



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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Monday 22nd January 2024** 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:

S.	Ager (Chairman)	L.	Headley
J.C.	Coleman (Vice Chairman)	J.	Martin
E.	Adelaja	R.	Ramage
J.M.	Coleman	A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet	B.	Taylor

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk & Proper Officer
17th January 2024

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 16th October 2023 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

To receive any declarations of interests that Members may wish to give notice of on matters pertaining to any item on this Agenda.

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

An opportunity to enable members of the press and public present to comment.

Order Note: A maximum of 30 minutes is designated for public participation time with no individual speaker exceeding three minutes unless otherwise granted an extension by the Chairman under Standing Order 3(F) & 3(G)

5. CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the Clerk's Report on matters arising attached at page 4.

6. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

To receive the income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2023 to 31st December 2023 and the accompanying Exception Report attached at page 5.

7. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the Minutes of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee meeting held on 5th December 2023 attached at page 8.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

To receive the Minutes of the Climate Change Working Group meeting held on 26th October 2023 attached at page 11.

9. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive the Tree Group minutes for the meetings held 17th October and 7th November 2023; and 9th January 2024 attached at page 13.

10. SECTION 106 WORKING GROUP

To receive a report on current Section 106 open spaces projects attached at page 19.

11. ALLOTMENT REPORT

To receive an allotment report attached at page 20.

12. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

To receive and review the Environmental Policy attached at page 21

13. STATION ADOPTION

To receive a report on station adoption attached a page 24

14. POTENTIAL OPEN SPACES IMPROVEMENTS

To consider items to be included on the 2024 Braintree District Council Potential Open Spaces Improvements document, previously known as Open Spaces Action Plan attached at page 25

15. WITHAM IN BLOOM

To receive a report on Witham in Bloom attached at page 29

16. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE RIVER BANK EROSION

To receive a report on river bank erosion on Whetmead Nature Reserve attached at page 31

17. JAMES COOKE WOOD IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

To receive and consider a report on James Cooke Wood improvement project attached at page 32

18. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

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

19. RIVER WALK DRAINAGE WORKS

To receive a report

GK/HA.17.01.2024



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- Participation in Essex Highways' Salt Bag scheme has been successful with 38 of the 40 bags supplied to Witham Town Council being distributed between 21 resident volunteers and 16 businesses.
- Policy & Resources Committee meeting of 12th December 2023 approved the spending of £10k from the equipment replacement earmarked reserve to purchase a second-hand rotary ride-on mower to replace the Ransomes Parkway ride-on mower which ceased working in June 2023.

Advice:

To receive and note.

[Back to Agenda](#)

Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 9)

Agenda Item 6

	<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2023/2024</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
400 Environment									
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650	4,650	1,650	6,060	2,610	0	0	0	0
Total Income	1,650	4,650	1,650	6,060	2,610	0	0	0	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	126,714	150,656	177,454	129,674	172,855	0	0	0	0
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	4,000	4,035	8,000	3,843	8,000	0	0	0	0
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	4,000	5,268	4,000	1,801	4,000	0	0	0	0
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	7,650	7,396	10,500	3,495	12,500	0	0	0	0
4432 New Tree Planting	2,000	2,001	2,000	2,007	2,007	0	0	0	0
4433 Tree Maintenance	9,000	8,870	5,000	4,385	5,000	0	0	0	0
4435 River Walk Project Management	0	0	10,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	600	430	600	0	270	0	0	0	0
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	1,200	4,490	1,200	3,115	3,115	0	0	0	0
4444 Fleet	4,000	4,997	6,000	3,506	4,674	0	0	0	0
4445 Open Spaces General	1,500	1,810	2,500	2,159	2,500	0	0	0	0
4446 James Cooke Wood	2,000	1,597	2,000	325	1,000	0	0	0	0
4447 River Walk	3,000	2,781	3,000	2,110	3,000	0	0	0	0
4448 Whetmead LNR	2,000	574	2,000	5,624	5,624	0	0	0	0
4452 River Walk Signage	3,000	1,044	3,000	3,756	3,756	0	0	0	0
4453 Litter Bins	3,000	1,963	3,000	0	0	0	0	0	0
4455 Witham in Bloom	12,200	13,038	12,700	14,955	14,954	0	0	0	0
4457 Waste Disposal	1,000	1,946	1,200	77	400	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	186,864	212,895	254,154	180,831	243,655	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

Witham Town Council

Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 9)

13:19

	<u>2022/2023</u>		<u>2023/2024</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(185,214)</u>	<u>(208,245)</u>	<u>(252,504)</u>	<u>(174,771)</u>	<u>(241,045)</u>		<u>0</u>		
Total Budget Income	1,650	4,650	1,650	6,060	2,610	0	0	0	0
Expenditure	186,864	212,895	254,154	180,831	243,655	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(185,214)</u>	<u>(208,245)</u>	<u>(252,504)</u>	<u>(174,771)</u>	<u>(241,045)</u>		<u>0</u>		

Expenditure Exception Report

Budget Line	Budget	% Over	YTD	Reason
Open Spaces General	£2,500		£2,159	£1,129 received from BDC Councillors' Community Grant towards repair of listening bench costing £1,169.
Whetmead	£2,000	281.2%	£5,624	Section 106 contributions received for Whetmead improvement project – New noticeboard £1,340 and new steps £3,200.
River Walk signage	£3,000	125.2%	£3,756	£1,147 received from BDC Councillors' Community Grant towards new noticeboard costing £1,907.

