



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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **14th April 2025** Time: **7.30 p.m.**

Place: **Town Hall, 61 Newland Street, Witham.**

Members are hereby summoned to attend the above Meeting to transact the following business. Members are respectfully reminded that each item on the Agenda should be carefully examined. If you have any interest, it must be duly declared.

To be present: Councillors:

J.	Martin	(Chairman)	T.	Hewitt
J.M.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)	R.	Ramage
E.	Adelaja		J.	Robertson
J.C.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

HA/GK/08.04.2025

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 20th January 2025 (previously circulated).

3. INTERESTS

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

4. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

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

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

5. CLERK'S REPORT

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

6. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

To receive the income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2024 to 28th February 2025 attached at page 5.

7. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 5th March 2025 attached at pages 7 to 10.

8. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive the Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in January, February and March 2025 attached at pages 11 to 16.

9. SCATTERING OF ASHES POLICY

To receive and approve the Scattering of Ashes policy attached at page 17.

10. CLOSED CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT POLICY

To receive and adopt the Closed Churchyard Management Plan for 2025 to 2035 circulated separately.

11. PERIOD GARDEN GARDENING GROUP

To receive a Member verbal report.

12. COMMUNITY ORCHARD

To receive a report attached at page 18.

13. WITHAM IN BLOOM – OPEN GARDENS

To receive a report attached at page 19.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

At this point, the Chair will move the following resolution: Under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

15. SECTION 106 – PUBLIC ART

To receive a report attached at page 20 to 22.



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- A survey has been carried out and design report recently received for regrading levels and creating swales at the north stretch of the River Walk, behind Ebenezer Close/Glebe Crescent to address the groundwater issues. This will be reviewed and subsequent quotes requested to carry out the designs proposed.
- Survey reports have recently been received for all pedestrian bridges on the River Walk. The reports will be analysed and quotes for recommended works invited. Work required, such as resurfacing is due to be funded by Section 106 contributions available.
- The thinning of James Cooke Wood was completed in February as well as all of the trees on the River Walk recommended for works from the recent tree survey.

Advice:

To receive and note.

[Back to Agenda](#)

07/04/2025

Witham Town Council

Page 1

16:28

Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 28/02/2025

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		1,650	(760)			146.1%	
Environment :- Income	2,410	1,650	(760)			146.1%	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	170,463	190,313	19,850		19,850	89.6%	
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	5,532	8,400	2,868		2,868	65.9%	
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	5,989	6,000	11		11	99.8%	
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	1,430	12,000	10,570		10,570	11.9%	
4432 New Tree Planting	3,026	3,035	9		9	99.7%	
4433 Tree Maintenance	5,798	5,000	(798)		(798)	116.0%	
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	0	600	600		600	0.0%	
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	2,146	1,200	(946)		(946)	178.9%	
4444 Fleet	5,204	6,000	796		796	86.7%	
4445 Open Spaces General	799	2,500	1,701		1,701	32.0%	
4446 James Cooke Wood	587	2,000	1,413		1,413	29.4%	
4447 River Walk	13,702	3,000	(10,702)		(10,702)	456.7%	
4448 Whetmead LNR	245	2,000	1,755		1,755	12.2%	
4452 River Walk Signage	1,720	1,965	245		245	87.5%	
4453 Litter Bins	1,000	1,000	0		0	100.0%	
4455 Witham in Bloom	11,032	14,000	2,968		2,968	78.8%	
4457 Waste Disposal	679	1,000	321		321	67.9%	
Environment :- Indirect Expenditure	229,353	260,013	30,660	0	30,660	88.2%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(226,943)	(258,363)	(31,420)				
Grand Totals:- Income	2,410	1,650	(760)			146.1%	
Expenditure	229,353	260,013	30,660	0	30,660	88.2%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(226,943)	(258,363)	(31,420)				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(226,943)						

