



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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **15th April 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: Councillors

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
HA/GK/ 10.04.2024

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 21st January 2024 (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 29th February 2024 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 March 2024 attached at page 7.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

To receive the Minutes of the Climate Change Working Group meeting held on 29th February 2024 attached at page 10.

9. RECOMMENDATION FROM CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

To receive the recommendation from the Climate Change Working Group for climate change projects attached at page 12.

10. SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP

To receive the Minutes of the Section 106 Steering Group meeting held on 25th January 2024 attached at page 14.

11. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive the Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in February and March 2024 attached at page 17.

12. SCATTERING OF ASHES ON OPEN SPACES POLICY

To approve and adopt a Scattering of ashes on open spaces policy attached at page 21.

13. RIVER WALK PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

To receive a report attached at page 23.

14. BLACKWATER RESTORATION PLAN

To receive information on a project being run by the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust on the River Blackwater attached at page 24.

15. 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.

16. SECTION 106 OPEN SPACES PROJECTS

To receive a verbal report.



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- Phase 2 of the Town Park landscape improvement project started during April.
- The first part of the woodland management programme for James Cooke Wood was completed during February. This saw 50% of the required felling take place to thin out the trees on site.
- A spate of recent vandalism in the town has seen the River Walk mural graffitied again which has required the original artist to return and repair it at a cost of £340. He is due to return on 19th April 2024.
- The recent climate change survey received 154 responses, 142 online and the remaining on paper. 23% of residents that completed the survey were not concerned with climate change. When asked how environmentally friendly people felt they were on a scale of 1 to 10, saw the average score as 7. A more detailed analysis will be undertaken although many suggestions made were outside Witham Town Council's remit such as kerbside glass collections, no charge for green bin collections and stop permitting house building.

Advice:

To receive and note.

[Back to Agenda](#)

Month No: 11

Cost Centre Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
400 Environment							
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	7,210	1,650	(5,560)			437.0%	
Environment :- Income	7,210	1,650	(5,560)			437.0%	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	150,604	177,454	26,850		26,850	84.9%	
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	14,893	8,000	(6,893)		(6,893)	186.2%	10,000
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	2,300	4,000	1,700		1,700	57.5%	
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	9,811	10,500	689		689	93.4%	
4432 New Tree Planting	2,007	2,000	(7)		(7)	100.3%	
4433 Tree Maintenance	5,645	5,000	(645)		(645)	112.9%	233
4435 River Walk Project Management	2,710	10,000	7,291		7,291	27.1%	
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	270	600	330		330	45.0%	
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	3,129	1,200	(1,929)		(1,929)	260.7%	
4444 Fleet	4,745	6,000	1,255		1,255	79.1%	
4445 Open Spaces General	2,231	2,500	269		269	89.2%	
4446 James Cooke Wood	2,040	2,000	(40)		(40)	102.0%	
4447 River Walk	2,677	3,000	323		323	89.2%	
4448 Whetmead LNR	13,974	2,000	(11,974)		(11,974)	698.7%	
4452 River Walk Signage	3,928	3,000	(928)		(928)	130.9%	
4453 Litter Bins	0	3,000	3,000		3,000	0.0%	
4455 Witham in Bloom	14,955	12,700	(2,255)		(2,255)	117.8%	
4457 Waste Disposal	301	1,200	899		899	25.1%	
Environment :- Indirect Expenditure	236,219	254,154	17,935	0	17,935	92.9%	10,233
Net Income over Expenditure	(229,009)	(252,504)	(23,495)				
7000 plus Transfer from EMR	10,233						
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(218,776)						
Grand Totals:- Income	7,210	1,650	(5,560)			437.0%	
Expenditure	236,219	254,154	17,935	0	17,935	92.9%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(229,009)	(252,504)	(23,495)				
plus Transfer from EMR	10,232						
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(218,776)						

Environment Expenditure Exception Report – 15th April 2024

Budget Line	Budget	% Over	YTD	Reason
Tree maintenance	£5,000	12.9%	£5,645	Tree maintenance ear marked reserve being used for costs over £5,000 - £645
Dog and bench schemes	£1,200	160.7%	£3,129	Income received from scheme of £7,210 negates apparent overspend.
Open Spaces General	£2,500		£2,231	£1,129 received from BDC Councillors' Community Grant towards the repair of listening bench costing £1,169.
Whetmead LNR	£2,000	598.7%	£13,974	Section 106 contributions received for Whetmead improvement project – new noticeboard, steps, interpretation board, plants and nature trail posts total - £13,618.52
River Walk signage	£3,000	30.9%	£3,928	£1,147 received from BDC Councillors' Community Grant towards new noticeboard at duck pond costing £1,907.
Witham in Bloom	£12,700	17.8%	£14,955	Increase in contractor's costs and lamp column testing charges.

