



Witham

town council

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

AGENDA

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **Monday, 9th January 2023** 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

K.	Atwill	(Chairman)
J.	Goodman	(Vice Chairman)
J.	Bayford	
P.	Heath	
S.	Hicks	
A.	Kilmartin	
C.	Lager	
M.	Lager	
S.	Rajeev	
M.	Weeks	

1. APOLOGIES

To receive and approve apologies for absence.

2. MINUTES

To receive the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 10th October 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.

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 AND EXPENDITURE & BUDGET REPORT

To receive the income & expenditure and budget report for the period 1st April to 31st October 2022 attached at pages 5 to 6.

7. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

To receive the Minutes of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held 6th December 2022 attached at pages 7 to 9.

8. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

To receive the Minutes of the Climate Change Working Group Meeting held 31st October 2022 attached at pages 10 to 11.

9. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

To review and agree the Environmental Policy following a recommendation from the Climate Change Working Group attached at pages 12 to 14.

10. SNOW CLEARANCE POLICY

To receive and review the Snow Clearance Policy attached at page 15 .

11. ESSEX HIGHWAYS SALT BAG SCHEME

- (a) To consider joining the Essex Highways Salt Bag Partnership scheme attached at page 16.
- (b) To discuss requesting Essex County Council for salt bins in Witham attached at page 17.

12. WITHAM TREE GROUP

To receive the Minutes from the Tree Group Meetings held October, November and December 2022 at pages 18 to 22.

13. RIVER WALK SIGNAGE

To consider a written representation regarding request for signage on the River Walk attached at pages 23 to 25.



Nikki Smith
Town Clerk

HA/NS/04.01.2023



ITEM NO: 5

Officer Report: Clerks Report

Issue:

- A meeting with Cllr Lee Scott is due to take place soon to discuss a bi-lateral Highways Devolution Scheme agreement to continue with some tasks following the scheme's closure this financial year.
- Quotes are currently being obtained to carry out required works on the River Walk between Ebenezer Close and Bramble Road to address the ongoing surface water issues.
- A tree survey has been carried out on major trees of the River Walk. A review is now currently taking place to establish priority works to be carried out this financial year.
- Witham Tree Group have confirmed that they are using their £2k budget from Witham Town Council this year to purchase 16 trees in Cornel Close/Bryony Close as suggested by a resident who contacted the Town Council.
- Town Centre Public Realm improvement project is continuing to go through the tender process with a tender deadline date of 10th January 2023. The current anticipated construction start date is July 2023.
- Town Park project Phase 2 is in process. Revised designs have been overseen by the Town Centre Regeneration Group and the proposed work will be going to tender in the next few months.

Advice:

To receive and note.

**Witham Town Council Current Year
Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 8)**

Item 6

	<u>2021/2022</u>		<u>2022/2023</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
400 Environment									
1401 Dog & Bench Sponsorship Scheme	1,650	1,810	1,650	4,650	4,650	0	0	0	0
Total Income	1,650	1,810	1,650	4,650	4,650	0	0	0	0
4400 Operations PAYE/LGPS	115,000	129,058	126,714	80,591	148,156	0	0	0	0
4420 Equipment Supplies & Maintenance	4,000	1,758	4,000	4,035	8,000	0	0	0	0
4425 Lighting Maintenance & Utility	2,500	3,377	4,000	1,144	4,000	0	0	0	0
4431 Toilet Block - Town Park	7,650	7,019	7,650	643	8,200	0	0	0	0
4432 New Tree Planting	2,000	2,000	2,000	0	2,000	0	0	0	0
4433 Tree Maintenance	9,000	4,500	9,000	980	9,000	0	0	0	0
4436 Dog Bin Maintenance	2,000	95	600	25	600	0	0	0	0
4437 Dog & Bench Schemes	1,200	1,628	1,200	4,400	4,400	0	0	0	0
4444 Fleet	4,000	5,188	4,000	3,633	5,449	0	0	0	0
4445 Open Spaces General	1,500	4,291	1,500	1,467	2,200	0	0	0	0
4446 James Cooke Wood	2,000	624	2,000	269	1,000	0	0	0	0
4447 River Walk	3,000	3,372	3,000	660	3,000	0	0	0	0
4448 Whetmead LNR	2,000	27	2,000	172	600	0	0	0	0
4451 NIL	2,000	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4452 River Walk Signage	3,000	3,780	3,000	0	500	0	0	0	0
4453 Litter Bins	1,500	0	8,000	0	1,000	0	0	0	0
4454 NIL	1,000	6,588	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
4455 Witham in Bloom	12,200	11,819	12,200	8,708	13,061	0	0	0	0
4457 Waste Disposal	0	0	1,000	1,344	2,016	0	0	0	0
Overhead Expenditure	175,550	185,123	191,864	108,071	213,182	0	0	0	0