[Back to Agenda](#)



Agenda Item7

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

MINUTES

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

Date: **5th December 2023**

Present: Councillors B Fleet (Chairman)
 S. Ager
 P. Barlow
 P. Heath
 R. Ramage

 Co-optees S. Black (Witham and Countryside Society)
 S. Brailey (Witham Tree Group)
 J. Casement (Witham Wombles)
 J. Goodman (Local Interests)
 J. Palombi (CPRE)
 P. Shuttleworth (Local Wildlife Interests)

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

25. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt.

26. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

27. MINUTES

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

28. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

No public were in attendance.

29. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received by the Council.

30. CLERK'S REPORT

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

31. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

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

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

32. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE SECTION 106 IMPROVEMENT PROJECT

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

33. SECTION 106 FUNDING AND OPEN SPACES

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

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

34. A12 WIDENING AND WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE

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

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

John Goodman left the Chamber at 14.46.

35. WATER QUALITY OF WITHAM'S RIVERS

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

36. WITHAM POND ENHANCEMENTS UPDATE

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

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

37. ESSEX WILDLIFE TRUST WILDER TOWNS

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

38. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

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

Meeting concluded at 3.12pm.

SP/06.12.23

Signed by Chairman.....

Back to Agenda

Agenda Item 8

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 26th OCTOBER 2023 AT 6:30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT: - Councillors: S Ager, L Barlow, J.M. Coleman, B Fleet, L Headley, A Sloma.

CO-OPTEES: - J. Palombi and J. Robertson

Staff: H Andrews - Deputy Town Clerk
S Smith - P. A to the council

6. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Cllr J C Coleman. Cllr E Williams was absent.

7. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

8. MINUTES

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

9. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Terms of Reference were approved.

10. CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN

Members were presented with a document titled 'Neighbourhood planning in a Climate Emergency'. It was agreed that Members should read the document before the next meeting. Members commented that although the Neighbourhood Plan was in its early stages it may be beneficial to have policies and ideas formed in preparation. Some considerations included tree planting, solar panels and flood prevention.

Members discussed concerns with potential flooding in Witham. It was **AGREED** that investigations should take place to establish who is responsible for the maintenance of areas within the town that may be at risk of flooding so that potential problems may be monitored.

11. COMMUNITY CLIMATE ACTION

Members discussed that there were already existing groups which focus on climate action in Witham. It was noted that there was a Facebook group called Eco-Witham. It was **AGREED** to look into who is responsible for the Group and consider potential partnership working.

Members agreed that the Town Council should continue to promote information regarding good recycling and reusing practices through the Town Council's website and pop up stalls.

12. CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECT

Members discussed potential climate change projects and ideas that the Town Council could pursue, which included:

- Promoting climate concerns and ideas through the Voice and surveying residents to establish what they are doing to combat climate change.
- Find out what local schools are doing about climate change.
- Investigate the feasibility of setting up a repair café in Witham.
- Investigate purchasing a thermal heat loss camera for hiring to residents to assess heat loss from buildings.
- Promotion of recycling points in the town.
- Encouragement of reusing, recycling and shared ownership.
- Researching other items to be recycled at a collection point in the Information Centre at the Town Hall.

Members **AGREED** that information should be collated on all services in Witham that currently exist for recycling and these should be publicised further. Further information to be shared with the public to advise on avoidance of single use products and how to reduce non-recyclable waste. Liaison with residents could commence with a survey and climate information at the next pop-up stall, and also in the next edition of the Voice.

13. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members agreed to meet again in February 2024 after the next Environment Committee meeting to be held on 22nd January 2024. Potential dates to be circulated separately.

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 7:30pm.

.....
Councillor
Chairman

SS/HA/31.10.2023

[Back to Agenda](#)

Agenda Item 9

Tree Group Minutes from the 17th October 2023

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

1 Apologies - Ken Davies.

2 Minutes of the 19th September accepted.

3 Matters arising - none.

4 Planning 2023/24

a) ECC/ Forestry Commission - funding should be confirmed soon but Barry will check the latest so that we can order trees, and also check that the invoice can go to Tom Moat at ECC and who they use as suppliers for posts and mesh;

b) WTC budget - ECC owned green off Braintree Road approved by ECC, agreed species small leaved lime and turkish hazel, probably two of each [Allan will do services check] ; two trees for Luard Way,, one each for Bramble Road and The Avenue, species to be decided by Eric; could also replace missing tree in Armond Road and extend the 'lozenges' area off Spa Road;

c) Sponsored tree - Allan confirmed that there was no problem with Cadent but the maps supplied by the power network were confusing so he is investigating further; possibly a tulip tree would be suitable; Barry to liaise with the sponsors;

d) Popcorn - they have initially indicated possibly 10 volunteers for a planting day;

e) Whips - Eric will order, for possibly planting near the new cyclepath or to replace losses at the Rugby Club or by the electricity sub station off Cut Throat Lane;

f) Other trees - Stan's oak & walnut to be included within the Spa Road planting; Steve has oak & horse chestnut saplings as well.

5 Developers - Mark has re-surveyed the Rivenhall Oaks area and reported the results to the developer, awaiting response. Allan reported that at the recent BDC planning meeting, a representative from Bellway conceded that they had not done well with trees in the past, so Mark's pressure may be having an effect.

6 Publicity - the website faults appear to have been resolved; re the leaflet, our logo and a photo to be added and Richard will look into possible printers. Could possibly be distributed through the Information Centre and the Library ?

7 Maintenance - a lot of repair work has been completed to cages etc; agreed go to the Trent Road area this week.

8 Memorial Park signage - Richard will be drafting a possible wording for the main sign.

9 Finance - the new signatories for the bank account are arranged and we just need to alter the correspondence address , and Barry will draft a letter for Allan to prepare on headed paper.

