

Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee

Date:	13 April 2021
Title:	Open Spaces Working Group
Contact Officer:	Andrea Oughton, Asset Manager

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide an update on projects.

Update

Restoring the Richness of Town Verges

2. At the Community, Leisure & Recreation Committee (CLR) meeting in October 2020 it was agreed to apply a new grass cutting / management regime to identified areas around the town on a trial basis. The programme is designed to protect key sightlines and footpaths along the outer town verges and to restore natural growth and vitality to the verges outside of these areas.
3. It is intended the project will be managed in stages. Year 1, areas are unlikely to look attractive but it is expected to see real benefits from year 2 onwards. Maintenance will be carried out by Thame Town Council with ongoing monitoring (investigation and recording of species, etc) by volunteers from Thame Green Living (TGL).
4. A site visit of all identified areas has taken place with the Asset Manager and Charles Boundy and Colin Bloxham of TGL. TGL have produced a Project Brief.
5. A useful meeting took place on 24 March 2021 with members of Chesham Town Council, the Chair of CLR, the Asset Manager and Charles Boundy (TGL). Chesham Town Council started a similar project four years ago which has been very successful.
6. A press release about the project, together with an item in the Council newsletter and social media posts have been published. Signage will be placed at all the sites informing people about the project and how to get involved if they wish to.
7. It has become clear that an additional mower with 'cut and collect' capacity will be needed to perform cuts in March and again late August / early September. A separate report will be presented to Council for consideration.

Rycote Meadow – A project to open up Rycote Meadow to public open space

8. An initial meeting of the Working Group, comprising members of TGL and the Asset Manager took place in January. A site visit with Charles Boundy, Colin Bloxham, the Asset Manager and Maintenance Supervisor took place in February.
9. The Working Group are drafting a project plan, to include (but not an exclusively), a footpath linking to the Bloor development to the north of the site and Oxford Road to the south, an inclusive entrance to the meadow from Oxford Road, wildflower, shrub and tree planting, the creation of a pond. Once completed the draft project plan will be circulated to the Open Spaces Working Group (OSWG) and nearby residents of Rycote Meadow for comment.

10. It is intended the project will be developed in stages over a three-year period. Funding will mainly be sourced from allocated s106 funds identified for this project.

Triangle Access to Moorend Lane

11. Apart from central refuges before the Aylesbury Road roundabout at the west end of Tythrop Way and just before the Risborough road roundabout to the south-east, the only safe crossing point is via the traffic light-controlled crossing leading from Queen Elizabeth Circle (QEC) to the Skate Park.
12. Between the controlled crossing and Moorend Lane a signed footpath leads from QEC via a stile to another stile on the opposite side of the road – with no safe crossing between the two. It is not possible to cross by the lights and walk along the edge of the road as the verge is narrow and overgrown.
13. However, a simple safe solution would be to unlock the gate between the Skate Park and the triangle of green open space, owned by the Town Council, at the far side of which is the public footpath that runs from the stile (referred to above) up to and around the back of the sewage works to emerge by a pedestrian access onto Moorend Lane. This green area is also identified as one of the areas to be managed as a wildflower meadow. It is proposed to open the gate on a trial basis and monitor.

Open Spaces Working Group (OSWG)

14. Following the resignation of Cllr Francis there is a vacancy on OSWG. It is intended to call for Councillor nominations to join the working group at the Annual Meeting of the Council in May.

Action:

To note the report.