

Parish Buses

On 26 June Full Council approved the immediate removal of the stolen minibus from the Council's asset register and this has been completed. The Clerk was duly authorised to negotiate the sale of the remaining minibus and it is proposed it is sold to Essex County Council for ongoing use by EFCT. Negotiations regarding the sale price are ongoing and subject to available budget at ECC. The payment from the insurer for the first bus is in the process of being transferred to the Parish Council account. Final sale terms of the second bus will be subject to Full Council approval

Co-option

After the resignation of Cllr Aradeaon, the legal process required to notify of a vacancy commenced. At this point, it is not known if a by-election will be called by a minimum of 10 residents. If a by-election is not called the Council can then co-opt a new Councillor for Grange Hill ward. A budget of £5,000 is available to go towards a by-election costs that will be incurred by the Parish. Council will be advised in September if a by-election has been called and if further virements are necessary to fund it. If no by-election has been called the Council will ask for applicants and co-opt a new member to serve as a replacement for Cllr Aradeon for the remainder of the Council's term

CCTV and security issues

Police took copies of Brook Parade footage on 15 August in relation to a local incident, the details of which have not been provided.

A man was looking through the window of Victory Hall at approx. 12:30pm on Wednesday 20 August. It was the window closest to the double fire exit doors in the hall. As Debora entered the hall from CH, his unexpected presence gave her a start, and upon being spotted by her he exited via the car park entrance. CCTV shows he was in the car park for almost 30 mins.

Inspection on Monday 11 August after an event showed three fire doors were open, apparently after an event of Friday 8th August. However, the hirer provided photographic evidence that the doors had been left locked on Friday evening.

Unauthorised access was given by a Councillor to an individual to the Community Hub on the evening of Wednesday 6 August. This individual was then left there alone and unsupervised for several hours. The chair of LFCG has been notified of this event. Given this and the subsequent issue around unlocked fire doors in VH (which is accessible from the Hub), keys to the Community Hub have been recalled and the lock is being changed to a non-copyable key. The key log shows no Councillor has been issued with keys to Victory Hall or the Community Hub.

VJ Day Commemoration

Following VJ Day, some comments have been made on social media questioning why the Parish did not display a specific VJ flag. For clarity, the Cabinet Office advised that government buildings should fly the Union Flag, which the Parish duly did. In addition, the Parish Registrar advised that the display of the Tommy soldiers was not considered appropriate for VJ Day and therefore they were not used on this occasion.

Social Media

Members are reminded that when using social media, councillors should exercise care and ensure that comments remain respectful, accurate, and in keeping with the standards expected of elected representatives. Publicly criticising agreed parish actions or officers can undermine confidence in the Council and its work. Councillors are therefore asked to remain mindful of their responsibilities and the importance of presenting a consistent and professional public message.

Flags

Recently the parish like some other areas has seen a proliferation of Union and St George flags fixed to lamp columns, traffic signs and other street furniture. However well-intentioned some displays may be, attaching items to highway assets without permission is not allowed and can present safety risks, distract road users and damage equipment. Parish officers are therefore logging sightings and reporting them to Essex Highways for removal under standard procedures. Please do not attempt to take anything down yourself, instead, report locations to the Parish Clerk so they can be actioned promptly and safely.

Officers are also mindful of the wider context. Across the country, loosely organised online campaigns have encouraged unauthorised flagging precisely because it can provoke argument and import national culture-war politics into local streets. The Parish Council should not be drawn into that dynamic. Our approach is simple and consistent - keep public spaces lawful, safe and welcoming for everyone, regardless of views. We are advising residents to avoid confrontation, decline to be filmed or drawn into debates on the roadside and use official channels to report issues. Where communities wish to celebrate civic pride, we encourage doing so through sanctioned, inclusive means rather than unsanctioned fixings to the highway.

Recruitment Updates

- *Open Spaces and Cemetery Operative:* The position is filled and Rob Ward is working for us.
- *Caretaker Position:* The position is filled and Debora Moraru is working for us.
- *Clerk Recruitment:* The role is being advertised and shortlisting will take place at the end of September with interviews in early October. The initial interview will be undertaken by the Acting Clerk and the HR consultant. Subsequent interviews will include two councillors as agreed by Full Council at the September meeting.

Employment Matters

- All job descriptions have been reviewed, redrafted and are being agreed with staff. Job titles have been updated and one employee's hours contracted hours have been increased for 35 to 37 per week as they are working 37 hours
- New employment contracts have been finalised based on agreed JD's, titles and hours.
- The online HR system has been implemented and is being populated with data
- All staff appraisals have taken place bar one partially outstanding due to queries of that individual's roles and responsibilities during the initial appraisal

Fire Risk Assessment

A fire risk assessment was completed on 17 April but had not been acted on until recently. The necessary tasks, though few, have now been assigned to the right staff members and are being addressed.

Health and Safety Assessment

Worknest visited today and have carried out a site wide risk assessment. Officers are working with them and HR to ensure continuity across documentation

Communication and Media Strategy

A communications and media strategy is currently being drafted to support the Parish Council's position regarding planning proposals affecting Green Belt land in Chigwell and will be submitted to Full Council for approval in September

Cemetery Gates

The arrangement for opening and closing in place as agreed by Full Council is ongoing and successful