

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
CLERK'S REPORT TO FULL COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 23 July 2026

Matters for Member Decision

The following items require formal determination by Members. In reaching a decision, Members are asked to consider the financial implications of each proposal, compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations and statutory duties, any health and safety requirements, environmental and biodiversity impacts, operational benefits, asset management considerations, and whether the proposed expenditure represents an appropriate and proportionate use of public funds in furtherance of the Council's objectives and responsibilities.

Limes Avenue Brick Wall Repairs (Decision Required)

Members will be aware that a section of brick wall at Limes Avenue has suffered structural failure and now requires reconstruction.

A condition assessment has been undertaken and quotations obtained for the necessary remedial works. The proposed works include:

- Demolition and removal of the damaged wall section.
- Excavation and removal of failed foundations.
- Installation of new reinforced concrete foundations.
- Chemical tying of new brickwork into the existing structure.
- Reconstruction of the wall to match the existing design and appearance.

The estimated cost of the wall reconstruction works is £4,950.

Investigations have also identified that tree roots, shrubs and associated vegetation growth adjacent to the wall have significantly contributed to the movement and failure of the structure. To address the underlying cause and reduce the likelihood of future damage, additional tree surgery works are recommended comprising:

- Removal of trees and vegetation within approximately two metres of the wall.
- Removal and grinding of all remaining stumps.
- Root management to minimise future structural impact.

The estimated cost of these additional works is £1,200.

The combined project cost is therefore estimated at £6,150.

As the wall forms part of the Council's ownership boundary, the Council has a responsibility to ensure that it is maintained in a safe condition. Officers consider that rebuilding the wall

without addressing the vegetation-related causes of the failure would represent a short-term solution and could result in additional expenditure in the future.

Officer Recommendation

That Members approve the allocation of £6,150 for the reconstruction of the Lime Avenue boundary wall and associated vegetation management works and authorise officers to instruct the contractors to proceed. Officers further recommend that both elements of the project are undertaken concurrently to provide a long-term and cost-effective solution to the structural issues identified.

Victory Hall Rear Wall Repairs (Decision Required)

Members will be aware that the plastered rear wall within Victory Hall has deteriorated over time and is now exhibiting areas of loose plaster together with two significant structural cracks.

Given the wall's location adjacent to the stage area and its regular use by hirers, community groups and event attendees, officers consider that remedial works are required to ensure the continued safety and presentation of the facility.

A quotation has been obtained for the necessary repair works. The proposed scope includes:

- Removal of all loose and defective plaster finishes.
- Installation of Expanded Metal Lath (EML) reinforcement where required.
- Repair and stabilisation of two significant cracks.
- Application of a sand and cement waterproof undercoat.
- Full skim coat finish to reinstate the wall surface.

The wall measures approximately 9 metres in length and 6 metres in height.

The total cost of the proposed works is £1,250 inclusive of materials.

Officers consider the quotation to represent good value for money and recommend that the works be undertaken at the earliest opportunity. Delaying repairs is likely to result in further deterioration of the wall surface, potentially increasing future maintenance costs and presenting a greater risk to users of the hall. The proposed works will restore the wall to a safe and serviceable condition whilst protecting the Council's asset pending any future improvement works to the building.

Officer Recommendation

That Members approve the allocation of £1,250 for the repair of the rear wall at Victory Hall and authorise officers to instruct the contractor to proceed with the works. Officers further recommend that the repairs are undertaken at the earliest opportunity to prevent further deterioration and ensure the continued safe use of the facility.

Council Chamber and Meeting Facilities (Decision Required)

As part of the Council's wider modernisation programme, several improvements have been implemented within the Council Chamber.

These include:

- New tables and chairs.
- Revised seating layout to improve public engagement.
- Councillor nameplates.
- Improved meeting presentation arrangements.
- Provision of refreshments during meetings.
- Enhanced professional appearance of the Chamber.

Branded tablecloths have also been ordered and are currently awaited.

Members previously requested officers to explore options for introducing paperless meetings using tablets. Following consultation with the Council's IT provider, the estimated cost exceeded £3,000.

Officers have therefore identified a significantly more cost-effective solution.

Proposed Improvements

- Installation of a 65-inch display screen for Members.
- Installation of a secondary screen for public viewing.
- Replacement of the existing projector arrangement.
- Relocation of the existing projector system for use at Victory Hall.
- Relocation of a CCTV viewing monitor from the Clerk's Office to the Administration Office, improving site security and visibility.

Estimated Costs

- 65-inch display screen: £400
- Secondary display screen: £80
- Brackets, installation and certification: £600

Total Cost: £1,080

This proposal would cost approximately one-third of the tablet alternative whilst:

- Reducing printing costs.
- Reducing stationery expenditure.
- Reducing confidential waste disposal costs.
- Improving public access to information.
- Supporting environmentally sustainable practices.
- Modernising Council meetings.

Officers estimate that the investment would broadly pay for itself within approximately two years through operational savings.

Officer Recommendation

Members are requested to approve expenditure of £1,080 to modernise the Council Chamber, reduce the Council's carbon footprint, improve accessibility and support greater public engagement with Council meetings.