10 WTC Christmas reception - Stanley may go to represent the Group.

11 Any other business

a) Eric suggested using additional short posts as anti mower guards;

- b] It was agreed that we should obtain some inexpensive forks & spades for use by volunteers, and also buy a new drill instead of continually using Eric's;
- c] Sycamores at Gimsons - Allan has written to BDC planning enforcement complaining about the developer's failings as the trees are dying [as has WTC we believe]. Awaiting response;
- d] Discussion about the practicality of moving larger trees;
- e] Stanley will contact the leader of BDC to say that we have had a good relationship in the past with Landscape Services but that it has been difficult to establish contact since Shaun Taylor's retirement.

12 Next meeting - Tuesday, 7th November, 7.30 pm at Eric's.

Tree Group Minutes from the meeting on the 7th November :

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

1. Apologies - Mark Austin.
- 2 Minutes of the 17th October - accepted.
3. Matters arising - none.

4. Lynfield elm - there was a detailed discussion about the situation. The Town Council are seeking for the preservation of all the saplings ; Ruskins will lift 18 rooted suckers using an 'airspade' ; the planning approval provides for six to be replanted in two groups of three, on Countryside Properties land.

It is alleged that 20% of the canopy is dead and that the elm tree has a possible fungal problem.

It is astonishing that the County arboriculturists were not consulted as part of the consideration of the tree - this should be done automatically.

Cynically, if the tree had been in another location, then the question of felling it may not have arisen.

We understand that an aftercare package will need to be approved, covering 3 to 4 years - it will be critically important to establish who is going to be providing that aftercare ; will a longer timescale be necessary? ; and will there be a penalty for failure?

The plan details are to be submitted to BDC Landscape Services (could other interested parties have input into that?).

The saplings will be lifted January /February, placed in 'airpots', to be cared for until the next winter.

We believe that robust guidelines are needed to ensure survival.

5. Sycamores at Gimsons - there is one dead and one dying mature tree, and Bellway are now applying for felling.

But why did these previously healthy and significant trees die? If it was as a result of the developer's incompetence, then legal action should be taken.

The matter is now with Landscape Services.

6. Planting 2023 /24

a). County Council /Forestry Commission - Barry reported on the ECC discussion with BDC ; funding from the FC is still outstanding despite constant chasing by Tom Moat of ECC ;

b). WTC trees - four to be planted off Bell fields Road, two at Luard Way, two at Epping Way, and one each at Bramble Rd, Armond Rd and The Avenue ; balance at the site off Spa Road along with the two trees from Stan. Barry will get approval for Armond Road from ECC ;

c). Sponsored tree is to be a liquidamber ; payment has been received from Mr and Mrs Foskew ;

d). Popcorn are still keen to help but we are awaiting the FC funding ; we will need to buy tools and gloves ;

e). Whips - Eric will order, possibly 500.

7. Developers - no news.
8. Publicity - agreed that 200 leaflets would be suitable and that Richard would get quotes ; Barry advised that WTC have a local clubs leaflet which we could possibly be included in.
9. Maintenance - Allectus Way this week.
10. Memorial Park signage - Richard has drafted the wording ; Barry will ring Louise at BDC and then Richard will send the wording to her to pass to their graphics department.
11. Finance - the paperwork was passed to Stanley ; the new contact address (ie Stan's) has been notified to the bank ; the bank balance as at the 15th September was noted.
12. Any other business - none.
13. Next meeting - Tuesday, 19th Dec at Eric's, 7.30 pm.

Tree Group minutes of the 9th January 2024 meeting are as follows:

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

1 Apologies - Stanley Brailey.

2 Minutes of the meeting of the 7th November - accepted subject to a correction regarding the Lynfield elm. It was noted that the arboriculturalist's report stated that 25% of the canopy had died [rather than 20%], that fungal decay was present and that the amount of root suckering indicated that the tree was in decline.

3 Matters arising - Allan discussed the email he had received from the new tree officer for BDC, Andrew Digby, which covered a number of issues including the Lynfield elm and how the suckers should be dealt with, which will be part of the reserved matters under the planning application; Andrew agrees with us that schools are not generally suitable sites for tree planting; also that the ' five year rule' for replacing dead trees on new housing developments is not working but that the Bristol Tree Forum were able to impose a tree replacement standard policy so it may be worthwhile seeing how that worked; he was unaware of any council imposing penalties on developers for tree failures.

There were no updates on the Gimsons situation regarding the mature sycamores.

4 Planting 2023/24

a) ECC/Forestry Commission - we do not appear to be much further forward; Barry had chased Tom Moat of ECC and will contact Amanda Wilkins of BDC; our contacts at Aegon & Popcorn had been advised of the position; trees can be ordered and delivered at short notice; a councillor colleague of Barry's has agreed to chase BDC if necessary;

b) WTC budget - these trees are all planted and this has been confirmed to the Deputy Town Clerk;

c) Sponsored/memorial tree - this has been planted off Lawrence Avenue , with family and friends present;

d) Whips - Eric has ordered but no confirmation of when they might appear; we could order/buy some others separately if necessary. To be planted near the hedge line near the cyclepath from the Rivenhall Oaks estate.

5 Developers - Mark advised that Bellway were supposedly obtaining quotes for replacement trees, according to their agents Remus; Mark has copied relevant correspondence to the CEO of Bellway to try and speed matters up, and has received an acknowledgement promising a full reply.

6 Publicity

a) Our leaflet - this is now in the Town Hall Information Centre and the Library. The cost was £61 for 250 leaflets and Richard has an invoice to pass to the treasurer. Thanks to Richard for organising this;

b) Clubs leaflet [WTC] - Barry will arrange for us to be included within this.