Continued on next page

**Witham Town Council Current Year
Annual Budget - By Centre (Actual YTD Month 8)**

	<u>2021/2022</u>		<u>2022/2023</u>				Agreed	EMR	Carried Forward
	Budget	Actual	Total	Actual YTD	Projected	Committed			
400 Net Income over Expenditure	-173,900	-183,313	-190,214	-103,421	-208,532	0	0	0	0
7000 plus Transfer from EMR	0	6,235	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(173,900)</u>	<u>(177,078)</u>	<u>(190,214)</u>	<u>(103,421)</u>	<u>(208,532)</u>		<u>0</u>		
Total Budget Income	1,650	1,810	1,650	4,650	4,650	0	0	0	0
Expenditure	175,550	185,123	191,864	108,071	213,182	0	0	0	0
Net Income over Expenditure	<u>-173,900</u>	<u>-183,313</u>	<u>-190,214</u>	<u>-103,421</u>	<u>-208,532</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>
plus Transfer from EMR	0	6,235	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Movement to/(from) Gen Reserve	<u>(173,900)</u>	<u>(177,078)</u>	<u>(190,214)</u>	<u>(103,421)</u>	<u>(208,532)</u>		<u>0</u>		

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MINUTES

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

Date: **6th December 2022**

Present: Councillors

S	Hicks	(Chairman)
K.	Atwill	
J	Goodman	
C.	Lager	
T	Pleasance	
S	Black	(Witham and Countryside Society)
S.	Brailey	(Witham Tree Group)
B.	Fleet	(Tree Warden)
J	Palombi	(CPRE)
H	Andrews	(Deputy Town Clerk)
S	Dyer	(Operations Manager)
S	Smith	(P.A to the Council)

21. APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Cllr S. Ager, J Casement and P Shuttleworth.

22. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

23. MINUTES

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

24. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There was no public present.

25. CONSIDERATION OF WRITTEN REPRESENTATIONS

No written representations were received.

26. CLERK'S REPORT

The Clerk's report was received by Members. It was noted that the ongoing water issues at Ebenezer Close was being reviewed and quotes for recommended drainage work being obtained. A tree survey had also recently been completed on the River Walk, and priority work recommended was being reviewed.

Members were informed that a London Plane tree had been planted during National Tree Planting Week, for the Queen's Jubilee as part of the Queen's Green Canopy. It was noted that consultation continues with National Highways with regards to the A12 widening project and the implications for Whetmead Nature Reserve with a further meeting proposed early in the New Year.

Members **AGREED** to receive the report

27. OPERATION MANAGER'S REPORT

The Operations Manager provided an update and confirmed that a new member of staff had joined the Operations Team who was working well and had already passed their brushcutter training qualification. On the River Walk, hedge cutting had been completed for the season, and leaves were continuing to be cleared from paths. It was noted that the water issues near Ebenezer Close was continuing but temporary measures were in place until a permanent solution was finalised.

It was noted that the team were continuing with thinning the tree canopy at James Cooke Wood and improvements were due to be made by replacing the car park fence with bollards.

At the Closed Churchyard the team have carried out general maintenance, including weeding the wildflower trial and adding more Yellow Rattle seeds. Wildflower plugs are due to be planted next year to continue the trial.

The team regularly visited the allotments and reported no issues.

Members thanked the Operations Manager for his report and extended their thanks to the whole team for the hard work that they do. Members informed the Operations Manager that one of the planters had been damaged at the railway station.

28. RIVER WALK FOOTPATHS

The Clerk informed Members that following a walk of the River Walk in August, a report had been received by Full Town Council on 21st November 2022 regarding resurfacing and restructuring the footpaths and cycleways on the River Walk. Priority tasks had now been agreed and it was noted that this was a long-term project over several years.

Members **AGREED** to receive the information.

29. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members were updated on the Essex Wildlife Trust rewilding project where some local parishes had been receiving advice on wildflower planting from advisers at the Trust.

Members discussed the potential benefits rewilding could have on the de-trunked A12 once the widening project had been completed.

Members commented that the land by Lidl and Churchills had been left in an unacceptable state by developers. The Clerk informed Members that complaints had also been received from the public and enquiries were currently being made with Braintree District Council regarding landscape plans for this area.

