



Witham Town Council: Environmental Policy

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

Introduction

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

- In 1993/94 the Council planted a 14-acre wood with trees to create James Cooke Wood. A management plan, renewed in 2024 follows a schedule of work to enhance the area for wildlife and ensure a sustainable healthy woodland for generations to come
- Whetmead Nature Reserve was a former landfill site but is now a wildlife haven. There are future ambitions to make further enhancements.
- The freehold of the River Walk was transferred to Witham Town Council in 2021 and a 10-year River Walk Management Plan was adopted during 2020/21 which ensures that long term climate benefits are in place, including replacing trees which have died or are felled for safety reasons.
- The closed Churchyard is managed to enhance its value to wildlife while respecting the graves within. In 2024 Essex Ecology Ltd were engaged to provide advice for a new management plan in 2025 to ensure the site's maintenance continues to maximise the area's biodiversity.
- Supporting Witham Tree Group in their tree planting activities within the town.
- A ban of pesticide use on our open spaces.
- Wildflower initiatives are taking place on our open spaces
- All 75 Witham Town Council lamp columns were replaced with LED bulbs during 2019/2020 which have a longer life span and so lower carbon emissions.
- The Information Centre distributes recycling bags, sells biodegradable food caddy liners at close to cost and collects used batteries and ink cartridges for safe disposal.
- Future plans are in place to carry out a complete review of the Town Council's fleet for carbon free alternatives and decarbonisation of the Council's operations.
- Introducing improved communal composting facilities at Cut Throat Lane allotment site, encouraging the use of water butts and discouraging tenants' use of pesticides.
- Future plans to consider replacing open spaces equipment with battery operated alternatives to reduce the use of fuel.
- Regularly monitoring recycling at the Town Hall and at events to minimise waste sent to landfill

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

Objectives

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

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

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

Specific Environmental Actions

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

Water Management

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

Energy Management

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

Biodiversity and Open Spaces

- Protect and enhance the natural environment of the Council's open spaces.
- Manage Council open spaces to promote and protect biodiversity.
- Continue to exclude the use of all pesticides on Council managed open spaces.
- Extend wildflower initiatives ensuring invasive species are excluded.

- Open spaces to be managed effectively to enhance the quality of the natural environment while providing amenity space for residents and protected well-being for species onsite.

Raising Awareness

- Promote the awareness of environmental issues within the town.
- Highlight carbon footprint reducing measures to residents
- Work with partner organisations to raise awareness.

Reviewed and adopted at Environment Committee held 9th January 2023, minute no 36.

Last reviewed: 20th January 2025

Next Review: 26th January 2026