Income and Expenditure Exception Report – Environment Committee 14th April 2025

	Budget	% Spent	YTD	Reason
Dog and Bench Schemes	£1,200	179%	£2,146	Income received from scheme of £2,410 negates apparent overspend.
Tree Maintenance	£5,000	116%	£5,798	Apparent overspend shown but total tree maintenance costs during 2024/25 will be covered by tree maintenance ear marked reserve and an open spaces virements as previously approved at Environment Committee 20.01.25/47 and Full Town Council 3.2.25/175
River Walk	£3,000	456%	£13,702	£11,811.25 spent on resurfacing of Pattison Close path has been funded by Section 106 contributions. £1,862 has actually been spent from River Walk budget line.

[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 2025**

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

38. **APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt, Cllr Ramage, J Casement, and P Shuttleworth. Cllr P Barlow was absent.

39. **INTERESTS**

No interests were declared.

40. **MINUTES**

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

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

There were no questions.

42. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received.

43. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. It was noted that the Clerk's description of the tree risk survey would have made a suitable response to a recent letter in the Braintree and Witham Times expressing disappointment in the tree felling. Members were further informed that an official response had been sent in to the paper by the Chair of Open Spaces and Chair of Witham Tree Group explaining that only a small proportion of trees needed treatment and that the losses would be replaced in the autumn. It was further explained in the response that Witham was very well served by tree planting as there was a dedicated tree group who plant annually.

Members suggested that it might be a good idea to remind the public in the Voice magazine about the Open Spaces meetings and highlight that they are open to all residents to attend and put forward their opinions.

Members welcomed the removal of nettles at Chipping Hill bridge and it was suggested that this would be a good spot to plant more willow trees especially as near-by trees are maturing.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

44. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update.

It is mainly a variety of ad-hoc jobs that are undertaken in the winter months. On the River Walk, the team are up to date and have cleared silt from the river at the underpass at Whetmead, cleared nettles, repaired culverts and put up new fencing and carried out some permitted tree work.

At James Cooke Wood, an appointed contractor had carried out thinning work and the chipping work is due to be done shortly. The creation of a dead hedge is being considered for the boundary.

There is nothing to report at Whetmead but further work will be carried out on the river bank in the Spring.

A lot of time has been spent in the Closed Churchyard this past month. The team have taken down some of the self-set trees, carried out pruning and chipped the brash for the footpaths, raised the crown on some trees and removed the ivy where appropriate. A tawney owl has been heard in the grounds recently and a little owl pellet discovered on a grave stone. There are plans to install bird and bat boxes soon.

At the allotments, there have been a few plot clearances and the water switched off for the winter and recently put back on again.

It was further clarified that where the river bank has collapsed close to Pattison close, repair options are being considered, potentially with the aid of Section 106 money.

The Deputy Town Clerk advised that where the drainage work had not been successful last year in the Glebelands area, this was being addressed and a report from an appointed consultant was expected shortly with advice on how to proceed. It was acknowledged by Members that the area was known for its springs and that problems were likely to be ongoing.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

45. DRAFT MANAGEMENT PLAN FOR ALL SAINT'S CHURCHYARD

Members were advised that the plan was based on an Essex Ecology report, however there were plans for additional surveys where possible in order to provide a more complete account of the species currently present. Members were further informed that discussions were taking place with a representative from Essex Wildlife Trust to try and facilitate a bioblitz with volunteers. Members suggested a lichen report may also be appropriate and welcomed the installation of bird, owl and bat boxes.

The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that it was hoped interpretation boards would be funded via Section 106 money and that it had been put forward to be included on Braintree District Council's Potential Open Spaces Improvement document. Members suggested that any future boards should use simple straightforward language in order to engage adults and children alike.

Members **RECOMMENDED** that the adoption of the management plan be approved by the Environment Committee.

Cllr Heath left the Chamber at 14.30.