[Back to Agenda](#)



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

MINUTES

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

Date: **5th March 2024**

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.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		P.	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		H.	Smith	(Open Spaces Team)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

39. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt and John Goodman.

40. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

41. **MINUTES**

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

42. **QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No public were in attendance.

43. **CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS**

No written representations were received by the Council.

44. CLERK'S REPORT

Members were advised that the River Walk drainage work would consist of a French Drain close to the entrance at Ebenezer Close with ditches also being created at two other points on the Glebe area of the River Walk where water drainage is an issue.

Members were further informed that Essex and Suffolk Water would contact successful candidates for their grant application by the end of March.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

45. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

A member of the Operations Team provided a verbal update.

The recent long spate of wet weather had proved challenging. On the River Walk, a new memorial bench has been installed at the Duck Pond, new finger posts have been added to the post near Guithavon bridge, a new noticeboard fitted at the Bramble Road entrance and the Listening Bench has been repaired following vandalism. In addition, the culvert fencing by Pattison Close has been replaced and spring bulbs planted along sections of the River Walk. There are plans to add a knee rail fence around the recently created Bee Haven by Helen Court to allow the planting to become established.

At James Cooke Wood, tree surgeons have recently completed thinning an area of the wood as part of the plan to reduce the trees by 30% to open up the forest floor and extend the life of the woodland. Further felling is still required. A new boardwalk has also been installed in the corner of the site over the boggy ground and the driveway entrance has been repaired as well as new bulbs planted near the carpark.

At Whetmead, the Open Spaces Team have repaired the bank erosion with cement bags and topsoil, installed a new noticeboard at the entrance and planted shrubs in the areas where the new nature trail posts are to be placed.

The allotments are having their tap casings replaced in the near future and the cement bases have been created in preparation for the work, while knee railings across the site have been repaired and, in the carpark, replaced by bollards.

The Churchyard had the crowns of their trees raised and spring pruning will begin shortly.

Members were further advised that a new mower had been purchased ready for the grass growing season.

Cllr Ager entered the Chamber at 1.45pm.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

46. WATER QUALITY OF WITHAM'S RIVERS

Concerns were expressed about the impact on rivers of the upcoming repealing of certain EU standards post Brexit and it was **AGREED** to review the river quality quarterly and maintain contact with the Environment Agency.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

47. ESSEX WILDER TOWNS AND RIVERS

Members were invited to volunteer for water survey training and Cllr Heath expressed an interest.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

48. JAMES COOKE WOOD IMPROVEMENTS

Members were pleased with the recent boardwalk and there was agreement that some carpark alterations are needed. Members were further informed that a new road sign for the carpark was still outstanding with Essex Highways.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

49. WHETMEAD NATURE TRAIL

Members were shown an example of a nature post with a draft copy of the accompanying booklet and advised that the trail would be installed ready for the Easter break.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

50. 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 4th June 2024 at 1.30pm.

Meeting concluded at 2.21pm.

SP/06.3.24

Signed by Chairman.....

[Back to Agenda](#)



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

CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Minutes

THURSDAY 29TH FEBRUARY 2024 AT 6.30PM, TOWN COUNCIL CHAMBER

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

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

Staff:

N	Smith	-	Town Clerk
S	Puckey	-	Open Spaces Administration Assistant

14. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Cllr E Williams was absent.

15. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

16. MINUTES

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

17. CLERK'S REPORT

The report was received and it was suggested that the Climate Change Survey be promoted on Facebook and that teenage views be encouraged.

Cllr J C Coleman and Cllr Headley expressed an interest in the NALC online event on 26th June.

