



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

## AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Tuesday, 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022** 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.	Goodman	(Chairman)
		K.	Atwill	(Vice Chairman)
		J.	Bayford	
		S.	Hicks	
		A.	Kilmartin	
		C.	Lager	
		M.	Lager	
		C.	Livermore	
		S.	Rajeev	
		M.	Weeks	

### **1. APOLOGIES**

To receive apologies for absence.

### **2. MINUTES**

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 (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 comment upon any item on the Agenda.

*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, EXPENDITURE & BUDGET REPORT**

To receive the committee income and expenditure report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 – 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 ([attached](#) at page 5).

**7. WITHAM TREE GROUP**

(a) Report to the Town Council

To receive a report from the Witham Tree Group covering their activities for the seasons 2020 – 2021 and 2021 – 2022 ([attached](#) at page 6).

(b) Tree Group Minutes

To receive the Tree Group Minutes for the meetings held 22<sup>nd</sup> February and 22<sup>nd</sup> March 2022 ([attached](#) at page 8).

**8. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE**

To receive the Minutes of the Open Spaces Sub-Committee Meeting held 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022 ([attached](#) at page 12).

*Order Note: That the recommendation at Minute 19 to consider obtaining Tree Preservation Orders on remaining trees on the Gimsons development will be discussed by the Planning and Transport Committee at its Meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> April 2022.*

**9. CLIMATE AUDIT PANEL**

To receive the Minutes from the Climate Audit Panel Meeting held 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 ([attached](#) at page 15).

**10. HIGHWAYS DEVOLUTION SCHEME**

(a) Update

To receive a verbal update from the Deputy Town Clerk.

(b) Licence

To receive a report ([attached](#) at page 17).

***Order Note: This matter was discussed at Minute 39(b) of the Environment Committee held Meeting held 31.1.2022.***

**11. RIVERWALK PATHS**

(a) To discuss arranging a walk of the River Walk for members and its benefits

(b) To discuss Public Rights of Way on the River Walk.

**12. REWILDING PROJECT**

To receive information about Braintree District Council's rewilding project and consider suitable areas ([attached](#) at page 19).

**13. POND CONSERVATION**

To receive information from FWAG East Consultancy Ltd regarding pond conservation projects ([attached](#) at page 20).

**14. BUS SHELTERS**

To receive an email from Essex County Councillor D. Louis ([attached](#) at page 21), to discuss the contents and decide on the way forward.



Nikki Smith  
Town Clerk

HA/GK/20.4.2022



ITEM NO: 5

**Officer Report: Clerk's Report**

**Issue:**

- Since the last meeting of the Environment Committee, the public footpath near the Gimsons development has reopened. The hedge bordering the River Walk in River View has been cut back and subsequent planting has been carried out.
- Following a site inspection of the Ebenezer Close end of the River Walk in September 2021 regarding ongoing water surface issues, Anglian Water have carried out work during the week commencing 18<sup>th</sup> April 2022 to open up their outfalls. For long term management of the issue, it has been recommended that the ditch at the rear of residential properties is reinstated. This will be a large scale project to be considered in the future.

**Advice:**

To receive and note.

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## Agenda Item 6

14/04/2022

## Witham Town Council Current Year

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## Detailed Income &amp; Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/03/2022

Month No: 12

## Cost Centre Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
<b>400 Environment</b>							
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	4,060	1,650	(2,410)			246.1%	
Environment :- Income	<u>4,060</u>	<u>1,650</u>	<u>(2,410)</u>			<u>246.1%</u>	<u>0</u>
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	126,740	115,000	(11,740)		(11,740)	110.2%	5,379
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	1,758	4,000	2,242		2,242	43.9%	
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	2,499	2,500	1		1	100.0%	
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	6,918	7,650	732		732	90.4%	
4432 New Tree Planting	2,000	2,000	0		0	100.0%	
4433 Tree Maintenance	4,500	9,000	4,500		4,500	50.0%	
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	95	2,000	1,905		1,905	4.7%	
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	1,628	1,200	(428)		(428)	135.6%	
4444 Fleet	4,784	4,000	(784)		(784)	119.6%	
4445 Open Spaces General	3,114	1,500	(1,614)		(1,614)	207.6%	460
4446 James Cooke Wood	624	2,000	1,376		1,376	31.2%	
4447 River Walk	3,372	3,000	(372)		(372)	112.4%	
4448 Whetmead LNR	27	2,000	1,973		1,973	1.4%	
4451 River Walk Extension	0	2,000	2,000		2,000	0.0%	
4452 River Walk Improvements	3,780	3,000	(780)		(780)	126.0%	
4453 Litter Bins	0	1,500	1,500		1,500	0.0%	
4454 Bus Shelters	6,588	1,000	(5,588)		(5,588)	658.8%	
4455 Witham in Bloom	11,819	12,200	381		381	96.9%	
Environment :- Indirect Expenditure	<u>180,244</u>	<u>175,550</u>	<u>(4,694)</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>(4,694)</u>	<u>102.7%</u>	<u>5,839</u>
<b>Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<u>(176,184)</u>	<u>(173,900)</u>	<u>2,284</u>				
7000 plus Transfer from EMR	5,839						
<b>Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve</b>	<u>(170,345)</u>						
Grand Totals:- Income	4,060	1,650	(2,410)			246.1%	
Expenditure	180,244	175,550	(4,694)	0	(4,694)	102.7%	
<b>Net Income over Expenditure</b>	<u>(176,184)</u>	<u>(173,900)</u>	<u>2,284</u>				