7 Maintenance work - almost all completed.

8 Memorial Park signage - Barry is seeking an update on where BDC are regarding this.

9 Finance - Stan had confirmed the current bank balance; it was agreed that we could purchase trees up to the value of £1000 from our own funds if the ECC funding did not materialise, and that we should also purchase material for mulching new trees , eg bark or composted green waste.

10 Tree record updates - Allan confirmed that this has been done, via Jane Noble.

The question was asked - how many trees have we planted?

The answer is believed to be 537 [ignoring whips], and that if we achieved what we have planned for this year, it could reach almost 600.

11 Any other business

a) Tom Moat [ECC] had suggested that we arrange to meet BDC tree /landscape services staff, to establish an ongoing relationship;

b) Allan advised that the Cricket Club had planted trees on their boundary, probably to screen off the Gimsons development;

c) It was suggested that a planting at the end of Tithe Close of trees, and then allowing the grass to be left uncut, would be attractive addition, adjacent to the River Walk;

d) It was agreed that we would plant daffodils in the autumn around the new tree planting off Bellfields Road to create a display from spring 2025;

e) Mark had looked at the likely tree losses arising from the A12 widening of the Witham bypass, and that it was a depressing picture.

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

[Back to Agenda](#)

Officer Report: Section 106 open spaces projects
Issue:

An update on the current Section 106 open spaces projects being completed by Witham Town Council -

- **Whetmead Nature Reserve improvement project** – The approved new interpretation board and nature trail etching posts have now been produced and received. Plans are now in place for the installation and launch of the nature trail in early spring.
- **Bee-friendly planting project** – The application to utilise Section 106 funds has now been approved by Braintree District Council. The Bee Friendly Trust are due to carry out the planned planting scheme near to River View on the River Walk at the end of January.
- **James Cooke Wood improvement project** – The application to utilise Section 106 funds to install a boardwalk in the north-east area of the wood, as well as a noticeboard at the car park entrance, has been approved by Braintree District Council. The noticeboard has been ordered and works to install the boardwalk are due to start in February.

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 – planting scheme will improve biodiversity.
- (b) Crime and disorder – no impact.
- (c) Climate – planting scheme will have a positive impact on climate.

Advice:

- To receive and note.

HA/15.01.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)



ITEM NO: 11

Officer Report: Allotments

Update:

- There are 109 allotments at Cut Throat Lane and a waiting list that is steadily growing. In January 2023 there were 115 people on the waiting list, this has now risen to 155. 12 plots were vacated and re-allocated Jan – Dec 2023.
- At the suggestion of Witham Allotment Association, the water was switched off in December in an attempt to avoid frozen pipes bursting this year. These will be turned on again at the end of February, weather dependent.
- There is currently £10,000 of Section 106 money allocated to Cut Throat Lane allotments and quotes are currently being sought to resurface the main carpark which is in a bad state of repair.
- We have legally been handed 12 new allotments at Wright Grove on the Rivenhall Park Estate in North Witham but are now waiting for the area to be cleared of weeds by the developer’s contractor as per the agreement. It is hoped that these will be allocated in February / early March ready for the growing season.
- A third allotment site, with 18 plots, at Lodge Farm will be handed to Witham Town Council before the 500th dwelling is occupied. At a meeting in January 2023 it was estimated that this would be around January 2025 but a further update on progress is pending.

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 change
- (b) Crime and disorder – no change
- (c) Climate Change– no change

Advice:

- To receive and note.

SP/10.01.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

Agenda Item 12



Witham Town Council: Environmental Policy

Witham Town Council is committed to reducing its environmental impact and creating a sustainable community for residents and future generations. Climate emergency declarations have been made by Essex County Council and Braintree District Council to become carbon neutral by 2030. This has highlighted the requirement for Witham Town Council to strive to reduce its impact on the environment and consider climate change while delivering its services, carrying out its duties and when considering all strategic decisions.

Introduction

The Town Council is committed to acting sustainably and already carries out carbon reducing activities, including the following –

- In 1993/94 the Council planted a 14-acre wood with trees to create James Cooke Wood. Further improvements are planned for this site.
- Whetmead Nature Reserve was a former landfill site but is now a wildlife haven. There are future ambitions to make further enhancements.
- The freehold of the River Walk was transferred to Witham Town Council in 2021 and a 10-year River Walk Management Plan was adopted during 2020/21 which ensures that long term climate benefits are in place.
- A ban of pesticide use on our open spaces.
- Wildflower planting trials are taking place on our open spaces
- All 75 Witham Town Council lamp columns were replaced with LED bulbs during 2019/2020 which have a longer life span and so lower carbon emissions.
- The Information Centre distributes recycling bags and collects used batteries and ink cartridges for safe disposal.
- Future plans are in place to carry out a complete review of the Town Council's fleet for carbon free alternatives and decarbonisation of the Council's operations.
- Introducing improved communal composting facilities at Cut Throat Lane allotment site, encouraging the use of water butts and discouraging tenants' use of pesticides.
- Future plans to consider replacing open spaces equipment with battery operated alternatives to reduce the use of fuel.

This policy applies to all land, property and equipment that Witham Town Council owns, manages or is responsible for as well as services it delivers. The Council will ensure compliance with all environmental regulations, laws and codes of practice including The Water Act 2003, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006, Climate Change and Sustainable Energy Act 2006, Clean Neighbourhoods and Environment Act 2005, Duty of Care (Waste), Water Framework Directive.

Objectives

Witham Town Council recognises that its day-to-day operations and activities can have an impact on the environment in a negative way. This policy aims to establish broad objectives in ensuring that the Council will continually strive to reduce its impact on the environment and consider climate change in the development of all its activities.

