



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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **20th January 2025** 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.	Martin	(Chairman)	T.	Hewitt
J.M.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)	R.	Ramage
E.	Adelaja		J.	Robertson
J.C.	Coleman		A.	Sloma
B.	Fleet		B.	Taylor

Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

HA/GK/15.01.2025

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held (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 comments.

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 5.

6. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT

To receive the income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st October 2024 attached at pages 6 to 7.

7. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 4th December 2024 attached at pages 8 to 10.

8. SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP

To receive the minutes from the Section 106 Steering Group Meeting held on 13th January 2025 attached at pages 11 to 13.

9. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive the Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in October and November 2024 attached at pages 14 to 16.

10. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

To review the Environment Policy, with amendments, attached at pages 17 to 19.

11. TREE MAINTENANCE

To receive a report and approve using the tree maintenance earmarked reserve for recommended works, attached at page 20.

12. VIREMENT

To approve the virement of funds from the River Walk Signage budget line to the Tree Planting budget line, attached at page 21.

13. POTENTIAL OPEN SPACES IMPROVEMENTS

To agree items to be included in the 2025 Braintree District Council Potential Open Spaces Improvements document attached at page 22.

14. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

TO RESOLVE 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.

15. RIVER WALK

To receive a report attached at pages 23 to 24.

16. JAMES COOKE WOOD WOODLAND MANAGEMENT

To receive a report attached at pages 25 to 26.

17. SECTION 106 FUNDING – BEE FRIENDLY PLANTING PROJECT

To receive a report attached at pages 27 to 28.



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerk's Report

To note:

- In December 2024 some bank erosion occurred on the River Walk near to Pattison Close where the River Brain bends round towards Gimsons/Helen Court. Some brambles were dislodged following storms during the month and exposed the river bank partially washing some of it away leaving an overhang. This area was immediately fenced off upon discovery and professional advice is currently being sought from various sources on the best action to take with regards to repairing the river bank.
- Plans are being progressed to look at replacing the bus shelters at the railway station which belong to Witham Town Council. Essex County Council are currently obtaining quotes for these and it is planned that the ownership of the shelters will then be transferred to Essex County Council with the excess Highways Devolution grant money used to fund these.

Advice:

To receive and note.

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Detailed Income & Expenditure by Budget Heading 31/10/2024

Agenda Item 6

Month No: 7

Cost Centre Report

	Actual Year To Date	Current Annual Bud	Variance Annual Total	Committed Expenditure	Funds Available	% Spent	Transfer to/from EMR
400 Environment							
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	2,360	1,650	(710)			143.0%	
Environment :- Income	2,360	1,650	(710)			143.0%	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	103,728	190,313	86,585		86,585	54.5%	
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenan	2,042	8,400	6,358		6,358	24.3%	
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	3,816	6,000	2,184		2,184	63.6%	
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	791	12,000	11,209		11,209	6.6%	
4432 New Tree Planting	0	3,000	3,000		3,000	0.0%	
4433 Tree Maintenance	2,090	5,000	2,910		2,910	41.8%	
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	0	600	600		600	0.0%	
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	1,157	1,200	43		43	96.4%	
4444 Fleet	3,673	6,000	2,327		2,327	61.2%	
4445 Open Spaces General	537	2,500	1,963		1,963	21.5%	
4446 James Cooke Wood	179	2,000	1,821		1,821	9.0%	
4447 River Walk	13,673	3,000	(10,673)		(10,673)	455.8%	
4448 Whetmead LNR	245	2,000	1,755		1,755	12.2%	
4452 River Walk Signage	0	2,000	2,000		2,000	0.0%	
4453 Litter Bins	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
4455 Witham in Bloom	9,996	14,000	4,004		4,004	71.4%	
4457 Waste Disposal	0	1,000	1,000		1,000	0.0%	
Environment :- Indirect Expenditure	141,926	260,013	118,087	0	118,087	54.6%	0
Net Income over Expenditure	(139,566)	(258,363)	(118,797)				
Grand Totals:- Income	2,360	1,650	(710)			143.0%	
Expenditure	141,926	260,013	118,087	0	118,087	54.6%	
Net Income over Expenditure	(139,566)	(258,363)	(118,797)				
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	(139,566)						

