54	-1.54	(-0%)
58	Operations - Salaries & NI & LGPS				206,017.00	94,056.27	111,960.73	111,960.73	(54%)
59	Equipment Supplies & Maintenance				8,400.00	1,343.14	7,056.86	7,056.86	(84%)
61	Lighting Maintenance & Utility				20,000.00	2,605.62	17,394.38	17,394.38	(86%)
62	Tree Planting				3,000.00	2,985.00	15.00	15.00	(0%)
63	Tree Maintenance				7,500.00	2,275.00	5,225.00	5,225.00	(69%)
64	Toilet Block - Town Park				14,000.00	2,972.25	11,027.75	11,027.75	(78%)
65	Dog Bin Maintenance				600.00		600.00	600.00	(100%)
66	Litter Bins				1,029.00	1,107.00	-78.00	-78.00	(-7%)
67	Open Spaces General				2,700.00	656.31	2,043.69	2,043.69	(75%)
69	James Cooke Wood				2,000.00	269.04	1,730.96	1,730.96	(86%)
70	River Walk				2,500.00	1,362.37	1,137.63	1,137.63	(45%)
71	Whetmead LNR				2,000.00	1,153.31	846.69	846.69	(42%)
72	Witham in Bloom				15,000.00	8,720.00	6,280.00	6,280.00	(41%)
73	Fleet				7,000.00	2,760.18	4,239.82	4,239.82	(60%)
74	Waste Disposal				1,000.00	83.22	916.78	916.78	(91%)
122	S106 Receipts		32,243.55	32,243.55				32,243.55	(N/A)
123	S106 Expenditure					37,211.70	-37,211.70	-37,211.70	(N/A)
	SUB TOTAL	**1,650.00**	**35,013.55**	**33,363.55**	**293,946.00**	**161,881.95**	**132,064.05**	**165,427.60**	**(55%)**

Summary

NET TOTAL	**1,650.00**	**35,013.55**	**33,363.55**	**293,946.00**	**161,881.95**	**132,064.05**	**165,427.60**
V.A.T.					17,594.69		
GROSS TOTAL		**35,013.55**			**179,476.64**		

Back to Agenda

PROPOSED ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE BUDGET FOR 2027/2028

Environment		2026/2027 Current Budget	2027/2028 Proposed Budget	Difference
Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme		1,650	1,650	
	Total Income	**1,650**	**1,650**	**0**
Operations - Salaries & Employer N.I & LGPS		206,017	210,661	4,644
Equipment Supplies & Maintenance		8,400	8,400	0
Dog & Bench Schemes		1,200	1,200	0
Lighting Maintenance & Utility		20,000	10,000	-10,000
Tree Planting		3,000	3,000	0
Tree Maintenance		7,500	7,500	0
Toilet Block - Town Park		14,000	14,000	0
Dog Bin Maintenance		600		-600
Open Spaces Management Software		0	3,120	3,120
Litter Bins		1,029	1,110	81
Open Spaces General		2,700	2,700	0
James Cooke Wood		2,000	2,000	0
River Walk		2,500	2,500	0
Whetmead LNR		2,000	2,000	0
Witham in Bloom		15,000	15,000	0
Fleet		7,000	7,000	0
Waste Disposal		1,000	1,000	0
	Overhead Expenditure	**293,946**	**291,191**	**-2,755**

Back to Agenda

Witham town council

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

MINUTES

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

Date: **4th March 2026**

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

4 members of the public were present.

31. APOLOGIES

Cllr Ramage and Cllr J M Coleman were absent.

32. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

33. MINUTES

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

34. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements from the public.

35. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. The Deputy Town Clerk further advised that the dates for the resurfacing of the bridges and the installation of the sculptures would be co-ordinated.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

36. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update. Notable actions this quarter included reinstating a trench at the Glebe River Walk area to try and alleviate water issues on the path, creating a scalloped area at James Cooke Wood to improve biodiversity, planting three new trees at Whetmead near the photography post and completing a memorial safety check at the Closed Churchyard.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

37. SECTION 106 PUBLIC ART PROJECT – RIVER WALK SCULPTURES

Members were happy with the sculptures and their locations. The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that they would have a clear coating to make removal of any graffiti easier.

It was noted that Members would like to see further improvements to biodiversity on the River Walk going forward and that a hedgerow could be considered between Bridge Street and Luard Way.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

38. REVIEW OF JAMES COOKE WOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members were happy with the management plan and were advised that a hedgerow was being considered on the edge of the wood adjacent to Oliver's nursery.