18. CLIMATE CHANGE PROJECTS

All projects were discussed in turn. It was **AGREED** that the following projects would be investigated further and taken to the next Environment Committee Meeting for consideration:

- **Night Light Pollution Reduction** – Letters to appropriate businesses and a potential approach to Witham Industrial Watch for support were suggested.
- **Thermal Camera Insulation Scheme** – While beneficial, concern was expressed about Pat Testing requirements and Cllr J C Coleman agreed to talk to Suffolk councils who already run this scheme.
- **Repair Café** – St Nicholas Church are willing to be considered as a potential venue. The difficulty in finding volunteers was deliberated and Cllr J C Coleman agreed to ask similar cafés in Sudbury and Hadley how they resolved this issue. It was proposed that The Cornerstone Church be contacted as to how they started.
- **Anti-idling Scheme** – While difficult to enforce, it was considered important and members felt that publicity via schools could be beneficial to launch the scheme.
- **Bee Squared** –An EALC mini-grant, 106 money or sponsorship were put forward as funding options.
- **Habitat Hero** – Consideration was given to tying this initiative in with other events such as making seed bombs at The Teddy Bear’s Picnic.

19. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Members agreed to wait until the new civic year with potential dates to be circulated separately.

The meeting closed at 8:15pm.

.....
Councillor
Chairman

SP/NS/04.03.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

Officer Report: Proposed Climate Change Projects

During the Climate Change Working Group meeting held on 29th February 2024, a number of projects were discussed to consider taking forward.

The following projects have been proposed for further consideration:

Light Pollution Reduction – Excessive commercial and industrial lighting at night is a waste of money and power which increases Witham’s Carbon footprint. Additionally, excessive light pollution has an adverse effect on wildlife, disrupting their natural behaviour, and impacts on our ability to see the beauty of the stars. An audit, conducted by Councillors, is proposed of excessive lighting at night with a view to writing to local businesses to review their overnight light consumption.

Thermal camera insulation scheme – Homes account for 22% of the UK carbon emissions and improving energy efficiency is key to lowering individuals’ emissions and limiting our impact on climate change. Additionally, the cost of energy is at an all-time high and it is the most vulnerable who are suffering most. To help Witham residents understand where heat is being lost in their homes, with a view to becoming more energy efficient, it is suggested that WTC consider purchasing a thermal camera that can detect heat loss from properties that residents could hire from the Town Hall. The camera attaches via an app to a resident’s smartphone and they are then able to see where their properties lose heat and where they can top up on insulation if needed. Residents who are under a specific income threshold could be signposted to financial county or district help schemes. Similar schemes already operate in parishes across Suffolk. This scheme would operate in the winter months when temperatures are low enough to detect thermal differences. Areas for further consideration of this project include PAT Testing and potentially deposits and proof of address to guarantee the gadget is returned.

Estimated costs -

- ❖ Wireless Flir One Edge (wireless) £300 + VAT
- ❖ PAT testing course - £234 and PAT testing equipment £320

Repair Cafe – Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs figures show 60,361 tonnes of waste were collected by Braintree District Council in the year to March 2023. Of this, about 26,588 tonnes were sent for reuse, recycling or composting – meaning the area had a recycling rate of 44%, down from 47% in 2022. (41.7% UK, 71% in Germany and 60% in Slovenia). The amount of rubbish generated needs to be reduced and one way of achieving this is by repairing items we would otherwise throw away. Cornerstone Church in Black Notley host a repair café on 3rd Saturday of the month between 10am and 12 noon for items such as clothes, electricals and bikes. Tea / coffee and cakes are available to purchase while you wait and a donation is requested but otherwise the service is free although understandably there are no guarantees an item is repairable. It is suggested that a similar café is considered for Witham. St Nicholas Church would be a potential venue however this would require volunteers with credible needlework, electrical, DIY expertise and, if run by WTC, would require commitment from councillors to attend and oversee.

No idling scheme – One minute of car idling produces enough toxic emissions to fill 60 people’s lungs while leaving your car running when parked creates 20 times more pollution than driving at 30mph. 50,000 people are thought to die prematurely each year due to exposure to air-pollution and children’s lungs are particularly vulnerable, ionic when a lot of car idling is outside schools!

As well as vehicle idling creating unnecessary pollution, it is also an offence under section 42 of the Road Traffic Act 1988 and the Road Traffic (Vehicle Emissions) (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2002. Therefore, if a vehicle driver is found to be parked up and idling unnecessarily, they can be fined £20 if they refuse to turn off their engine on request.

