



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

MINUTES

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

Date: **3rd September 2025**

Present:	Councillors	B	Fleet	
		P	Heath	(arrived 2.17pm)
	Co-optees	S.	Black	(Witham and Countryside Society)
		J.	Casement	(Witham Wombles)
		J.	Palombi	(CPRE)
		P	Shuttleworth	(Local wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
		S.	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
		S.	Puckey	(Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

14. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from J Goodman. Cllr Ramage was absent.

15. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

16. MINUTES

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

17. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

A resident had emailed asking for an update on the poor condition of the fence between 1 Bridge Street and the River Walk. The Deputy Town Clerk informed the Committee that there had been no further communication between the Town Council and the owner of 1 Bridge Street, although it was believed that further tree work was due to be done in the autumn. Members were further informed that the Council had no health and safety concerns about the fence, as there was a nettle bed in front of it should it fall, and will not actively be pursuing the resident on this matter at this time.

The resident had an additional question regarding the future of the old dead Willow tree by Luard Way. Members were informed that the tree had been surveyed last year and was not considered to be a safety hazard, even though it was nearing the end of its life. The tree would continue to be checked at regular intervals. Members felt that it was good to see children enjoying tree climbing and dead trees were still a good habitat for insects. A new willow tree may be considered near this site in the future.

18. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. The Deputy Town Clerk further advised that two new benches would be installed on the River Walk close to Pattison Close in the next few months, that the additional bee havens would be completed in the autumn and that an information board had been put in on the River Walk on Armond Road as a memorial to the Witham Rail Crash of 1905.

Cllr Heath entered the Chamber at 2.17pm

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

19. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update.

The Operations Team is up-to-date with the River Walk. Unfortunately, there has been some vandalism and two benches had been removed for repair, but a new bench had been installed in Maldon Road. There have been several fires on the River Walk over the summer and a nature trail camera has been erected close to Ebenezer to deter further arson attempts.

There have been two events on the River Walk which went well; the Teddy Bears' Picnic and the Rail Disaster Remembrance.

Regular maintenance has been continuing at James Cooke Wood, widening the rides and cutting back vegetation as well as replacing some fencing with new posts.

There has been the usual maintenance at Whetmead. In addition, two etching posts have been reset, the river bank has been repaired and a new nature camera installed to act as CCTV.

The team are up to date with the churchyard and the allotments.

The Operations Manager advised that the Mill Lane Meadow would be mowed in October and two Members expressed an interest in being part of the volunteers to collect the grass.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

20. BIO BLITZ EVENT

Members agreed that the event had been a success and that Essex Wildlife Trust's attendance had played a large part in the day being well received. Members were informed that it was hoped the event would be repeated next year, either in the Closed Churchyard or Whetmead, if Essex Wildlife Trust and Essex Field Club could attend.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

21. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE

The Deputy Town Clerk advised Members that the camera post would be put up in the near future and the Operations Manager added that he had identified a location which would include a view of Wickham Bishops Church.

Members were interested to know who owned the woodland area by the north steps at Whetmead and, if it was owned by National Highways, if it might be integrated into the reserve. The Deputy Town Clerk was not aware of land ownership in the area but this was not currently in the council's plans.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

22. RIVER WALK PUBLIC ART

Members were invited to feed back any ideas for sculptures or locations as soon as possible. Members were further advised that The Town Council was still awaiting final funding confirmation but it was anticipated that the project would begin in the next couple of months.

Members expressed an interest in graffiti art being part of any future public artwork, identifying the rail bridges over the River Walk and road bridge over the entrance to Whetmead as potential locations. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that while the rail bridges had been ruled out due to difficulty obtaining agreement from Network Rail, it was hoped that artwork may be considered at the Whetmead underpass in the future.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

Meeting concluded at 2.51pm.

SP/3.9.25

Signed by Chairman.....