Members expressed an interest in working towards Green Flag status and monitoring the impact on biodiversity of recent work in the wood.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

39. LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY EVENT

The Open Spaces Administrative Assistant provided a brief summary of the event held at Colchester Zoo. There were several workshops highlighting success stories in other areas and providing tools to help interested parties help nature and engage others in their towns.

Meeting concluded at 2.45pm.

SP/5.3.26

Signed by Chairman…….

Witham town council

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

MINUTES

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

Date: **3rd June 2026**

Present:	Councillors	J	Goodman	
		P	Heath	
		R	Ramage	
	Co-optees	S.	Black	(Local Wildlife Interests)
		J.	Casement	(Witham Wombles)
		J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		S.	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

Two members of the public were present.

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr B Fleet. Cllr J.M Coleman was absent.

2. APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN

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

3. APPOINTMENT OF VICE- CHAIRMAN

It was **AGREED** that Cllr 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.

.

6. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions or statements from the public.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members were further advised that while only two bridges had been painted to date, the other bridges would be painted in due course if volunteers could be found. It was further noted that feedback on the sculptures had been overwhelmingly positive and families were particularly enjoying the new installations.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

8. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update. Notable issues this quarter included a riverbank repair near Pattison Close due to dogs entering the river, relocating logs from the river at Bramble Road to Whetmead as they were regularly being pushed into the river, preparing the sites on the River Walk for the sculptures and the three successful Council events including the Easter Trail, Dog Show and Bioblitz.

Following a point raised by a member of the Sub-Committee, the Operations Manager further advised that if Members wanted to provide cover for the broken fence on the River Walk at Bridge Street, then hedging could potentially be planted in the autumn / winter.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

Members **AGREED** that the Operations Manager would investigate appropriate hedging near the entrance to the River Walk at Bridge Street with a view to making a recommendation to Environment Committee to consider planting.

9 REVIEW OF CLOSED CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT PLAN

Members were happy with the management plan overall, however there was some concern around the installation of shallow dishes, in particular given the current issues with avian flu. The Deputy Town Clerk confirmed that potential interpretation boards would only be at the entrances and would not disrupt the churchyard itself. Members felt that it might be interesting to carry out a lichen and / or bat survey although it was noted that this might be costly.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

10. RIVER WATER QUALITY

Members reviewed the River Watch results and noted that the phosphate, nitrate and ammonia levels on occasion were higher than they should be. This would continue to be monitored.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

11. WHETMEAD BIO BLITZ

Members noted that attendance was disappointing, perhaps due to the remote location and uncharacteristically hot weather on the day although those that did attend really enjoyed the event. The information gathered, which included the discovery of a rare beetle, was considered worthwhile and would feed into the next management plan for the site. Members considered that the term Bio Blitz may have been confusing, with connotations of litter picking and cleaning, and the Open Spaces Administrator advised that any future event could be a called Nature Day to avoid this issue.

Meeting concluded at 3.00pm.

SP/9.6.26

Signed by Chairman…….

Witham town council

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

MINUTES

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

Date: **2nd September 2026**

Present:	Councillors	B	Fleet	
		J.M.	Coleman	
		J	Goodman	
		P	Heath	
		R	Ramage	
	Co-optees	J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		H.	Smith	(Operations Manager)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Officer)

Five members of the public were present.

12. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Susan Black. Jane Casement was absent.

13. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

14. MINUTES

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

15. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A member of the public enquired about future plans for the closed Period Garden. The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the garden had been closed due to a damaged wall and anti-social behaviour but they were considering the possibility of opening up part of it again as a community garden, following the installation of a new shed.

A second member of the public was concerned that the River Walk Back Channel and parts of the river in the vicinity were overgrown with reeds and needed clearing. The Town Clerk agreed to contact the Environment Agency. A question was also raised about the line of desire path around the pond being reinstated but it was explained that this had been left to grow over to prevent anti-social behaviour.

A question was also raised about the ownership of the triangle of land next to Lidl where important Bee Orchids are regularly cut by staff. It was advised that this is Braintree District Council land but they would be informed of the Bee Orchids.

16. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members were further advised that Wednesday 28th October had been set as a date for raking at Mill Lane Meadow with a view to try and reinstate the buttercup meadow.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

17. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

A member of the Operations Team provided a verbal update. It was noted that the team were on schedule with all regular maintenance, with very little grass cutting required this quarter due to the weather. Notable achievements included several new bench installations, a new entrance sign at James Cooke Wood, and three successful Council events held on the River Walk - the music festival, teddy bears' picnic and new summer fair.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

18. WHETMEAD MANAGEMENT PLAN

While members were happy with the management plan, a question was raised about the accuracy of one of the paths and it was agreed that this would be reviewed.

Members **AGREED** to recommend adoption of the management plan to the Environment Committee.

19. RIVER WALK TREES

Members were in agreement that it would be good to plant a new oak tree on the River Walk near the veteran oak close to Pattison close / Laurence Avenue to provide succession for future residents to enjoy.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

20. RIVER WALK HEDGE

Members accepted that planting the hedge would be expensive and time consuming to maintain.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

Meeting concluded at 2.50pm.

SP/3.9.26

Signed by Chairman…….

Back to Agenda

Planting Season 2025/26

Funding pressures

After record-breaking planting numbers in the previous two planting seasons, we faced a new and disappointing situation in 2025/26. The Government's decision to suspend its Urban Tree Challenge Fund, pending a review, meant that our major source of funding in recent years was unavailable. After planting a record 95 trees in 2024/25, a total of 54 planted in the last season was something of a comedown, although it is twice as many as the Group was able to plant in its early days.

At this time of funding uncertainty it has been reassuring to know that we can continue to rely on the generous support and encouragement of Witham Town Council.. While other local authorities have cut back on funding for tree planting owing to their own financial pressures, the Town Council has sustained and even increased the level of funding for the Tree Group's work. We are most grateful for the Council's continuing faith in our ability to deliver new initiatives for the benefit of local residents.

The remaining funding came from individual donors and from the Group's own limited resources. Any individual who wishes to finance a tree to mark a milestone in life, in memory of a lost loved one or for some other reason can approach the Tree Group, which for a set fee will purchase, plant, water and maintain the tree. Also individuals who have grown trees in their own gardens up to a certain height have generously offered these trees to the Group for planting in public areas. The Group is particularly grateful for such donations at a time when the public funding available to support its work has been reducing.

Because of the uncertainty of future funding, the Group did not start any major projects in the 2025/26 planting season but concentrated on smaller priority projects, on developing or completing existing projects and on replacing losses at established sites.

A number of the planting sites were on Braintree District Council's land and required the Council's cooperation and approval. While the Council is not currently able to fund the Tree Group's planting plans, it has been happy to work closely with the Group to facilitate its work. We are grateful for the help and advice we receive from the Council. We were particularly pleased to welcome two key members of staff who came to help with the planting on one occasion.

Once again we had help on several occasions from staff of Aegon Plc. We much appreciate the assistance which they have provided over many years. Every Aegon helper has given us an admirable level of hard work and commitment.

New projects

In the face of an increasing pattern of hot, dry summers, including record average temperatures in the summer of 2025, the Tree Group has in recent years pursued a project to provide shade trees at all children's play areas in the town. In this planting season trees were provided at the playground on the Allectus Way estate near the end of Alan Road.

As an adjunct to its project at Rickstones Recreation Ground (see below), the Tree Group planted cherry trees on either side of Manor Road, just outside the Ground. This road is the beginning of the access road for Witham Cemetery and the new trees should provide an attractive gateway for those visiting the cemetery.

Addition to existing projects

In the planting season 2024/25 the Tree Group planted 40 trees at Rickstones Recreation Ground, as detailed in the report on that season. In this season the Tree Group planted trees to join up the two areas of earlier planting and added a row of ornamental trees at the other end of the Ground along the cemetery fence. This was our largest single planting site this year, comprising 20 trees.

At the major planting site alongside the cycle path from Motts Lane to the Rivenhall Oaks estate, we added two trees to the central section to fill a gap.

Some years ago we planted trees in the open area between Town End Field and Dengie Way in a project funded by Braintree District Council. It had always seemed to the Tree Group that there was ample scope for adding a small number of trees to the site without undue crowding and the Council agreed. Five trees were accordingly added in this planting season.

Replacing lost trees

The Memorial Park between Bramble Road and Honeysuckle Way was a major project devised and financed by Braintree District Council to commemorate residents of Witham who died while serving in the armed forces. The project was completed some five years ago when more than 120 trees were in the ground. In the last year there have been some losses – one tree blew down in high winds, one of the earliest planted simply gave up the ghost, one was burned in a fire believed to have been deliberately started and one did not survive the extreme drought of the summer of 2025. All were replaced.