It is proposed that Witham Town Council undertake a no-idling campaign to improve Witham's air quality and reduce Witham's carbon footprint from car exhaust with a particular emphasis on schools and debunking of myths about keeping car engines on. While it is understood that enforcement is very difficult, it is felt that residents are unaware of the significance of "idling" and therefore highlighting the issue and potentially using child-pesther-power by working with schools, may help in the reduction of this activity.

Bee squared - Bees and other pollinating insects are essential to our life. Bees are vital to both pollinate the food we need to survive and pollinate many of the trees and flowers that provide habitats for wildlife. Bees (and other insects) need a huge amount of energy to fly from their home to fields where they collect nectar, and pollinate plants in the process. They frequently fly several miles, and need regular fuel stops enroute. Humanity has created huge towns and housing estates in their flight paths. Traditionally, gardens had plenty of nectar-producing flowers, where insects could re-fuel. Modern gardens are frequently empty of fuel-stops.

The idea is to introduce more bee-friendly plants at regular intervals around Witham, which is where the community project, 'Bee Squared' comes in. WTC would distribute – free of charge – a small packet of wildflower seeds (with a leaflet) to households via The Town Hall. Residents would be encouraged to plant their free wildflower seeds in their front garden (follow instructions on the packet), either in the ground (area of 1 square metre) or in a few large pots. Residents would be asked to display a BEE SQUARED logo (back of leaflet) in a visible window to show that they are joining in. This project is already widespread in Kent and It was felt that this could potentially be sponsored by a local business.

- ❖ As a guide - 500 seeds would cost 71p each +VAT + delivery (£12) so £367 approx

Habitat Hero month - Climate Change and increased building is having an impact on our wildlife. One in 6 species are at risk in Great Britain. Let's bring nature to the forefront of people's thoughts and encourage wildlife into Witham's gardens. This project would take more planning.

- ❖ Talks by experts e.g. Hedgehog Haven / Essex Wildlife Trust.
- ❖ Councillors make a bug hotel, seed bomb or birdfeeder with children in half term / summer holiday.
- ❖ Negotiate a discount on bird boxes with local supplier to tie in with another relevant event.
- ❖ Encourage Log piles in local gardens.

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 –Positive impact
- (b) Crime and disorder – no impact
- (c) Climate – Positive impact

Advice:

- To review the information and chose one or more options to pursue further.

SP/4.4.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 25th JANUARY 2024 AT 10.30AM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

Members present: - Councillors L Barlow, J.C. Coleman (chairing), B Fleet, L Headley, P Heath, and R Playle.

Staff:- N. Smith (Town Clerk), H Andrews, (Deputy Town Clerk)

16. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs S Ager, P Barlow and B Taylor.

17. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

18. MINUTES

The minutes of the Section 106 Steering Group held on 28th September 2023 were agreed and subsequently signed by the Vice-Chairman.

19. CLERK'S REPORT

The Deputy Town Clerk advised members that a meeting had taken place on 18th January 2024 with Braintree District Council Section 106 Officers who had provided updated information on contributions held and expected for Witham. It was confirmed that the funds could be used on various projects throughout Witham and was not restricted to the parish ward or catchment area unless specified.

Members were advised that the project to create a bridge over the river Brain near Blackwater Lane was being investigated by BDC's new Senior Landscape Architect who considered that it was doable but ecology assessments were currently taking place.

No further information is known about a start date for the town centre improvement works.¹ Witham Town Council have been asked for content to create graphics for the reverse of the new noticeboard to be installed outside the Post Office in Newland Street, and Officers are currently working on a history panel of the Town Hall.

It was noted that the contractor had been appointed for the next phase of the Town Park project. £2,046.74 of Section 106 funds, which expire in April 2024, have been requested by Braintree District Council to be spent on the first year of maintenance and watering. Members strongly objected to the use of Section 106 funds for maintenance and also noted that the New Forestry Commission considered that newly planted trees should be watered for three summers and so one year maintenance would be insufficient for the project to be successful.

It was **RECOMMENDED** that Braintree District Council be contacted to express Witham Town Council's disappointment that Section 106 funds were to be used for maintenance when the planting project was unlikely to succeed in the long term. It was therefore felt that this was not an efficient use of S106 contributions.

¹ Since the meeting the Deputy Town Clerk has spoken with the BDC Graduate Landscape Officer who confirmed that they are waiting for appropriate licences from Essex Highways to be approved before a start date is assigned.