The Council will aim to improve its environmental performance and influence improvement in Witham in the following ways:

- Use energy, natural resources and non-renewable resources efficiently and strive to minimise waste and pollution.
- Inform Witham's residents of the Council's environmental activities and respond and react to feedback.
- Support individual behaviour change in Witham's residents, leading by example and supporting environmentally friendly activities.
- Support local businesses in adoption of low-impact practices.
- Manage its land using environmentally-friendly practices that will promote biodiversity and protect habitats.
- Support and encourage climate change initiatives in planning applications through the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Specific Environmental Actions

The Council will commit to environmental action in the following specific areas -

Water Management

- Water to be used efficiently for Council activities and at Town Hall.
- Maximise the use of water butts.
- Minimisation of pollution and conservation of the River Brain through the River Walk and Whetmead including the river banks which provide an important wildlife habitat.

Energy Management

- Monitor energy use and look at instigating energy-saving measures at the Town Hall.
- Raise awareness of energy efficiency of staff when using Council resources.
- Promote energy saving practices to residents.

Biodiversity and Open Spaces

- Protect and enhance the natural environment of the Council's open spaces.
- Manage Council open spaces to promote and protect biodiversity.
- Continue to exclude the use of all pesticides on Council managed open spaces.
- Extend wildflower planting schemes ensuring invasive species are excluded.
- Open spaces to be managed effectively to enhance the quality of the natural environment while providing amenity space for residents and protected well-being for species onsite.

Raising Awareness

- Promote the awareness of environmental issues within the town.
- Work with partner organisations to raise awareness.
- Liaising with youth/schools and promoting sustainable period products for schools.

Reviewed and adopted at Environment Committee held 9th January 2023

Next annual review: January 2025

[Back to Agenda](#)



ITEM NO: 13

Officer Report: Witham Station Adoption
Update:

Witham Town Council have been part of the Greater Anglia Station Adoption Scheme since 2019, previously Witham in Bloom had been an adopter. The scheme is designed to allow adopters to look after their station, primarily through gardening projects, but could also be art installations and other innovative schemes for the good of the local community, within the parameters of what is allowed within stations.

WTC share the adoption of Witham Station with two volunteers (also adopters of Braintree Freeport station) whereby the summer and winter flowers are procured and planted by WTC and the volunteers undertake regular watering and deadheading, as required, as well as replacing any failed flowers.

The budget for the scheme is low and it is difficult to provide an impactful display with these funds. A grant of £200 a year is received from Greater Anglia and an additional £300 from Essex County Council's Community Rail Partnership. This income covers summer and winter planting of 18 single tier, 1 two tier and 3 three tier planters. Additional funding is occasionally accessible from Essex County Council, if a need is demonstrated. This year WTC received an additional £92.02 to plant perennials. The £200 2023 grant from Greater Anglia, first invoiced by email in July (as per previous years) and again more formally in October, is still outstanding and despite regular prompts there is still a delay, which apparently is the result of GDPR issues.

WTC recognise the importance of the station as the gateway to the town for many commuters and visitors and that the environment reflects on the town's image, however there has been considerable difficulty in recouping funds this year and more money is ideally needed to make an effective floral impact. A decision is needed as to whether the relationship should continue and whether to put some funds towards this.

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 change
- (b) Crime and disorder – potentially negative if ceased
- (c) Climate Change– potentially negative if ceased

Advice:

- To receive and decide on whether to continue Station Adoption and whether additional funding is needed.

SP/15.01.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

BDC Ward	Location	Improvements Required to existing facilities	Improvements Required to new facilities	Record	Source	Ownership	Map Ref	Comments
Witham Central	Mill Lane Square	Existing space adjoining Mill Lane bungalows, small square for small scale landscaping and seating improvements	nil	Requests from public received by Town Council	Town Council	Greenfields Community Housing	See Town Council map	Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Land adjoining Whetmead Nature Reserve	nil	Purchase/lease existing space adjacent to Nature Reserve. Create a link from Riverwalk to Whetmead, stabilise ground, improve signage and make Saul's Bridge more visible	None given	Town Council	Not in public ownership	See Town Council map	
	All Saints Churchyard	Improvements to spatial quality and repairs to assets including gravestones	nil	Comments received from public	Town Council	Not in public ownership	Green spaces site location maps	
	Freebournes Road Industrial Estate	Buffer planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Witham Town Park	Signage, seating, bins and entrance improvements	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	Green spaces site location maps	
	Land off Greenfields	Landscape improvements, natural play, signage, paths and seating	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Blackwater Rail Trail	Bridging River Brain is short term aim. Improvements to access, signage and paths. Cycleway improvements including cycleway from Pasture Road to Catholic Bridge across the River Brain near Blackwater Lane. Bins/dog waste bins and surfacing	Bridge across the River Brain near Blackwater Lane	None given	OSAP Version 1	ECC owned land	None	
	Sauls Bridge off Maldon Road Sports Ground	Boundary planting and access improvements	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	River Walk (Chipping Hill Bridge to Saul's Bridge)	Repairs to cycleway. Bridges on River Walk will need replacing. Habitat creation, path/cycleway improvements and signage, more buoyancy aids, litter bins, dog waste bins, seating and surfacing	Car and cycle parking	None given	OSAP Version 1	WTC owned land	None	
	Whetmead Nature Reserve	Path and access improvements, habitat enhancements, buoyancy aids, interpretation and dog waste/litter bins	Creation of outdoor education space	None given	Town Council + OSAP Version 1	Town Council owned (deeds not seen)	None	This entry can be removed and Section 106 funds have been spent and project completed.
	Allectus Way Open Space	Landscape enhancements including play equipment, paths/cycleways, boundaries and tree planting, habitat creation, bins/dog waste bins, path access and signage	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Witham Lodge amenity space	Planting enhancements and signage, grass areas and shrub planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Sauls Bridge Sports Ground, Maldon Rd	Walking/running signage and KM markers	Outdoor table tennis equipment	None given	BDC Officer	BDC ownership	None	
	Witham Sports Ground, Spinks Lane	Upgrade and improve facilities at the centre	New 11v11 Floodlit 3G football turf pitch. Small sided informal (MUGA)	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Maltings Academy, Spinks Lane	Nil	Provision of floodlights for courts	None given	AET Academies Trust	ECC owned land	None	
	Claudius Way	Signage, health and safety improvements and bins	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None	Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Off Church Street, Bellfield	Create area for informal recreation, seating, bins	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	This entry should be in Witham North
	Lockram Lane by former churchyard & Rex Mott Court	Landscape improvements	nil	none	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	To be identified	Tree planting on 20 planting areas identified by Witham Tree Group	nil	WTG Survey of 2014	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	River Walk - Mill Lane	Planting enhancements, introduction of hedgerow, boundary treatments						Suggested entry for 2024

