

Witham's Voice

Autumn 2021

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Your quarterly newsletter

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An introduction to your new Councillor for the Hatfield Ward

Interested in becoming a Community Special Constable?

If you want to make a real difference in your town then volunteer as a Community Special Constable and play a part in keeping your neighbourhood safe. Witham Town Council are supporting Essex Police to increase local and visible policing in and around Witham, and there is currently funding available for more officers in Witham.

If you are interested in becoming a Community Special Constable or would like more information, please visit www.essexpolice.uk/specials/witham.



Witham Dog Show

Saturday
3rd July



Photography by @rhiannachadwick

On Saturday 3rd July, we welcomed visitors with their canine companions to the River Walk for Witham Town Council's first Dog Show where they enjoyed a selection of fun dog classes, local trader stands and fun have-a-go activities,

Lots of locals flocked to the event with their canine companions, with a selection entering fun dog show categories such as 'Bad Hair Day', 'Best Biscuit Catcher' and 'Look Most Like Their Owner'. Local dog related businesses sponsored each category and supplied prizes for the winners, as well as hosting a trade stand for the day. Ramsden Heath Flyball came along, providing displays and have-a-go opportunities for members of the public to take part in. All monies raised went towards two local nominated charities, RSPCA Danaher and Clarks Farm Greyhound Rescue. There was a great turnout for this free community event, with lots of demand for a repeat next year.

Witham Town Council have received overwhelmingly positive feedback for the event and were pleased to see everyone respecting each other and following the social distancing guidelines.

Acquisition of Witham's River Walk

Witham Town Council is delighted to announce the completion of a major land transfer, which sees the local council become the freehold owner of Witham's River Walk, having managed the land under lease from Braintree District Council since 2005. The proposal to transfer ownership of the River Walk to the Town Council was invoked in 2015, when Members resolved to trigger a clause within the lease that would entitle the Town Council to full ownership of the land. Supported through Braintree District Council's legal team and the Town Council's appointed solicitors, this complex and lengthy transaction for an area of land that spans one end of the town to another marks a truly historic moment for Witham's future. A total of six years negotiation with Braintree District Council has resulted in this significant, permanent acquisition of land for Witham's local citizens. Considered Witham's 'Jewel in the Crown', the River Walk is enjoyed by all of Witham's community, and the completion of the freehold combined with a recently adopted ten year management plan puts the River Walk on a pathway to greater enhancement of biodiversity and connectivity with other local assets.

Speaking of investing in Witham for the future, District Councillor Stevie Hicks added "As The Witham Town Council Chairman of The Open Spaces Management Committee and local District Councillor of The North Ward of Witham, I am markedly cock-a-hoop about this final closure of ownership being rightfully bestowed to Witham Town Council, giving us and future Town Councillors the confidence to invest stronger than ever into our local community. Now more than ever our collective efforts matter in managing this absolutely beautiful part of Witham for future generations to enjoy, without the continued fear of the heart of Witham being lost

to ever encroaching developments. The Town Council has adopted the 2nd generation River Walk Management Plan to safeguard and sensitively improve biodiversity for the next ten years. Witham will be safer from the travesty of trees being torn down where bordering new developments as local control of key areas is improved."



The River Walk has also recently undergone an extensive tree maintenance programme in addition to the Town Council completing the 2nd phase of its longstanding back channel conservation project in partnership with Essex Wildlife Trust. A complete refurbishment of dog bins was executed during lockdown and new benches are being installed at selected beauty spots as part of the Town Council's ongoing commemorative bench scheme.

The Town Council would like to thank Braintree District Council's Members for supporting this longstanding ambition of devolution and the Town Council's solicitors, Holmes & Hills for their extensive assistance in facilitating the transfer. In recognition of the District Council's open commitment to continued devolution of local services and assets to willing Town & Parish Councils, Members now look forward to a brighter future, where Witham has the first say in its evolution.

Allotments

In addition to the legal transfer of the River Walk, Witham Town Council took over the ownership of Cut Throat Lane allotments on 22nd June 2021.