30. DATE AND TIME OF NEXT MEETING

It was noted that the next meeting of the Sub-Committee would be 14th March 2023.

Meeting concluded at 2.55pm

HA/SS/08.12.2022

Signed by Chairman.....

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP AT WITHAM TOWN COUNCIL HELD 31st OCTOBER 2022 AT 6:30PM IN THE TOWN CLERKS OFFICE.

PRESENT: - Councillors S. Ager, C. Jay, J. Palombi, J. Williams, R. Williams.

Staff: H Andrews - Deputy Town Clerk
 S Smith - P. A to the council

11. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

No apologies were received.

12. MINUTES

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

13. CLERKS REPORT

Members were informed that BDC have appointed a Climate Change Project Manager who met with the Deputy Town Clerk and can support the group where possible. It was noted that Braintree District Council would be providing climate change literacy training to their officers, and that this programme may be rolled out to town and parish councils.

The Deputy Town Clerk informed members that they had recently been provided with a carbon calculator and officers would look into starting work on this soon.

14. REPORTS BY MEMBERS

Members were provided with three different reports prepared by Members. The comments were as follows:

a) Walking routes in Witham

J. Palombi explained that the route provided was fully accessible for wheelchair and pushchair users, but some sections may have changed recently due to maintenance work. Members suggested posting a 'walk a month' on the website by encouraging local residents. Members were informed that there are various walking literature available in the Information Centre which residents can be directed to.

b) Website and social media climate change awareness

Members were informed that all social media and website suggestions made were fine to proceed with.

c) Events report

Members received a verbal report regarding events. The main focus was to encourage people to recycle properly at Witham Town Council events, the suggestion was to recommend that vendors only use recyclable or reusable cups and cutlery.

Some other suggestions made by Member's included:

- A list of climate guidance to be created for vendors and the Events Coordinator to ensure all recommendations are considered in event planning.
- A reduced price to be offered at WTC drink stalls for those who bring their own cup.
- The suggestion of the introduction of a Witham cup on entry to events to be used at all drink vendors with discount given could be explored.

15. ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

Members received and noted the Environmental Policy with the following amendments:

- The policy to be reviewed should be reviewed annually with the first review to be carried out in six months when the carbon emission figures had been calculated.
- To include liaison with youth/schools within raising awareness actions.
- To ensure that consider climate friendly initiatives are considered in planning applications and through the creation of the Neighbourhood Plan.

Members discussed providing reusable period products for schools in Witham. It was noted that the Town Council would not be permitted to provide funding for this as the County Council are the education authority. It was **AGREED** that Cllr Jay would research this suggestion further with regards to costs. It was noted there could be the potential to look into County Councillor grant funding for this initiative.

16. CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY

Members discussed whether declaring a climate emergency was necessary for the Town Council as various climate initiatives are already in place. It was noted that Members supported Braintree District Council’s climate emergency initiatives and would have the agreed Environmental Policy in place.

It was **AGREED** to create an individual action plan for Witham Town Council instead of declaring a Climate Emergency to go alongside the Environmental Policy.

17. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Members discussed the suggestion of incorporating a ‘recycling day’ event with the next climate change awareness pop-up stall in the New Year. Some ideas included:

- Look into providing recycling cages, so that people can bring along their hard to recycle items.
- Invite Braintree District Council’s Climate Change Manager to attend.

18. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

It was agreed that the next meeting should be held after the next Environment Committee meeting in January, and that the office will email Members some available dates.

With there being no further business, the meeting closed at 7:37pm.

.....
Councillor S. Ager
Chairman

SS 07.11.2022



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, including the following –

- In 1993/94 the Council planted a 14-acre wood with trees to create James Cooke Wood. 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.
- A ban of pesticide use on our open spaces.
- Wildflower planting trials 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 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.

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.
- Inform Witham's residents of the Council's environmental activities and respond and react to feedback.
- 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 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 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 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.
- 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

First review: July 2023 to approve carbon calculator baseline figures

Followed by next annual review: January 2024

Witham Town Council: Snow Clearance Policy

1. This policy relates to Witham Town Council's snow clearance procedures to be carried out by Witham Town Council's Operations Team.
2. In the event of snow that needs clearing, it was agreed that the following areas will be cleared by Witham Town Council's Operations Team following a suitable risk assessment –
3. **Town Hall** – The public pavement in front of the Town Hall is the responsibility of Essex County Council and any snow clearance and gritting should be left to them. Witham Town Council's Operations Team will clear, salt and grit the driveway leading from Newland Street to the Town Hall car park and a walkway leading to the side entrance of the building and kitchen. This should minimise the risk of slipping by staff and visitors to the Town Hall. It is not considered necessary to clear the whole car park.
4. **Bridges** – The Operations Team will be responsible for the four bridges along the River Walk.