	River Walk	Welcome signage, interpretation boards							Suggested entry for 2024
	River Walk	Landscaping and path improvements by Lid/Churchill							Suggested entry for 2024
	Land next to Whetmead Nature Reserve (east of A12)	Landscaping, seating, car park improvements, interpretation boards, habitat creations			Town Council	Town Council			Suggested entry for 2024
Witham North	Bramston Green (50455)	Landscaping, seating and planting	nil	Discussions between Town Council and residents	Town Council	Greenfields Community Housing	Green spaces site location maps		Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Chipping Hill Green (A on map provided by Town Council)	Existing green spaces requires stabilisation to gravel surface to stop it washing into the road. Needs defence from cars. Land used for the medieval fayre	nil	Comments received from public by Town Council.	Town Council	Part BDC acquired in 1932, part common land with an unregistered owner	See Town Council map. Pdf.		
	Ebenezer Close (60459)	Improve access, litter bins/dog waste bins, seating and signage	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None		
	River Walk (Ebenezer to Chipping Hill Bridge) (30437)	Repair cycleway. Bridges on River Walk will need replacing. Habitat creation, path/cycleway improvements and signage, more buoyancy aids, litter bins, dog waste bins, seating and surfacing	Car and cycle parking	None given	OSAP Version 1	Witham Town Council	None		
	Glebe Crescent (2 spaces)	Tree planting and improve access	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None		Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Braintree Road	Access and path improvements, landscape enhancements and habitat creation	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	ECC owned land	None		
	Cemetery (80405)	Tree planting, signage and access improvements	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None		
	Rickstones Playing Field (10404 & 10397)	Signage/information boards and ball stop fencing. Access and recreational facilities. Improve pitch drainage	Cycle and blue badge parking and outdoor table tennis equipment	None given	OSAP Version 1 and Braintree Strategy Playing Pitches	BDC ownership	None		
	Rickstones Play Ground Pavilion	Refurbishment and improvements of pavilion	nil	None given	Witham Town Council	BDC ownership	None		
	Templars (Doorstep Green)	Boundary improvements and habitat creation	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Land owned between BDC and Greenfields	None		
	Forest Road Pond	Improvements to pond, signage, planting, seating, bins/dog waste bins and paths	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None		
	By railway from allotments to golf course	Seating, bins	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None		
	Former recreation area rear of Ebenezer Close	Landscape improvements with seating and bin	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None		
	To be identified	Tree planting on 19 planting areas identified by Witham Tree Group	nil	WTG Survey of 2014	Town Council	Unknown	None		
	Rickstones Playing Field	Additional dog waste bins			Town Council				New entry 2023
	Evans Way balancing pond area	Improvements to seating			Town Council				New entry 2023
Witham South	Opp. 21 Pelly Avenue (50553)	Planting two-three trees in front of a large facing wall to create a better visual aspect	nil	None given	Town Council	Greenfields Community Housing	Green spaces site location maps		Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Land between River (20528)	Improve access, ground stabilisation and informal walking/exercise route	Purchase of land by Town Council	Comments received from the public by the Town Council in relation to Constance Close development consultation	Town Council	BDC ownership	Green spaces site location maps		
	Pelly Avenue	Entrance renovation, signage, wheelchair access, surfacing, play equipment, bins/dog waste bins and tree planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None		Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Olivers Drive noise bund	Buffer planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None		