20. PROPOSED OPEN SPACES PROJECTS

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an update on the current open spaces projects Witham Town Council were working on –

- Whetmead Improvement Project – The nature posts and interpretation boards have now been received and it is expected that the nature trail will be installed early spring. All payments made for the project have now been reimbursed with the allocated Section 106 contributions.
- James Cooke Wood – The boardwalk project has been approved and Officers had a site meeting with the appointed contractor on 17th January 2024. The project is expected to start in February. The noticeboard has also been ordered and will be installed once received.
- Bee Haven – The bee-friendly planting project near to River View on the River Walk has been approved and initial site preparation is starting today, 25th January 2024, by the Bee Friendly Trust. This will be completed during February.
- Allotments – Research is still being carried out regarding contributions allocated to allotments. Quotes are being obtained for improving the car park. The installation of raised beds is also being considered as well as other enhancements including new tap casings.
- River Walk paths and bridges – Work will now take place to prioritise which paths and bridges require attention. Quotes are being obtained this month to resurface the Bramble Road bridge as a first priority.

21. SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS HELD EXPIRING 2024

Members discussed the open space contributions expiring during 2024 and considered projects for these to be allocated to.

A discussion took place regarding installing staggered barriers by the River Walk bridges to encourage cyclists to dismount. Concerns were raised whether this installation would go against LTN 1/20 – Department of Transport – Cycle Infrastructure Design and also be a problem for mobility scooters. It was **SUGGESTED** that Officers could carry out some initial research on this subject.

It was noted that various improvements are required to the River Walk paths and bridges and this should be seen as a priority for utilising the funds expiring in 2024. Members also noted that some small planting projects could also be carried out, similar to the Bee Haven project, in suitable areas of the River Walk.

It was **AGREED** to look at utilising the majority of the appropriate S106 funds expiring in 2024 for River Walk paths and bridges with a small percentage of funds for smaller planting projects.

22. SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS HELD AND DUE FOR WITHAM

Members discussed the newly updated information confirming Section 106 contributions held and due for Witham.

It was noted that the public art contributions are earmarked to go to the same Maltings Lane development building. It was **SUGGESTED** that enquiries could be made to extend the expiry date so that both contributions expire on the same date of March 2026. Members discussed that it should be functional art and something that can be

used in addition to being public art. Considerations should take place in the near future as this type of project could take some time commission.

Members discussed the Rivenhall Park Phase 4 sustainable transport contributions and information was provided about a bus gate option. Members spoke of the Digi-Go Community bus and it was noted that various options, including a community bus may be possible when considering these contributions in the future.

23. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

Members noted that the Town Clerk and Deputy Town Clerk were next meeting with Braintree District Council Section 106 Officers in April and so it was suggested that the Steering Group next convene after their meeting. Suggested dates will be circulated to Members.

Meeting concluded at 11.50am

DRAFT

[Back to Agenda](#)

Agenda 11

February 2024 Tree Group Minutes

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

- 1 Apologies - Ken Davies
- 2 Minutes of the 9th January accepted.
- 3 Matters arising - none.

4 Planting 2023/24

a) County Council/Forestry Commission.

Barry & Richard had a site meeting with Andrew Digby of BDC, who approved our planting plans so the trees were subsequently ordered from the nursery;

i) the Spa Road planting was done on the 15th & 17th February, the latter with help from the Popcorn Community group and local; councillors; Paulina of Popcorn has emailed to say how much they enjoyed the event; we still have a walnut to plant there which Stanley has and also possibly an oak; it was suggested that another 'Emerald Queen' could be planted by the playground to complete the potential shade protection

ii) The planting by the Rivenhall cyclepath commences 22nd February; soil issues discussed;

b) Boys Brigade - their trees to be planted on Saturday, 2nd March, Barry to liaise with them; it was agreed that as the trees will be planted near where we fill the bowser, we would water the trees; as the trees are slightly smaller than we normally plant, single posts are likely to be sufficient;

c) Posts and mesh - Eric has purchased a supply ;

d) Whips - as none have been received from TCV, it was agreed to leave this until the autumn.