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(This report covers the Tree Group's major activities in seasons 2020-2021 and 2021-2022)

The summers of 2020 and 2021 were again hot and dry and newly planted trees needed weekly attention from April until September. A 1000 litre bowser together with an increased capacity pump, purchased with support from a grant from the Essex Association of Local Councils, proved to be a great asset in this task.

The creation of the War Memorial Park between Bramble Road and Honeysuckle Way was completed in the autumn of 2021. BDC are arranging for signs to be placed at either end of the Park and an information board to be located centrally. The initial intention, to create a linear copse to commemorate those who fell in WW1, grew into a major project to remember those who fell in war generally including the war in Afghanistan. In total 124 trees were planted. The Tree Group were supported in most phases of the project by Bee Brook Tree Services and community volunteers including staff from Aegon and on one occasion students from Rickstones Academy.

In the past two years we have undertaken two projects jointly with Eastlight Community Homes. The first on the Hatfield Road estate where we planted 17 trees, the second on the Forest Road estate where we planted 12. Eastlight provided the funding for the purchase of the trees for both projects and the Tree Group sourced the posts, mesh and ancillary materials from the Town Council budget allocation to the Group. As a supplement to the Forest Road project with Eastlight the Group planted three trees off Cut Throat Lane between the Electricity Station and Hemlock Close with support from a BDC Community grant sourced with the help of Cllr Weekes. We also planted 200 whips supplied by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV), supplemented by various saplings provided by Group members and a member of the public, to screen the Electricity Sub-Station. A full list of trees planted by the Group is available on our website [www.withamtreegroup.org.uk](http://www.withamtreegroup.org.uk)

It is now ten years since the Group was formed and it is perhaps a good time to take stock, review what has been achieved and to examine ways in which our prime objective, to see an increase in the tree cover in Witham, can be even better fulfilled.

We have planted over 300 quality trees and thanks to our planting techniques and subsequent after care and maintenance, in particular our practice of watering newly planted trees throughout their first two summers, we have had very few failures. We have also planted over 1000 whips and several smaller trees donated by residents. We identified sites for over 150 trees planted and maintained by Kings Nursery under contract to BDC, funded by a s.106 agreement. We have developed an excellent relationship with BDC Landscape Services and in recent times with Eastlight Community Housing and have received excellent support from members of the public and especially staff at Aegon. But we have been increasingly concerned that our efforts to increase tree cover may not be keeping pace with losses elsewhere.

The ability of trees to mitigate the impact of climate change through carbon capture is well understood but it takes up to 40 years for a tree to reach a level of maturity when it can begin to make an impact. Meanwhile we are reducing levels of carbon capture each time a mature tree is lost. In recent times trees have been lost through disease e.g. Dutch Elm disease and Ash Dieback, storm damage, retail and housing developments.

There is little we can do to prevent losses through disease but we have seen clear evidence that some recent losses have been due to poor planting techniques. Trees that were probably planted some 15 or so years ago have died long before their time and then been uprooted during storms. Examination of the root ball has shown that they failed to put down stabilising or feeding roots. This can only be due to failures at planting time to tease out pot bound roots and to provide space and soil conditions for young roots to grow.