Income and Expenditure Exception Report – Environment Committee 20th January 2025

	Budget	% Spent	YTD	Reason
River Walk	£3,000	455%	£13,673	£11,811.25 spent on resurfacing of Pattison Close path has been funded by Section 106 contributions. £1,862 has actually been spent from River Walk budget line.

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MINUTES

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

Date: **4th December 2024**

Present:	Councillors	B P	Fleet Heath	(Chairman)
	Co-optees	S. J. P.	Black Goodman Shuttleworth	(Witham and Countryside Society) (Local Interests) (Local Wildlife Interests)
	Officers	H. S. S.	Andrews Dyer Puckey	(Deputy Town Clerk) (Operations Manager) (Open Spaces Administrative Assistant)

28. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr Hewitt, Cllr Barlow, Cllr Ramage, J Casement, and J Palombi

29. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

30. MINUTES

The minutes were **AGREED** and subsequently signed by the Chairman.

31. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no questions.

32. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received.

33. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. Members noted that they had received positive feedback on the path repairs at Pattison Close with regards to the quality of the work and the friendliness and patience of the contractors themselves.

The Deputy Town Clerk further clarified which trees had needed felling in the Closed Churchyard and confirmed that the revised management plan was on track to be completed in early 2025.

It was noted that there had been some bank erosion by Pattison Close where the River Brain bends. Following Storm Bert, some brambles had become dislodged which exposed the river bank and had partially washed some of it away, leaving a dangerous overhang. Members were informed that the area had been fenced off from the public and that professional advice was being sought from Darren Tansley at Essex Wildlife Trust and Green-Tech, the company who had provided cement bags for the erosion at Whetmead earlier in the year.

Members were advised that there was no update on commencement of the A12 widening scheme at present.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

34. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided a verbal update.

On the River Walk, the team are up to date with their schedule apart from the cutting of some hedgerows, which had stalled due to the soft ground. The completion of cutting the meadow areas was also on hold awaiting repairs on the Sherpa mower. The team also hoped to fit in another grass cut on the River Walk before Christmas, subject to the weather. The Team had installed two new commemorative benches, one near Lidl facing down the path and one close to the picnic benches on Guithavon Road and relocated two bins. The Operations Manager further advised that a fence had to be installed by the river close to Pattison Close, to protect the river bank and residents, where erosion which had left a half meter overhang.

At James Cooke Wood, work is ongoing with brash being chipped and deposited on to the paths. The Operations Manager further clarified that the hedge by the roadside had been cut by local contractors on our behalf.

At Whetmead, there had been some vandalism to three of the etching posts, one of which had to be replaced and reset.

The Closed Churchyard is up to date.

Around the town, the Christmas tree had been installed (twice due to Storm Bert), winter bedding plants had been put in the stone planters around the town centre by the Operations Team and at the station, and empty allotment plots had been cleared ready for new tenants.

The Operations Team had also been busy with Remembrance Parade and the Christmas Market.

Members further discussed the ongoing issues with vandalism and how difficult it is to address. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that the Street Warden and Special Constables patrol the town regularly and that CCTV is installed in some areas.

The Deputy Town Clerk agreed to find out why the Environment Agency had been on the River Walk close to Luard Way this week.¹

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

35. BLACKWATER RESTORATION PLAN

The presentation slides were shared with the meeting and Cllr Fleet provided a verbal summary of the workshop held on 13th November which looked at the key problems on the River Blackwater and how the river’s health might be restored.

The key issues which the plan is looking to address include disconnection from flood plains, resulting in sediment deposits and subsequently vegetation growth in the river, weirs, which prevent fish swimming up steam and allow material to build up, and the river losing its original sinuosity, resulting in a faster flow.

