



Witham's Voice

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Summer Edition

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Witham Community Pays it Forward

COMMUNITY ACTION RESPONSE: COVID-19
5 things you can do to make a positive difference in your community

Think of others, consider your actions & be kind
People in every community will face the challenges of Covid-19 in some way - from needing basic provisions to help while they are unwell.

Connect and reach out to your neighbours
As self-isolation increases, we need to find new ways to stay connected and check in on one another for our physical and mental wellbeing. Share phone numbers and stay in touch.

Make the most of local online groups
Keep up to date, share information and be a positive part of your local community conversations.

Support vulnerable or isolated people
Different groups in our communities are at increased risk and social isolation and loneliness are key concerns for all ages. There are things you can do like volunteering for local support services or donating to food banks to help.

Share accurate information and advice
Support anyone who may be anxious about Covid-19. Sign post them to the correct advice from Public Health England and encourage people to follow the correct hygiene practices.

The recent Covid-19 outbreak has seen the country go through its toughest restrictions in recent history, with only essential travel advised and many residents unable to leave their homes entirely. As a nation we have shown deep and well-deserved gratitude to those frontline workers who keep the country running and keep us all safe, however we should also spare a thought for those giving up their time to help their neighbours and communities; something we have seen in abundance across Witham.

Organised by The Witham Community Hub, the 'Pay it Forward' Facebook group have been helping to get much needed supplies to residents of Witham and its surrounding areas that are most in need. Volunteers have been donating essential items such as food and medicines, which are being made in to care packages and delivered to the doorsteps of those unable to leave their homes. Set up in March, the group has seen over 200 members join to help their community as best they can. Members of the group are getting involved by collecting materials to make scrubs and bags for NHS workers, swapping books and puzzles to keep each other entertained and even posting fun pictures and brainteasers to keep spirits lifted. The hub has also had the support of several local businesses who have been able to lend their resources to help with their mission, such as the use of freezers to help store food donations and vehicles to help make deliveries. Through these combined efforts, Witham Community Hub has been able to help over 1000 vulnerable people during these trying times, not forgetting our amazing NHS workers who have received some well-earned gifts, such as chocolate eggs for Easter.

Countless other residents have also been helping where they can in the community, collecting and delivering items for vulnerable neighbours and offering comfort and support where they can. One local resident has been raising funds to create much needed PPE for NHS workers through 3D printing, whilst another is offering free concerts outside his home in Witham. A special thank you goes out to all of those silently doing their part to help others through this difficult period – even the smallest gestures can make the biggest differences, and these good deeds do not go unnoticed by those whose lives they brighten. The boxes of treats delivered to a neighbour, the surprise phone call to an older relative, or the hand drawn picture brightening up the windows all make a difference to someone, and can be a lifeline when they are lonely or struggling to cope. As restrictions start to lift it is important to remember that there are still many that are unable to leave their homes or have no-one to keep them company – pandemic or not. There are many people in our community who are regularly giving their time to help others in any way they can, so if you have stepped up during this global crisis to do your part, please continue to pay it forward and make a difference in someone else's life.



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Witham's Voice

Your Community Police

Hello, I am Special Sergeant Simon Jesse and I'm a Community Special Constable for Witham.

I have been active in Witham for nearly two years now and I hope that some of you have already seen the team out and about patrolling through the town centre or perhaps on the River Walk or near to your homes.

Over the last year we have been working to improve our visibility while ensuring that we are tackling the issues that affect you in the town.

We have recovered stolen items - from bicycles to motorbikes - disrupted anti-social behaviour, tackled vehicle crime as well as helping vulnerable people and providing support at domestic incidents.

We want to do more to make a difference in your community.

We have attended community events, local youth clubs and schools and we report our actions regularly to Witham Town Council.

As a Special Constable we each volunteer a minimum of 16 hours per month to provide the presence in Witham. Most of us do much more than that.

We have the same powers and equipment as a Regular Officer and therefore we deal with all types of incidents.

One of our key advantages is that we can be more accessible to the residents of Witham by being out and about in your community where you need us.

This enables you to approach us and discuss any concerns you may have.