The Avenue is one of the Town's few roads where there are street trees to enhance the urban scene. It is one of the glories of Witham. Losses occur from time to time and the Tree Group has always been keen to sustain the attractiveness of the road by filling the gaps as soon as possible when it has funding to do so, even though the trees lost have usually been planted by other bodies. As a result there is now a significant number of trees in The Avenue which have been planted by the Group. In this planting season five dead trees were replaced; only one of the dead trees had actually been planted by the Tree Group, a sapling donated by a member of the Group which had never established itself.

Other plantings

Two trees were funded by family members in memory of a lost loved one and were planted at the Tree Group's main site for such plantings in the field near the town end of Flora Road.

Two horse chestnuts, grown in his garden, were donated by a member of the public and were planted in an area beyond the bottom of Colne Chase where we had previously planted horse chestnuts, which are flourishing. We are delighted to report that the donor has taken a still more valuable step by joining the Tree Group.

The Future

We are already putting together plans for planting in 2026/27. We await the result of the government's review of its funding for tree planting in towns but, in the absence of any assurance of significant funding, we will again have to set our targets at a modest level. The Tree Group's own resources are finite and cannot sustain a significant level of planting. We are confident that we can rely on Witham Town Council to continue its support. However, other councils not only remain under financial pressure but, given central government's plans to reform local government, have no assurance of their future existence.

In this uncertain situation the Tree Group will continue to push forward as far as it can with its plans to restore a beneficial level of tree cover in Witham. How far it can progress will depend on matters outside its control.

Back to Agenda

February 2026 Tree Group Minutes

Our minutes are as follows:

1 Apologies -Allan [redacted]

2 Minutes of the 6th January - accepted. Barry advised that at the WTC Environment Committee meeting, the chair, Cllr Martin, on behalf of the Council, had thanked the Tree Group for it's work for the town.

3 Matters arising - Stanley advised had discussed the vandalism of trees along the cyclepath with the police. if we can specify the area, they could put up a cctv camera. we would suggest a camera near Holly Walk.

4 Planting 2025/26
a] we have now completed planting in The Avenue, the Memorial Park replacements, two memorial trees, and two donated trees from [redacted]

b] we still have two trees and saplings . We potentially have 5 or 6 volunteer helpers this week so we will plant the whips & saplings that members have. Mark explained the planting technique he has been using to try and have a better success rate; we will defer planting the tree in memory of Grace until the family are ready.

5 Maintenance - we have the trees at Templars, at the site behind Ramsden Mills and the Forest Road estate to review, and possibly at the Humber Road estate. Some work is due along the cyclepath and the plane tree at Pastures Road may need recaging; some trees along Honeysuckle Way have been damaged by deer so we should consider larger cages for these ones..

6 Finance
a] Stanley confirmed the current balance; Eric is due some expenses;
b] Money owed to us from the Forestry Commission for maintenance etc - Barry has spoken to Harry Bryer of ECC to chase for these funds but they haven't had anything yet, so Harry will chase again;
c] Deposit account - Stanley is completing the Fatca form.

7 Website etc
a] Allan had some queries re the new website which he is pursuing;
b] Facebook - nothing to report;
c] Eric advised that he has agreed to give a talk to the U3A in due course.

8 Veteran trees - Mark & Stanley will recommence their survey work on the 5th March,, and will look at the River Walk and the Avenue.

9 Eco -event - this is being organised by the Forest Road Residents Association at the Rivenhall Oaks golf club, and we will have a stall , which Janet & Richard will set up, and Mark and Eric will take over later. Steve [redacted] may also be available.

10 Any other business
a] Mayor's civic service - Stanley will represent the Tree Group;
b] Stanley had raised some tree maintenance issues with Andrew Digby of BDC who had them dealt with;
c] Trees without cages probably need spraying around to avoid being struck by mowers, however this should become less of an issue as we are using bark mulch more now;

d] Could we have a notice on the town notice board advertising ourselves and seeking volunteers ?

11 Next meeting - Tuesday, 10th March, 7.30 pm at Eric's.
We will be planning for the 2026/27 planting season; Richard will draft a watering plan for this summer.

March 2026 Tree Group Minutes

Present : Eric [redacted], Richard [redacted], Stanley [redacted], Mark Austin, Graham [redacted], Barry [redacted]

1 Apologies - Allan [redacted]

2. Minutes of the 10th February - accepted.

3. Matters arising - none.

4. Planting 2025/26 - to note all completed. The memorial tree for [redacted] will now be planted next winter.

5. Watering proposals - Richard was thanked for his work on the proposed watering schedule, which were accepted. There will be a total of 149 trees + 60 whips [163 'watering units']. Eric & Barry will do the Avenue trees separately.
Provisionally commence Thursday 7th May.

