



**GROUNDS & ENVIRONMENTAL COMMITTEE**  
**MONDAY, 8 MARCH 2021**

**ADDITIONAL PAPERS**

Date published: Friday, 5 March 2021

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|----------------|--|
| Agenda Item 6  | <b>ALLOTMENTS UPDATE</b><br>To receive a report on our allotments, looking at our waiting lists and to consider the recommendation/s contained therein<br>(Pages 1 - 4)  |
| Agenda Item 13 | <b>CEMETERY FEES AND CHARGES</b><br>To consider fees and charges from 1 April 2021<br>(Pages 5 - 6)  |
| Agenda Item 14 | <b>CENTRAL BEDFORDSHIRE COUNCIL RIVER CLEARANCE (ONE-YEAR REVIEW)</b><br>To receive and consider making a request to Central Bedfordshire Council, regarding the shared responsibility for clearing a section of the River Ouzel<br>(Pages 7 - 10)   |
| Agenda Item 17 | <b>PARSON'S CLOSE RECREATION GROUND</b><br><b>To receive a report regarding the Town Council objective to refurbish the play area at Parson's Close Recreation Ground to create an inclusive adventure play space and to consider the recommendation/s contained therein (to follow).</b><br>(Pages 11 - 96) |

Agenda Item 18

**TOWN COUNCIL VEHICLES**

**To consider the recommendation made by the Policy and Finance Committee on 18 January 2021 in respect of town council vehicles (to follow).**  
(Pages 97 - 100)

PLEASE BRING THE ATTACHED PAPERS TO THE MEETING IN ADDITION TO THE PREVIOUSLY CIRCULATED AGENDA.



## Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

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**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Title:** Allotments Update

**Purpose of the Report:** To receive an update on the waiting lists for town council owned allotments and to consider a recommendation to increase rainwater collection opportunities across both allotment sites.

**Contact Officer:** Ian Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services

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<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>		To provide great public open spaces with varied opportunities for sport and leisure and to exceed expectations in delivering cemetery and allotment services.
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>	√	Purchase of 120 water butts for £41.66 each (£4,999.00 total) to be taken from earmarked reserve 9106/950 - allotments with current available funds of £8,429.
<b>Human Resources</b>		
<b>Operational/Service delivery</b>		
<b>Procedural/Legal</b>	√	Statutory obligations under the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908
<b>Risk/Health and Safety</b>		

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the proposals are:

1.1 To note the report.

1.2 To note the present waiting list.

1.2 To consider and allocate up to maximum of £5,000 from earmarked reserve 9106/950 - allotments with current available funds of £8,429 to purchase 120 x Water Butt c/w lid, tap, stand and diverter kit to be given to the Leighton-Linslade Allotment Association for even distribution across both allotment sites.

## 2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The law on allotments appears in several Acts of Parliament, some more than a century old. The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 imposed a duty on councils – which remains in force, to provide allotments if six or more people say that they want them. However, there is no legal time limit to obtain an allotment.

2.2 The Town Council has two statutory allotments, one at Weston Avenue with circa 168 plots and one at Alwins Field with circa 80 plots.

## 3. LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

3.1 Parts of the Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 are still in force. In particular, section 23 of this Act lays a duty on certain councils to provide allotments.

23(1) If the council of any borough, urban district, or parish are of opinion that there is a demand for allotments...in the borough, urban district, or parish...the council shall provide a sufficient number of allotments, and shall let such allotments to persons...resident in the borough, district, or parish, and desiring to take the same

23(2) On a representation in writing to the council of any borough, urban district, or parish, by any six registered parliamentary electors or [persons who are liable to pay an amount in respect of council tax] resident in the borough, urban district or parish, that the circumstances of the borough, urban district or parish are such that it is the duty of the council to take proceedings under this Part of this Act therein, the council shall take such representation into consideration.

3.2 Where the population of a district or parish, according to the last published census, is under 10,000, the council's duty is limited to the provision of allotment gardens [Allotments Act 1950 s9(a)]. Where the population is 10,000 or upwards, the council's obligation is limited to the provision of allotment gardens not exceeding one-eighth of an acre [Allotments Act 1950 s9(b)].

3.3 The council may improve the allotment land but is under no statutory obligation to provide a particular level of services such as water or electricity.

#### **4. MANAGEMENT OF THE WAITING LIST**

4.1 Currently a waiting list is maintained by the Town Council and is operated on a strict allocation by order of inclusion principle.

