



**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.**