46. WITHAM RIVER WATCH

Members were informed that samples were taken monthly from the bridge at Whetmead and Bramble Road. Only two had been conducted so far but it would be interesting to monitor any patterns or changes over a year. Members were further advised that measurements were taken for temperature, turbidity, dissolved solids, ammonia, phosphate and nitrate levels within the context of the location. To date it had been noted that the phosphate levels were higher at Bramble Road than Whetmead, suggesting agricultural run-off before the river enters the Witham parish. An article has been written for the Voice to inform residents.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

47. WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL EVENTS

Members were pleased with the number of events being offered this year and felt it was a good way to bring the River Walk to residents' attention. The Deputy Town Clerk clarified that the VE day event would be held on May 8th but exact timings had not yet been finalised.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

48. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee would be held on Wednesday 4th June 2025 at 2pm.

Meeting concluded at 2.45pm.

SP/06.03.25

Signed by Chairman.....

Back to Agenda

Tree Group – January 2025 minutes

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

1 Apologies - none.

2.Minutes of the 12th November were agreed.

3.Matters arising - none.

4. Planting

a) Cycle path area - planting almost complete, requiring two poplar along the avenue, plus two trees for the side green

b) Rickstones Recreation ground - nine planted last week, and 10 more due for this week ; help is expected from Aegon volunteers ; Eric is borrowing a cable detector ;

c) Rosebay Close - we have had to change our plans to accommodate BDC concerns, so the number of trees is reduced to six, now four Norway maples and 2 Liquidambers with the latter adjacent to the football kick about area ; awaiting approval by Operations Manager, BDC ;

d) WTC trees - the planting confirmed as:
one at Homefield Road, six at Rosebay Close, one at Forest Road (replacement), ten at the end of the cycle path from the Rivenhall Oaks estate, one in The Avenue (replacement), five at Spa Road, total of 24 trees ;

e) Memorial trees - possibly the London plane and sweet chestnut ; Barry to liaise with the donor re the planting date ;

f). The Avenue - possibly the gleditsia for here ;

g) Whips - to be delivered to us on the 28th Jan, possibly plant on the 30th, at the top end of the cycle path area to supplement previous planting. Issue of how to protect from mower damage (as has happened near Cut Throat Lane substation) - Eric to consider ;

5.Witham Town FC - Allan has been in contact and is waiting to hear from them, having offered to advise ; they may want to plant whips only on cost grounds ;

6.Memorial Park signage - design approved, now awaiting BDC graphics department to process ;

7. Website - Allan has chased up the designers and will chase again saying that we are concerned about the delay.

Eric will try and get reports onto Facebook meanwhile ;

8. Finance - Stanley confirmed the current funds, and will reimburse Eric for his costs ;

9. Underground services - discussion regarding checking, mainly for electric cables. It was noted that gas main maps are reliable.

Allan is re-establishing our link with Anglian Water, which needs a sign off from local councils so as not to have to buy expensive maps ;

10 Veteran trees - Mark and Stanley advised that 30 had been identified in the town so far and the research is ongoing. Finds are being reported to the Woodland Trust for their website (they come and check apparently) ;

11. Central information store - still pending ;

12 Any other business

a) Lynfield elm - Allan has chased BDC re lifting of the suckers as was due for this winter and BDC will advise the latest ;

b) Replacement trees for the Rivenhall Oaks estate - the enforcement officer dealing with this issue has left the council and the replacement knew nothing about it! Allan may send relevant correspondence from BDC to her so that she knows the position ;

c) Trees adjacent to Rickstones school have had their cages removed, presumably by contractors for BDC, per Stanley ;

d) Stan also advised that a tree along Bramble Rd has been damaged by a mower.

13 Next meeting - Tuesday, 11th February, 7.30 pm at Eric's.

Tree Group – February 2025 minutes

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

1 Apologies - Graham Wingrove, Mark Austin.

2 Minutes of 14th January accepted.

3 Matters arising - plans for next year to be covered in March.

4 Planting

- a] Cyclepath area completed;
- b] Rickstones Recreation Ground - final fourth tranche to be planted 13th February;
- c] Rosebay Close completed;
- d] Town Council planting completed except for one [The Avenue];
- e] Memorial trees - two to be planted, date to be agreed with the donor;
- f] Whips - planting completed; Richard will advise BDC officers re mowing so they are avoided hopefully.