The bridge near Laurence Avenue leading across the river to Maldon Road Park has high usage and is particularly hazardous as it is shaded by large trees.

Two bridges between Bridge Street and Guithavon Road which may be used by students of Maltings Academy.

One bridge near Bramble Road.

All four bridges will be cleared of snow, salted and gritted. The priority order will be the bridge near Laurence Avenue, followed by the bridge near Bramble Road and lastly the two bridges between Bridge Street and Guithavon Road.

Approved: 18/7/2022
Review date: 18/7/2023

POLICY NO: WTC/27 - ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE



ITEM NO:

11(a)

Officer Report: Essex County Council's Salt Bag Partnership Scheme

Issue:

During the week of 12th December 2022, snow fall and weather conditions affected the majority of paths in Witham. Although Essex Highways gritted the main bus route roads through Witham, no clearance of footpaths was carried out. Witham Town Council received several complaints regarding the lack of clearance as the weather conditions were such that paths were dangerous for pedestrians to use for the majority of the week.

Although Essex County Council has the statutory duty as part of The Highway Act 1980 to keep the network clear of snow and ice as far as is reasonably possible, they do not clear footpaths. Instead they operate a Salt Bag Partnership Scheme which they run with Parish and Town Councils. Further information can be found at <https://www.essexhighways.org/roads-and-pavements/winter-travel/salt-bag-partnership>. Those signing up to the scheme receive one tonne of palletted salt (40 x 25kg) to be distributed to volunteers to use on locations that are considered important to the community.

The scheme will involve the Town Council co-ordinating a network of reliable volunteers who are happy to store the salt and then will clear paths in their area. The Town Council do not have the resources for our Operations Team to carry out this work. Essex Highways confirm that they will remain primarily liable even if the Town Council and volunteers are willing to assist with snow clearance. Snow clearing guidance will be given to volunteers.

In recent years there has been some concerns regarding liability and individuals clearing paths. Witham Town Council's insurance company were contacted regarding snow clearance during December 2022 and they advised that they would not cover the Council for things that they were not responsible for. However, on taking part in the Salt Bag Partnership, the liability would primarily remain with the County Council –

Under common law a volunteer can only be considered negligent if they deliberately went out to create a hazard. Actions which could give rise to liability for negligence would be (a) the careless discharge of snow from the shovel, (b) the careless placing of snow so as to conceal or create a hazard and (c) the use of water which actually increases the risk of slipping or skidding.

Witham Town Council considered taking part in the scheme during 2012 but did not do so due to a lack of volunteers and the potential issues they would have with storing the salt.

Members should consider whether they now wish to join the Salt Bag Partnership Scheme and priority areas in the town that potentially should be cleared.

Advice:

Members to consider whether to join the Salt Bag Partnership Scheme for the 2023/2024 winter period.