Large scale retail and housing developments in and around Witham have resulted in the loss of many mature trees. Planning requirements call on developers to provide tree planting schemes to mitigate for the losses. A typical feature of these schemes is that the developer undertakes to replace any tree that fails to establish within a period of 5 years. It is clear from our research that many trees planted under these schemes fail to establish. This is almost certainly due to a failure on the part of the developer to provide sufficient aftercare i.e. watering. It may also be due to poor planting practice. It would appear that developers find it more cost effective to replace a failed tree before the expiry of the five year period rather than maintain a watering regime to help the tree establish in the first place. No provisions are made in the contract as far as we are aware that would ensure that the replacement tree survives. If this practice is allowed to continue our new housing and retail developments will end up with a tree landscape that is far from that envisaged by the original plans.

To rectify this situation, we would urge the Town Council to make strong representations to Braintree District Council Planning Department to revised the conditions attached to landscaping requirements relating to new developments to ensure that recognised planting practices are followed and appropriate aftercare (watering) procedures are adopted and to carry out strict enforcement action to ensure that those conditions are met. We would also urge BDC to discuss with present developers how they might rectify the present appalling situation whereby so many young trees they have planted have failed to establish.

Barry Fleet  
Allan Waight

February 2022

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Agenda Item 7(b)

Here are the minutes from our 22nd February meeting:

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

1 Apologies - Stanley Brailey

2 Minutes of 11th January accepted.

3 Matters arising - we had noted that the 'chanticleers' along Collingwood Road needed tidying up by the removal of suckers and weeds, and assumed that this would be a WTC issue but it now appears that they may be unable to do anything as they are not authorised by the County Council to work along a 'priority 1' route.

4 Future planning

- a) Spa Road playground area - Barry reported on his site meeting with Shaun of BDC on the 1st February; Shaun was going to order the trees [30]; we need to know the timescale as we would need to plant by mid-April at the latest before we start watering again;
- b) Alan Road playground area - no news yet;
- c) Watering schedule - Richard's proposals & Stanley's comments considered, which were all accepted; agreed we can tweak if necessary as we go;
- d) Maintenance - discussion re techniques for altering posts & cross beams;
- e) Rickstones playing fields - this area has been inspected previously and has considerable potential so we need to discuss this with Shaun again for future planting.

5 Developer planting

- a) Bellway, Rivenhall - Mark has established that their contractors will replace dead trees;
- b) Lidl - Shaun had advised that enforcement action may be necessary to ensure that they replace the dead trees.

6 Templars estate - the residents' association wish to meet with us again so Barry will arrange this; Eric & Allan also to attend.

7 Memorial Park signage - Barry has discussed the interpretation board with Shaun and it appears that this may now be part funded from the councillor 'pots'; wording to be agreed - needs to direct residents to the war memorial for the list of those commemorated, and the support of the Tree Group needs to be referred to; the external signs have been made with delivery awaited;

8 Finances



- a] the Treasurer's report was received;
- b] WTC - Eric has ordered posts & mesh to complete their budget; Barry reported on the suggestion made by a councillor that we could possibly order other materials we need via the Town Hall in order not to pay VAT but a previous Town Clerk had indicated that this was not appropriate;
- c] Use of spare funds discussed - no immediate action appropriate.

9 Website - we have been receiving a number of contacts, which Allan reported on;

10 Bulb planting - it was noted that WTC are happy for us to plant bluebells in James Cooke Wood next winter;

#### 11 Other matters

- a] Decaying - Barry had advised Shaun that the limes at Pasture Road and alders by the stream near Howbridge Rd no longer need their cages;
- b] Collingwood Road cycleway proposals - Barry reported that he understood that the only trees now at risk are the 3/4 by the rail bridge; WTC has objected to the scheme saying the money could be better spent improving provision elsewhere in the town;
- c] Lynfield Elm - TPO not practical as owned by ECC; if could be moved, would need pollarding and regular watering [probably by us!] to have any chance of survival;
- d] Ivy Chimneys - had been discussed with Shaun, and enforcement action may be necessary re hedge removal and new agreed tree [post meeting note: a tree appears to have been planted];
- e] Willow planting discussed, plants & site identified;
- f] Maintenance - a couple of our trees in the Avenue need re-posting.

