

# Chesham Town Council

Bill Richards  
Town Clerk



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7<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Dear Councillor,

You are SUMMONED to attend a meeting of the **COMMUNITY ASSETS RECREATION AND ENVIRONMENT** Working Group to be held remotely, on

**MONDAY 14<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2021 AT 6.30pm**

## AGENDA

1. Election of Chairman and Vice Chairman for the Administrative Year 2021/22
2. Apologies for absence.
3. Declarations of Interest.
4. To receive and confirm the Minutes of the Community, Assets, Recreation and Environment Committee meeting held on 12<sup>th</sup> April 2021.
5. Environmental Update
6. Cemetery Update.
7. Exclusion of the Public and the Press.
8. Update on Council Services pertaining to Covid 19
9. Possible Installation of Controlled Entry System, Chesham Moor Gym and Swim Centre
10. Christmas Lights Contract

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bill Richards'.

Bill Richards

Town Clerk

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Chesham Town Council, Town Hall, Chesham, Bucks HP5 1DS  
Twinned with Friedrichsdorf Germany; Houilles France; Archena Spain

# Chesham Town Council

continued . . .



<u>Councillor Circulation</u>
Councillor Parveiz Aslam
Councillor Wilford Augustus
Councillor Miss Emily Culverhouse
Councillor Majid Ditta
Councillor Mrs Justine Fulford
Councillor Paul Harding
Councillor Ms Chasey Hood
Councillor Mrs Jane MacBean
Councillor Mrs Rachael Matthews
Councillor Nick Southworth

## **AGENDA ITEM NO: 5 – ENVIRONMENTAL UPDATE**

**Reporting Officer: Kathryn Graves (01494 583798)**

### **Summary**

1. To receive an update on local environmental issues and progress with the Council's Eco-Audit Action Plan.

### **Background Information**

2. In September 2018, the UN Secretary General announced that radical cuts in fossil fuel emissions were required within two years to avoid runaway climate change. A report produced by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change in 2018 stated that carbon emissions need to be cut by almost 50% by 2030, to have a two-thirds chance of avoiding catastrophic temperature increases above 1.5°C.
3. At the Council meeting of the 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the town council declared a Climate Emergency with an aspiration to be carbon neutral by 2030.
4. Following the Climate Emergency declaration, the council commissioned an Eco-Audit to provide baseline data of the council's carbon footprint and proposed actions to help the council become carbon neutral by 2030 and reduce the negative ecological impacts of our activities. Your officers created an Action Plan stemming from the recommendations within the audit

### **Financial Implications**

5. Any significant expenditure on environmental actions is budgeted for.

### **Strategic Objectives**

6. Accords with the Council's strategic objectives three, '*To preserve the unique identity of Chesham and promote its heritage and its environment.*'

### **Environmental Implications**

7. As detailed within the report.

### **Equality Act Implications**

8. The implications of any specific actions taken are assessed prior to works being carried out.

### **Detailed Consideration**

#### **Eco-Audit Action Plan Update**

9. Since the February 2021 update on the Eco-Audit Action Plan, the lights at the Parks Depot and the Lowndes Park toilet block have been changed to energy-saving LEDs.

10. The amount of bicycle-parking has been doubled at the Chesham Moor Gym & Swim centre to encourage people to cycle there rather than drive. A new wildflower bed has been created at the centre, and bird feeders erected.
11. The new, reduced-mowing regime has been implemented at Co-op Field, and signs have been erected at the entrances to the field to explain why the management of the field is changing. Mr Trevor Brawn, from the Chesham & District Natural History Society, is helping to monitor the flora that grows under the new regime.
12. The Parks Manager has changed the fertiliser used on our football pitches to an organo-mineral fertiliser, which promotes stimulation of soil microbes and has lower emissions of ammonia and nitrous oxide than mineral fertilisers.
13. The Elgiva staff have installed thermometers to monitor room temperatures around the theatre, and are now maximising the use of natural light in areas such as the foyer to reduce the use of artificial lighting.
14. In April, a volunteer project was led by the Chiltern Rangers (thanks to funding from the Local Area Forum) to improve areas of the cemetery for both visitors and wildlife. A new contemplation area was created at the top of the cemetery. Small ornamental cherry trees now stand in planters made from reclaimed wood. Pollinator plugs have been planted alongside the cherries to encourage insect visitors, and wildflower seed has been scattered as well. A little further down the slope, a long strip of ground next to a path has been prepared to create a display of wildflowers. For a number of years, the Friends of Chesham Cemetery have managed a small area of 19th century graves near the Chapel for wildflowers. Success has been limited, as the area was quite shady. The neighbouring landowner has recently taken out a number of trees, making this area much lighter and enabling this area to be managed for wildflowers once again. Nest boxes have been added to the Avenue of Limes and a bird-feeding station has been created near the Friends of Chesham Cemetery's Exhibition Centre by the Bellingdon Road entrance.