Essex Highways Salt bins

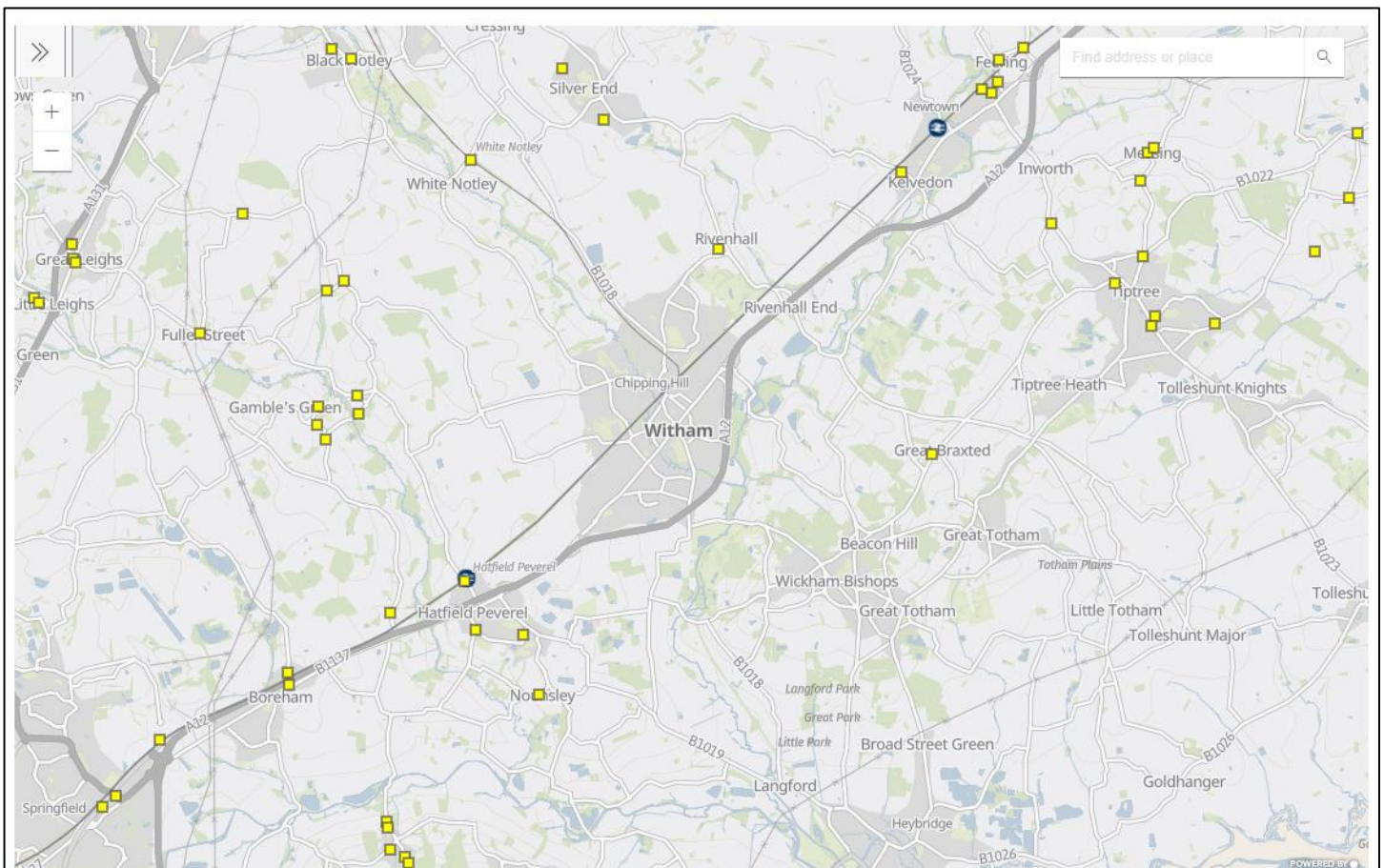
Salt bins are provided at various locations throughout the county to allow drivers and pedestrians to treat localised icy conditions. The bins contain a salt/sand mix which is solely for use on public roads and pavements and should not be used for private driveways.

We currently have in the region of 1000 salt bins in Essex and each fill of the salt bin network takes approximately 350 man hours, uses up to 1000 tonnes of salt and takes over 3 weeks to complete.

Existing bins are stocked as part of our normal stocking programme and will not be filled on an ad hoc basis during the winter.

Throughout the winter our priority is to ensure the precautionary gritting network is secure. Only when this activity is completed can resources (manpower, equipment and salt) be deployed to other areas.

To view the locations of our salt bins go to our [Salt bin map](#), below. Zoom to the area you wish to see.