#### 12 Any other business

- a] Report to WTC Environment Committee - Allan agreed to draft this, including concern about losses;
- b] Meeting with new ECC Forestry & Woodland Officer postponed as he had to deal with storm related issues;
- c] Redrow trees blown over near Lynfield [post meeting note: appear to have been put back up];
- d] Strimming - one of our trees in Epping Way badly damaged , Allan will raise with Paul Partridge , BDC; Eric has devised a new strimming guard to prevent such problems ;
- e] The two dead trees in The Avenue were blown over by Storm Eunice, and Barry liaised with Anne Hooper of ECC for their removal.

13 Next meeting - Tuesday, 22nd March at Eric's, 7.00 p.m.

Here are the minutes from our 22nd March meeting.

Present: Stanley Brailey, Allan Waight, Eric Teverson, Mark Austin, Barry Fleet

1 Apologies - Graham Wingrove, Richard Hawkes.

2 Minutes of the 22nd February - accepted.

3 Matters arising - the cycleway scheme for Collingwood Road had been refused by BDC, we understand; strimmer damage - Paul Partridge of BDC reminding staff to take care.

4 Future planning

a) Spa Road - no further news; it may be necessary to defer to next autumn/winter, not least because our usual tree storage site at Eric's will be lost shortly;

b) Alan Road - awaiting news;

c) Templars estate - Eric, Allan & Barry had met with Melanie from the Templars Residents Association, following the initial meeting last year. They would like to concentrate on the playground area, the mound behind the Templars School and they would like a tree to celebrate the work of their former chair, Valerie Ahern. It was suggested to Mel that a hornbeam near the Rickstones Road entrance for Valerie, two lines of trees on the mound [ 15-20 trees], and 9 trees in the playground area [ Court 9] would be appropriate; it may take two planting seasons; we would need access through the bollards behind the shops for watering etc.; the Association have applied for a grant of £1900, and the possibility of local councillor grants was mentioned;

The Conrad Road area could be looked at subsequently.

Members accepted the report; Eric had done some costings - 9 trees in the play area at around £135 per tree plus £35 for cage, tube etc. would cost £1530; if we fund the cages, their £1900 grant would buy 14 trees; using the WTC allocation in addition could help buy 25 trees.

Barry will go back to Mel with some queries including suggesting a specimen tree adjacent to the mound for Valerie rather than by the entrance; meanwhile Allan will do the services checks;

d) Rickstones recreation field - agreed that this area should be looked at again as there is significant scope. It was mentioned that the Little Elms shops may be redeveloped - would this scheme involve tree planting? Also, there is space for trees in the cemetery;

e) Whips - Mark has some from the Woodland Trust plus Eric & Barry have some too; all to be planted 24th March, starting at Cut Throat Lane site.

5 Developer planting - it appears that Lidl have had contractors in to replace ALL the plants on site, removing not just dead trees but the living ones too! We hope that the new trees take; Mark will chase Bellway re their awaited replacement trees; there appears to have been some planting on the area behind Aldi.

6 Memorial Park signage - no further news.

7 Report to WTC - Allan & Barry to attend the Environment Committee meeting on the 26th April.

8 Finances -Stanley had secured a donation of £30 from the Co-op.

9 Website - nothing to report.

10 Any other business

a] Town centre - the latest BDC 'Contact' magazine talks about improvements planned to create a more attractive environment but without any mention of trees - we should raise with WTC;

b] We have been invited to the Annual Town Meeting on 19th April; options considered, Barry will discuss with Jane;

c] Stanley said that most storm felled trees had ivy on them [sail effect];

d] Lynfield elm - per Stan, Anne Hooper of ECC was not consulted; Stan will contact Shaun to discuss;

e] Lime trees in the Grove may be pollarded following the loss of one damaging a house.

11 Next meetings

a] Committee meeting at Eric's , 12th April, 7.00 pm;

b] AGM to be on 24th May, venue to be confirmed;

c] social type event separately.

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Agenda Item 8



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## MINUTES

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

Date: **Tuesday 1<sup>st</sup> February 2022**

Present: Councillors

S	Hicks	(Chairman)
J	Goodman	
C.	Lager	
S	Black	(Witham & Countryside)
S	Brailey	(Witham Tree Group)
B	Fleet	(Tree Warden)
J	Palombi	(CPRE)
P	Shuttleworth	(Local Wildlife Interests)
H	Andrews	(Assistant Town Clerk)
S	Dyer	(Operations Manager)

### 18. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Atwill, Cllr Pleasance and J Casement.

### 19. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting of 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2021 were agreed and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

Members discussed the Gimsons Review Group and whether the potential river spoil problem and other issues were being pursued. It was noted that the Gimsons Review Group had met three times in addition to a site visit and enquiries were being made regarding issues raised. Concerns were raised regarding the remaining trees on the development which do not have Tree Preservation Orders on them as these would not have protection from felling by new occupants. It was **RECOMMENDED** that obtaining Tree Preservation Orders on remaining trees on the Gimsons development should be explored.