The Local Government (Parishes and Parish Councils) Regulations 1999 state that allotments held by a district council should be transferred to the appropriate parish council and therefore in recent years Witham Town Council have been in negotiations with Braintree District Council to obtain the allotments to rightly manage.

The allotments at Cut Throat Lane has over 100 plots of different sizes available for residents to grow their own fruit, vegetables and flowers at a modest annual fee. There is currently a large waiting list to obtain a plot but the Town Council are due to have some further allotments available in the future on new developments in Witham which may go some way towards reducing the number waiting.

Allotment gardening has grown in popularity in recent years and has numerous health and social rewards as well as the benefits that it has towards climate change. Witham Town Council are therefore excited about this



transfer and look forward to working with the allotment community and making improvements to the site. Further information and to apply to go on the waiting list for an allotment please contact assistantclerk@witham.gov.uk or visit www.witham.gov.uk/allotments

YOUR COUNCIL

Below is an update on some of the recent actions and outcomes of Council meetings.

Council meetings are open for the public to attend. If you would like to attend a meeting, dates are published on the back page of Witham's Voice along with details of all of your Witham Town Councillors. Information is also available on our website, www.witham.gov.uk/committees

Spotlight Turns on Developer Funding



Witham Town Council is seeking comprehensive negotiations with Braintree District Council to tackle the dire situation of millions of pounds of unspent developer's money remaining in the coffers of the local planning authority. Witham demands its fair share of funding and a far greater input into the drafting and management of developer's contributions. Braintree District Council remains in the minority having not adopted Community Infrastructure Levy, which would see Witham Town Council receive a direct, minimum contribution of 15% of developers funds to the local purse. The Town Council is now seeking evidenced answers as to why the District Council still refuses to implement this powerful statutory tool, adopted by the majority of the UK's planning authorities, and will continue to update local citizens on this significant issue. The Town Council remains the local voice of opposition to unsustainable and poorly funded development.

Major Concerns Remain over Proposed Quarry Expansion

The Town Council has highlighted its serious concerns to upper authorities over the proposed rapid expansion of nearby aggregate extraction operations, which could see the number of daily HGV movements passing through Witham increasing by 300%. For over 6 years, the Town Council has unsuccessfully petitioned Essex County Council & Highways England for a comprehensive redesign of HGV signage to reroute excessively sized vehicles away from Witham's quiet residential streets. The Council continues to urge residents to make their voices heard and join the cause for a change in HGV routing for Witham.



Gimsons Review Group

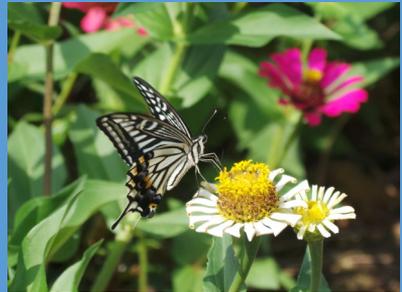


Although unsuccessful in its attempt via judicial review to overturn the development of the Gimsons site, the Town Council continues to monitor developer's actions on site and strict adherence to construction rules, times and conditions. The Town Council has constituted the "Gimsons Review Group", an advisory committee, which is tasked with scrutinising the overall development of the site and

Braintree District Council's role as the local planning and enforcement authority.

Wildflower Trials to Commence

The Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee has approved a trial, wildflower planting scheme for Town Council managed open spaces. If the selected cultivation of wildflowers is successful in this initial trial, the Town Council will consider a wider wildflower planting and maintenance programme to help expand the biodiversity of Witham's many beautiful, green spaces.