#### **Sewerage Update**

15. The current capacity of Chesham Sewage Treatment Works, and the added volume of flow reaching the works from groundwater infiltrating the town's sewers has resulted in more than 95 releases of diluted, but untreated sewage into the River Chess in 2021. The most recent notification of a release came on the 24<sup>th</sup> May. Your Policy and Projects Officer attended a meeting of the Chess Catchment Forum, organised by Thames Water on the 19<sup>th</sup> May, where an update was given on the current situation at the sewage treatment works and the projects underway to reduce the sewage pollution into the Chess. Your officer's notes from the meeting are **attached**.

#### **Recommendations**

**That the report be noted.**

## Chess Smarter Water Catchment Forum Meeting Notes – 15/5/21

This was the second meeting of this forum, hosted by Thames Water, and included a broad range of representatives from Thames Water, the Environment Agency, Bucks Council Flooding team, Three Rivers District Council, Chesham Town Council, River Chess Association and the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project. It is intended that we will receive email updates on a monthly basis, with meetings every two months to report on progress.

### Chesham Sewage Treatment Works

A system of 'over-pumping' at the sewage treatment works has been put in place as a temporary measure (since April 2020) to reduce the frequency and volume of sewage releases into the river. This system enables sewage sent to the treatment works' storm tanks to be pumped back into the system for treatment (sewage is sent to the storm tanks for storage when the volume of material entering the works exceeds its treatment capacity). It is estimated that this system has prevented 387,475m<sup>3</sup> of sewage polluting the river from the start of 2021 to the 30th April.

However, as a temporary system, the pumps do not have alarm telemetry connected to them, which means there can be delays in responding to problems with the pumps. Wear and tear on the pumps led to performance issues in April 2021, and it is believed that this contributed to some of the pollution events at that time. The pumps were replaced at the end of April. Modelling work showed that over-pumping will be needed until mid-June to prevent further sewage releases on dry days.

Thames Water have recently conducted their quarterly maintenance clean of the inlet works on the sewage treatment site and removed 7 tonnes of rag and grit. Rag is the term used for materials such as wet wipes and sanitary towels. Thames Water asked for help with spreading the message to residents that items such as wet wipes, sanitary towels, tampons, nappies and incontinence pads should never be flushed down the toilet, but should be bagged and put in a bin. Such items regularly cause sewer blockages and can even get through the screening process at the sewage treatment works and end up in the river. For more information on the campaign, please see their web site: <https://www.thameswater.co.uk/about-us/responsibility/bin-it>

The planned upgrade of Chesham Sewage Treatment Works in the next three years will increase the volume of sewage that can be treated and Thames Water predict that this will prevent sewage releases into the River Chess in the future.

### Groundwater Infiltration Into Chesham's Sewers

In total, 4.6 km of Chesham's sewers were surveyed to identify where groundwater is infiltrating the sewers. In 2021, it is planned to line 117 m of sewer, carry out 4 patch repairs and seal two manholes to reduce infiltration. So far, 41% of the works have been completed, but there are sites where the work cannot be completed until groundwater

levels have declined further. Work is likely to take place in July or August at these sites. Where possible, work is being carried out overnight and using 'no-dig' methods to minimise disruption. Further investigations will take place to identify other locations requiring intervention.

#### **Abstraction Reduction, River Health and Flood Risk**

Affinity Water terminated its water abstractions from the Upper Chess catchment in September 2020 and Thames Water have committed to ending groundwater abstractions from Hawridge by 2024. The resulting higher groundwater levels, combined with the reduction of groundwater infiltration into the sewers, is expected to benefit flows in the upper Chess. Both Thames Water and Affinity Water are assessing options for river habitat improvement that will be completed by 2025. There is on-going monitoring of the effect of the abstraction reductions to identify any resulting increase in groundwater flooding risks.

## **AGENDA ITEM NO: 6 – CHESHAM CEMETERY UPDATE**

**Reporting Officers:** Maria McGwynn (01494 774842) and Bill Richards (01494 583824)

### **Summary**

1. To receive an update on developments with the Cemetery administration and the number of likely interments being able to be facilitated at the current cemetery.

2. **Background Information**

The Committee last considered the matter of capacity over two years ago and it was agreed then to review the situation regularly (*3<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 - Minute No. 47*). The committee further reviewed the matter of capacity on 6<sup>th</sup> August 2018- (*Minute No. 24*) and was agreed that the Council engages with Chiltern District Council in respect to it helping to identify potential sites and with potential purchases thereof as the Local Plan proceeds.

### **Financial Implications**

3. The Council currently sets aside £5,000 per annum to be utilised for the purchase of land for a new cemetery when required but the earmarked Reserves position to be reconsidered at the next Finance Committee. .