We have had some very good successes in Witham because of the information that you have given to us.

We would like you to continue to report crimes by calling the Essex Police non-emergency number, 101, or you can report information by visiting www.essex.police. Please call 999 in an emergency.

If it is information about something that is affecting you, in your area then please let us know.

We may discover it during a patrol, but it would be quicker if you can report it.

If you are unsure about providing your name, then please report anonymously through Crimestoppers on [0800 555 111](tel:0800555111).

We want to work together with you for our Community.

Join Special Sergeant Simon and make a difference to your community:

www.essex.police.uk/specials #MyOtherLife



Witham River Walk tree maintenance

During the winter period, we arranged for tree maintenance work to be carried out which was completed in March.

This is the second year of a three-year programme of essential maintenance that comes as a result of an extensive tree survey of the River Walk carried out by qualified and experienced tree surgeons. The survey highlighted trees that required work for a variety of reasons – some were already dead, some needed attention due to safety reasons, while others needed crown-lifting or pollarding to encourage healthy growth or the growth of nearby trees.



The Willow trees at our popular duck pond were amongst those that were included in this year's maintenance programme. Some of these were over-mature, beginning to collapse and therefore becoming a hazard. Two Willows were removed completely, on the recommendation of the tree surgeon, and a further two Willows were reduced in height. Three new Willow trees have been replanted in their place and we hope they will soon flourish for all to enjoy.

Witham Town Park

Six stone sculptured art pieces appeared in Witham Town Park in Maldon Road earlier this year and caused some discussions by residents.

They have been funded by Section 106 agreements and are as a result of consultations by Braintree District Council and Witham Town Council. They have been paid for by a building developer who stipulated that the money had to supply works of art. Both Councils agreed that the art pieces should reflect Witham's history.

The six sculptured pieces represent -

- Roman activity in Witham showing a carved Roman figure discovered at Ivy Chimneys
- The Knights Templars' link with Witham
- The market trade in the town established in 1212
- The wool trade that flourished in the 16th century
- The railway line opening in 1843
- The seed, malt and agricultural industry of the 19th century



A further public consultation was carried out during January and February of this year for Maldon Road entrance improvements and an outline landscape plan for the park. The results of the consultation are currently being collated and the results will be published later in the year.

The sculptured seats are currently in temporary locations and will moved to their final locations once the Maldon Road entrance improvements are completed.



Community News

Witham's New Memorial Park



Most residents of Witham will be familiar with the War Memorial garden at the junction of Newland Street and The Avenue. Like many memorials up and down Britain, it lists the names of those who died in the First and Second World Wars, with around 80 men who gave their lives in the Great War alone (1914-18).

With 100 years having passed since that devastating conflict there have been many ceremonies to commemorate that event. However, there was a feeling that in Witham we could do more to provide a permanent dedication in addition to the War Memorial.

Officers at Braintree District Council considered that there was land in the town that could be used for tree planting; in particular a field between Bramble Road and Honeysuckle Way was identified as being suitable, alongside an existing hedge line. Although Braintree Council could fund the purchase of the trees, the question remained; who was going to plant and subsequently water these trees? Thankfully Witham Tree Group stepped in to help lead the project.

Witham Tree Group were formed in 2012 and are a voluntary group who have been planting larger trees around the town for a number of years on behalf of Witham Town Council. The Group are an ideal partner for this project as they have developed considerable expertise in tree planting and, very unusually for a voluntary group, are able to regularly water trees using their own water bowsers which are used to ensure that new trees are able to establish themselves and do not die from drought in the first two or three years of life.

The first planting day was on the 5th December and the importance of the new WWI Memorial Park was recognised by the attendance of the Town Mayor Councillor Clare Lager, who was joined by Cllr Gabrielle Spray of Braintree Planning Committee and members of Witham Branch of the Royal British Legion.

A total of four planting days were needed to plant an initial 53 large trees, of which 4 were funded by Witham Town Council.

A variety of native trees have been planted, including English oaks, hornbeam and field maples. These trees have been planted by the Tree Group with help from volunteer staff from Aegon UK, students from New Rickstones Academy and Bee Brook (contractors for Braintree Council).