5 Developers

a) Bellway - Mark has been told that Bellway are awaiting a quote from their suppliers for new trees; Mark is querying which trees are being replaced and the aftercare to be provided;

b) Allan has prepared a document of draft guidance for a council and developers, which he will send to Andrew Digby for consideration. Crucially, if residents of new estates [like the Bellway one at Rivenhall] are paying a fee for annual maintenance, there is no reason why this should not include tree maintenance, and this should be part of the planning approval [and the 'five year rule' would then become redundant ?].

6 Publicity

a) Our leaflet is now in the Town Hall Information Centre and the Library;

b) We are to be included in a new edition of the WTC clubs leaflet;;

c) Website - problems occurring again; possibly ask Jane to look at it; Allan will check the messaging function; we need to add our email address to the site;

d) Janet Hawkes has kindly contacted Laura Kenny of Witham Wombles for advice re social media.

7 Memorial Park signage - Barry reported on his conversation with Louise Harvey of BDC , and as a result, Richard has discussed the situation with Andrew Digby, and will raise it with him again; are the end signs already made and being stored somewhere?

8 Meeting with BDC officers - Richard had shown Andrew Digby and his colleagues Alice & James from Landscape Services around Witham to show them the Tree Group's work. This included our future plans for the Rickstones recreation ground and they were supportive

9 Finance - Stanley reported the current bank balance; we have received donations of £65 which Barry passed to Stanley; it was noted that a payment is due from ECC for the watering at Templars last summer;

Expenses - Richard is due £61 for the leaflets and Eric will confirm his spending on posts and mesh in due course.

There was a discussion regarding the costs of this winter's planting; Barry will discuss with Tom Moat of ECC our queries.

10 Any other business

a) We have been asked by Grace Allman of BDC whether we can continue watering their trees at Halycon Close, and also whether we would consider watering the trees and shrubs they are going to plant in the Town Park [the latter from 2025 following a contract with contractors for 2024]; a donation would be made to our funds.

It was agreed that we should be able to continue with Halycon Close but that we cannot commit to the park for 2025 because of other commitments but could consider it again next year; Barry will advise Grace;

b) Stanley has seen a gingko at Perrywoods garden centre for £130 + £30 delivery; not known if it was still there;

c) Allan had confirmed that we have a risk assessment document for when we have volunteers assisting us;

d) Skate park - Ken has advised that this is to be refurbished, and suggested that we consider shade planting there in due course;

e) Eric suggested that we need a central store of information, i.e. to include where he buys supplies, and Allan's methods of doing utility checks. Discuss again at next meeting;

f) WTC Civic event - we have received an invitation but it appears that nobody is available to attend;

g) Allan had been contacted by a lady called Lucinda from the Forest Road estate, who is concerned about trees without posts or cages, he has advised her to raise this with Eastlight Housing;

h) Stanley mentioned an organisation based at Earls Colne which is apparently funding tree planting on a world wide basis.

11 Next meeting - Tuesday, 26th March, 7.30 pm at Eric's house.

Tree Group minutes for March 2024

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

1 Apologies - Mark Austin, Ken Davies.

2 Minutes of the 19th February accepted.

3 Matters arising - none.

4 Planting 2023/24 - this was now virtually completed , with a record number of trees planted [84]; two donated pine trees to be collected and planted, to be accommodated at Spa Road perhaps; it was noted that we need to start planting earlier next season; it was also noted that the cable detector worked..

5 Watering - Richard was thanked for his detailed report and recommendations. The watering this summer would be challenging because of the number of trees and locations spread across the town. The report was accepted and it was agreed that we would try the proposed route and see how it goes, as it can be tweaked if necessary. It was suggested that we consider refilling at Armond Road. Watering commencement to be agreed.

6 Developers

- a] Rivenhall Oaks - this was deferred as Mark was away;
- b] Allan's draft guidance had been sent to Andrew Digby of BDC, and was awaiting his comments; Allan may also submit it to another department;
- c] Gimsons - no news re failure of sycamore trees and it was thought that WTC was raising again with BDC; perhaps enforcement action by BDC may be necessary;
- d] Lynfield Elm - no news and it was noted that the suckers had not been lifted; Allan will contact Andrew Digby for an update.

7 Publicity

- a] Website - Richard's planting report and Eric's photos had been added to the site; our email address is now shown on there, which hopefully will make it easier to contact us;
- b] Social media - the offer from Laura Kerry of Witham Wombles to put our details on their site was appreciated and the advice she had provided, including the Facebook page; ideally we need to have someone within our group to take it forward and options were discussed;
- c] Allan had contacted the 'climate czar' for BDC, Cllr Schweir re a possible meeting.