6 Plan for 2026/27. Suggested planting sites -
a] Cemetery entrance road - gaps between horse chestnuts, space for 3/4 trees. Would need to discuss with BDC;
b] Replace lost trees - memorial tree at Templars; missing trees at Pastures Road and Allectus Way [possibly replace elsewhere ?]; dead tree in Forest road;
c] Spa Road - link up the two planting areas;
d] Area behind Allectus Way, by rail line, maybe black poplars on large spacing;
e] Side of Town Park, gap in existing line , space for 3/4, adjacent Gimsons site;
f] Playground off Gershwin Boulevard;
g] Rickstones Recreation ground, corner by Manor Road;
h] River View, by hockey pitch , to be surveyed first.

7 Maintenance suggestions - need to make Pastures Road plane vandal proof; look at Humber Road; deer proof trees at Honeysuckle Way.;

8 Finance
a] Stanley confirmed the bank figure;
b] Forestry Commission payments - no news;
c] Deposit account - FATCA form to be considered;
d] The Town Council had advised that they had £170 left in their budget - Eric will purchase additional posts.

9. Website / Facebook - Allan continuing to pursue Red Feather; Richard will write a report on planting to be added to the site; Eric posts on facebook most weeks.

10. Veteran trees - 135 now identified; several sites still to be visited.

11 Eco event hosted by Forest Road Residents Association - limited public interest though we may have a possible volunteer for watering; Eastlight had a stall so were spoken to.

12. Any other business - none.

13. Next meeting - Tuesday, 14th April, 7.30pm at Eric's.

April 2026 Tree Group Minutes

The minutes of the 14th April are as follows :

Present : Allan [redacted], Eric [redacted], Richard [redacted], Graham [redacted], Barry[redacted]

1. Apologies - Stanley [redacted], Mark [redacted]

2. Minutes of 10th March accepted.

3.Matters arising - none.

4. Watering - possibly start 7th May?
Possible volunteers from Aegon and two individuals.

5. Planting 2026 /27 - Richard 's report received enabling us to identify preferred options :
a) Gershwin Park playground area ;
b) Town Park boundary ;
c) Replacement of failed trees;
d) Spa Road area, to link up existing sites;
e) Rickstones Recreation ground, remaining planting (football club want to be consulted, Barry will contact them) ;
f) Cemetery entrance road ;
g) Sports ground ;
h) Allectus Way ;
i) Humber Road.

Consultation with BDC will be necessary for most of these sites, so Richard will contact Andrew Digby to arrange a meeting.
It was noted that we will also be planting a tree for the Witham & Countryside Society following their dissolution.
It was also noted that there is no news yet regarding any extension to the Forestry Commission funding.

6. Maintenance - the line of paulonias at Rickstones had to be restaked following the loss of two trees due to severe vandalism ; the London plane at Pasture Road has been re-caged (and now adopted by a local resident).

7. Finance
a) our current bank balance was noted ;
b) re the money we are owed from the Forestry Commission, Barry has raised this again with ECC and it is hoped we will receive some payment soon ;
c) deposit account - no change to the position ;
d) insurance - Barry about to renew our public liability insurance ;
e) the Witham & Countryside Society are very kindly gifting us the balance of their funds, and a tree is to be planted in tribute to the Society.

8. Website - Allan 's report was discussed ; we are awaiting details for us to operate it on our own - we would need someone to manage it for us (Eric could put an enquiry on Facebook - Allan will draft the text). It was agreed that we would not accept Red Feather' s offer of administration due to the excessive cost.
Re Facebook, Eric continues to put information on when appropriate.

9. Veteran trees - 150 trees in the town now recorded for the Woodland Trust ; two sites still to visit.
It was noted that this work does not include trees on private land.

10. Any other business
a) Stanley had reported trees growing into their metal grills outside Prezzos and the Lockram Lane toilets. Would need to check the ownership? ;
b) Barry had planted a number of whips at Chipping Hill School as part of their 'forest school' project ;
c) The Town Council 's Voice newsletter contains an article about the Memorial Park and our involvement, based upon a draft submitted by Barry.