Members were advised that the review of the ground water issues on the River Walk near Ebenezer Close was still ongoing. Anglian Water are due to carry out work to open up their outfalls but that additional work will be required to re-dig out ditches in the area to potentially solve the problem.

It was noted that the ground investigations work at Whetmead was continuing for the proposed A12 widening project.

## **20. CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk gave an update regarding the path near Helen Court. Members were advised that discussions had been taking place with Gimsons developers and it had previously been suggested that the hedge along River View may need to be removed to allow for the width of the new footpath. A recent site visit had taken place with officers, the technical manager of Bellways and an Arboricultural Consultant and it is now confirmed that the County Council have approved a 1.5m wide pavement and so the hedge will need to be cut back by 300mm along a 12m stretch. The hedge is on land owned by the developer but will be working with the Town Council to improve the hedge by removing excess ivy, filling gaps and improving the biodiversity. The hedge will also be extended by 10m towards the development entrance. The work will be carried out shortly ensuring that the official public footpath opens at the end of February 2022 when the diversion order expires.

## **21. OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT**

The Operations Manager advised that the Operations Team were up-to-date on all River Walk work, apart from the cutting back of a hedge near Saxon Drive which is delayed due to ground conditions. It was also noted that the grass near Helen Court would need time to recover from the damage caused by pedestrians.

Winter work is being carried out in James Cooke Wood with removing dead trees as part of the thinning process. A commemorative bench is due to be installed in memory of the late Cllr Paul Ryland and the base for this will be laid during February.

It was noted that the ground worked on for the A12 widening investigations at Whetmead will be reinstated once works are completed. The Operations Manager also confirmed that 50 tree whips were planted at Whetmead but were torn up within 24 hours of planting. 21 trees were recovered and have been replanted in scrub areas.

Work continues at the Closed Churchyard with cutting back of ivy from headstones, pruning vegetation and the wildflower area recently planted appears to be promising. Mixed bulbs have also been planted in this section and planting was assisted by supported learning students from Witham's Adult Education Centre. It was noted that positive feedback had been received from the church leader and that a new management plan was still required for the site. Members spoke of the potential to carry out species surveys to assist with producing the management plan.

Members were advised that the Operations Team are also currently working on the Town Council allotments clearing unworked plots so that they can be offered to those on the waiting list. New noticeboards and bins had recently been installed by the team and the site is soon to be fully occupied by tenants.

It was confirmed that the Operations Team carry out some Highways Devolutions tasks as part of their duties and any suggestion of tasks to be carried out could be reported for assessment.

Councillor C Lager left the meeting.

**22. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Following discussions at the Environment Committee's meeting of 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022, a review will take place of footpaths along the River Walk to establish those that are not currently registered as Public Rights of Way.

The Green Flag award scheme was also discussed and it was noted that an application for the River Walk will be held in abeyance until the condition of the footpaths had been addressed and construction developments affecting the River Walk had been completed.

**23. DATE AND TIME OF THE NEXT MEETING**

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee will be set shortly but was likely to be in May 2022.

Meeting concluded at 2.50pm

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Agenda Item 9

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE AUDIT PANEL AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 7<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2022, 6:30PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.**

**PRESENT:** - Councillors S. Ager, P. Barlow, S. Hicks, R. Williams

**Staff:** H Andrews - Deputy Town Clerk

In the absence of the Chairman, Councillor Jay, members agreed that Councillor Ager would chair the meeting.

**10. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

No apologies for absence were received.

**11. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

**12. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

The minutes of the previous meeting were confirmed as a true and accurate record and subsequently signed by Councillor Ager on behalf of the Chairman.

**13. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MINUTES**

There were no matters arising from the previous minutes.

**14. PUBLIC TOILET AUDIT**

Members discussed the options available to improve the Town Park public toilets to improve carbon footprint. Options of either rainwater collection facility or solar panels were discussed. Members **AGREED** that investigations should take place to establish which option was more advantageous for reducing carbon and to explore potential installation costs. Members noted that a rent rebate was available and spoke of the general costs involved in maintaining the toilets.

