



**OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE
WEDNESDAY 19TH JUNE 2019 AT 3:00PM**

AGENDA

- MEMBERS:** Councillors - J.C. Goodman (Chairman)
S.E. Hicks
T. Pleasance
Mrs S.C. Lager
R.P. Ramage
- S. Brailey - Witham Tree Group
J. Casement - Witham Wombles
A. Chick - Witham Rotary Club
B. Fleet - Tree Warden
J. Palombi - CPRE
L. Ralph - Environment Agency
P. Shuttleworth - Local Wildlife Interests
D. Smith - Local Wildlife Interests
A. Watts - Wild About Witham
B. Wilmer - Witham & Countryside Society
- OFFICERS:** Mrs J.P. Sheehy - Town Clerk
H. Andrews - Assistant Proper Officer
S.P. Dyer - Operations Manager

1. APOLOGIES

To receive any apologies for absence.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

To receive any declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 16th JANUARY 2019

To receive the minutes of the previous meeting for comments and observations
([attached](#))

4. QUESTIONS & STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

An opportunity for members of the press and public present to comment upon any item on the agenda or raise new concerns.

5. CONSIDERATIONS OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

To consider any written representations received by the Council

6. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

To receive the Operations Manager's verbal report on recent Open Spaces activities and to answer any questions put by members.

7. CLERK'S REPORT

To receive the Clerk's report ([attached](#))

8. CLARIFICATION OF RECOMMENDATIONS

To clarify recommendations that arose from the previous meeting to the Environment Committee as they have sought clarification regarding the requested Tree Survey.

9. GREEN FLAG DESIGNATION FOR OPEN SPACES

To receive a report on the outstanding points necessary for accreditation ([attached](#))

10. CURRENT RIVER WALK MANAGEMENT PLAN REVIEW

To continue the review of the current plan from page 22 onwards. A list of proposed amendments is ([attached](#))

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

To raise enquiries or any other agenda items to be handled by next meeting of the committee.

12. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee will be held on 14th August 2019 at 3:00pm.

NOTES OF THE MEETING OF THE OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 16TH JANUARY 2019 AT 2:00PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

PRESENT:- Councillors Mrs J.A Williams (Chairman), Mrs S.C Lager, P. Horner.

Also in attendance:

B. Wilmer (Witham & Countryside Society)
J. Palombi (CPRE)
D. Smith (Local Wildlife Interests)
P. Shuttleworth (Wild About Witham)
A. Watts (Local Wildlife Interests)
B. Fleet Tree Warden
A. Chick (Witham Rotary Club)
S. Brailey (Witham Tree Group)

Staff: J. Sheehy - Deputy Town Clerk
C. Frost - Open Spaces Supervisor

13. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received Councillor J.C Goodman & from J. Casement due to previous engagements. It was noted that A. Chick in attendance was no longer listed as a committee member.

It was **AGREED** that A. Chick re-join the committee with immediate effect.

14. INTERESTS

There were no declarations of interest.

15. NOTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING HELD 17TH OCTOBER 2018

The notes were taken as read.

16. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC.

There were no members of the public present.

17. OPEN SPACES SUPERVISORS REPORT

A verbal report was given by the Open Spaces Supervisor who noted that this time of year was usually quieter, with focus being placed on general maintenance concerning footpaths. Reference was made to ongoing tree works that had now been completed by contractors instructed by the Town Council. Woodchip that had been produced from the work was being used on unofficial footpaths to improve the general amenity of the site. It was noted that during the second phase of tree work, woodchip would be used to reinstate footpaths at Whetmead Nature Reserve.

A query was raised over two trees felled by contractors. It was noted that one tree was earmarked for works as it was likely to fall over in due course on a footpath, whilst the other had already fell due to rotting roots at the base and was moved by the contractors.

18. DEPUTY TOWN CLERK'S REPORT

A report was received. Members were notified that a standard set of byelaws were in operation on the River Walk which did not prohibit fishing so long as other statutory elements such as possession of a licence were met. It was further noted that a dog waste bin previously requested by a member of the public for Moat Farm Chase had now been installed.

19. MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

Members were notified that this item will be held in abeyance until the next meeting due to impending administrative changes. Members also congratulated J. Sheehy on his impending movement from the position of Deputy Town Clerk to Town Clerk.

20. WHETMEAD NATURE RESERVE SECURITY

Members were notified that there were outstanding concerns with rehangng a gate and prohibiting access to the nature reserve and it was suggested that the committee look at a more comprehensive arrangement for the reconfiguration of the entrance. It was noted that District Council officers had expressed preliminary willingness to help devise a new scheme for the area.

It was suggested as an interim measure, a new gate could be devised that would not restrict pedestrian access or potential use of a 'kissing gate' which allows for pedestrian access but restricts vehicles and bikes. It was also suggested that any existing ramps that had been constructed by bikers using the site be flattened and the site returned to normal as best as possible. It was thought that bikers used the site on weekends.

It was **AGREED** that the Community Special Constables be contacted to patrol the area.

It was **AGREED** that the District Council's Landscape Architects be contacted to ascertain a timeframe for a scheme to be devised to improve the security of the area.

It was **AGREED** that this topic would also be raised at a meeting concerning the Blackwater Rail Trail in March between the Deputy Town Clerk & Essex County Council officers to understand ECC's approach to policing and securing footpaths.

21. GREEN FLAG DESIGNATION FOR OPEN SPACES

Members were requested to consider if the 'Green Flag' designation should be sought and factored into the 2nd generation management plan for 2020-2030. Members noted the work involved with obtaining Green Flag Status but it was considered a valuable tool in promoting and enhancing green spaces. It was noted that central park in Chelmsford possessed Green Flag status and officers at the City Council may be able to provide greater direction on this matter.

It was **AGREED** that the new plans be formulated with Green Flag Status in mind with committee members B. Fleet and J. Palombi being appointed to lead on this element of the plan in consultation with the Deputy Town Clerk.

22. RIVER WALK MANAGEMENT PLANS REVIEW

Members began the review of the expiring River Walk Management Plan and agreed the following points:

P.3, Para.3: paragraph to be retained to be removed in event of ownership.

P.3-P.4 – To provide a welcoming site to be amended to "Welcome and useable". Include references to wildlife diversity, climate change and accessibility. Whetmead location to be re-named as "lower end of River Walk". Include statement on preventing unauthorized access.

P4, Para. 4 – Reference inclusion of the 'Town Trail' and retain 'educational' element. Greater promotion of the site on social media and town council website.

P4, Para.6 - Remove "possible"

Councillor Mrs S.C Lager entered the meeting at 14:52.

P.4, Para 6 – Remove references to Whetmead.

P.4, Para 7 – Amend the wording to reflect the plan is final once adopted.

P.6 – To be amended by officers.

P.7 – to be amended by officers.

P.8, Para 3 – to be amended by officers.

P.8, Para 4 – to be rewritten.

P.8, Para 5 – Delete.

P.8, Para 6 – Amend to include statement of pesticides concerning knotweed.

P.8, Para 7 – Delete.

- P.8, Para 10 – Amendment by officers.
- P.8, Para 15 – Amendment by officers to clarify duties.
- P.9, Para 2 – Amendment to feature list wildflower meadows.
- P.9, Para 3-12 – reference to Flora & Fauna list be updated pending updated survey.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Environment Committee that a new survey be commissioned from ECOS and that the survey consider unusual trees that may benefit from Tree Preservation Orders.

- P.10 – Inclusion of new maps pending survey.
- P.12 – Review 'Batten Report's section pending survey.
- P.13 – Delegation to John Palombi for Heritage page.
- P.14, Para 3 – to be rewritten by officers.
- P.14 – Publicity for community groups to be included and greater emphasis placed on how to get involved by submitting ideas.

It was **AGREED** that a new standing item be included on all future agendas for 'Consideration of Written Representations'

- P.14, Para 9 – Delete.
- P.14, Para 10 – Reword commemorative and donated trees.

