



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

MINUTES

Meeting of: **Environment Committee**

Date: **15th April 2024**

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

Present: Councillors: S. Ager (Chairman)
J.C. Coleman (Vice Chairman)
E. Adelaja
J.M. Coleman
L. Headley
J. Martin
R. Ramage
A. Sloma

Also in attendance: Cllr P. Barlow
H. Andrews (Deputy Town Clerk)
G. Kennedy (Committee Clerk)
S. Puckey (Open Spaces Admin Assistant)

37. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Fleet and Councillor Taylor was absent.

RESOLVED That the apologies be received and approved.

38. MINUTES

RESOLVED That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Environment Committee held 21st January 2024 be confirmed as a true record and signed by the Chairman.

39. INTERESTS

No interests were declared.

40. QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

There were no members 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 1st April 2023 to 29th February 2024 was received.

RESOLVED That the income and expenditure report for the period 1st April 2023 to 29th February 2024 be received and noted.

43. OPEN SPACES MANAGEMENT SUB-COMMITTEE

The Minutes of the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee Meeting held on 5th March 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

44. CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

The Minutes of the Climate Change Working Group Meeting held on 29th February 2024 were received.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and noted.

45. RECOMMENDATION FROM CLIMATE CHANGE WORKING GROUP

Recommendations from the Climate Change Working Group for climate change projects were received.

Members agreed that it would be sensible to select first those projects which would be easier to implement recognising budget restraints and officers' time.

Bee Squared

Members thought that the Bee Squared project to encourage residents to plant wildflowers in their front garden to help bees on their foraging trips should be easy to undertake and a grant or funding could be available to purchase wild flower seeds which would be distributed for free to residents.

RESOLVED That the Bee Squared project be undertaken.

No Idling Scheme

Members agreed that this would be better undertaken by Essex County and Braintree District Councils although the street warden could remind motorists accordingly.

Thermal Camera Insulation Scheme

This project could be undertaken at minimal cost. Residents could hire the camera which would show where insulation was needed in their homes. This would be limited to winter months and a returnable deposit would be required.

RESOLVED That the Thermal Camera Insulation Scheme be pursued.

Repair Café

Members discussed the complexities of this scheme which could require professionals, such as electricians to assist, and might also impact on charity shops.

RESOLVED That further enquiries be required before this project could be undertaken.

Habitat Hero Month

Members considered that this project could be achieved but further consideration would be required. The suggestion was made that this matter could be referred to the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee to take forward.

RESOLVED That this potential project be referred to the Open Spaces Management Sub-Committee.

RESOLVED That the report be received and noted.

46. SECTION 106 STEERING GROUP

The Minutes of the Section 106 Steering Group Meeting held on 25th January 2024 were received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that she had recently met with Braintree District Council officers to discuss Section 106 projects. She said that Whetmead Nature trail had been well received, the James Cooke Wood noticeboard and board walk had been installed and new bee-friendly planting near River View along with new tap covers at the Cut Throat Lane allotment site were now completed. The District Council was still progressing the Town Park and town centre improvements as well as the skate park. It was hoped that the Town Council would do more projects in the future.

The Deputy Town Clerk said that when she had met the District Council officers a proposed project which would have been discussed at Agenda Item 16 in Private Session would not now need to be considered.

RESOLVED That the Minutes be received and information noted.

47. WITHAM TREE GROUP

The Tree Group minutes for the meetings held in February and March 2024 were received.

Members commended the Tree Group for their work.

RESOLVED That the minutes be received and noted.

48. SCATTERING OF ASHES ON OPEN SPACES POLICY

Members were asked to approve and adopt a Scattering of Ashes on Open Spaces policy.

It was agreed that such a policy would be appropriate and that guidance should be given to be discreet. It was noted that the wording should be amended to read ‘between the hours of dawn to dusk’.

RESOLVED That the Scattering of Ashes on Open Spaces policy be approved and adopted with the above amendment.

49. RIVER WALK PUBLIC RIGHTS OF WAY

A report was received regarding the Heart of Witham Preservation Group’s wish to register the River Walk footpath from Bridge Street to Guithavon Road as a Public Right of Way (PROW).

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that most of the River Walk was already a PROW. She had sought advice from the Essex County Council PROW officer previously who explained that as the River Walk was walked regularly by the public and it was deemed to be a permissive path, there would be no need to protect particularly as it was owned by the Town Council. She said that the Group were concerned about the section of pathway from Bridge Street by the Churchill development which was owned by the District Council and it was feared it could be developed. If a PROW was needed to be closed, an application would need to be made to the County Council at a cost.

Members then discussed implications especially in regard to the possible closure of bridges when renovation was required.

On balance it was agreed that the Town Council would offer no objections.

RESOLVED That the report be received and the Town Council offer no objection to the Heart of Witham Preservation Group’s wish to register the River Walk footpath from Bridge Street to Guithavon Road as a Public Right of Way.

50. BLACKWATER RESTORATION PLAN

Information on a project being run by the Essex and Suffolk Rivers Trust on the River Blackwater was received.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that only one representative would be able to attend the workshop event on 2nd May 2024 at Markshall Estate.

RESOLVED That the information be received and noted.

The Deputy Town Clerk explained that the last item on the Agenda was not needed to be discussed.

There being no further business the Chairman closed the Meeting at 8.15 p.m.

Councillor S. Ager
Chairman

HA/GK/18.4.2024