**15. GENERAL DEBATE**

Councillor Ager provided feedback on the recent EALC Climate Change Conference and had emailed the resources pack to members. Items included for discussion were electric dial-a-bus services and a climate change app for children.

Members **AGREED** to explore grants available for improving churchyards with regards to carbon reduction in relation to the closed churchyard and the proposed closed churchyard management plan due.

Members also **RECOMMENDED** that reduction of carbon emissions should be reviewed on Council services and that an EPC (Energy Performance Certificate) should be obtained for the Town Hall. Improvements to the Council's fleet should also be explored. It was noted that a review of the Council's fleet is part of the Environment Committee's business plans. Discussions took place regarding the initial cost of electric vehicles, financial benefits, reduction of carbon emissions and the life cycle of the Operations Team's vehicles. It was suggested that the option of a mini-moke style vehicle could also be explored.

Members discussed the Neighbourhood Plan and that climate related sections should be included. It was **AGREED** that the 'Neighbourhood Planning in a climate emergency document should be explored when considering WTC's Neighbourhood Plan.

It was noted that consultation is currently taking place with Witham Industrial Watch with regards to exploring solar panel options on the industrial estate.

## 16. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to discuss.

There being no further business, the panel concluded at 7.15pm.

*1. Neighbourhood Planning in a Climate Emergency to be circulated to Climate Audit Panel members separately.*

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**Officer Report: Maldon Road/Blue Mills Hill fingerpost licence update**

**Issue:**

- Email received on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2022 from Essex Highways confirmed that their engineering team are programming works to have the sign replaced. No date yet established.
- Information previously received if obtaining a licence to carry out the replacement of the sign, the Standard Conditions will be similar to below-
  - 1) *The applicant is responsible for ensuring that no statutory undertakers' apparatus is affected by the exercise of this consent*
  - 2) *The applicant shall take all reasonable precautions to protect the verges, any street lighting, street furniture and drainage systems. If any damage is caused to the highway by the installation and/or maintenance of the information sign, it will be made good as soon as reasonably practicable, either by the Highway Authority or the applicant. Responsibility of the cost of making good of any damage caused to the highway by the installation and/or maintenance of the statue shall remain the responsibility of the applicant*
  - 3) *Any works within the highway are to be undertaken by an appropriate accredited person*
  - 4) *The New Roads and Street Works Act Co-Ordinator must be notified at least one week prior to starting works in order that necessary supervision can be arranged. Notification is to include appropriate accreditations and works methodology.*
  - 5) *A road opening permit will be required*
  - 6) *Any variation for the approved plans and any future variations or modifications will be subject to prior written approval from the County Council*
  - 7) *No form of fencing or obstruction or structure to protect the sign other than that agreed to by the County Council will be permitted within the public highway and the County Council, as highway authority, is empowered to take action under Section 143 to remove any structure which is deemed to be a nuisance*
  - 8) *The applicant shall, at all times, accept responsibility for the information signs and shall maintain the signs in, good, sound, healthy and safe repair at all times.*
  - 9) *The applicant shall make good, to the County Council's satisfaction, any damage caused to the highway by the exercise of this consent and indemnify and keep indemnified the County Council from and against any claims, demands or proceedings in any way arising in regard thereto.*

- 10) *The applicant shall accept responsibility for, and indemnify and keep the County Council indemnified against, all actions, proceedings, claims for incidental damage, loss or injury caused and other reasons, demands, costs and expenses whatsoever which may be brought or sustained or incurred by the County Council by reason of the existence of the information signs in the highway.*
- 11) *The applicant shall effect a public liability insurance policy for an amount of not less than £5,000,000 (Five Million Pounds) and it shall maintain this policy in full force and effect for the total period of this consent.*
- 12) *Despite this consent, the area of verge housing the sign shall always remain part of the public highway and users of the highway are still entitled to exercise their right of passage over them.*
- 13) *Should these terms and conditions not be met, or if it is required by the County Council to do so, the applicant shall at its own expense restore to the County council's satisfaction that part of the highway affected by the erection of the information signs.*
- 14) *Alternatively, upon any breach of the terms and conditions of this consent, the Highway Authority may decide, and shall be permitted, to remove the information signs at the expense of the applicant who shall pay on demand to the County Council the cost of such a removal.*

**Advice:**

To receive and note.