Infrastructure Improvement Programme and Building Maintenance Reserve (Decision Required- Upon Recommendation from Finance and Governance Committee)

As part of ongoing asset management reviews, officers have identified a growing number of maintenance requirements across the Council's property portfolio.

These include:

- Structural inspection of the Parish Office fire escape staircase.
- Repairs to Parish Office guttering.
- Repairs to the Community Hub exterior wall.
- Future replacement of windows and doors at Victory Hall.
- Future replacement of windows and doors at the Community Hub.
- Ongoing maintenance requirements for Cemetery buildings and operational assets.

Currently, the Council has no dedicated Building Maintenance Reserve to fund major repairs, and lifecycle replacement works.

To support a more proactive and strategic approach to asset management, officers recommend that the Council considers establishing a dedicated Building Maintenance Reserve.

Such a reserve would help fund:

- Planned maintenance programmes.
- Health and safety works.
- Infrastructure improvements.
- Lifecycle replacement of assets.
- Large-scale repair projects.

Officers also recommend development of an Infrastructure Improvement Programme to identify future liabilities and support long-term financial planning.

Officer Recommendation

Members are requested to:

1. Note the absence of a dedicated Building Maintenance Reserve.

2. Consider establishing a Building Maintenance Reserve.
3. Instruct officers to prepare an Infrastructure Improvement Programme.
4. Consider future funding mechanisms for the reserve.
5. Receive a future report detailing infrastructure priorities and funding requirements.

Tree and Vegetation Management (Update)

Station Road Tree Encroachment- Operational Priority

Officers wish to advise Members that a complaint has been received from a resident regarding a tree situated on Parish Council land on the opposite side of Station Road. The resident has raised concerns that branches are extending towards their property and are now within proximity of a first-floor window.

Given the tree's location and the potential risk of damage to property, officers have treated this matter as an operational priority. A quotation has been received from a suitably qualified tree surgeon in the sum of £650 and officers are recommending that the required works proceed at the earliest opportunity.

Members should note that, due to the location of the tree adjacent to the highway, it may also be necessary to implement temporary traffic management measures or a road closure to undertake the works safely. Quotations for any associated traffic management requirements have not yet been obtained, as the arboricultural quotation was only received shortly before publication of this report. Officers will investigate these requirements further and, should additional expenditure be necessary, will report back accordingly or seek delegated authority as appropriate.

Dolphin Court Boundary Vegetation

The Council has also received representations from four residents of Dolphin Court regarding vegetation and tree growth along the boundary of Parish Council-owned land adjoining their properties. Whilst maintenance works were undertaken in this area several months ago, residents have advised that certain trees and vegetation continue to encroach towards their properties and impact upon their outlook and enjoyment of their homes.

Officers will undertake a further site assessment to determine the extent of any encroachment, identify any necessary remedial works and obtain quotations where appropriate. A report containing recommendations and associated costs will then be presented to Members for consideration.

Brook Way Fallen Tree

Members are further advised that a tree located on Parish Council land adjacent to Brook Way has recently fallen and requires assessment and removal by a suitably qualified tree surgeon. Quotations for the necessary works are currently being obtained and will be presented to Members for consideration once received.

A further update will be provided to Council as assessments are completed and any additional quotations are received, enabling Members to determine the most appropriate course of action in each case.

Parcel Lockers - Victory Hall and Parish Offices (Update)

I am pleased to report that the Council has secured commercial agreements for the installation of parcel locker facilities at both Victory Hall and the Parish Offices.

Following site assessments and negotiations, agreements have been completed with YEEP and Evri. The YEEP parcel locker is now installed and operational adjacent to Victory Hall, whilst the Evri locker has been approved and is awaiting installation.

The Victory Hall locker is entirely self-sufficient and does not require connection to Council utilities, resulting in no ongoing electricity costs or operational liabilities. The Parish Office installation requires a small electrical connection, which has been factored into the commercial arrangements.

The agreements are expected to generate approximately £2,000 per annum in additional income over an initial three-year term, with payments made quarterly. Thereafter, the arrangements will continue a rolling monthly basis.

To maximise the benefit of the increased footfall generated by the lockers, officers also intend to install a marketing noticeboard on the exterior wall of Victory Hall. The noticeboard will promote the hall and its facilities, including room hire opportunities, kitchen facilities and hire charges. This will help raise awareness of Council services amongst residents and visitors who may otherwise be unfamiliar with the venue.

The project represents a positive example of how Council assets can be utilised to generate additional income whilst providing a convenient service to residents. Officers will continue to explore similar opportunities and report further proposals to Members as they arise.

That Members note the update and agree that income generated from the parcel locker agreements be allocated to the Infrastructure Improvement Programme and Building Maintenance Reserve to support future investment in Council assets and facilities.

Parish Minibus Disposal (Update)

I am pleased to report that the Council's recovered former minibus has now been sold through Mannheim Auctions.

Following deduction of auction fees, net proceeds of around £9,500 have been received.

When combined with the previously received insurance settlement of approximately £19,000 relating to the theft of the Council's second vehicle, the Council now holds approximately £28,500 associated with this matter.