The next workshop is due to be held in March, during which a plan will be presented for consultation. Members noted that while the River Blackwater only touches Witham at Whetmead, some lessons might be learnt which could be valuable for the River Brain.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

36. SECTION 106 FUNDING AND OPEN SPACES

The Deputy Town Clerk summarised the projects completed to date and outlined the projects currently being considered. Concern was raised about the potential for vandalism for any public art and that the design and location would need to be carefully considered.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report.

37. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee would be held on Wednesday 5th March 2025 at 2pm.

Meeting concluded at 2.51pm.

SP/09.12.24

Signed by Chairman.....

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¹ Environment Agency confirmed that they were carrying out in-channel annual maintenance.

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 13TH JANUARY 2025 AT 2PM IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER.

Members present: - Councillors P Barlow, J.C. Coleman (in the chair), B Fleet, P Heath, and R Playle.

Staff:- H Andrews, (Deputy Town Clerk)

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs L Barlow, B Taylor and L Headley.

12. INTERESTS

There were no interests declared.

13. MINUTES

The minutes of the Section 106 Steering Group meeting held on 10th September 2024 were agreed and subsequently signed by the Vice Chairman.

Cllr P Barlow arrived at the meeting.

14.

CLERK'S REPORT

The Deputy Town Clerk provided an update on Section 106 matters. It was noted that the River Walk bridges inspection has recently been carried out and the subsequent report was awaited. Once received, resurfacing of the bridges and further enhancements will be considered using Section 106 funds available. It was also suggested that bridge railings could be extended to assist pedestrians using the bridges, particularly the bridge near Helen Court, due to the gradient.

It was noted that the BDC bridge crossing project currently under tender was the proposed crossing over the River Brain in Blackwater Lane, from Market Lane and near to the Whetmead Nature Reserve end of the road.

The Clerk's report was received and noted.

15. PUBLIC ART

(a) Community murals

An update of the Network Rail bridge mural project was given advising of the difficulties that have so far be encountered regarding costs and feasibility of the project. Members were advised that painting was not permitted directly onto the brickwork of the bridges and panels for painting would need to be installed instead. Due to the change in aesthetics it was suggested that the mural should just be installed onto the bridge/tunnel nearest to Asda. There would also be difficulty with painting the panels off site but to paint them at the bridge location would incur more costs from Network Rail which were currently being established.

Members discussed pursuing creating art work at the skatepark which would be in keeping with graffiti murals. It was noted that this would incur less costs as there was smaller surface areas available to paint, so there would be more S106 funds

left for other public art projects. Members were advised that S106 contributions could also be used for art workshops as part of the public art criteria.

It was **AGREED** that the skate park mural project should be progressed due to the costs involved with Network Rail, although if further beneficial information is obtained regarding being able to pursue the railway bridge proposal, this could be still be pursued.

(b) Wooden sculptures

Members discussed installing wooden sculptures and that there would be additional funds available for them if the small mural project is carried out. It was suggested that potentially a wooden sculpture could be added to the bee-friendly planting area, various sculptures could be installed in different locations potentially creating a trail for residents to follow, and substantial sculptures could be positioned at popular entries points to the River Walk.

The potential to use trees already available was highlighted and the Deputy Town Clerk advised that this would be considered as there were some trees on the River Walk due to be felled from a recent survey which would be assessed for suitability.

It was **AGREED** that the wooden sculptures project should be progressed and available trees/wood should be utilised if possible.

Cllr B Fleet left the meeting at 2.30pm.

(c) Maltings Lane public art ideas

Members discussed the initial ideas proposed for Maltings Lane and suggested that all could be considered – a creative playground near the community centre and improvements to the MUGA area with the possibility of the installation of a graffiti art wall. Discussions took place regarding the possibility of attaching artwork to the new community centre or boundary areas.