### **Strategic Objectives**

4. None specific to the Council's Strategic Objectives.

### **Equality Act Implications**

5. None pertinent to this Report.

### **Detailed Consideration**

6. Digitalisation of the cemetery is now complete, all data has been merged into the map with regards to the deceased. Officers still have some of the old sections of the cemetery to investigate with regards to the existence of plots. While they are showing available on the maps they may not actually exist on the ground. This may require the assistance of an experienced grave digger who will be able to probe the areas in question and then once this is complete, officers can provide a very accurate picture of the life of the cemetery with regards to available grave spaces. As we currently still have spaces available this expense is not required at present for all areas but could be done in the old sections of the consecrated areas as this is where we mainly lack space. This will of course involve a lot of officer hours from the Parks and Premises Manager and the Administration Manager.

7. The Administration Manager has produced the number of possible interments based on current findings please find **attached**.
8. As can be seen, the Council will soon not be able to offer consecrated plots, as once these are used, there are no other areas that can be utilised. Although section O in the Unconsecrated section still has space, the area will not be able to be blessed as consecrated as some of the deceased are already interred as Unconsecrated and people have bought future plots as Unconsecrated so we can't suddenly change this. There have also been discussions with the Mosque Committee that section O as being Unconsecrated may be able to be used as an overflow for the Muslim Section being so close by, if needed as they are running low on space. Unfortunately, this area has been heavily used during the pandemic with 3 graves in 2020 and 4 graves in 2021 already.

The Administration Manager proposes that if we do run out of space that the unconsecrated grave can be blessed by a Church of England priest at the time of interment consequently making that grave alone technically consecrated which has already happened in past burials without complaint.

9. The Administration Manger has carried out a detailed breakdown of all interments from 2008 to present **attached** to see if there is some sort of pattern, unfortunately this is not the case as burials historically have not been predictable. Last year is a great example of this as you would think the demand for graves during a national pandemic would have been the highest yet but we used more new graves in 2010. The only explanation officers have is that due to the amount of deaths cremation was a preferred choice as it's a much quicker turnaround than burial and we could experience a flurry of ashes interment bookings and purchases later this year but this of course will not affect graves in any way only ashes plot where there is not currently a shortage. We can work out from this information an average to assist in planning which from my calculations is 9 new graves per year based on the last 13 years but again as previously mentioned this may differ based on demand.
10. At the March 2016 meeting, it was believed that the unconsecrated areas would still serve the Council for some 20 years and, to this end, it was noted that those of certain faiths wanting a consecrated grave could simply engage an ordained religious figure to undertake this procedure on the burial plot. As the digital and manual surveys paint a clearer picture, this figure may reduce. As can be seen above, the Unconsecrated assessment has dropped significantly from the 2016 figure. As previously, there are no imminent concerns about the Cemetery becoming 'full', but the 20-year scenario may be over-optimistic. The search for a new site remains problematic and the search for a new site within the town boundary to ascertain possible sites for consideration and utilisation continues.



**Recommendation**

**That the Working Group notes the current position in respect to the Cemetery.**

## **Chesham Cemetery Update June 2021**

### **Cremated Remains:**

Garden Of Remembrance: – **21 plots**

Avenue of Remembrance: – **Approx. 350 plots** – (maybe more depending on the amount that could fit on each row)

Avenue of Yew Trees – **68 plots**

Avenue of Lime Trees – **34 plots**

Shrubbery Garden – **Unlimited**

Rose Garden (2 sites) – **35 plots**

### **Muslim Section**

Adults – **100 plots**

Children – **30 Plots**

### **Unconsecrated Section.**

K- **57 plots & 1 child plot & 1 ashes space**

H – **174 plots**

O- **207 plots**

J- **207 plots**

J Child – **14 Spaces**

A – **FULL**

B – **1 Double Plot**

C – **1 Double Plot**

D – **Full**

E- **Full**

F - **4 Double plots**

G - **16 double plots**

## **Consecrated Section. – Church Of England**

This area still needs a lot of investigation. This area is lacking in space the most especially double plots.

A – Full

B – Full

C- 3 Double plots that we are aware of other areas needs further investigations

D- 14 double plots & 2 single plots we are aware off needs investigations

E – 4 Plots

F- 25 plots - 18 double & 7 single

G – 11 double plots

M – FULL

N- 23 plots 22 double & 1 single

NN – 9 plots 6 double & 3 single

# Chesham Cemetery

## Total amount of Burials & Cremations - Year on Year Comparisons

YEAR	ASHES	FULL BURIAL	TOTAL	New Burial Plots	New Ashes Plots
2006	12	15	27		
2007	9	15	24		
2008	10	16	26	15	3
2009	13	14	27	11	7
2010	14	26	40	18	5
2011	16	16	32	10	6
2012	14	10	24	4	2
2013	11	5	16	1	1
2014	17	17	34	13	4
2015	9	18	27	9	6
2016	22	12	34	8	5
2017	11	18	29	10	4
2018	13	15	28	8	5
2019	12	10	22	6	1
2020	8	14	22	13	1