Climate Audit Panel Seeks Environmental Change

The Town Council's new Climate Audit Panel constituted this summer has already commenced a series of high profile research and audit projects to understand and reduce both the Town Council's operational carbon footprint and improve the



immediate environment of Witham as part of the wider, international efforts to stem climate change. Despite funding constraints, the Town Council is ambitious in making a genuine difference to the way it operates including ending all internal combustion use in horticultural operations and exploring solar capabilities for local industry. Meeting 4 times a year, this advisory function of the Council promises to go much further than simply declaring a "climate emergency" by putting

forwards genuine, funded projects to make a change. The Town Council rejects the growing culture of "Greenwashing" and is committed to achieving genuine, visible action for climate improvement.

MEET YOUR NEW COUNCILLOR: JoAnn Williams

I am a long-term resident of Witham and am very active in the Community. I was a Witham Town Councillor from 2015 to 2019 and was Witham Town Mayor for 2017-2018. I am really pleased to say that I was re-elected in 2021 to represent the Witham Hatfield Ward as a Conservative Councillor. I am proud of many of the things the Council brings to Witham and I was heavily involved in organising two public meetings with Essex Police, the Essex Police and Crime Commissioner and our MP the Right Honourable Priti Patel to address resident's concerns over antisocial behaviour and the lack of visible policing in Town. This effort has seen communications open between residents and the Police and we have seen a reduction in the antisocial behaviour. I also have actively worked on Youth Engagement for the town to help alleviate antisocial behaviour and help our young people to expand their horizons and become better future citizens of our Town, County and Country.



I am retired and have time to dedicate to the Community. I am a volunteer within the Community as a member of the former Witham and District Lioness Club who are now the Witham and Maldon Swans, I represented the Town Council on the Board of Citizens Advice and I have served for many years as a member of Witham Carnival Association. I am now proudly the Chairman of the Board of Trustees of the Connected Learning Multi-Academy Trust, made up of Templar's Academy, Powers Hall Academy, Icenii Academy, Silver End Academy and Cherry Tree Academy.

I want to focus on issues such as: Youth Engagement, traffic issues, tackling antisocial behaviour, littering and encourage pride in our Community. I know it is vital to keep a two-way dialogue going between the Council and its constituents to understand our Community's needs.

I love living in Witham and can't think of anywhere else I would want to live.

What ward am I in?

Our Town Councillors represent individual wards, so if you have a problem that is local to you, it helps to know which Councillor you should contact.

To find out which ward you are in and if there are any elections coming up in your area, visit our website, www.witham.gov.uk/your-council

Witham Heritage Room

The Heritage Room in the Information Centre is a little gem that is so often missed by our visitors.

The room is home to an original fire surround, rescued from elsewhere in the building during earlier restoration works, and it really sets the scene for this part of the building. The room also has a beautiful original table which is over 100 years old.

In keeping with the history theme, our display cabinet contains various historical items related to Witham that are held by the Council, some of which have been donated under our Public Artefact Donation Scheme.



If you are looking for copies of Agendas and Minutes from Council meeting, information on local clubs and support groups or leaflets for Council Services, you will find them in this room. Our display boards are often home to a display of art from local artists, but are also available for volunteer clubs to use to promote themselves. Just call into the Information Centre to find out more if you would be interested in using this space.

It's the perfect place to take the weight off your feet or browse the leaflets, posters and items on display.



WHAT'S ON IN WITHAM

SPOOKTACULAR TRAIL

**Saturday
30th
October
10am—4pm**

Come along to our special spooktacular trail along Witham's River Walk this Halloween.

Help the wacky wizard find his missing potion ingredients by searching along the trail. You may even bump into some interesting characters along the way who will have plenty of tricks and treats in store for you.



We will also be joined by the fantastic entertainer Bam Bam who you may recognize from Britain's Got Talent. He will be here to show some real magic tricks—what a treat!

There is plenty of fun to be had for the whole family, so make sure you don't miss out !

This free family event will be available to book online soon. For more information and to book tickets, please visit our website or come and see us in the Town Hall Information Centre on Newland Street.



SPOOKTACULAR TRAIL

Come along to our fun Halloween event on Witham's River Walk.



WITHAM CHRISTMAS FAYRE

Come along to our brand new Christmas market and enjoy the festive atmosphere whilst shopping for gifts and treats.