	Sauls Avenue	Landscape enhancements including tree planting and habitat creation	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Brook Walk (Dengie Close)	Planting, tree planting, signage, information boards, surfacing and litter/dog bins	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Land owned partly by BDC and partly by Greenfields	None	
	James Cooke Woods	Path works, signage and habitat improvements	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Town Council owned (deeds not seen)	None	
	Carroways noise bund	Buffer planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Land owned by developers (deeds not seen)	None	
	Maltings Lane	Buffer planting, tree planting and habitat creation	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Land owned by developers (deeds not seen)	None	
	Hatfield Road Estate, bund by railway	Create path and cycleway link to Stevens Rd	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Malting Estate. Gershwin Boulevard	Enable fishing in drainage water lagoon	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	Remove from list. Area is not suitable or safe for fishing.
	James Cooke Woods	Improve drainage in swampy area	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Maldon Road Sports Field (40466)	Provide pavilion/changing room. Renovate clubhouse. Install boundary fencing.	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Allectus Way past shops	Create footway/cycleway	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	James Cooke Woods, Maldon Road, Witham, CM8 3LJ	Boardwalk in waterlogged area				Town Council owned		New entry 2023
	To be identified	Tree planting on 19 planting areas identified by Witham Tree Group	nil	WTG Survey of 2014	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	James Cooke Wood	Improvement and extension to car park area						Suggested entry for 2024
	River Walk	Welcome signage, interpretation boards						Suggested entry for 2024
Witham West	Land by Asda	Improve access to be made part of the River Walk. Renew surfacing and improve signage	Transfer land to Town Council ownership	None given	Town Council	BDC (appears part sold off)	Green spaces site location maps	
	Flora Road/Bramble Open Space	Additional litter bins away from play area. Landscape enhancements including natural play, play equipment, paths/cycleway, boundaries, tree planting and habitat creation. Signage, surfacing, planting, seating	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Spa Road open space, including land south of Humber Road	Additional litter bins and seating away from play area. Landscape enhancements including play, paths/cycleway, boundaries, tree planting and habitat creation. Signage, surfacing, planting, seating	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Highfields Road (South of Chelmer Rd)	Safety improvements, litter bins/dog bins and seating. Graffiti/vandalism/ASB problem	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Powers Hall End amenity space, Flora Road	Improve access, litter bins/dog waste bins, seating	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	None	
	Powers Hall End/Rosebay Close	Access paths, planting and habitat creation	Cycle and disability parking	None given	OSAP Version 1	Land owned partly by BDC and partly by Greenfields	None	Change Greenfields to Eastlight Community Housing.
	Land owned by Greenfields	Include cycleway from Spa Road to Blunts Hall Rd. More bins/dog bins and seating	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None	Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Land to South and West of Pennyroyal Crescent	Planting, surfacing and bin/dog bins	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None	Ownership - Eastlight Community Housing
	Powers Hall End Playing Field	Boundary planting	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	ECC owned land	None	
	Witham RUFC	Improve pitch drainage	nil	None given	Braintree Strategy and Action Plan for Playing Pitches	Currently Unknown	None	

	Witham Town Football Club (inc Spa Rd playing field)	Portable training lights on adjacent pitches and better on-site storage	nil	None given	Braintree Strategy and Action Plan for Playing Pitches	Currently Unknown	None	
	Woodland marsh rear of Honeysuckle Way	nil	Acquire for informal recreation/ River Walk	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Spring Lodge to Bramble Rd	Tree planting, seating, bins	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Humber Road to ditch near football club	nil	Seating, bins, goalposts/similar	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Douglas Grove, northwards to Humber Road	Tree planting, seat, bin	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Teign, and Ness Walk	Tree planting, seat, bin	nil	None given	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	Land by Asda - River Walk	Install larger or additional bins						New entry 2023
	Honeysuckle Way	Seating						New entry 2023
	To be identified	Tree planting on 19 planting areas identified by Witham Tree Group	nil	WTG Survey of 2014	Town Council	Unknown	None	
	River Walk pond	Enhancements to River Walk duck pond by increasing biodiversity						Suggested entry for 2024
	River Walk	Welcome signage						Suggested entry for 2024
	Rosebay playground	Improvements to play equipment, path access improvements						Suggested entry for 2024
	Powers Hall End, by Terling Rd	Tree planting						Suggested entry for 2024

Allotments

	Location	No. of Plots	Waiting list	Improvements required	Record	Source	Ownership	Comments
Witham North	Forest Road frontage including allotments (North of Motts Lane & Cut Throat Lane)			Access, fencing, seating, signage, litter/dog waster bins and landscaping	none given	OSAP Version 1	BDC ownership	
	Cut Throat Lane Allotments (Site 1) CM8 2PX	109	125 waiting in total	Installation of raised gardening beds for less physically able people and improvements to parking area	none given	BDC Parks & Open Spaces	BDC ownership	Ensure that these improvements are re-entered onto document as they were previously on the Open Spaces Action Plan but have been removed in error
	Cut Throat Lane Allotments (Site 2) CM8 2PX			Improvement to communal paths	none given	Town Council	Witham Town Council	New entry for 2023
	Cut Throat Lane Allotments							
Witham South	Witham	No known allotments - provision of allotments required						
Witham West	Witham	No known allotments - provision of allotments required						
	Land between Teign Drive and Blunts Hall Road			Suggested site for provision of allotments				New entry for 2023

Back to Agenda



ITEM NO: 15

Officer Report: **Witham in Bloom**

Issue:

Since 2016, when the Witham in Bloom group closed, Witham Town Council has taken over a scaled down version of the initiative, funding the floral displays on lamp columns, car parks, in stone troughs and in the hanging baskets outside some businesses. The distribution is shown below

- 38 lamp post inserts (summer only)
- 3 roof troughs (summer only)
- 40 barrier troughs at Newlands and Mill Lane car parks
- 31 Stone troughs throughout Newland Street (and top of Guithavon Street)
- 2 three tier planters and town sign tub
- 12 hanging baskets (summer only) (2 of which are outside the Town Hall)

Working with a supplier, Skippers Maintenance, Witham has enjoyed spectacular summer blooms from June to October, which are watered and fed twice weekly, and some winter bedding from October to April. In 2023/24 the direct cost to the Town Council was £14,140 in addition to the lamp-column testing at £847 and for the 2024 / 25 year this has increased to **£14,826** and **£924** respectively.

While WTC recognises the clear benefits of maintaining the floral displays in providing an attractive and welcoming environment for residents, workers and visitors (as well as insects), and helping to instil a sense of pride in the town, there is a recognition that costs need to be kept under control and fair for all.