Other ideas were to provide a creative outside area next to the community centre which could also be used to hire out, for example for parties; adding an amphitheatre near to the football pitch to create seating, adding creative style boards to the MUGA area which could incorporate a climbing wall and cut-out shaped artwork which could provide shadow images.

It was noted that public consultation should be undertaken this year to look at the various ideas as the expiry date for the S106 funds is March 2026. Consultation could take place in the Summer edition of the Voice, details shared in the Information Centre and a questionnaire/leaflet could be produced with graphic ideas to gain public opinion and also sharing these with young people to obtain their views.

It was **AGREED** to explore the ideas put forward for Maltings Lane public art and develop these further to provide proposals suitable for public consultation.

16. SECTION 106 CONTRIBUTIONS FOR WITHAM AND FUTURE PROJECTS

The updated Section 106 contributions document was received and it was noted that some small adjustments had been made where funds had already been utilised.

The River Walk cycleway connections item was queried and it was noted that Section 106 funds of £200k had been secured from the Bellway Phase 4 development.

Members discussed what was planned for these proposed works and spoke of poor cycle connections from Cut Throat Lane to the River Walk. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that she would refer to Braintree District Council for further clarification.

It was also noted that £61k was available from the Gimsons development for River Walk improvements to be used by June 2028 for Members to consider. Further Section 106 funds from Gimsons of £9,564 to be used to improve the footpath and cycleway leading to Kings Chase through the Town Park was also highlighted. There were concerns regarding what plans had been made as cycling by adults is not currently permitted in the Town Park and the funds available would not be sufficient to make any significant improvements. It was suggested that the gap in the railings between the Gimsons development and the Town Park could be surfaced as it is currently muddy and not suitable for pushchairs. The Deputy Town Clerk advised that she would make some enquiries with Braintree District Council regarding this.

17. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the meetings usually take place every three months but that Officers would propose the next meeting when needed to further progress the public art projects.

Meeting closed at 15.01pm

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Councillor P. Barlow
Chairman

HA/13.01.2025

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Tree Group Minutes – 8th October 2024

Agenda Item 9

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

1 Apologies - Ken Davies

2 Minutes of the 27th August – accepted

3 Matters arising

- a). Stanley had reported seeing a ECC official surveying trees, and Barry has now met someone too
- b) Amanda Wilkin of BDC has nominated us for a BDC Volunteer Award.

4. Planning 2024 /25

- a). Our recommendations have been approved by Andrew Digby of BDC but he asked for a map showing the tree locations, which has been provided. The position of the football pitches at the Rickstones site does not appear to be a problem. We could consider making a partial order from the nursery for the two ends of the cycle path site (pending funding for the top end)
- b). It has been confirmed that BDC own the playgrounds at Rosebay Close and Alan Road, so Eric and Richard will survey the former, for the WTC budget
- c). Barry has advised the Deputy Town Clerk of the committee's suggestions for possible sites on the River Walk and will provide further clarification
- d) We are also considering another six off Spa Road near the ' lozenges ' planting, replacing the dead tree in Forest Road, one tree adjacent to Homefield Rd (Allan can advise the neighbouring resident), up to ten by Motts Lane
- e) Memorial trees - two have been requested by Ms G Bray, who has ordered previously; Barry will liaise with her
- f) Whips - Eric will order 200 from TCV, probably for the cycle path area and the site off Cut Throat Lane.

5. Planning rules

- a). Allan 's recommendations have apparently been actively discussed at BDC, which is encouraging ;
- b) The Nature Recovery Plan - this is an important document with a consultation period running up to the 25th October, and Richard will comment on our behalf. It was noted that only 7% of Essex is woodland.

6. Website

- a). Our consultants Red Feather Solutions were awaiting information from TCV but the transfer took place last week ; the domain name stays the same ; possible new features discussed ;
- b). We could detail local veteran trees and Mark and Stanley will survey suitable trees.