The second phase will be undertaken next winter so that at least 80 large trees are planted in total to commemorate the brave men who gave their lives in the First World War.

Witham Tree Group Chairman Barry Fleet said, 'We are pleased to have been involved in this very ambitious project, which will create a Memorial Park that will be a significant enhancement for our town. Although 80 trees is the target, this is a minimum as, of course, everyone who fought in WWI is no longer with us and so we should remember them all.'

If you would like to help with the next phase of planting, please contact the Tree Group through their website at withamtreegroup.org.uk . Planting days are usually on Thursdays.

Witham's Voice

Policy & Resources Committee Annual Report from Councillor Michael Lager, Chairman

The P&R Committee provides the legal, financial, policy and contractual framework for delivering Council services, and has responsibility for staff, property and external relations. During the year the Committee has scrutinised budgetary financial statements including bank balances and the detail of expenditure. Clean audit reports internal and external have been received. The use of cheques for payments has almost completely been discontinued in favour of using direct debits, BACS and internet, although this meant switching from Lloyds Bank to Unity Trust Bank, but the time and cost saving has been worthwhile.

Business planning linked to financial provision is being embedded, new standing orders have been adopted, the committee structure has been modernised, the Members' Code of Conduct has been simplified, the Voice magazine is now

delivered by Royal Mail to all addresses in the CM8 postal area, and a systematic scrutiny of developers' promises in "Section 106" agreements is under way with a particular focus on the Maltings estate.

Plans are being made to make more of the land behind the Town Hall with secure and proper accommodation for our outdoor staff. Repairs to the (listed) Town Hall are now complete, and a refurbishment of the Information Centre will soon be ready.

We are fortunate in having a loyal and enthusiastic staff for whom nothing is too much and who rise to every challenge.



Planning Applications & Transport Committee Annual Report from Councillor John Goodman, Chairman

During the Civic Year 2019 / 2020 planning applications relating to properties and developments in the Witham area have been submitted to Braintree District Council, in its role as the local Planning Authority, which, in turn, has then conveyed the applications to Witham Town Council's Planning Applications & Transport Committee for due consideration.

Every application brought to our attention is deliberated upon in line with recognised guidelines and policies and we are then in a position to recommend to the Planning Authority approval, refusal or to offer no objection, although it must be remembered that Witham Town Council is able to act only in a consultative capacity and the final decision on any planning application rests with Braintree District Council. If Witham Town Council recommends refusal, we endeavour to endorse that recommendation by attending Braintree District Council's Planning Committee meeting at which the application in question is being considered.

Witham is fortunate in that its main thoroughfare, Newland Street, lies within a Conservation Area but this brings forth more diligent consideration with regard to strict policies on structural changes, materials and illumination of signage. This, of course, also applies to our other Conservation Area in Chipping Hill and its environs.

The committee also receives a number of applications each year which relate to work which is to be carried out on trees

which are subject to a Tree Preservation Order and we are fortunate, again, to be able to call upon the expertise of third-party Tree Wardens within the town for advice. Should an application request the complete felling of a tree, our usual policy is to express a desire that a replacement tree is planted wherever possible.

It is recognised that Witham is not only an existing commuter town but is also expanding exponentially and this has led to a number of concerns over the town's traffic infrastructure. In this respect, we regularly receive requests from various residential areas within the town for assistance in resolving parking issues and every case is considered sympathetically. When such issues are brought to our attention we request that residents support their request with, ideally, photographic evidence which we can then submit to the relevant authority.

When Witham Town Council's Planning Applications & Transport Committee is able to meet again its meetings will be held every fortnight and, as always, will be open to the public. Indeed, we would encourage any resident who wishes to make a representation on an application to attend the meeting at which that application will be considered.



Council Updates

Environment Committee Annual Report from Councillor Tom Pleasance, Chairman.

Following the local elections May 2019, the committee structure of council members was allocated across the 16 members from different parties to a total of 12 members; including the new Chairman.