8 Memorial Park signage - Barry advised that Andrew Digby is trying to establish if Mencap in Ipswich ever received an order or a quote request from BDC.

9 Finance

- a] Expenses details passed to Stanley from Eric & Richard. Eric will confirm the names of the suppliers to Stanley;
- b] Barry confirmed that ECC will pay us the unused balance of the planting costs;
- c] Barry advised that the insurance premium will be due in May.

10 Central information store - Eric, Allan & Barry all have contributions to make; a paper version to be prepared for every committee member; a summary could be put on the website.

11 Any other business

a) Planting 2024/25 - it was agreed that we would advise Tom Moat of ECC that we propose to plant another 35 in the vicinity of the cyclepath, plus an initial 30 on the Rickstones recreation field; it was anticipated that a further 15 trees approximately could be funded from the Town Council budget.

It would be preferable to order earlier next season for a wider range of choice of species;

b) Allan is updating the list of trees planted;

c) Barry mentioned the new Woodland Trust promoted site, the UK Tree Equity Score, which identifies the tree cover in urban areas, by postcode;

d) It was noted that ECC are planning street tree plantings and that we can make site suggestions;;

e) Stanley reminded that we need to plant trees able to cope with climate change and advised that Kew Gardens are looking at varieties of oak, planes and others that thrive in Turkey;

f) It was noted that a BDC tree off Spa Road had been removed, including the cage;

g) It was noted that some of the new trees planted by the pallet firm off Hatfield Road were leaning significantly.

12 Next meeting - 30th April at Eric's house, 7.30 pm. To include the AGM.

[Back to Agenda](#)



Witham Town Council: Scattering of ashes policy

Policy Overview

This Policy has been introduced regarding the scattering of human ashes on the Council's managed open spaces. This is to ensure that the issue is administered for the mutual benefit of all users.

Objectives of the policy

The Council is seeking to ensure that it is adopting a clear, measureable and sympathetic approach to the management of its facilities, which will take account of the sometimes contrasting needs of a variety of users to our open spaces.

The policy will relate to the scattering of ashes on the River Walk, Whetmead Nature Reserve and James Cooke Wood. The scattering of ashes is not permitted in All Saints Closed Churchyard also managed by Witham Town Council.

General

- All applications to scatter ashes within the Councils open spaces should be completed on the request application form as per appendix 1 from the next of kin or executor.
- No memorials will be allowed on the site where ashes have been scattered.
- The Council reserves the right to remove any memorials.

Scattering of ashes on Council open spaces

- Ashes shall only be scattered in a location agreed in advance with an authorised Council officer and at a predetermined date and time in consultation with the next of kin or executor.

- No flowers or similar memorials shall be permitted to mark the occasion on the site at any time.
- The ashes should be scattered thinly and not in one solid mass on the ground. They should be scattered avoiding shrubs, trees and flower beds.
- Care should be taken when scattering ashes. This should be carried out discreetly, being aware of the wind direction and other users of the open spaces.
- Scattering of ashes can take place 7 days a week between the hours of dusk and dawn.

Agreed and adopted: 15.04.2024

Review date: 14.04.2025

Environment Committee



Appendix 1 – Scattering of ashes request form

Name and address of person requesting service (Next of kin or executor only)	
Name:	
Address:	
Post Code:	
Telephone Number:	
Name of deceased:	
Relationship to deceased:	
Area requested for the scattering:	
Date and time requested for scattering:	
Date:	Time:

I have read and understood the scattering of ashes policy provided by Witham Town Council:	
Signed	Date:
Please return the form to Witham Town Council, Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham, CM8 2FE. Email: deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk	

Back to Agenda



ITEM NO:	13
----------	----

Officer Report: River Walk Public Rights of Way

Issue:

The majority of the River Walk footpaths are registered as official Public Rights of Way. However, the section from Bridge Street to Guithavon Road is not registered on the definitive map as an official Public Right of Way.

It has been considered on several occasions whether the whole of the River Walk paths should be registered as Public Rights of Way and recent guidance sought from Essex County Council's Public Rights of Way Officer has confirmed that as the landowner of the River Walk, Witham Town Council provide permissive paths which enables the land to be managed easier than if the paths were PRowS.