It was **RECOMMENDED** to Environment Committee to review cycleway signage.

- P.15 – Review footpath and cycleway statement upon perusal of definitive map.
- P.16-19 – Hold in abeyance until further clarity sought on Green Flag requirements.
- P.20 – Remove page.
- P.21, Para 2,3 – Amend grass cutting statement subject to ECOS guidelines.

It was **AGREED** in view of the time that the remaining points be considered at the next meeting when the 1st draft is considered.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

A request was made to clear up the period garden to the back of the Town Hall as it was entering an increasingly overgrown and dilapidated state.

24. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

The time and date of the next meeting was confirmed as **Wednesday 17th April 2019 at 2:00pm.**

There being no further business the Chairman closed the meeting at 4:00pm.

JS.22.01.2019



Clerk's Report – Open Spaces Management Sub-committee

Blackwater Rail Trail

The acquisition of the Blackwater Rail Trail is due to be discussed in a meeting with James Abbott and officers on 17th June 2019. Further update to be received.

Signage

New entrance signs for the River Walk, Whetmead, James Cook Wood and the Closed Churchyard should be in place in the next couple of months. The signs will incorporate a QR scanning code for the Town Trail.

Whetmead entrance gates

Currently being looked into with regards to cost, type, etc. Operations Manager due to have a meeting with the blacksmith on 13th or 14th June. Further update to be received.

HA/10.06.19

Officer Report: Green Flag Designation for Open Spaces

Research has now been carried out in considering the application for Green Flag status. The River Walk Management Plan will need to be amended for the application and the following items will be needed –

1. Amend signs to provide clear information about the River Walk at various entrance points to the site
2. An access statement needs to be included in the Management Plan providing clear information on the accessibility of various routes/areas to different users
3. A policy about reducing risk of personal harm while using the site should be included in the Management Plan
4. The statement about the control of dogs using the site should be amended on the Management Plan to include more about our approach
5. A policy on litter and waste management is needed in the Management Plan – with a specific policy for managing chewing gum
6. The Management Plan should be revised to include details regarding composting and how we use horticultural waste
7. The Management Plan should make clear what horticultural qualifications relevant staff managing the site have
8. The Management Plan should refer to appropriate management of other features, i.e. water bodies
9. The Management Plan should be amended to refer to the Tree survey and how different areas are managed
10. A Tree Action Plan is needed to show how we deal with responding to fallen/dangerous trees
11. A maintenance schedule for infrastructure is needed, i.e. repainting
12. A maintenance schedule for equipment used by staff
13. The Management Plan should include our waste minimisation approach, i.e. recycling facilities
14. The Management Plan should show evidence of eliminating pesticide/chemical fertilizers and that we don't use peat
15. The Management Plan should show our climate change adoption strategy
16. The Management Plan will need a statement regarding the landscape features of the River Walk and their conservation
17. Community involvement needs to be referred to in the Management Plan. It is satisfied by the Open Spaces Management Sub Committee but consider advertising the River Walk on our Social Media/website
18. A Marketing and Promotion Plan will need to be in place

Advice:

That the various policies and plans be prepared in conjunction with rewriting of the River Walk Management Plan (next agenda item)

River Walk Management Plans Amendments

Item 10

Proposed Plan Period: 2020 - 2030

- ~~1) P.3, Para. 3 delete redundant paragraph in anticipation of future ownership.~~
- ~~2) P.3 – P.4 review the “Purpose of the Management Plan” objectives.~~

- ~~3) P.4, Para. 2 review the need for this statement.~~
- ~~4) P.4, Para. 4 consider the ‘educational, cultural and developmental’ statement.~~
- ~~5) P.4, Para. 5 replace “possible climate change” with “climate change”~~
- ~~6) P.4, Para. 6 reconsider wording to reflect separate management plan for Whetmead.~~
- ~~7) P.4, Para. 7 reconsider wording to reflect 2nd generation management plan.~~