Eric will advise Jaime Carvallho of ECC what has been planted using funds they organised..

5 Witham Town FC - nothing further heard from them.

6 Memorial Park signs have been installed [at last!]; Barry will thank Andrew Digby of BDC and also look into an article for The Voice.

7 Website - Allan has contacted Red Feather and advised changes needed to the draft site; the main structure is satisfactory.

8 Finance

- a] Stanley confirmed the balance but it was noted that Eric is owed a significant sum;
- b] It was noted that we need to get paid for the watering we did last year and for the balance of the 2024/25 planting costs.

9 Underground services - Allan is awaiting a letter from ECC to produce to Anglian Water so we can continue to access information [has already had one from WTC confirming that we act on their behalf when planting]; it was agreed that a detector could be hired when required.

10 Veteran trees - Stanley & Mark will continue their survey after the planting season.

11 Central information store - will be completed in due course.

12 Any other business

- a] Allan has chased for an update on the Lynfield Elm, and the BDC officer dealing has promised to pursue the matter;
- b] Rivenhall Oaks development - re the missing trees, it has been raised with BDC Enforcement Dept, who claimed that it was all in order! This has been challenged, with a copy of Bellway's own survey confirming the missing trees. We want BDC to monitor the

replanting, to ensure that it complies with the original plans. BDC should now liaise with Bellway directly;

c] Local Plan Review - comments deadline is 7th March;

d] Kew - Stanley is attending a seminar there on 23rd April;

e] Eco event - we have been advised of this event for 20th February at Rivenhall Oaks centre but the notice is too short for us to attend.

13 Next meeting - 11th March, 7.30 pm at Eric's.

Tree Group – March 2025 minutes

Present : Richard Hawkes, Graham Wingrove, Mark Austin, Ken Davies, Eric Teverson, Stanley Brailey, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Allan Waight.

2 Minutes of 11th February accepted.

3 Matters arising - veteran trees and central information store items deferred at present; Lynfield elm, Allan chasing, but presumably no action at present.

4 Planting - all work completed for the 2024/25 winter, including Rickstones Recreation ground and all the trees funded by the Town Council; re the memorial trees , we have received thanks from the donor Ms Bray and a request for an alteration to the record for her tree in The Avenue. We received a message from a Ms Emma Burg praising our work at Rickstones .

5 Planning for 2025/26 & beyond

a] Richard, Eric & Barry had looked at possible next areas at the Rickstones Recreation ground, namely the triangular green; along the western side , behind the neighbouring houses, and to join up two areas already planted. Potentially 60 trees, though may take several years.

We would need to meet with Andrew Digby & Levi White of BDC to discuss, and Richard has requested a meeting for later this month;

b] Allectus Way, rear of Alan Road - Andrew Digby had mentioned the possibility of using a funding scheme offered by Network Rail, as the land is adjacent to the rail line; there is space for 90 trees we believe;

c] Another possibility is the green adjacent to the cricket ground where there may be significant space;

d] Another possibility is the edge of the Town Park, to, screen the new housing, perhaps using WTC funds ?:

e] We have received a request to plant a couple of trees adjacent to a house that fronts Lockram Lane but unclear who owns the land. Mark will enquire;

f] It was suggested that we could also look at the Gershwin Boulevard area playground;

g] Memorial park - we need to replace at least one tree ;

h] The green across from the Memorial Park, off Honeysuckle Way, has significant space, so could be considered;

i] The Avenue has gaps too.

6 Watering scheme for this summer - Richard's plan accepted, though it was recognised that we may need to tweak it in practice; we may need to buy more watering cans.