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Agenda Item 12

**Rewilding Project**

**Sent:** 31 March 2022

Dear Chairman,

Following on from the successful community bulb and tree planting initiative, the Council is keen to consider other ways in which it can improve sustainability and biodiversity across the Braintree District in support of its commitment to help tackle the issue of climate change and improve our local environment.

In recent years the Council has tried a different approach to the way in which it manages its green open spaces, by allowing some areas to grow naturally (re-wild) with less frequent maintenance to increase plant and insect populations and encourage small birds and mammals, as well as planting wildflower seeds to help pollinators thrive. This has worked well in some of the less frequently used parts of our cemeteries, our meadows and nature reserves and larger open spaces, where maintenance levels have been reduced. Re-wilding has become more and more common across the country as a simple but effective way of helping conservation by restoring and protecting nature and the environment.

We are keen to hear from your Council if there is any land in your area that is owned and maintained by Braintree District Council that you feel would benefit from re-wilding? We have already been approached by some parish councils and would like to give every council an opportunity to suggest areas for inclusion in the project. If we make any change to the maintenance of land within your town/parish boundary, we will rely on your help and support to communicate this to the local community and explain the reasons for the change.

We will also be reviewing and identifying areas of our land that we consider would benefit from re-wilding and if any fall within your town/parish boundary, we will make contact with you to share our thoughts and obtain your feedback before making any changes to the existing maintenance regime.

If you would like to nominate an area/s for re-wilding, please send us your proposals together with a plan identifying the land in question to [rewilding@braintree.gov.uk](mailto:rewilding@braintree.gov.uk) and we can then check its suitability. The initial **deadline for responses is 30 June 2022**, although there is nothing stopping areas from being nominated at any time throughout the year.

We look forward to hearing from you.

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Agenda Item 13

Dear Parish Clerk,

I work for the Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group, and I am writing to let you know about a funded pond conservation project we are delivering on behalf of Natural England, which may be of interest to both your fellow Parish Councillors and also to your parishioners. You may have previously heard from us regarding the project, and we are delighted to inform you the project is continuing.

Funding is available for restoring old ponds and digging new ponds in certain parts of Essex which fall into strategic areas for great crested newts. **Parts of your parish qualifies for this funding as some of the land around the village is deemed to be especially suitable habitat for bolstering and connecting existing populations of this endangered species.** As such, we are seeking landowners who are prepared to dig or restore wildlife ponds on their land.

The project is part of Natural England's District Level Licencing scheme (DLL) - a strategic approach to licensing for great crested newts, which seeks to provide bigger, better and more joined up habitat for this orange-bellied amphibian at a landscape scale. The ponds restored and created under the scheme will not only provide high quality habitat for newts; they will benefit numerous other pond-associated species. Most of the 150 or so pond projects we've delivered under the scheme to date have been fully funded – you can view some of these ponds at our website: [www.fwageast.org.uk/ponds](http://www.fwageast.org.uk/ponds)

We have written a short article (attached) to explain the scheme to villagers. We would be very grateful if you could email this to your parishioners/ raise it at your next council meeting/ place it in your parish newsletter, so that we can reach other landowners who may have suitable land, for example, local farmers, smallholders, large rural garden owners, land-based businesses, and parish-owned land.

Please feel free to get in touch if you would like to discuss, require any further details or photos to go with the story.

Many thanks for your time and best wishes,

**The FWAG East Ponds Team**

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Agenda Item 14

Dear Councillor Louis

At the Town Council Meeting on Monday evening Members noted your comments regarding bus shelters. I know that at least one of the redundant shelters on Gershwin Boulevard has been earmarked for Maldon Road (where one had been removed in the past). Members hoped that another redundant shelter could be used on the Lodge Farm estate in due course. Could this be raised at the LHP meeting please?

Kind regards

Geraldine

Planning Officer

Good Afternoon Geraldine,

As both of the shelters on Gershwin Boulevard were installed by the developer under a s106 agreement, ECC is not able to relocate them.

I do recall letting the Cllr who initially raised this at the time know and they submitted a scheme request for a new one for Maldon Road.

I have also received requests for Spar Road and Hatfield Road.

If a new shelter was required on the Lodge Farm estate, a LHP scheme request would need to be submitted.

Best regards,,

*Derrick*

**Cllr Derrick Louis TD MBA CDir FloD**

*Member for Witham Southern Division (Hatfield Peverel, Witham South and Witham West)*

*Cabinet Deputy to the Leader of the Council*

*Lead Member for the Armed Forces Covenant*

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