7. Memorial Park signage - the potential interpretation board and end sign designs discussed, and Barry will go back to Andrew Digby with our recommendations including asking if the manufacturer can install them.

8 Finance - Stanley confirmed the latest position.

9. Central information store - Allan has drafted his contribution but will tweak it.

10. Bulb planting - Eric has purchased two sacks of daffodils which will be planted this week on the site in Chipping Hill.

11 Mulch for trees - agreed to buy some from a local supplier, and any also received from Barry 's tree surgeon will be a bonus.

12. AOB - it was recommended that we consider planting judas trees for the attractive blossom.

13. Next meeting - 12th November, 7. 30 at Eric's.

Tree Group Minutes – 12th November 2024

Present: Richard Hawkes, Eric Teverson, Graham Wingrove, Allan Waight, Stanley Brailey, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Mark Austin.

2 Minutes of 8th October accepted.

3 Matters arising - none.

4 Planting 2024/25

a) Rickstones Recreation Ground - BDC Operations Manager consulting teams that use the pitches; Richard will chase if necessary; refurbishment of the playground should not affect us; we think the trees are reserved at the nursery

b) Cyclepath - the trees are reserved and Eric will now order; Barry to request volunteer help from Aegon; possible planting dates, 28th November, 5th & 12th December

c) Rosebay Close - 8 Norway maples planned, Barry to advise Andrew Digby of BDC

d) Town Council trees - we are planning for the Rosebay trees [see above], 10 for the end of the cyclepath [downy birch, hornbeam, lime, red acer, variegated tulip tree], 2 at Spa Road [lime & downy birch]; 1 persian ironwood at Homefield Road [Allan has written to the neighbouring resident & Eastlight Housing to advise]; replacement acer 'Crimson Sentry' for Forest Road; Barry to advise Hayley at Town Hall that the total cost is £3003

e) Tree Group - we will fund the replacement for The Avenue [wych elm]; 5 for Spa Road - lime, downy birch, 2 hornbeam, scots pine, so total of 6

f) Memorial trees - paulownia [foxglove tree] & sweet chestnut

g) Whips - 200 ordered, to be delivered 28th January; Barry to advise owners of donating plants of timescale.

5 Witham Town Football Club - they have received a grant to 'green' their site and would like to include trees, and asked us to advise. Allan has been in contact and offered a site visit, and indicated the cost of trees that we planted nearby at Spa Road. Waiting to hear from them.

6 Memorial Park - awaiting response from BDC re signage.

7 Website - our IT firm Red Feather are dealing with the issues raised by us, response due shortly; there will be a helpline available.

8 Finance -- Stanley confirmed the current balance which includes the fee for the two memorial trees; Eric is owed for the bulbs and mulch he purchased, circa £200.

9 Veteran trees - Stanley & Mark are continuing to identify these trees of more than 3 m girth within Witham, and found around 24 so far including sequoia, atlas cedar, turkey oak, deodar cedar & cedar of Lebanon.

Details will be submitted to the Woodland Trust.

An article will be done for our website in due course.

10 Central information store - still pending.

11 Volunteers - it was suggested that we could have a whip planting day at a weekend.

12 Any other business - none.

13 Next meeting - 7th Jan at Eric's , 7.30 pm.

POST MEETING - DATE SWITCHED TO 14TH JANUARY

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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 carbon reducing 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. Further improvements are planned for this site.
- 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 planting trials 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 of 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 ~~planting schemes~~ 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.
- ~~Liaising with youth/schools and promoting sustainable period products for schools.~~

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

Last reviewed: 22nd January 2024

Next Review: 20th January 2025

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Officer Report: River Walk Tree Maintenance

A full tree risk survey of the River Walk has recently been completed. The most comprehensive report that has ever been produced has now been received and is currently being reviewed. The survey assessed 617 trees and 46 groups of trees amounting to a total of 1,343 trees. The survey confirmed that 97% of the trees are in either good or fair physiological condition which was noted to be an excellent position for the tree population.