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

1. Apologies - Ken Davies
2. Minutes of 20th September accepted.
3. Matters arising - none.
4. Future planning
 - a). Templars estate - trees to be ordered once funding is confirmed ; Eric will work on the figures ; potentially four trees from the residents association funds (paulownia suggested for inclusion) ; another site visit needed ; residents ' consultation ends 17th October ;
 - b) Chasten Free School - they have been changing their mind as to what they would like to do ; another visit may be necessary and Allan will arrange if that is required ; some services maps have just been received but are largely incomprehensible ;
 - c) Spa Road scheme - no further news;
 - d) Cornel Close /Bryony Close - still no response from Eastlight to our request for permission to plant, Allan will continue to press for a reply;
 - e) Alternatives to Cornel /Bryony if necessary - further suggestions were off Honeysuckle Way near where we planted the poplars ; two trees off Bramble Road to replace BDC trees killed by staff strimmers ; two potentially in the Avenue ; alongside the new cycle path from Rivenhall - site visit would be required and we would also need a key to access past the posts for planting and watering ; the cricket club would like two trees to potentially screen the Gimsons site - Stanley will check whether the club would fund these trees and /or water them ;
 - f). Memorial trees - Barry to liaise with Mrs Brown;
 - g) Aegon - Barry has been in touch with them again and they are extremely keen to help plant new trees;
 - h) Whip plants - it was agreed that we should remove those that had died in the hot weather at the Cut Throat Lane site, and replace them (TCV are offering plants).
5. Howbridge Junior School have asked for our advice on whip planting, and Allan & Barry will visit them shortly.
- 6 Developer planting - Mark & Richard have looked at what trees may be dead on the Rivenhall estate; Mark will now look at in more detail so he can report to the developer and keep us up-to-date too.
7. Maintenance - repairs done at Memorial Park: broken ties and cages; one tree topped; next week, we start at Cut Throat Lane.
8. Finances - the Treasurer has reported no changes to the figures except for the monthly £5 administration fee; the principle of paying via bank transfer needs to be discussed; Allan is owed £60 for hire of the Hub meeting room (2 meetings).
9. Website - TCV had checked whether our site was active (as they wish to close those that aren't) and Barry had confirmed that our site was both active and essential to our communication with the local community - TCV had acknowledged this so there will be no change ; we have had a problem where people looking for us are directed to local tree surgeons SL Landscapes - Jane had contacted TCV about this but we may have to put up with it ; Richard has done a report on the end of the watering season.
- 10 Any other business - none.
- 11 Next meeting - Tuesday, 15th November at Eric's house (8, The Avenue), 7.30 pm

15th November 2022 Tree Group Minutes

Present: Eric Teverson, Richard Hawkes, Mark Austin, Allan Waight, Ken Davies, Stanley Brailey, Barry Fleet.

1. Apologies - Graham Wingrove, Shaun Taylor

2. Minutes of the 11th October accepted.

3. Matters arising - none.

4. Planning

a). Templars estate - trees being delivered tomorrow, 16th November; first planting session is on the 17th November ; site photos required for ECC ; volunteers from Aegon expected and advised of location etc. ; Jane Noble and Steve Harris to be advised ; cherries to be planted around the play areas first;

B). Chatten Free School - Allan has visited again and agreed planting sites for four trees (cherries and hornbeams) ;trees being delivered on the 17th November ; possible planting day to be agreed as it will need to be at a weekend when the pupils are absent ; cages not needed but short posts to be used ;

c) Cornel and Bryony Closes - approval to plant finally received from Eastlight Housing; Allan has done the residents' consultation letter and will deliver it on the 18th November; Barry has advised the Town Hall so that they can expect an invoice from Barchams; possibly plant before Christmas? ;

d). Balance of WTC budget - Stanley is still trying to speak to the cricket club to establish what help they are looking for ; it was noted that some more irrigation tubing needs to be purchased ; other sites for planting are around the Rickstones and Alan Road playgrounds; agreed that we would replace the two dead BDC trees at the Bramble Road playground ; it was also noted that there is space for up to 5 trees to continue the line of hornbeam at Flora Road ; for the future, agreed that we should consider planting alongside the new cycleway from the Rivenhall estate as there is plenty of scope ;

e). Memorial trees - Barry has met with Mrs D Brown and she is proceeding with the purchase of two trees in memory of her son and great granddaughter ; payment received so we need to proceed to order the agreed trees (hornbeam and cherry) ;

f) Potential gift of trees - Barry had met with Mr Graham Want and seen his trees, which consist of two 3 foot hollies and eight 4 foot 'cypresses'; agreed that we would take them for the hedging area off Cut Throat Lane ; Barry to liaise with Mr Want ;

g). Ouse Chase tree - this was removed by us as dead ; agreed that it was too risky to replace as it is suspected that it may well be attacked ; Barry to advise Cllr Rose of the position.

5. Howbridge Junior School - Allan and Barry had visited and provided advice regarding their intended whip planting; they hope to get parents to do much of the planting; need to water explained.

6. Developer planting - Mark has advised the developer of the Rivenhall estate where replacements are needed so we await developments.

7. Maintenance report - most of the issues have now been dealt with; Barry or Eric to survey the Avenue trees; it was noted that some of the BDC '45k' trees have cages that are no longer needed.

8 Finance - Ken advised the current financial position; it was noted that he is intending to stand down at the next AGM; it was suggested that it would be helpful to have additional signatories.

9 Website - Richard will do a report on the new planting; there is continued concern that a search for our site often brings up the local business SL Landscapes. Stanley knows someone who may be able to advice.

10. AOB - Eric will order two packs of TCV whips (packs of 50).

11 Next meeting - 6th December at 7.30pm at Eric's house.

6th December 2022 Tree Group Minutes

Present: Allan Waight, Eric Teverson, Richard Hawkes, Jane Noble, Stanley Brailey, Ken Davies, Barry Fleet.