4.2 This means that, the first person on the list will be the first person allocated a plot when one becomes available.

4.3 There is an expectation that tenants shall keep their allotment plot in a good state of cultivation, and free from perennial weeds. Allotment holders will also be expected to abide by the terms of their allotment tenancy agreement and allotment rules as determined by the Council and as considered necessary. Non-compliance will render their tenancy agreement terminated.

4.4 The total number of people waiting for an allotment plot as of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021 is;

Alwins Fields	84 (Longest time anyone has been waiting 2yrs 2 months) an increase from 16 since 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020.
Weston Avenue	106 (Longest time anyone has been waiting 2yrs 1 months) an increase from 23 since 3 <sup>rd</sup> March 2020.
No Preference	7

4.5 The national average is 52 people waiting for every 100 plots available, this information was collected in 2013 by The National Allotment Society.

4.6 Our waiting list is higher than the national average for first time in recent years (albeit the national average collected in 2013 is a pre-pandemic statistic). Over the last year in particular, the demand for plots has increased dramatically with demand partly attributed to the pandemic.

#### **5. RECOMMENCEMENT OF PLOT ALLOCATIONS**

5.1 The recommencement of plot allocations will start in line with HM Government's Covid-19 Response Spring 2021 – (second stage of Step 1 on 29<sup>th</sup> March to ensure that most of the traditional spring season can be utilised).

5.2 We have 14 vacant plots on Alwins Fields and 26 vacant plots Weston Avenue as of 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021. All suitable applicants will be contacted week commencing 15<sup>th</sup> March to ensure that available plots will be let as soon as we are allowed to do so.

5.3 It remains our objective to get plots cleared and allocated as soon as we can (mindful of current Covid restrictions). As a statutory function, we will continue to work hard toward meeting the needs of our residents as soon as plots are

made available.

## **6. WATER COLLECTION INITIATIVE**

- 6.1 Officers have met with representatives from the Leighton-Linslade Allotment Association and have discussed the best way to invest earmarked reserves in allotments improvements and meeting the Town Council's environmental ambitions.
- 6.2 As a rule of thumb allotments need to get at least 2.5 cm of water weekly. Water is an essential component for all plot-holders growing fruit, vegetables, herbs and flowers but it is also considered a precious resource mains water supply should be used in a reasonable and thoughtful manner by all.
- 6.3 The introduction of a positive water collection initiative by buying 120 x Water Butt c/w lid, tap, stand and diverter kits, demonstrates the true partnership relationship between the Leighton-Linslade Allotment Association and the Town Council. In doing so, it will meaningfully contribute toward the environmental ambitions of the Town Council.

## **7. CONCLUSION**

- 7.1 In conclusion, the demand for allotment plots is high and is currently outstripping available supply. However, the Town Council will continue to do everything it can to meet demand within the current parameters as laid out by covid regulations.

**End.**



## Grounds and Environmental Services Committee

**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2020

**Title:** Cemetery Fees and Charges

**Purpose of the Report:** To consider a zero increase in the 2021/2022 cemetery fess.

**Contact Officers:** Ian Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>		<b>To provide great public open spaces with varied opportunities for sport and leisure and to exceed expectations in delivering cemetery and allotment services.</b>
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>		To continue with the projected annual budget 1100/401 - £70,000 and 1101/401 - £18,000
<b>Risk management</b>		None
<b>Operational/service delivery</b>		None
<b>Legal/compliance</b>		None

### 1. RECOMMENDATIONS

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To consider and approve a zero increase in cemetery fees and charges for 2021/2022 with the expectation that this be reviewed in 12 months' time unless determined otherwise.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Leighton-Linslade Town Council provides a number of services that it levies a charge for. These charges are regularly reviewed and adhere to the Council's Standing Orders and Financial Regulations.
- 2.2 Fees & Charges are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure Council;

- Has the ability to meet corporate and service objectives;
- Has a way to manage demand through either encouraging or discouraging the use of services and/or the patterns of use of services;
- Provides clarity regarding why different charges are set for different user groups e.g. through the use of discounts/concessions;
- Has an agreed set of fees and charges that will make an important and significant contribution to achieving the Council's financial objectives.

2.3 Fees and charges represent an important source of income to the Council. There are a number of potential conflicts between raising income by increasing charges and promoting the use of the facilities Council provides particularly by vulnerable groups on a low income. The appropriate fee structure will, therefore, depend on the overall intention for that service area. The Council is responsible for managing public funds in a proper manner and should set its charges at appropriate levels.