Of the trees assessed –

- 1 tree requires a further detailed assessment in the form of an Internal Decay Assessment, which is currently being arranged.
- 1 tree requires felling within 1 month, which is currently being arranged.
- 7 trees require some form of tree surgery within 3 months
- 19 trees require some form of tree surgery within 6 months
- 7 trees require some form of tree surgery within 1 year
- 20 trees requires ivy to be severed and stripped within 2 years before the next survey

Quotes will be obtained and reviewed to carry out the above recommendations from the survey report.

The budget for tree maintenance is £5,000 with a further £7,267.50 in the earmarked reserves. The expenditure incurred so far during 2024/25 on tree works and surveys means that funds, yet to be determined, will be required from the earmarked reserves.

Impact Assessment

The Town Council has a statutory duty to consider the effects of its decisions on biodiversity, and crime and disorder in the area. As the Council has also formed a Climate Change Working Group, this should also be considered –

- (a) Biodiversity – Some impact – short-term disturbance and loss of species but some monoliths will be left which will provide habitats for various species and creating gaps in the canopy will allow light to reach the floor promoting growth of vegetation increasing plant biodiversity
- (b) Crime and disorder – No impact.
- (c) Climate – Possible impact with felling trees but would plan to plant replacements.

Advice:

- To approve the use of tree maintenance earmarked reserves to fund required tree works.

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ITEM NO: 12

Officer Report: Virement

The Tree Planting budget line is the annual payment made towards tree planting carried out by Witham Tree Group which for 2024/2025 is £3,000. The payment requested this year is £3,036, with rounding up of trees and accessories purchased by the group, and therefore exceeds the budget by £36.

For good order, it is suggested that a virement is made from the River Walk Signage budget line of £36 to the Tree Planting budget line as this is not expected to be fully utilised.

Impact Assessment

The Town Council has a statutory duty to consider the effects of its decisions on biodiversity, and crime and disorder in the area. As the Council has also formed a Climate Change Working Group, this should also be considered –

- (a) Biodiversity – No impact.
- (b) Crime and disorder – No impact.
- (c) Climate – No impact.

Advice:

- To approve the virements of £36 from the River Walk Signage budget line to the Tree Planting budget line.

HA/09.01.2025

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Agenda Item 13

BDC Ward	Location	Improvements Required to existing facilities	Improvements Required to new facilities	Record	Source	Ownership	Map Ref	Comments
Witham Central	River Walk (Chipping Hill Bridge to Saul's Bridge)	Repairs to cycleway. Bridges on River Walk will need replacing. Habitat creation, path/cycleway improvements and signage, more buoyancy aids, litter bins, dog waste bins, seating and surfacing	Car and cycle parking	None given	OSAP Version 1	BDC owned land leased to Witham Town Council (Deeds not seen)	None	Amend to Witham Town Council ownership
	Witham Town Park	Conversion of public toilets into a drinks kiosk with separate public toilet				Braintree District Council		Suggested entry for 2025
	Collingwood Rd, near Labour Hall	Replacement of bench, bin and installation of planter				ECC owned land		Suggested entry for 2025
	All Saints Church - closed churchyard	Installation of interpretation board				Parochial Church Council - maintained by Witham Town Council		Suggested entry for 2025 *
	Witham Memorial Gardens, Newland Street	Improvement or replacement of war memorial				Braintree District Council		Suggested entry for 2025 *
Witham North	Forest Road Pond	Improvements to pond, signage, planting, seating, bins/dog waste bins and paths	nil	None given	OSAP Version 1	Greenfields Community Housing	None	Change ownership to Eastlight Community Housing
Witham South	Howbridge Road	Replacement of bench				ECC owned land		Suggested entry for 2025
	Spinks Lane, Bridge Street junction	Replacement of bench, bin and installation of planter				ECC owned land		Suggested entry for 2025
Witham West								

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