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

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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…….