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## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **14<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

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

Present: Councillors: J. Martin (Chairman)  
J.C. Coleman  
B. Fleet  
J. Robertson

Also in attendance: Cllr P. Barlow  
L. Headley  
N. Smith (Town Clerk)  
S. Puckey (Open Spaces Admin Assistant)

### **18. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor J.M. Coleman. Cllrs Adelaja, Ramage and Taylor were absent

**RESOLVED** That the apologies be received and approved.

### **19. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2024 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

### **20. INTERESTS**

Although Cllr Fleet did not declare a non-pecuniary interest at this item he did so at Item 10 as a member of the Tree Group.

### **21. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC**

No member of the press or public was present.

**22. CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk's Report on matters arising was received. The Clerk further informed Members that Braintree District Council had just reported a delay in the tender process to install the bridge across the River Brain near to Blackwater Lane.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and noted.

**23. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

The income and expenditure report for the period 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to 31<sup>st</sup> August 2024, was received.

**RESOLVED** That the income and expenditure report be received and noted.

**24. 2025 – 2026 DRAFT BUDGET**

The 2025-2026 draft budget was received and it was noted that the increase in fleet budget was due to the wear and tear of the aging vans.

**RESOLVED** That the 2025-2026 draft budget be received and approved.

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

The Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee be received and noted.

**26. SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP**

The Minutes from the Section 106 Steering Group Meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> September 2024 were received. Members discussed the merit of the use of "agreed" and "Recommended" by sub-committees.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes from the Section 106 Steering Group Meeting be received and information noted.

**27. WITHAM TREE GROUP**

CLlr Fleet declared an interest as a member of the Tree Group.

The Minutes from the Witham Tree Group held on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2024 were received.

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes from Witham Tree Group be received and information noted.

**28. ALLOTMENT POLICY**

Members were asked to receive and consider the allotment policy again as the suggested amendments in the management report, agenda item 15 at the Environment meeting held on 22<sup>nd</sup> July, were shown on the old 2022 policy agreement and not the 2023 policy.

Members again noted that hens were allowed to be kept on the allotments but not bee hives. The Open Spaces Administrative Assistant explained that while the Council was legally bound to allow hens on the allotments, this was not the case for bees. Unfortunately one of the allotment holders was severely allergic to bee stings and therefore a decision had been made not to include bees at the present time.

**RESOLVED** That the amended Allotment Site Management Policy be approved.

**29. JAMES COOKE WOOD MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Members were asked to receive and adopt the James Cooke Wood Management Plan for 2024-2034 which had been circulated separately.

**RESOLVED** To receive and adopt the James Cooke Wood Management Plan for 2024-2034.

**30. RIVER WALK MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Members were asked to receive and approve amendments made to the current River Walk Management Plan which had been circulated separately.

**RESOLVED** To receive and approve the amendments to the River Walk Management Plan.

**31. BUS SHELTERS**

Members were asked to consider a report regarding the future of Witham Town Council's bus shelters at Witham Station. Essex County Council had confirmed the station bus stops were not within the scope of their current upgrade scheme but that WTC could purchase new bus stops with outstanding Devolution Monies. Members discussed whether new bus stops were needed at the station and the possibility of seeking advertising revenue from any new bus stop installed. Members further discussed the ongoing issue of graffiti at the station bus stops and the maintenance costs of removing it in the future.

**RESOLVED** To purchase new bus shelters at Witham Rail stations with the use of Devolution Monies and subsequently pass the ownership of these assets to ECC for future maintenance.

**32. BEE SQUARED PROJECT**

Members were asked to consider the Bee Squared project. Members were happy with the idea in principle and felt it was a good way to engage children in the environment. Councillors decided to choose the cheaper option as they would volunteer their services to fill the envelopes as opposed to buying pre-filled ones.

**RESOLVED** To undertake the project subject to finding sponsorship from a local business.

### **33. POTENTIAL OPEN SPACES IMPROVEMENTS**

Members were asked to consider items to be included in the 2025 Braintree District Council Potential Open Spaces Improvement document. Members were advised that projects included on the document allowed 106 monies to be allocated to these improvements more easily.

**RESOLVED** To approve the new items suggested for inclusion on the 2025 Potential Open Spaces Improvement document.

### **34. ESSEX LOCAL NATURE RECOVERY STRATEGY CONSULTATION**

Members were asked to note the current on-line public consultation for the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Members were informed that the UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in Europe and that each county is writing their own nature recovery document.

**RESOLVED** To receive and note that there is currently a public consultation for the Essex Local Nature Recovery Strategy and that Witham Town Council supports the process.

### **35. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** That under the Public Bodies (Admission to Meetings) Act 1960, the press and public be excluded from the Meeting for the consideration of the remaining items of business on the grounds they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information falling with Schedule 12A (S3) of the Local Government Act 1972.

### **36. RIVER WALK PATHS**

A report and quotations were received regarding repairs to the River Walk near Moat Farm Chase and Saxon Drive where large tree routes are breaking up the surface to the footpath and cycleway. Members agreed that a cost-effective solution was important as this situation was likely to reoccur in other parts of the river walk in the future.

Members considered the options and agreed that, Southern Landscape and Construction who had provided the quotation to repair the paths with Agri-flex material would be the most cost-effective solution.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the contract to reconstruct the footpath and cycle way at Moat Farm Chase and Saxon Drive be awarded to Southern Landscape and Construction at a cost of £4,868.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.30 p.m.