

## **CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL**

### **CLERK'S REPORT - COMMUNITY SERVICES AND ASSETS COMMITTEE**

**Meeting Date:** 16 April 2026

#### **Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs)**

Members will be aware that the Council has a statutory duty to ensure that all electrical installations within Council-owned buildings are safe, compliant, and subject to regular inspection. To meet this obligation, the Council has commissioned a local, competent electrical contractor to undertake Electrical Installation Condition Reports (EICRs) across all existing Chigwell Parish Council buildings.

This action follows officers becoming aware that a previous EICR was not completed to the required standard. A formal complaint has been raised, and a recorded Letter Before Action has been issued to the contractor concerned, seeking recovery of costs totalling £1,439.96.

Progress to date is as follows:

- Cemetery EICR and required remedial works have been completed.
- Community Hub EICR is scheduled to take place next week. Due to the nature of the testing and the risks associated with reduced lighting and temporary isolation of electrical systems, this has resulted in a partial closure of the building whilst the inspection is undertaken and the report finalised.
- Victory Hall and Parish Council Offices will follow on a phased basis to ensure continuity of services and appropriate risk management.

These actions are necessary to protect the Council, staff, users, and visitors and to ensure compliance with electrical safety legislation.

#### **Health and Safety – Victory Hall Fire Escape**

An outstanding health and safety issue remains in relation to the fire escape route from Victory Hall, specifically the pathway leading from the designated fire exit to a safe point of dispersal at the front of the building.

Officers have assessed a range of available options and concluded that the most efficient, cost-effective, and environmentally responsible solution is for the works to be carried out in-house by the Council's Open Spaces Team. This approach supports the Council's biodiversity and environmental objectives by avoiding the use of tarmac or concrete and instead delivering an eco-friendly pathway solution that meets safety requirements while minimising environmental impact.

The proposed works include:

- Construction of a compliant eco-pathway from the fire exit to a safe dispersal point;

- Installation of emergency lighting along the side of the building, incorporating battery back-up to ensure visibility in the event of a power failure;
- Installation of protective fencing to prevent evacuees from accessing the rear of the building during an emergency.

The estimated cost of the works is £4,000–£5,000, with an anticipated delivery period of approximately five working days. Further technical detail and cost breakdown are provided in Appendix 3, prepared by the Open Spaces Supervisor.

A recommendation from this Committee to Full Council is sought to approve the proposed approach and associated expenditure, in order to eliminate the identified fire safety risk and ensure compliance with health and safety requirements.

### **Team Restructure – Administrative and Operational Separation**

An operational decision has been taken to restructure service delivery, formally separating administrative functions from operational functions.

Under the revised arrangement:

- All Administrative Officers will now be based at the Parish Council Offices.
- All Operational Officers will be based at the Cemetery.

Benchmarking exercises undertaken across the Epping Forest District Council area identified that Chigwell Cemetery was the only site with a Registrar permanently based on-site. In line with other Town and Parish Councils, the Registrar role has now been relocated to the Parish Council Offices.

This change delivers several benefits:

- Provides a more dignified and professional environment for bereaved relatives;
- Supports the transition to card-only payments, requiring a single payment terminal;
- Improves resilience and integration with wider administrative and financial processes;
- Extends administrative coverage beyond the previous 9:00am–2:00pm arrangements;
- Creates capacity to support the placement of an Apprentice within the operational cemetery team.

All local Funeral Directors have been formally written to and emailed, explaining the restructure and its rationale.

### **Cemetery Action Plan – ICCM Audit Response**

Members will note from the agenda and summons that an Executive Summary of the Cemetery Action Plan has been provided. This summarises a detailed and complex strategic programme developed in response to findings from the ICCM audit.

This is a significant piece of work and should not be underestimated in scale or complexity. A draft version of the full Action Plan has been shared with Committee members, and officers met for the first time on 10 April 2026 to outline the vision, approach, and expected outcomes. This initial session was deliberately designed to allow reflection before implementation.

Key points for Members to note:

- Officers will contribute to the final version of the plan.
- Prioritisation has been determined strictly on the basis of risk, with memorial safety and making-safe works identified as Priority One.
- A tactical Task and Finish Group will be established to provide weekly oversight, progress tracking, and reporting.
- There are financial implications, particularly in relation to memorial safety works and securing the cemetery out of hours.
- Security improvements are already underway, including:
  - CCTV feeds now linked to Parish Council Offices;
  - A larger CCTV monitor installed at the Cemetery Office to improve real-time site monitoring.

Full implementation of the Action Plan is expected to take between 9 and 12 months, as work must be structured and phased alongside statutory burial responsibilities and ongoing grounds maintenance across Chigwell.

Members are asked to note that delivery of this Action Plan will reduce officer capacity for other non-essential projects during the implementation period. This work is considered an absolute operational priority.

### **New Telephony System**

Members will have seen recent communications regarding the implementation of the new telephony system, which now brings the Council in line with modern public-sector standards.

Key features include:

- A professional greeting with menu options and voicemail facility;
- A hunt-group system, ensuring calls are presented to available officers rather than missed;
- Normal operating hours of 9:00am–4:00pm, Monday to Friday, excluding bank holidays;
- Ability to transfer calls seamlessly;
- Integration with officer mobiles and headsets, enabling flexible and digital call handling;
- Removal of redundant legacy landlines.

Feedback from users and officers has been positive, and the system represents a significant improvement in accessibility, resilience, and customer service.

### **Protected Wildlife – Open Spaces**

During the commencement of planned Open Spaces works, protected wildlife was identified by the Open Spaces Team. Specialist ecological advice was obtained immediately, and all works are being carried out strictly in accordance with legal and professional guidance.

As a result, certain areas of Station Green will not be subject to cutting or other works for the duration of the protection period. This item is noted for information only.

**Prepared by:**

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