



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | Essex | CM8 2FE

OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

AGENDA

TUESDAY 24TH MAY 2022, 2:00PM

MEMBERS:	Councillors	S. Ager K Atwill J. Goodman S. Hicks C. Lager T. Pleasance	OFFICERS:	H. Andrews S. Dyer
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CO-OPTEES:	S. Black	-	(Witham & Countryside Society)
	S. Brailey	-	(Witham Tree Group)
	J. Casement	-	(Witham Wombles)
	A. Chick	-	(Witham Rotary Club)
	B. Fleet	-	(Tree Warden)
	N. Heenan	-	(Environment Agency)
	J. Palombi	-	(CPRE)
	P. Shuttleworth	-	(Local Wildlife Interests)

- 1) APOLOGIES**
To receive apologies for absence
- 2) APPOINTMENT OF CHAIRMAN**
To appoint a Chairman of the Sub-Committee.
- 3) APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHAIRMAN**
To appoint a Vice-Chairman of the Sub-Committee.
- 4) TERMS OF REFERENCE**
To receive and agree the revised terms of reference for the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee ([attached](#))
- 5) MINUTES**
To receive the minutes of the meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee held on Tuesday 1st February 2022 ([attached](#))
- 6) CLERK'S REPORT**
To receive the Clerk's Report ([attached](#))

7) OPERATIONS MANAGER'S REPORT

To receive the Operations Manager's verbal report on recent open spaces activities and to answer any questions put by member.

8) POND CONSERVATION

To receive information from FWAG East Consultancy Ltd regarding pond conservation projects, following a referral from the Environment Committee meeting of 26th April 2022 (Minute No. 55) ([attached](#))

9) ANY OTHER BUSINESS

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

10) DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To note that the next meeting of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee will be held on Tuesday 6th September 2022



Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee

Terms of Reference

1. The Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee (OSMSC) hereafter referred to as 'The Committee' exists to operate as a Sub-Committee within the remit of its assigned business and will report to the Environment Committee.
2. The Group will elect a Chairman and Vice Chairman from among its members.
3. An officer of the Council will be present at the meeting to record minutes and action decisions.
4. All letters and notices will be produced under the authority of Witham Town Council and on Witham Town Council headed notepaper.

Interests

5. Members will be required to declare any pecuniary and non-pecuniary interests as with all meetings of the Council.

Mission Statement

6. The Committee exists to oversee matters relating to the day-to-day management of all Witham Town Council open spaces.

This will include –

- River Walk
- James Cooke Wood
- Whetmead Nature Reserve
- All Saints Closed Churchyard

Duties will include –

- Oversight of all key operations of open spaces under the control of the Town Council, including proposing new ideas and initiatives
- Creation and review of management plans
- Considering wider projects and producing reports for consideration and endorsement by the Environment Committee
- Consideration of representations received from the public in relation to Witham Town Council managed open spaces.

Frequency of Meetings

7. The Committee will meet four times a year for efficient transaction of its duties.
8. If a total period of six consecutive months should pass without a meeting, then the Committee will be referred to Policy and Resources Committee for review of dissolution.

Membership

9. The Committee will consist of 6 Members of Witham Town Council, including the Chairman of the Environment Committee.
10. In addition to this core membership, the Committee will reserve the right to appoint additional interested co-optees.
11. The Chairman of the Environment Committee cannot be the Chairman of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee.

Financing

12. The Committee may make financial recommendations to the Environment Committee but has no power under statutory limitation to make financial decisions.



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 witham.gov.uk

MINUTES

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

Date: **Tuesday 1st 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 2nd 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 31st 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

HA/08.02.2022

Signed by Chairman

Officer Report: Clerk's Report**Issue:**

- National Highways are continuing to liaise with Witham Town Council during their consultation for the A12 widening scheme and the implications this will have on Whetmead Nature Reserve. A Development Consultation Order is due to be submitted to the Planning Inspector this summer. Proposals for replacement land are currently being considered and plans are being produced to minimise the impact on the site with the creation of new public open space and landscaping schemes providing maximum biodiversity and new habitats. Various surveys continue to be carried out on behalf of National Highways during this process to classify habitats and notable species on the site.
- In February 2022, Witham Town Council's Operations Manager oversaw work carried out by Bellway's Arboricultural team on the hedge in River View as part of the Gimsons development. The hedge is on the border of the River Walk not on WTC land, however, due to the nature of the development, Bellways have liaised with the Council on work necessary to the hedge to ensure the required footpath width can be achieved. Additional planting has been carried out to enhance and extend the hedge and to increase biodiversity in the area.
- Witham Town Council's commemorative bench scheme is continuing to be popular which has resulted in four benches being installed in the past twelve months on our open spaces. A further two benches are currently on order for the River Walk. The scheme generally looks to replace old benches already installed that may be weathered and would benefit from replacement, although new locations can also potentially be considered.
- Following the planting of a jubilee tree in the Town Park by Braintree District Council, Witham Town Council are planning to plant a tree on the River Walk to commemorate the jubilee year during National Tree Planting week in November 2022.
- The planting of wildflower seeds in the Closed Churchyard last October has not been successful. A further replanting scheme will therefore be considered for the autumn.

Advice:

To receive and note

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

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 you 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



Environment Committee minutes -

55. POND CONSERVATION

Information was received from the Farming and Wildlife Advisory Group, regarding pond conservation projects.

Members agreed that this matter should be referred to the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee and noted that publicity was requested.

RESOLVED That the matter be referred to the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED That details of the scheme be shared through the Voice and Social Media.