First business was to overview the Environment Budget 2019 -2020. The budget of £158,265 was approved, which covers 11 categories including the Operations Team salaries, replacement of equipment, maintenance of the open spaces (such as the River Walk and Whetmead) including trees, Witham in Bloom, lighting and utilities to name a few.

Witham's environment is close to most people's hearts. Maintenance of all open space is at a high standard adding to the enjoyment of those who use them, which is down to the true dedication of the Operations Team lead by Spencer Dyer.

James Cooke Wood has been identified for its low-key

maintenance and providing of facilities for the town over the years. The Council has for some time contemplated the issue of whether it be retained or to dispose of the asset and use the money elsewhere. Once again this issue came to committee to be discussed and caused a strong debate among members. I'm pleased to say that it was decided that the wood be retained as a community project, with a 5-year plan which has been widely accepted to improve facilities and create a much needed accessible route for families to enjoy the wooded area.



Community Committee Annual Report from the Town Clerk on behalf of Councillor Ron Ramage, Chairman

The Community Committee continues to act as the central body for listening to the needs and demands of local citizens and this has been reflected in the comprehensive work undertaken by Members this year. The committee resolved to continue the Council's annual support grant of £10,000 to Citizens Advice, recognising that the Council's continued funding of this critical organisation helps make positive change in every day life. The committee has also offered full financial support to the Witham Sunday Cinema and agreed its new budget to have a dedicated line of funding to support this growing and positive local project. The committee oversaw the work of its many task & finish groups including Youth matters, overseeing an electoral engagement exercise for students, helping to teach young voters of the future the importance of democracy.

In October, the committee approved a comprehensive redesign of the Council's Information Centre to modernise this popular function in the heart of Newland Street. This £25,000 project is on track to be completed and reopened to the public when social distancing measures enable us to do so. The Committee now turns its attention to tackling social

isolation within the community and reaching out to those who may have been forgotten by society. The committee is also performing a comprehensive review of CCTV monitoring arrangements and working closer than ever with Essex Police via the dedicated Community Special Constables programme which has seen a return of visible policing in Witham and with it, a reduction in anti-social behaviour and crime.

Moving forwards into 2020, the Committee has laid out an ambitious business plan to perform fundamental reviews into all aspects of the Council's projects, including a review of the Council's grant aid scheme and reaching out to residents of newer developments in town to ensure these growing areas are a welcome part of our community and not left in the cold.



Witham's Voice

Witham Town Council are proud to manage our River Walk which provides a natural corridor through the town, valuable habitats for wildlife and a beautiful open space for all to enjoy. It extends over 3 kilometres along the River Brain from Ebenezer Close in the north of the town leading down to Maldon Road in the south.

Many more residents have been using this space in recent weeks for daily exercise and we would be interested in hearing your views in our users' survey

Are you aware of Witham's River Walk?

Yes No

Do you use the River Walk?

Yes No

If so, how often do you use the River Walk?

Daily
Weekly or more often
Monthly or several times a month
Every two to three months
Rarely
Never

What do you use the site for?

As a pleasant diversion or route
Walking
Dog walking
Jogging/running
Cycling
For picnics
Enjoying the wildlife
Photography
Other, please comment

What area of the River Walk do you use the most?

Spa Springs (*Ebenezer Close to Chipping Hill*)
Chipping Hill (*Chipping Hill to Armond Road*)
Guithavon Valley (*Armond Road to Guithavon Road*)
Mill Lane Meadows (*Guithavon Road to Bridge Street*)
Howbridge (*Bridge Street to Maldon Road*)

How close do you live to the River Walk?

Within five minutes' walk
Less than a mile away
More than a mile away

To assess who uses the River Walk, please let us know the following –

What is your age range –

Under 17
18-24
25-34
35-44
45-54
55-64
65-74
75+

Witham Town Council also manages Whetmead Nature Reserve and James Cooke Wood.

Whetmead can be found at the end of Blackwater Lane and James Cooke Wood is on Maldon Road, leading out of Witham.

Are you aware of these open spaces?

Yes No

If so, do you visit them?