- ~~8) P.6 – to be rewritten by officers to update governance structure of the Town Council.~~

- ~~9) P.7 Delete page; superfluous. Replace with explanatory page on Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee including details of how Members of the Public can join and attend the committee to influence decision making.~~

- ~~10) P.8, Para. 3 – to be rewritten by officers to reflect new risk management procedures and citing relevant policy.~~
- ~~11) P.8, Para. 4 reword paragraph to make clear the role of Environment Committee as the executive decision making body for open spaces.~~
- ~~12) P.8, Para. 5 delete; superfluous.~~
- ~~13) P.8, Para. 6 delete paragraph and replace with new headed statement outlining the Town Council’s commitment to no use of pesticides.~~
- ~~14) P.8, Para.7 delete; superfluous.~~
- ~~15) P.8, Para. 10 – Para. 14 – to be rewritten by officers to update financial management of open spaces and remove any schedule of figures that will inevitably be outdated after a single year.~~
- ~~16) P.8, Para.15 – Para.16 – to be rewritten by officers to clarify the role of the Environment Agency and outline the duties of river management under the Town Council’s riparian duties.~~

- ~~17) P.9, Para. 2 Review the 8 feature list.~~
- ~~18) P.9, Para.3 – Para.12 – review to consider if ecological observations are still correct. Consider any additions or amendments.~~

- ~~19) P.10 – Review maps.~~

- ~~20) P.11 – Review Maps~~

- ~~21) P.12 – Reconsider the ‘Future Vision’ statement in its entirety and consider what the 2nd generation management plan may outline in such a vision.~~

- ~~22) P.13 – Review heritage & historical background page.~~

- ~~23) P.14, Para.3 – Reconsider statement.~~
- ~~24) P.14 – Current Assessment section to be reviewed. Consider if inclusion is necessary for 2nd generation management plan.~~

- ~~25) P.15 – Review contents of entire page particularly regarding volunteer opportunities and adoption of cycle routes.~~

- ~~26) P.16,17,18,19 – Consider removal of these pages as not relevant to the physical management of the River Walk.~~

- ~~27) P.20 – Amend as necessary pending decision.~~

~~28) P.21, Para 2 & 3 – Review grass cutting proposals and general wording. Consider replacement of this particular Ecology page with ‘Grass Cutting Schedules’ or other such appropriate section.~~

Continue discussion from previous meeting on 16 January 2019 –

- 29) P.22 23 & 24 - Officers to redraw and update maps; consider inclusion of detailed grass cutting areas and frequencies.
- 30) P.25, Para.1 - Review pond proposals. Is this still feasible? Minimal budget allocation for this work.
- 31) P.25, Section ii - Review entire section for effectiveness.
- 32) P.27, review “Management for Glow Worms” section.
- 33) P.28, 29 - review management of sedge beds.
- 34) Page 30 through to 38 - Review detail of all sections and consider if the River Walk has been managed in accordance with this content. Consider addition and removal of content as required for 1st draft plan.
- 35) P.40 - Review considerations for Community Involvement and now defunct ‘Friends of the River Walk’ section.
- 36) P.40 - Review commemorative tree section in anticipation of scheme closure.
- 37) P.41 - Remove section concerning signage (currently under review) as superfluous to management plan.
- 38) P.41,42 - Consider reconfiguration of section and inclusion of ‘Marketing Plan’ (Green Flag requirement)
- 39) P.43 through to 53 - remove entire section. This section is too difficult to police against all other Council priorities and is superseded by the reconfigured sub-committee structure with responsibility for the standing item ‘Maintenance Programme’. Details on the revised governance structure can be included in the plan in place which demonstrates the role of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee as principal overseeing body of open spaces. This will also help reduce the size of the management plan.
- 40) Appedix 1) Remove without replacement, dated information subject to annual change.
- 41) Appendix 2) Remove as not contingent to management plan and likely subject to change.
- 42) Appendix 3) Review observations.
- 43) Appendix 4) Remove.