1 Apologies - Graham Wingrove, Shaun Taylor, Mark Austin.

2 Minutes of the 15th November accepted.

3. Matters arising - Barry reported that he had advised Cllr Bill Rose that replacing the removed tree at Ouse Close was not a priority because of the vandalism risk.

4 Planning

a). The planting at Templars has been completed, with the considerable help of volunteers from Aegon, around 30 having helped over the three days ; the total cost is £780.82 and it was agreed that we would contribute £30.82 and invoice the Residents Association for the balance (Eric will prepare and send the invoice to Mel of the TRA) ; before and after photos are to be sent to Tom Moat of ECC by Eric, once Barry has provided the correct address) ; funding for the subsequent watering to be resolved in due course ;

b) Chatten Free School - the four trees to be planted shortly, probably 10th Dec (Allan, Eric, Jane, Graham, Richard, Mark hope to be available). Perhaps the Forest Road replacement could be done on the same day;

c) Cornel /Bryony - there have been no responses to residents' consultation so we are fine to proceed to order the trees;

d) Spa Road - Barry has discussed this project with Shaun and understands that the necessary funds are not currently available;

e) Balance of WTC budget - agreed that we would order trees for Flora Road and to replace the two dead trees at the Bramble Road playground ; Barry will advise Hayley at the Town Hall ; hornbeam, downy birch and field maple to be used, subject to availability from the nursery ; Stanley has had no response from the cricket club as to their needs, however, it was noted that the new Gimsons development appears to have space for several trees in an appropriate position so Stanley and Allan will investigate ;

f) Memorial trees - the trees for Mrs Brown will be ordered along with those for the WTC order;

g) Cut Throat Lane - 100 new whips arriving early January; we would also utilise Mr Want's trees there;

h) Future planning options - we could start Spa Road if partial funding became available or alternatively around the Rickstones Road playground which needs more trees; Alan Road area remains a possibility; the Olivers Road area needs denser planting as a sound barrier, particularly if the A12 widening results in losses there.

5 Developer planting - no update.

6 Maintenance - Barry had surveyed the Avenue and advised that around 13 trees need caging work including about 4 that may have been originally planted before the Tree Group

started ; the pin oak in the Town Park could have its cane support removed. It was agreed that the work would be done on the 8th Dec. It was noted that a number of BDC's' £45 k' trees still have cages that need removing; also, our trees in Cuppers Close could have their cages reduced.

7 Finance - Ken confirmed our current position; it was noted that we will be receiving £750 from Templars Residents Association, and we would then need to reimburse Eric; Barry advised that Jane had agreed to succeed Ken as Treasurer from our AGM, which was much appreciated by the committee.

8 Website /publicity - thanks to Richard for his excellent report on the Templars project; Allan had some suggestions for improving the website, mainly alterations to the home page - Jane will seek advice on upgrades.

9. Any other business - Barry reported that a new report from Defra states that trees provide not only shade, natural beauty and fruit but also play a vital role in storing carbon, regulating temperatures, strengthening flood defences and reducing noise and air pollution. Recent research shows that these latter benefits are worth a staggering £3.9 billion to the UK economy. The Government says that the 'significant value' of trees in the UK will be used to help show councils, land managers and local communities the value of planting more.

10 Next meetings

a) Christmas social on the 20th December at Eric's (8, The Avenue) at 7.30pm;

b) Committee meeting on Tuesday, 24th January, 7.30 pm at Eric's.

Sent: 01 December 2022 15:08

Subject: River Walk Safety

Good afternoon

I am writing in relation to safety concerns on the River Walk in Witham. In recent months a surge in anti-social cycling and unlawful use of electric scooters on the River Walk has created an increased risk to the public, and in particular the vulnerable, the elderly, those with young children and those with mobility issues.

A number of my neighbours now refuse to use the River Walk because of the intimidation they face when they do from a sizeable minority of users on both cycles and electric scooters. This includes threats of violence, in particular, but not exclusively, by those of school age.

The lack of written guidance from the council at the entry points to the River Walk compounds the problem.

Nowhere does it state for example that this is a combined footpath as defined in the Highway Code. This means that some cyclists, (in particular those who have not read the highway code) believe they have exclusive right to cycle on parts of the path and that pedestrians have to move out of the way or face injury. Simple reinforcement of the road hierarchy and the importance of protection for pedestrians through signage may both serve to educate cyclists and prevent further injuries.