Yes No

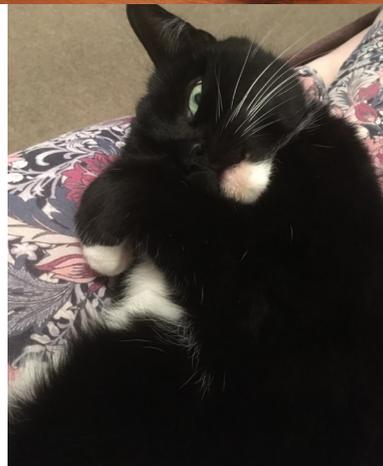


Please cut out and return completed surveys to the Information Centre in Newland Street, or alternatively you can complete this survey online via the Witham Town Council Facebook page.



We have all had to learn to adapt lately, with most of us finding ourselves stuck at home a lot more than usual. Our council staff have found this a lot easier with the help of our beloved pets - so here is our tribute to the special animals that have kept us going through trying times!

Do you have a furry friend that has made social distancing more bearable? Why not use **#withampets** to share your photos of them with the community



Missing out on Town Council meetings due to social distancing?

Whilst the social distancing measures are in place, many Town Council meetings are available to the public via video conferencing .

Details of each meeting will be published in advance on our Facebook page, or alternatively you can contact the Town Council directly for details on how to virtually attend a meeting.



Witham Town Council



TOWN HALL

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townclerk@witham.gov.uk

INFORMATION CENTRE

Tel: 01376 502674

YOUR COUNCILLORS

CENTRAL WARD

Michael Lager: 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT.
Tel: 01376 513747
Robert Williams: 25 Guithavon Valley CM8
1HF Tel: 01376 510845

WEST WARD

Susan Ager: 15 Chelmer Road CM8 2EY
Tel: 01376 512470
John Goodman: 2 Chippingdell CM8 2JX.
Tel: 01376 516918
Tom Pleasance: 5 Helford Court CM8 1TL.
Tel: 01376 501597
Paul Ryland: 6 Old Parsonage Court CM8
1XP Tel: 01376 502500

SOUTH WARD

Kevin Atwill: 11 Guithavon Street CM8
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Chelsey Jay: 15 Magnolia Close CM8 2PD
chelsejayemail@gmail.com
Angela Kilmartin: Flat 3, Icen House,
Newland Street CM8 2FS.
Tel: 01376 502872
Cliff Livermore: 4 Norah Guilder House, Strutt
Close, Hatfield Peverel CM3
2HB Tel: 07825 093394

NORTH WARD

Philip Barlow: Rivendell, Chalks Road CM8
2BT Tel: 01376 514033
Jack Bayford: 112 Oak Road, Rivenhall
CM8 3HG Tel: 07860 748151
Steve Hicks: 9 Malyon Road CM8 1DF Tel:
01376 5125890e- mail:
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Michelle Weeks: 20 Elderberry Gardens CM8
2PT Tel: 01376 515912

HATFIELD WARD

Clare Lager: 45 Chipping Hill CM8 2JT
Tel: 01376 513747
Ron Ramage: 9 Graces Close CM8 1QH
Tel: 07963 934224

It's your council...

Witham Town Council Offices are open Monday - Thursday 9:00AM-5:00PM and Friday 9:30AM-4:00PM.

Closed Weekends and Bank Holidays.

Meetings of your Town Council are open for you to attend. There is usually an opportunity to speak before the beginning of each meeting to raise your concerns to the Council.

Full details are displayed at www.witham.gov.uk

Agendas are on display on the noticeboard in Newland Street.

Meetings usually begin at 7:30PM and Planning Applications & Transport Committee meetings at 6:30PM.

Meetings are held in the Council Chamber in the Town Hall, Newland Street, Witham, Essex, CM8 2FE.

The Information Centre in the Town Hall is open from 9:00AM-4:30PM Monday - Thursday and Friday 9:30AM - 4:00PM. Closed Weekends and Bank Holidays.

MEETINGS:

Town Council: 6th July, 1st September

Environment: 20th July, 14th September

Community: 8th June, 3rd August

Policy & Resources: 22nd June, 17th August

Planning & Transport: 8th & 22nd June, 6th & 20th July, 3rd & 17th August, 1st & 14th September