For example, if maintenance work was required on a PRow on the River Walk and the path needed to be closed, it would be necessary for a Temporary Traffic Regulation Order (TTRO) application to be made to Essex Highways, which would be advertised locally, emergency services would be consulted and would be at a current cost of £1,313.21.

The paths from Bridge Street to Guithavon Road are already public footpaths on public open space that are constantly used and the main dual footpath/cycleway not registered is already recorded as part of the National Cycle Route 16.

A representative from the Heart of Witham Preservation Group has contacted Witham Town Council and advised that they intend to register this part of the River Walk as a PRow and would like confirmation of any objection from Witham Town Council. They have concerns regarding the small section of land near to Churchills which still comes under the ownership of Braintree District Council and the impact of any development would have on the footpath. They therefore consider that registering the path as a PRow is necessary.

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:

- Members to decide whether to approve the registration of the River Walk footpath from Bridge Street to Guithavon Road as a Public Right of Way.

HA/04.04.2024

[Back to Agenda](#)

To the Parish Clerk,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (ESRT) and our partners; Essex and Suffolk Water (ESW) and the Environment Agency (EA).

The ESRT have commissioned JBA Consulting to deliver a large scale hydro-geomorphological survey of the Rivers Pant and Blackwater called a fluvial audit. The purpose of this fluvial audit is to gather a complete picture of the river's characteristics, riparian land-use, anthropological impacts. This information will allow us to identify areas of concern and to target future activities that will improve and restore the river for both wildlife and people.

As a part of this project, we want to engage and empower local individuals, landowners, businesses and organisations. The river runs through your parish and we are seeking, firstly to inform your council of the work that we are doing so that the survey and its resulting projects do not come as a surprise. The surveys will begin in earnest in late spring.

We are also reaching out to offer information sharing. We are making the results of this audit available to the public and you are very welcome to receive an electronic copy of the final report when published.

While we do not need any physical help at this stage, local information about the river is invaluable and we are also keen to develop communication with anyone who has a stake in the river for future project development.

We will be holding a workshop on the 2nd May at Markshall Estate providing further information about the project. If a representative of your council wishes to attend then please do get in touch. If you have any questions, or information please do feel free contact us at info@essexsuffolkriverstrust.org.

I hope to hear from you in the near future.

Yours Faithfully
Helen Dangerfield
Director, ESRT

The Blackwater & Pant Fluvial Audit & Restoration Plan

The Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust (ESRT), with help from our partners, are running a large-scale project on the rivers Pant and Blackwater* in two parts. Firstly, a Fluvial Audit is being conducted over the spring and summer of 2024 with a final report being produced in the late Autumn. This report will then form the backbone of a strategy for this river system to be produced by the ESRT in early 2025.

Why the Blackwater & Pant?

In 2023, Essex County Council and the Essex River Hub identified the Blackwater as a priority catchment for the county for both restoration and for climate change action.

What areas are being covered?

The whole non-tidal length of the Blackwater & Pant will be assessed as part of the fluvial audit and will fall under the restoration plan. This covers an area of 24 parish councils from Swards End to Langford as well as Braintree District Council and Witham Town Council.

Who will be involved?

The ESRT's main partners for this project are the Environment Agency and Essex and Suffolk Water with the fluvial audit conducted by JBA consulting. We hope to use this project as a method of bringing together groups and individuals from across the catchment including (but not limited to) the North Essex Farm Cluster's members, parish councils, private land owners & farmers, local environmental action groups, other NGOs and local businesses. During the fluvial audit, landowners will be contacted regarding land access for the survey.

What will the outcome of this be?

At present, environmental restoration projects across the catchment are opportunistic. The restoration plan produced from the fluvial audit will identify key target sites and issues for NGOs and the EA to work on. Larger scale projects will be more achievable with greater evidence of their worth and better coordination. This project is key to ensuring the long term environmental quality of the river.

The Pant and Blackwater are the same river. The upper section is the Pant and the lower portion is the Blackwater. The name changes under the Church Lane bridge at Bocking, on the outskirts of Braintree. No one is sure which name came first, with historic records contradicting each other including from the Romans and the historian Bede.

A Fluvial Audit is a type of large-scale river survey formed of two parts:

1. A desk based study that looks at historic records of the river
2. A hydrogeomorphological survey of the whole length of the river that captures a complete picture of the watercourse's current state