7 Rivenhall Oaks - Mark advised that 202 replacement trees planted, with watering tubes; any that die will not be replaced ! Mark will try and find out the watering frequency.

8 Whips - BDC advised of what we planted , so hopefully they will not be mowed off.

9 Street trees - Jaime Carvallo of ECC had advised that they had not proceeded as the suggested sites would have failed certain criteria. Barry will go back saying that we can plant in The Avenue.

10 Website - Allan had advised that slow progress being made. Also,, Emily O'Brien of BDC had put a report of our activities on their Facebook page.

11 Underground services - Allan is continuing to correspond with Anglian Water; Barry will confirm to Allan that our contact with ECC is ongoing.

12 Finance - Stanley confirmed our current funds; we are owed by ECC for last year's watering and the balance of the planting costs, and Barry will chase for these payments. We may need a separate account at some stage.

13 Maintenance programme discussed. This week, Bramble Road & Spa Road areas.

14 Any other business - none.

15 Next meeting - Tuesday, 15th April , 7.30 pm at Eric's.

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 dawn to dusk

**Agreed at Minute 48, Environment
Committee meeting held 15.04.2024**

Reviewed: 14.04.2025

Review Date: April 2027

POLICY NO: WTC/60 Environment
Committee

[Back to Agenda](#)

Officer Report: Community Orchard**To discuss:**

Members have previously discussed the creation of a community orchard in Witham to increase trees in the town and potentially provide fruit for residents. Conversations have taken place with Braintree District Council regarding suitable land that could potentially be used but no progress has been made.

A field belonging to Witham Town Council has been identified as a potential site for a community orchard. It is part of the River Walk near Chipping Hill bridge which is not currently open to the public. The field is generally left to nature and has one cut every Autumn. The suggestion has therefore been made that the land could be used for the creation of a community orchard.



A traditional orchard is defined as having a minimum of five fruit trees and the suggestion has been made that heritage varieties of apples that are no longer commercially available could be planted. The area available is over 2,000 square metres in area and could therefore accommodate multiple trees.

Further work would be needed to establish the feasibility of creating an orchard on this land, engaging the community, and how and who would manage the trees. New trees require regular watering for a minimum of two years to ensure that they establish which will also need to be taken into account. There are grant opportunities available for community orchards which could be explored to assist with funding.

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 with the planting of a variety of new trees.
- (b) Crime and disorder – No impact.
- (c) Climate – Positive impact from planting trees.

Advice:

- To consider the creation of a community orchard.



ITEM NO: 13

Officer Report: Witham in Bloom – Witham Open Gardens

Witham in Bloom was previously a highly successful scheme involving different members of the community but has not run since the organiser Annie Northfield retired in 2015. There is still a desire to reinstate the Witham in Bloom in its original form where Witham can compete in regional and national competitions while enhancing the town.

We have in recent years considered relaunching the scheme and the Autumn 2023 edition of the Voice requested volunteers interested in being a part of organising Witham in Bloom, but unfortunately only 2 or 3 members of public came forward. With the lack of staff resources available to put into such a project, it was not pursued at that time.

It is therefore proposed to consider running Witham Open Garden scheme in the summer of 2026 as a first step towards bringing back Witham in Bloom. Residents would be invited to open their gardens to the public for a day which provides an opportunity for them to showcase their gardens and for the community to connect, similar to the National Garden Scheme.

A minimal budget of £500 is proposed to cover printing costs of leaflets detailing participating gardens and their locations as well as any other promotional materials required.

The proposed event can be advertised in the next edition of Witham's Voice to gather interest from potential participants.

If successful, it may lead onto other 'Witham in Bloom' events and the reinstating of the scheme as a whole in the future.

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 – Encouraging promotion of flora and fauna may have a positive impact.
- (b) Crime and disorder – Bringing community together around shared interests may have a positive impact.
- (c) Climate – Highlighting the role of gardens in combating climate change may have a positive impact.

Advice:

- To consider approving the Witham Town Council Open Gardens event for Summer 2026.