Officers recommend that these funds remain ring-fenced within Council reserves pending future Member consideration.

The disposal of the vehicle and receipt of the associated funds effectively brings closure to a matter that has been ongoing for some time. Our asset register will be updated.

The Paddocks (Update)

Following reports concerning a gathering at The Paddocks, officers visited and met with the organiser.

The event had been organised by a local resident and was attended primarily by nearby families and members of the local community.

Words of advice were provided regarding future use of the site, and the organiser was reminded of the environmental sensitivities of the location and the need to engage with the Council where appropriate.

The gathering concluded at approximately 9.00 pm and an inspection undertaken the following morning confirmed that the site had been left clean and free from litter.

Officers will now arrange for suitable signage to be installed advising visitors that:

- Barbecues are prohibited.
- Bouncy castles and similar structures are not permitted.
- The Paddocks is a nature-focused area.
- Only designated pathways are routinely maintained.
- Residents should contact the Parish Council if in doubt.

These signs will be designed and installed over the coming weeks.

Members for consideration once received.

A further update will be provided to Council as assessments are completed and any additional quotations are received, enabling Members to determine the most appropriate course of action in each case.

Community Hub Operational Arrangements and Interim Terms of Use (Update)

As previously reported to both Full Council and the Finance and Governance Committee, officers have implemented contingency arrangements to ensure resilience within the Cemetery Service during periods of annual leave and staff absence within the Open Spaces Team. This approach has enabled the Council to maintain service continuity and avoid turning away cemetery business at a time when considerable effort has been invested in strengthening relationships with funeral directors and service users.

To support these arrangements, staff have undertaken additional responsibilities outside their usual roles to address operational pressures and maintain service delivery. This includes the Caretaker helping with cemetery administration tasks, specifically the updating of cemetery records within Scribe.

For clarity, cemetery administration is currently undertaken through the following process:

- Administrative staff manage public enquiries and telephone calls.
- Open Spaces Team operatives undertake grave selection activities.
- The Responsible Financial Officer manages the official administrative processes.
- The Clerk provides the final authorisation and formal sign-off under temporary delegated arrangements.

Members will recall that these temporary arrangements were introduced to address previously identified single points of failure within the cemetery administration function. The revised process has operated effectively and has improved service resilience whilst longer-term arrangements are addressed through our new cemetery regulations.

Officers also wish to draw Members' attention to the significant efforts being made by staff to maintain service standards during this period. The Caretaker has undertaken additional duties beyond their contracted role to support operational priorities. Whilst no request has been made for additional remuneration, it is considered good employment practice for the Council to recognise and offer payment at the standard hourly rate for hours worked beyond contractual obligations, given the contribution being made to maintaining service delivery.

In addition, concerns have recently been raised by councillors associated with the Community Hub regarding aspects of the Caretaker's workload and responsibilities. Officers wish to clarify that the Caretaker has continued to undertake routine cleaning of the Community Hub each Friday and remains committed to supporting the facility. However, it is considered reasonable and appropriate that users of the Community Hub operate under clear terms and conditions of use, in the same way as hirers of Victory Hall and other Council facilities.

The introduction of such arrangements would provide clarity regarding responsibilities for the condition of the building during periods of use and ensure that users are accountable for maintaining agreed standards. This is considered particularly important given the level of activity within the building and the need to ensure Council resources are utilised appropriately.

The Clerk has discussed these matters with the Limes Farm Community Champion and seeks Council approval to work collaboratively with the Limes Farm Community Group to establish a clear and mutually agreed set of interim terms of use. This is especially relevant in light of the proposed building works and the transitional arrangements that will be required before, during and after the project. Members should note that a significant amount of equipment,

materials and general clutter within the building will need to be reviewed and, where appropriate, removed as part of these preparations.

Accordingly, Members are asked to delegate authority to the Clerk for a period of three months to establish and implement interim terms and conditions of use for the Community Hub, in consultation with relevant stakeholders. This will support the effective management of the facility during the transition period and allow officers to bring forward a more comprehensive long-term occupancy and usage agreement for Council consideration following completion of the proposed works.

Members are also asked to note and acknowledge the contribution of officers who have undertaken additional duties and reprioritised workloads to maintain service delivery. These arrangements represent a cost-effective interim solution, whilst ensuring appropriate governance, operational resilience and clear responsibilities regarding the use of Chigwell Parish Council's Community Hub.

Subject Access Request (SAR) Update

Members are asked to note that an invoice in the net sum of £480 has been received from the external company engaged to assist the Council in responding to the Subject Access Request previously reported to the Finance and Governance Committee.

This payment relates to work undertaken to date in connection with the request. Members will be advised accordingly should any further costs be incurred as the matter progresses or if additional support is required to bring the process to completion.

Clerk's Annual Leave (Reminder)

For Members' information, my approved annual leave dates are as follows:

- 3 August 2026
- 7 August 2026 to 14 August 2026 (inclusive)
- 21 August 2026
- 28 August 2026

Appropriate arrangements will be in place to ensure continuity of service during these periods.

Prepared by:

Jason Selvarajah MSc
Clerk & Proper Officer
Chigwell Parish Council