



Town Hall | 61 Newland Street | Witham | CM8 2FE  
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## MINUTES

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **20<sup>th</sup> January 2025**

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

Present: Councillors

J.	Martin	(Chairman)
J.M.	Coleman	(Vice Chairman)
J.C.	Coleman	
B.	Fleet	
R.	Ramage	
J.	Robertson	

Also in attendance: Cllrs

P.	Barlow	
L.	Headley	
H.	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
G.	Kennedy	(Committee Clerk)

### **37. APOLOGIES**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors E. Adelaja and B. Taylor.

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

### **38. MINUTES**

**RESOLVED** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 14<sup>th</sup> October 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

### **39. INTERESTS**

Councillor Fleet declared a non-pecuniary interest in Minute 45 – Witham Tree Group, as he is a member of that organisation.

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

There was no member of the press or public present.

**41. CLERK'S REPORT**

The Clerk's Report on matters arising was received.

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

**42. COMMITTEE INCOME AND EXPENDITURE REPORT**

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

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the River Walk appeared to be over-budget but this related to the resurfacing of the footpath by Pattison Close which was funded through Section 106.

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

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

The Minutes from the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024 were received.

Councillor Fleet, as Chairman of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee, explained that he had been on an interesting workshop about the River Blackwater where common problems were discussed including the loss of the sinuous nature of the river and separation from the flood plain which created problems with flooding. There would be a future workshop reporting on how to address these issues.

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

**44. SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP**

The Minutes from the Section 106 Steering Group Meeting held on 13<sup>th</sup> January 2025 were received.

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

**45. WITHAM TREE GROUP**

Councillor Fleet had declared an interest.

The Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in October and November 2024 were received.

Councillor Fleet said that they were busy planting on average ten trees a week at present including on the Rickstones recreation ground to provide shade around the play area. In answer to a question he explained that they have a licence to extract water from the river. He said that most trees they plant survive because they are watered.

**RESOLVED** That the minutes of the Tree Group meetings be received and noted.

**46. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY**

The Environmental Policy, with amendments, was received.

**RESOLVED** That the updated Environmental Policy be received and approved.

**47. TREE MAINTENANCE**

A report was received and Members asked to approve using the tree maintenance earmarked reserve for the recommended works following a recent tree survey.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that most of the trees on the River Walk are in good condition but a quotation for the work will be required.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and approval given for the tree maintenance earmarked reserve to be used for the recommended works.

**48. VIREMENT**

Members were asked to approve the virement of funds from the River Walk Signage budget line to the Tree Planting budget line.

**RESOLVED** That approval be given to vire funds from the River Walk Signage budget to the Tree Planting budget line.

**49. POTENTIAL OPEN SPACES IMPROVEMENTS**

Members were asked to agree items to be included in the 2025 Braintree District Council Potential Open Spaces Improvements document.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that additional items had been included in the list since Members had last reviewed in October. She detailed the additions including the installation of an interpretation board in the Closed Churchyard and improvements at the war memorial. She said that further suggestions had now come forward with playground equipment at the Maltings Lane Community Centre and stabilising the river bank. Members spoke of the need to plan ahead with regard to Section 106 funding. It was suggested that further conversations should take place with Braintree District Council to refresh the proposals and to consider renewal of play equipment at Bramble Road and to extend the allotment site in Cut Throat Lane.

**RESOLVED** That the 2025 Braintree District Council Potential Open Spaces Improvements document be received and noted.

**50. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC**

**RESOLVED** That under the Public Bodies (Admissions to Meetings) Act 1960 S.1(2) and in accordance with Standing Order 3(d), the press and public should be excluded from the remainder of the meeting due to the confidential nature of the business to be transacted.

**51. RIVER WALK**

A report was received.

Members discussed the ongoing issue with water encroaching footpaths at the north of the River Walk and how this could be resolved. Members agreed to proceed with the consultancy design suggested by Icen Consulting.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and Icen Consulting quotation of £2,575 be accepted to carry out consultancy designs for swales, re-grading levels and to include a topographical survey and to use the River Walk path and cycleway earmarked reserve for the survey.

## **52. JAMES COOKE WOOD WOODLAND MANAGEMENT**

A report was received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that to improve the health of the woodland a second phase of thinning was required. Half the work had been achieved in February 2024 and quotations had been sought to carry out the remainder of the work. Falcon Tree Specialists had quoted £5,000 to undertake the work, extract the felled timber and leave some brash for habitat. In addition they had quoted £980 to use a more efficient chipper which was a comparable price to carry out the work in-house.

Members agreed that Falcon Tree Specialists quotation should be accepted.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and Falcon Tree Specialists quotation of £5,980 to undertake the remaining work to thin out the trees in James Cooke Wood and chip leftover brash to use on walkways, be accepted, and to use the James Cooke Wood Improvement Plan earmarked reserve.

## **53. SECTION 106 FUNDING – BEE FRIENDLY PLANTING PROJECT**

A report was received regarding additional bee hotels on the River Walk and further areas of bee friendly planting.

Members agreed that Section 106 funding should be used for this project with Witham Operations Team carrying out the installations.

The Deputy Town Clerk also explained that the bee-squared project was being pursued.

**RESOLVED** That the report be received and the recommendation to approve the use of Section 106 funding of £1,589.31 for the purchase bee hotels, bee friendly plants and interpretation boards be agreed.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.25 p.m.

Councillor J. Martin  
Chairman

HA/GK/22.1.2025