2.4 At its meeting held 9<sup>th</sup> September 2019, the Grounds and Environmental Services Committee resolved to:

**Endorse all fees & charges for Cemeteries be increased by the September 2019 Retail Price Index (RPI) plus 1% (and rounded up to the nearest 50p before VAT)**

2.5 This is the first review since the September 2019 resolution and given current circumstances, it is considered neither fair nor reasonable to consider any kind of increase to cemetery fees and charges at the present time. In accordance with the recommendation set out at para. 1.2, a zero increase is proposed albeit this will be reviewed no earlier than 2022 unless Members determine otherwise.

**End.**





**Grounds and Environmental Services Committee**

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**Date:** 8<sup>th</sup> March 2021

**Title:** Central Bedfordshire Council River Clearance

**Purpose of the Report:** To consider the continuation (or otherwise) of shared responsibility for clearing a section of the River Ouzel.

**Contact Officers:** Ian Haynes, Head of Grounds and Environmental Services.

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<b>Corporate Objective/s</b>		<b>Objective #46 - To work with key partners on the development of the Leighton-Linslade Green Wheel.</b>
<b>Implications:</b>		
<b>Financial</b>		Creation of a £6,000 - £9,000 per annum agreement to enhance the area with better maintenance.
<b>Risk management</b>		None
<b>Operational/service delivery</b>		Some issues if undertaken during busy times.
<b>Legal/compliance</b>		Our joint obligation to biodiversity under section 40 of the Natural Environmental and Rural Communities Act 2006.

**1. RECOMMENDATIONS**

Should members be minded, the recommendations are:

- 1.1 To note the report.
- 1.2 To carefully consider the creation of a SLA (or equivalent) between CBC, Town Council and third party landholding interests in order to provide an on-going commitment to the clearing of the river Ouzel and the west bank between Leighton Road and the rear of Leighton Buzzard ALDI.
- 1.3 That the costs of clearance be equitably shared between all parties to represent landholding interest and associated responsibility.

Or

- 1.4 **To consider and stop the shared responsibility for clearing a section of the River Ouzel and inform Central Bedfordshire Council of this committee's decision.**

## **2. BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 At its meeting held 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2020 this Committee received and considered a report from Central Bedfordshire Council's Countryside Manager regarding shared responsibility for clearing a section of the River Ouzel. Central Bedfordshire Council had asked the Town Council to clear the section owned by third parties twice a year with Central Bedfordshire Council clearing it twice more.
- 2.2 This area was highly visible to the public and would benefit from enhanced clearance. Clearing of trollies and litter from the river bank would be carried out by the Town Council but no clearing from the actual water as the Town Council did not want its staff carrying this out.
- 2.3 It should be considered that this enhanced intervention by the Town Council has dramatically improved the area. However, due to the very high level of footfall this area sees, the area quickly becomes littered again.
- 2.4 All of the eastern side of the River Ouzel in this section is owned by CBC and the western section is owned by two landowners, the Town Council and third parties.
- 2.5 It is believed that the Town Council should now take the lead on directly managing this area through an enhanced service level agreement whilst still continuing to share responsibility for clearing the section owned by third parties twice a year, with CBC.
- 2.6 It can be considered that this area of town is highly visible and would benefit from enhanced clearance. However, this is not a Town Council owned area and it isn't the responsibility of the Town Council to clear.
- 2.7 This committee agreed that Central Bedfordshire Council could 'deep clean' twice a year with the Town Council completing a 'lighter clean' in between and for it to be reviewed after one-year. However, it is now believed that enhanced vegetation management of the area is required.

## **3. CONCLUSIONS**

- 3.1 There is little doubt that town council engagement in said clearance has made a huge difference to this area. The decision of otherwise to continue and formalise the arrangement is a matter for Members to decide. The principal authority would be notified of this decision thereafter.
- 3.2 Should Members be minded formalising the said arrangement, it is anticipated

that a financial commitment of circa £2,000 - £3,000 per annum would have to be made by the 3 parties involved over a three-year period. The agreement of the 3<sup>rd</sup> party has yet to be reached albeit “an in principle” acceptance has been offered up.

- 3.3 The potential £27,000 investment in the area over a three-year period could genuinely make a positive contribution to the town.

**End.**

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