11. Next meeting - Tuesday 19th May, 7.30 pm at Eric's (NB: should include AGM).

Tree Group Minutes 19th May 2026

Present: Allan[redacted] Eric [redacted] Richard[redacted] Graham [redacted] Stanley [redacted] Barry[redacted], Shamir.

1. Apologies - Mark [redacted]

2. Website - we welcomed Shamir to the meeting, who is a software engineer who has volunteered to help us with the website going forward. Allan summarised the history of the site, and that we are now using Facebook for reporting many of our activities so fewer revisions to the website should be needed in the future. Allan will provide contact details for Shamir and we will provide the future content.
Possible link to veteran trees details.
Shamir then left the meeting.

3. Minutes of the 14th April accepted.

4. Matters arising - none.

5. Planting 2026 /27
Report of meeting with BDC officers Andrew Digby, Bryan Longman and Kimberly.
Richard and Eric toured the various possible planting sites and BDC are supportive of our proposals;
Andrew will provide maps of the sites to assist us, and we will confirm proposed species for them to comment on.
We can include replacements for Luard Way Barry will advise [redacted] who requested this).

Re Rickstones Recreation ground, Barry will try again to speak to the chairman of the football club, to explain future planting plans.

6. Watering - we have had to start earlier than planned due to the dry weather and have now watered for four weeks.
We have been received help from Persimmon Homes staff and Aegon staff along with some individual volunteers.

7. Maintenance - some work has been necessary on an ongoing basis, eg at Cuppers Close and The Avenue.

8. Finance
a). Stanley confirmed the balance;
b) The funds due from the Forestry Commission are still outstanding so Barry will raise again with ECC;
c) Deposit account, still to be sorted;
d) Insurance - public liability cover renewed, no change to the cost, Barry reimbursed;
e) Witham and Countryside Society - it was noted again that we would receive a donation in due course to support future planting, with an oak tree due to be planted for them.

9. Facebook - Eric puts an item on most weeks and will now do so on the community page.

10. Veteran trees - still some to survey, eg in the cemetery. 153 identified so far.

11. AOB
a). Utility checks - Allan advised that these are most easily done via ' Lines search before you dig', which is an online form. This is then referred to their members, ie the gas, electricity,

water and telecoms companies. (except BT but they almost always lay their cables under footpaths). Sewage services are not covered;
b). Trees with grills potentially damaging the plants - we had raised the issue of the grills around trees outside Prezzo and by the Lockram Lane toilets.
No action is apparently needed for the Prezzo one but the latter needs cutting off so Andrew Digby is arranging for this.

12. Next meeting - Tuesday, 23rd June, 7.30pm at Eric's.

Tree Group Minutes – 23rd June 2026

Present : Eric [redacted], Richard [redacted], Graham [redacted] Mark [redacted], Stanley[redacted] Barry[redacted]

1 Apologies - Allan Waight
2. Minutes of the 19th May accepted.
3.Matters arising - Barry reported on his discussion with the chair of the football club using the Rickstones Recreation ground. Barry had explained where the additional trees were planned for, and the chair advised where the goalposts may be next season, ie near the cemetery fence (so no conflict).

4.Future planning
a) We are still awaiting the site maps from Andrew Digby, so Richard will remind him. Sites are Gershwin playground, Town Park, Rickstones Recreation ground, Allectus Way estate near the rail line, cemetery entrance, possibly Luard Way too;
b) Species suggestions - silver birch in the Park, tulip trees at the cemetery entrance road, 3/4 modest size for Rickstones eg Persian ironwood, 'golden rain tree' or judas tree, acers for Gershwin playground, and for Allectus Way site, planes, holm oak Italian maple and Italian alder as drought tolerant. Possible whip planting nearer the railway.

5. Watering - in May, we benefitted from significant help from Aegon and Persimmon Homes, and Simon [redacted]joined us, and Philip[redacted] was available once a month ; last week was a fast run ; with the heatwave, an 8.30am start this week, aiming to finish by 11.00.

6. Maintenance - tree at the bottom of the cycle path, cage mended ; Bramble Road tree has had a strimmer cage added.

7. Finance
a) Stanley confirmed the balance ;
b) Update re Forestry Commission funds, ECC had been chased;
c) Deposit account - no progress ;
d) W&CS - no news yet.

8. Website - we now have access again, Shamir seeking to make the necessary updates. Do we still have a contract with Red Feather to host our site until the end of the five year period?

9. Veteran trees - research almost completed by Mark, current total 165, plus probably 5 in the cemetery to check.
Details will be loaded onto the Woodland Trust site.
Possible link to our website.
Article to be done for our website.