Diaries at the ready!

With national restrictions starting to ease, Witham Town Council are looking forward to filling your calendar with lots of fun events! From returning favourites to brand new events, there is plenty in store for 2021.

All events are subject to government restrictions and will follow safe Covid practices where required.

For more information, please call 01376520627 or email events@witham.gov.uk

Witham's brand new Christmas event brings festive magic to a shopping extravaganza.

Music, food and drink will be available alongside local traders and vendors, offering a perfect Christmas gift shopping experience.

Don't forget to stick around to see our Christmas light switch on after dark!

As Christmas approaches, we will gather outside once more to enjoy Carols by Candlelight alongside Churches Together, after a successful event in Witham Town Park in December 2020.

You'd better not pout and you'd better not cry, because Father Christmas is coming to Witham Town Hall this festive season! He will be here to meet lots of boys and girls to see if they have been naughty or nice this year. Dates of these visits will be confirmed soon.

More details about our Christmas events will be released in the coming months, so keep an eye on our social media for more information.



For updates on all of our events, visit our website and social media pages.



Witham
town council



@WithamTC



@WithamCouncil



@town_Witham



TOWN HALL

Tel: 01376 520627

townclerk@witham.gov.uk

INFORMATION CENTRE

Tel: 01376 502674

61 Newland Street, Witham, Essex CM8 2FE

Witham Town Council Offices are open Monday - Thursday 9:00AM-5:00PM and Friday 9:00AM-4:00PM.

The Information Centre in the Town Hall is open from 9:00AM-4:30PM Monday, Tuesday and Thursday, 10:00AM -4:30PM Wednesday and 9:00AM - 3:50PM Friday.

Both are closed Weekends and Bank Holidays.

Meetings of your Town Council are open for you to attend. There is usually an opportunity before the beginning of each meeting to speak directly to members of the council regarding current agenda items.

Full details are displayed at www.witham.gov.uk

Agendas are on display on the noticeboard in Newland Street.

Meetings usually begin at 7:30PM and Planning Applications & Transport Committee meetings at 6:30PM. These are held in the Council Chamber at the Town Hall.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Town Council: 20th September, 18th October, 15th November & 14th December

Environment: 4th October

Community: 1st November

Policy & Resources: 29th November

Planning & Transport: 20th September, 4th & 18th October, 1st, 15th & 29th November, 14th & 20th December

YOUR COUNCILLORS

CENTRAL WARD

Michael Lager: 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT
Tel: 01376 513747

Robert Williams: 25 Guithavon Valley CM8
1HF Tel: 01376 510845

WEST WARD

Susan Ager: 15 Chelmer Road CM8 2EY
Tel: 01376 512470

John Goodman: 2 Chippingdell CM8 2JX.
Tel: 01376 516918

Tom Pleasance: 5 Helford Court CM8 1TL.
Tel: 01376 501597

SOUTH WARD

Kevin Atwill: 11 Guithavon Street CM8
1BJ Tel: 07798 873544

Chelsey Jay: cllrchelseyjay@gmail.com

Angela Kilmartin: Flat 3, Icen House, Newland
Street CM8 2FS.
Tel: 01376 502872

Cliff Livermore: 4 Norah Guilder House, Strutt
Close, Hatfield Peverel CM3
2HB Tel: 07825 093394

NORTH WARD

Philip Barlow: Rivendell, Chalks Road CM8
2BT Tel: 07774 196679

Jack Bayford: 112 Oak Road, Rivenhall
CM8 3HG Tel: 07860 748151

Steve Hicks: 9 Malyon Road CM8 1DF
Tel: 07836 690551 e-mail:
steviehicks57@outlook.com

Michelle Weeks: 20 Elderberry Gardens CM8
2PT Tel: 01376 515912

HATFIELD WARD

Clare Lager: 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT
Tel: 01376 513747

JoAnn Williams: 25 Guithavon Valley CM8 1HF
Tel: 01376 510845