

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL
COMMITTEE REPORTS AND UPDATES

COMMITTEE:	Community & Environment		
MEETING DATE AND TIME	31st March 2022 7.00pm	LOCATION	Town Hall
REPORT FROM	J MacArthur - Communities and Marketing Manager and Deputy Chief Officer		
AGENDA ITEM	18		
REPORT TITLE	Chatty Benches		
Background	<p>Congleton Town Councillors have asked officers to investigate installing some ‘Chatty Benches’ in Congleton. ‘Chatty Benches’ have been added to in towns and villages across the UK. The idea is that you brand a bench with a plaque making it clear that people sitting on the bench are happy to talk.</p> <p>Cheshire East Ansa has recently installed four Happy to Talk benches across Cheshire East – in parks in Crewe, Macclesfield and Sandbach.</p> <p>Congleton Town Council Officers have assessed this as a relatively easy project which if councillors wanted could be installed in Congleton. We are aware that there are a number of benches that are not currently sponsored and that are within easy distance of other benches so that someone wanting to sit down is not forced to sit on a ‘happy to talk’ bench if they want to be left alone. Care will be taken to make sure any plaque is flush with the bench to avoid problems with clothing.</p>		
Proposal	<p>That if the Town Councillors wish to go ahead and create ‘Happy to Talk’ benches, that they delegate responsibility to the Streetscape Manager and Communities and Marketing Manager to develop a plan to install at least one ‘Happy to Talk’ bench in each of the following locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Congleton Park • Congleton Town Centre • Congleton Community Garden • Moody Street Garden • Margaret’s Place • And speak to the Trustees of Astbury Mere to see if they would be happy to make one of its benches a Happy to Talk Bench. <p>Funding for the plaques can be met from the Tourism budget and is expected to be less than £300.</p>		

Environmental	Minimal increase in carbon footprint as materials will be supplied locally
Equality	This project is aimed at addressing loneliness and isolation. Many people can go days without talking to another person. Having a passing conversation on a bench with a stranger can be therapeutic and can make someone's day that bit brighter.
Financial	The production of the plaques can be met from the Tourism budget.
Decision Requested	For the Town Council to support the proposal to install Happy to Talk benches and to delegate the delivery of the project to Streetscape with the Communities and Marketing team.