10. Any other business
a). Mower damage - Richard will report it to Bryan Longman of BDC ; we want them to tell us if they damage one of our trees. Part of Rickstones Recreation ground was left in own - why not adopt this elsewhere? ;
b) Redrow roundabout - the olive trees have been removed - why?
Also, some losses from the new line of trees outside the estate ;
c) Eric has a number of elm saplings for planting in due course ;
d) we need a campaign to discourage councils from unnecessary mowing.

11. Next meeting - Tuesday 25th August, at Eric's, 7.30 pm.

Tree Group minutes 25th August 2026

Present - Richard [redacted] Mark [redacted], Graham [redacted] Eric [redacted] Barry [redacted]

1. Apologies - Stanley[redacted]
2. Minutes of the meeting of 23rd June - accepted subject to the correct spelling of Simon [redacted] surname.
3.Matters arising - Philip [redacted] can water again in September.
4. Future planning
a) Latest re BDC - Richard, Eric and Barry are meeting Andrew Digby on the 27th August to agree species for planting ;
b) Possible BDC funding scheme - we will ask Andrew about this ;
c) Possible ECC /FC funding scheme but a £10k minimum so Barry will discuss with Harry Bryer of ECC as to whether we could be paired up with another organisation, or could it be spread over more than a year? ;
d) Trees for WTC budget - provisionally, trees for the Gershwin Boulevard Playground, the cemetery entrance road, the Town Park boundary, the hockey pitch corner and Spa Road in part ;
e) Town End Field - the potential for more trees was noted and as the area is damp, any trees planted should do well ;
f) Memorial Park - at least one replacement needed ;
g) Richard was thanked for his summary of the sites. In addition to those discussed above, we could have -
4 at Rickstones Recreation ground, 20 at the Allectus Way area, 1 memorial tree (Grace W), 1 for the Witham and Countryside Society, 2 replacement paulownias at Rickstones Rec, 1 at the top of the cycle path from Rivenhall Oaks, 1 at Templars to replace the failed memorial tree, 2 poplars off Honeysuckle Way, to add to the existing ones.
Planting numbers for the Allectus Way site are the most flexible. Some sites will need service checks.
The first tree order should be made shortly.

5. Watering - last week, all of the Memorial Park and all the cycle path trees were done in addition to the usual younger ones.

6. Maintenance - some tree ties and cross members replaced whilst watering.
One or two trees at the Memorial Park have deer damage, which needs sorting out.

7. Finance
a) Stanley had confirmed the balance ;
b) FC funds - possible payment for the planting along the cycle path shortly ;
c) The donation from the Witham and Countryside Society had been received and Barry was writing to thank them for their generosity.

8. Website - Allan had advised that Shamir now has access codes so should be able to update as required.
Facebook continues to be updated.

9. Veteran trees - the Woodland Trust have asked Mark for photos of each tree! 68 done so far, should be completed by the end of September.

10. Any other business

a) Publicity - Barry has been interviewed by a journalist for a network specialising in stories about fighting climate change.
The report may be picked up by other news outlets;
b) Lynfield elm - it was noted that there has been no further news.

11. Next meeting - 6th October at Eric's, 7.30 pm.

Back to Agenda

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

- The hirer is required to provide evidence of adequate public liability insurance in connection with the hiring.
- 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: 19/10/2026
Review date: October 2027

Back to Agenda

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: **19/10/2026**
Review date: **October 2027**

POLICY NO: WTC/22 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Back to Agenda

Agenda Item 10(c)

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, on the day, carried out by the Operations Manager:

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.

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.

4. **Community Centre –** The paths around the perimeter of the building and the car park will be cleared and gritted by Witham Town Council staff to provide a safe entrance to the centre.

Approved: **Environment Committee minute 13 12/07/2021**
Last reviewed: **19/10/2026**
Review date: **October 2027**

POLICY NO: WTC/27 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Back to Agenda

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 area 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.