Secondly there is a growing perception among the electric scooter riders that since the River Walk is not a public highway they can do what they like. As a consequence we have unlit scooters carrying more than one passenger creating a further risk. Again written guidance would help. Enforcement would obviously assist too since these problems exist across Witham with most pavements now having to double as cycle/scooter lanes.

I am raising this matter with you since I am informed by Braintree Council that issues with safety on the River Walk are the responsibility of Witham Town Council.

I look forward too the council's response on how it intends to address and mitigate these risks to local residents before we have further incidents and injuries.

Regards

On 6 Dec 2022, at 10:06, deputytownclerk@witham.gov.uk wrote:

Good morning,

Thank you for your email.

I appreciate your concerns regarding cycling and electric scooters using the River Walk paths.

We are currently reviewing the standard of the footpaths/cycle ways on the River Walk and are in the process of obtaining quotes to have the line markings reinstated on the paths which are designated for both pedestrians and cycles. This will include having markings at various points to highlight which side of the path is for cycles or pedestrians. It is hoped that this will be carried out in the early part of next year.

As regards the use of electric scooters, this is an ongoing problem generally. Private electric scooters are not allowed by law to be used on public paths or roads in the UK so should not be used in any public areas in Witham. They are currently only permitted to be used on private land. Some areas in the UK have e-scooter trials where they are permitted to be used through a rental scheme with local authorities in public areas, but this does not apply to Witham. Further information about the law and e-scooters from Essex Police can be found at <https://www.essex.police.uk/police-forces/essex-police/areas/essex-police/au/about-us/e-scooters/#:~:text=Powered%20transporters%20fall%20within%20the,must%20not%20be%20ridden%20carelessly.>

Witham Town Council fund Community Special Police Constables for the town and our Town Councillors have raised concerns with them regarding the use of e-scooters in the town. Our Special Constables carry out regular visible patrols throughout Witham, including the River Walk, and confirm that they often stop e-scooter users to advise them of the law and confiscate scooters. They are particularly vigilant in trying to confiscate as many scooters as they can to remove them from our public areas, but of course this is an ongoing issue as they need to witness the e-scooter being used to be able to stop them and take action. Our Specials provide us with a monthly report of their activities which can be found on our website if you are interested - <https://www.witham.gov.uk/police-specials/#:~:text=Each%20Special%20will%20volunteer%20a,uniform%20as%20regular%20police%20officers.>

Thank you for taking the time to contact us.

Received 06/12/2022

Dear Hayley

Thank you for your reply. I hope that some of those discussions will have an impact upon behaviour on the river walk eventually.

Since my concern is related to safety I would ask for more specifics on how the most vulnerable will be protected moving forwards.

We are living in an age when electric bikes as well as scooters are prevalent on the river walk. These represent a potential risk to the most vulnerable. Simply re-marking the lines is inadequate given the speeds that electric bikes travel.

I would emphasise that nowhere on the river walk is there guidance on expected behaviour, requests to lower speeds or even a reminder to be considerate to others.

This needs to be addressed.

You may be aware that Barnet council and another as yet unnamed council are being sued for significant sums by riders of electric scooters who have experienced injury or material damage while unlawfully using roads and parks. While the precedent in case law may be interesting moving forwards on a wider scale I am raising this matter to advise you the lack of signage and appropriate guidance has created a free for all that puts residents at risk. I believe last week's casualty list includes a broken collarbone.

In conclusion therefore if the council chooses to persist in 'allowing' high speed electric vehicles to pass close to vulnerable users,(given the town's many care home residents) and is of the view that

a painted line is adequate protection then we can expect further injuries for which the council may be partially liable.

I would ask you again to consider appropriate signage to reinforce how in this day and age diverse groups of users can use the river walk safely and to explicitly ban all powered vehicles with the exception of mobility vehicles , while reminding cyclists of their responsibilities on a combined pathway which include being able to warn others ahead, and being prepared and able to stop for children , the infirm and those with disabilities in accordance with the guidance in the Highway Code.

Thank you for your time in this matter

Regards

Response from insurance company

Sent: 14 December 2022 15:26

In respect to your query “, we have had issues with people riding e-scooters along our River Walk. It is against the law at present to ride an e-scooter unless it’s part of a recognised company and plan. We are thinking of erecting signs along the River Walk advising not to use the scooters. We just wanted to check if this will in any way affect our Insurance or liability”

Your insurer has no objection to you erecting signs – if you have identified that this is a hazard to other users of the river walk it’s entirely appropriate to take some action to prevent it.