



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

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **14th April 2025**

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

Present: Councillors: J. Martin (Chairman)
J.M. Coleman (Vice Chairman)
E. Adelaja
J.C. Coleman
T. Hewitt
R. Ramage
J. Robertson
A. Sloma

Also in attendance: Cllrs P. Barlow
L. Headley

H. Andrews (Deputy Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Secretary)

54. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fleet. Councillor Taylor was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

55. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held on 20th January 2025 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

56. INTERESTS

No interests were declared at the time but later in the Meeting Councillor J.C. Coleman declared non-pecuniary interests at Minute 68 – Section 106 – Public Art, as he is a volunteer at Witham Hang Out which the users of the skate park attend.

57. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no member of the press or public present.

58. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's Report on matters arising was received.

In answer to a question she explained that suitable contractors would be sought to carry out work to create swales on the northern stretch of the River Walk to address the ground water issue.

RESOLVED That the report be received and information noted.

59. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

The income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2024 to 28th February 2025 and exception report were received.

RESOLVED That the reports be received and noted.

60. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 5th March 2025 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

61. WITHAM TREE GROUP

The Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in January, February and March 2025 were received.

RESOLVED That the minutes be received and noted.

62. SCATTERING OF ASHES POLICY

Members were asked to receive and approve the Scattering of Ashes policy.

RESOLVED That the Scattering of Ashes policy be received and approved.

63. CLOSED CHURCHYARD MANAGEMENT POLICY

Members were asked to adopt the Closed Churchyard Management Plan for 2025 to 2035.

Members understood the need to ensure a balance between being respectful and providing suitable wildlife habitats.

RESOLVED That the Closed Churchyard Management Plan for 2025 to 2035 be received and adopted.

64. PERIOD GARDEN GARDENING GROUP

Councillor J.M. Coleman gave a verbal report regarding the setting up of a gardening group to undertake future maintenance of the Period Garden.

She said that she wanted to keep to the original plan of the garden and suggested that the flower beds be prepared so that people could come and plant plants from their gardens. She considered that an ideal place to advertise would be in the doctors as gardening eases mental health issues and traumas. Planting blossom trees would be particularly calming and restful but understood that watering would be needed.

Members agreed that this was a marvellous idea to make use of the garden again.

RESOLVED That the report be received and welcomed; and that the project be supported.

65. COMMUNITY ORCHARD

A report was received concerning the creation of a community orchard.

Councillor Hewitt promoted the idea of a community orchard that grew heritage apples and pears, that are no longer commercially available, for residents to pick. A group could be formed to manage the orchard as any fruit that drops from the trees needed to be picked up to avoid pests. He considered the proposed field to be ideal and the project could be extended to other areas in the future. He said that there was lots of information on the internet for community orchard projects.

Members welcomed and supported the idea of a community orchard but understood the need to investigate the practicalities of setting one up.

RESOLVED To investigate funding opportunities and practicalities in establishing a community orchard for the benefit of the community.

66. WITHAM IN BLOOM – OPEN GARDENS

A report was received about the introduction of an Open Gardens' event for 2026.

Members were supportive of introducing such a scheme and recognised that the Mayor's or another charity could be a beneficiary.

RESOLVED That the report be received, the introduction of an Open Gardens' event for 2026 be supported and a sum of £500 approved for printing programmes and other advertising.

67. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

RESOLVED That 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.

68. SECTION 106 – PUBLIC ART

A report was received about a community mural at the skate park.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that approval to use Section 106 funding for Public Art was required before the end of July. This was a smaller project and it was proposed to use Brave Arts to create a community mural at the skate park. Brave Arts had been used to create the mural on the gauging station on the River Walk. They would hold a workshop with the users of the skate park where designs would be discussed. The users would then be invited to take part in the creation of the actual artwork over two days of the school summer holidays.

Councillor J.C. Coleman declared a non-pecuniary interest as he volunteered at Witham Hang Out which the youths using the skate park attend.

Members considered this to be a great project to involve the young people.

RESOLVED That the report be received, the project supported and Brave Arts be appointed at a cost of £2,000 to create a community mural at the skate park.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.20 p.m.

Councillor Martin
HA/GK/15.4.2025