- work with experts to conduct surveys to monitor the wildlife and habitats on our Open Spaces, including, but not limited to, glow worms, water voles and bats, to better understand the impact of active management plans and highlight where improvements can be made to support different species.
- actively look to increase the biodiversity within its open spaces through land management practices and habitat creation.
- 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)
Last reviewed: 19.10.2026 Environment Committee
Review date: October 2027

POLICY NO: WTC056 – Environment Committee

Back to Agenda

Witham town council

ITEM NO: **11 (a)**

Officer Report: **Allotment Rental Charges Report – rent charges**

Issue:

Currently Witham Town Council allotments are charged at 51p per m² with tenants paying between £23.10 and £75.89 (mode average £64.51) at Cut Throat Lane and £59.67 at Wright Grove. The rent is increasing to 54p per m² in the year 2027/2028 as agreed at Environment Committee meeting of 22nd July 2025, minute 13 which means tenants will pay between £24.46 and £80.35 (mode average pay £68.31) at Cut Throat Lane and £63.18 at Wright Grove.

To put the rent in context the following are the charges at other allotment sites for this year - 2026/27:

- Braintree District 60p m²
- Maldon 68 m²
- Colchester 55p m²
- Hatfield Peverel Allotment Association 40p m² + £10 membership
- Witham 51p m²

It is proposed that for the year 2028/2029, the cost is increased from 54p m² to 56p m² (3.7% - around inflation) to take account of the inflationary increase in costs . This would mean that tenants would pay between £25.37 and £83.33 (mode average £70.84) at Cut Throat Lane and £65.52 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 56p per m² from 2028/2029.

SP/10.09.2026

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.

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.

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, nor are they permitted to deposit such waste on to any land surrounding the allotment site.

13. The scattering, burial or interment of human or animal ashes is not permitted anywhere on Witham Town Council allotment sites. Allotment plots are provided solely for the cultivation of fruit, vegetables, flowers and other permitted horticultural purposes. Any request for an exception will not normally be considered. The installation or creation of permanent memorials is also not permitted on any allotment plot or within communal areas, without permission from the Council.

14. The Tenant is responsible for disposing of any non-compostable waste from their plot and removing it from the allotment site. 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.

15. 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.

16. 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. Abusive behaviour will not be tolerated

17. 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.

18. 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

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

20. 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.

21. 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.

22. 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.

23. 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.

24. 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.

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

26. 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.

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

28. 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

29. 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.

30. 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.

31. 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.

32. An allotment key is provided at the start of the tenancy. A £10 deposit is charged for the key which will refunded when returned at termination. (Wright Grove only).

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

34. 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.

35. A deposit of £50 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.

36. 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.

37. 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.

38. 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.

39. 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.

40. 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

41. 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.

42. 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.

43. 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.

44. 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.

45. 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.

46. 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.

47. 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

48. 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.

49. 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.

50. 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 (Wright Grove only).

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

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

53. All Tenants' information will be kept for seven years following the termination of a tenancy. This retention period is based on the need to maintain financial and contractual records, comply with audit requirements, and enable the council to establish, exercise, or defend legal claims in accordance with the Limitation Act 1980.

Whom Is the Policy Applicable to?
The Policy applies to Tenants allocated an allotment plot.

Adopted: Community Committee 09/08/2021 minute 27
Reviewed: 19.10.2026
Review date: October 2027

POLICY NO: WTC041 ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE

Back to Agenda

Witham town council

ITEM NO: 12

Officer Report: **Scattering of Ashes on WTC Open Spaces Policy**

Issue:

Witham Town Council currently has a Scattering of Ashes Policy for WTC open spaces, under which applications are made for formal approval of a suitable location and time for ashes to be discreetly scattered on the River Walk, Whetmead Nature Reserve or James Cooke Wood.

A recent enquiry has shown that the policy is difficult to put it into practice. In particular, it has proved challenging to identify a mutually suitable location, to establish how privacy can be maintained and to ensure that the activity can be undertaken discreetly and without impact on other users.

Where there is no agreed area that is completely out of public view, the Council risks causing distress to other users of the open spaces, who may unexpectedly encounter this personal event, or distress to the applicant who may feel that their wishes cannot be supported.

River Walk, Whetmead and James Cooke Wood are public open spaces used for recreation and quiet enjoyment by the local community. The Council cannot guarantee privacy, prevent accidental public presence or remove the possibility of discomfort for those who encounter the event. This suggests that these spaces are not naturally suited to a formal approval process for this activity.

It is recognised that scattering of ashes is carried out on WTC open spaces without the Council's knowledge. However, as the formal policy has proved difficult to implement, withdrawing the policy entirely will provide a clearer position. A simple stance that ash scattering is not formally permitted on WTC open spaces will avoid difficult case-by-case decision making and remove the need for officers to negotiate sensitive arrangements that may never be fully satisfactory.

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 recommend the withdrawal of the Scattering of Ashes policy in full.

Back to Agenda