In 2023, requests via social media and The Voice, for volunteers to reignite Witham in Bloom only yielded three resident enquiries and while there is still a desire to try and rekindle the scheme in the future, it is proposed that in the interim, some minor changes are undertaken ourselves:

- Inform relevant businesses that they can purchase a fully maintained summer hanging basket / roof trough at a cost of **£50+VAT** (£37 for basket and £13 for 20 week maintenance) outside their premises but that this year the council will not be funding this. **This will save £650, if all are taken up and £481 if none are** (as maintenance is a fixed cost regardless of the number of troughs / baskets). **However please note that there is a risk that businesses may chose not to have a hanging basket / roof trough which would mean fewer flowers.**
- Plant the 31 **winter** stone troughs ourselves this year and undertake maintenance of them and the carpark saddle troughs, including feeding and deadheading, which we estimate would save **£155** in flora and **£1,750** in maintenance. We would still retain Skippers to plant the 40 carpark saddle troughs (£1,480).

If both these measures were implemented, there would be total saving of between **£2,386 and £2,555**. The success of this scheme would be reviewed in 12 months with a view to potentially taking on some summer planting and maintenance ourselves in 2025 although this would require investment in a water Bowser (£3,000-£5,000).

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 change
- (b) Crime and disorder – no change
- (c) Climate Change– no change

Advice:

- To review the information and assess whether Witham Town Council should invite local businesses to pay for hanging baskets and undertake the winter trough planting and maintenance ourselves.

SP/04.01.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

Officer Report: Whetmead river bank**Issue:**

There is currently an issue with river bank erosion on a section of the River Blackwater at Whetmead Nature Reserve. This appears to have been caused by children using this area to access the water during the summer. The erosion is close to the path that goes around the nature reserve which is making the path narrower as the bank moves backwards.

Advice has been sought from Essex Wildlife Trust regarding how this can be repaired. It is considered that pre-filled concrete bags should be placed at the source of the erosion and back-filled to reconstruct the path. The top layer will be made up of soil bags which will enable grass to be re-seeded. A quote received from a company who provide suitable traditional hessian bags pre-filled with dry mix concrete within biodegradable liners is £2,709.50 which exceeds the Whetmead budget line of £2,000.

The Environment River Walk Project Management budget line of £10,000 has not been utilised and will not be fully used this year and with this in mind, it is proposed to vire funds of £2,709.50 to purchase the required bags to repair the river bank.

**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 – Repairing erosion has a positive climate impact.

Advice:

- To approve the virement of £2,709.50 from the River Walk Project Management budget line to purchase the required products to repair the river bank erosion at Whetmead.



ITEM NO: 17

Officer Report: James Cooke Wood Improvement Project

Issue:

A feasibility study of James Cooke Wood was presented to the Environment Committee on 14th September 2020 with various recommendations on how the community woodland can be improved. Due to lack of resources, both staff and funding, limited progress has yet to have been made.

Witham Town Council are now carrying out open space projects using Section 106 funding available and will be able to commence with improvements to James Cooke Wood.

Boardwalk

The installation of a boardwalk was a previous recommendation and is currently in progress through Section 106 funds available to be utilised this month. The north east side of the wood is an area that is boggy and prone to flooding and therefore is inaccessible for a large portion of the year. The proposed boardwalk will create a pleasant walkway for visitors and improve accessibility.

Noticeboard

The installation of a noticeboard at the entrance to the wood is also being implemented as part of the first improvements covered by Section 106 funding. This will enable information about the site to be shared with visitors, provide educational material and share local community notices.

Woodland Management

James Cooke Wood was originally planted with 6,000 trees during the winter of 1993/94 initially by Members and local residents, and completed by a local forestry contractor. The trees were planted close together for maximum effect but due to lack of resources no long-term maintenance strategy was allocated to this asset. The trees now need thinning out in order to thrive and for the health of the woodland. A felling licence is held from the Forestry Commission to enable the necessary works to be carried out for up to 30% of the trees to be felled.

Witham Town Council carry out some felling during winter and as part of day-to-day duties as and when issues arise with trees there, however the amount of felling needed is now considered outside their capacity due to their other responsibilities. It is therefore considered that a contractor should be employed to take on the woodland management and carry out the felling required to improve the wood which will open up the tree canopy and increase the biodiversity of the site. Initial enquires suggest that approximately £5k would enable 50% of the required works to be carried out. There are budget lines that will not be fully utilised for 2023/2024 that can be used for the funding of these works. The Litter Bin budget line of £3,000 has not been utilised this year as it has not been necessary to purchase any new litter bins. With this in mind it is proposed to vire £3,000 from the Litter Bin budget line and the remaining £2,000 to come from the James Cooke Wood budget.

Improvement to car parking and entrance

The car park is small and currently caters for around 8 vehicles. The access road is also prone to potholes and surface issues. To attract more visitors, encourage events and generally enhance the entrance area to the site, the car park and entrance will need to be improved. This has been included as an item to be added to Braintree District Council's Potential Open Spaces Improvement document for 2024 which enables Section 106 funding to be secured more easily.

It is considered that the car park should be made larger and as trees are required to be felled on site, this could be incorporated at this section of the woods to increase the car park size, widen and enhance the entrance which will improve the visibility from Maldon Road.

Other improvements

Various other ideas have been suggested to enhance James Cooke Wood – including nature trails, woodland carvings, play activities and a natural classroom.

However, it is considered that woodland management and enhancement to the car park and entrance area should be pursued first before other improvements are considered.

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 – The woodland management aspect of the improvements would increase biodiversity.
- (b) Crime and disorder – No impact.
- (c) Climate – Long-term positive effect.

Advice:

- To approve the woodland management project and vire £3,000 from the Litter Bin budget line and use the James Cooke Wood budget line for the remaining £2,000 to fund this.
- To approve car park/entrance enhancements as the next stage of the James Cooke Wood improvement project and for Officers to pursue this further.

HA/09.01.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)