

CONGLETON TOWN COUNCIL

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE HELD ON 11th November 2021

For the papers discussed at the meeting, please see the [Meeting Agenda of the Community & Environment Committee 11th November 2021](#)

PRESENT:

Committee members:

CLlr Kay Wesley (Chair)

CLlr Sally Ann Holland (Vice Chair)

CLlr Suzy Firkin

CLlr Amanda Martin

CLlr Robert Moreton

Ex Officio member: CLlr Margaret Gartside (Deputy Mayor)

Non-Committee Members: Cllrs Robert Douglas and David Brown

Also present: Congleton Town Council Officers: David McGifford and Jackie MacArthur,
One member of the press, one Cheshire Police Officers and three members of
the public, one of whom spoke at Public Questions.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies for absence were received from:

Committee Members: Cllrs Dawn Allen, Paul Duffy, Jean Parry and Mark Rogan

Ex Officio Member: CLlr Denis Murphy (Mayor)

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

CE/31/2122 Resolved to approve the [minutes of the Community & Environment Committee held on 23rd September](#) as a correct record.

3. Declarations of Interest

Councillors Sally Holland and Robert Moreton declared a non-pecuniary interest on any matters relating to Cheshire East Council.

4. Outstanding Actions

See Agenda item 8 for any outstanding actions for the Community and Environment Committee.

5. Questions from Members of the Public

Questions were raised by Jackie Kay who was present at the meeting and Olga Whitmore who was unable to attend and has been sent answers. The questions related to the Congleton Tree Group and how and where trees are planted, what consultation takes place, what happens when people object, who leads the Congleton Tree group and where people can find out more about it. The full set of questions and answers can be viewed in Appendix 1.

There is also more information about the Congleton Tree Group on the Climate and Nature Emergency page on the Town Council website.

6. Urgent Items

Cllr Kay Wesley raised a concern that there is inadequate provision for people in Congleton to get a COVID booster and that travelling out of town to get a booster is a big deterrent to many of our elderly residents. The Clinical Commissioning Group has been contacted by the Town Council and Congleton Partnership's Senior Forum requesting that booster sessions are held in our town.

7. Cheshire Police

Sergeant Paul Brunton from Cheshire Police gave a verbal update on Policing matters affecting Congleton, please see Appendix 2.

8. Updates Paper from previous Community and Environment Committee

CE/32/2122 Resolved to note the updates paper with items from the Community and Environment Committee held on 23rd September 2021. Items included Elizabeth Statue (closed), Civic Awards 2021 (closed) Launch of e-learning, Green Tree House Social Supermarket (closed) Bath Vale entrance, Action against Inconsiderate Parking (closed), Bus Survey Feedback(closed).

Action: E-learning needs more promotion.

9. Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group

CE/33/2122 Resolved to receive the [notes of the Anti-Social Behaviour Working Group held on the 16th September 2021.](#)

10. Integrated Transport Working Group

CE/34/2122 Resolved to receive the [notes of the Integrated Transport Working Group held on the 8th October 2021.](#)

11. Congleton In Bloom Working Group

Received a verbal update from the Congleton in Bloom Working Group regards the 2021 results and the Volunteer thank you evening. Committee wanted to thank the In Bloom team, all the volunteers and the Town Council Streetscape team for all their work. Fantastic that Congleton received gold and was the Best Large Town in the North West.

12. Congleton Green Working Group

CE/35/2122 Resolved to receive the [notes of the Congleton Green Working Group held on the 20th October 2021.](#)

13. 750 Year Celebration Working Group

CE/36/2122 Resolved to receive the [notes of the 750 Year Celebration Working Group held on the 7th October 2021.](#)

14. White Ribbon Working Group

Received a verbal update from the White Ribbon Working Group on future plans including plans for the 16 Days of Action following the official White Ribbon Day on the 25th November. More help required for the stall at the Makers Market on the 27th November. Councillors can contact Cllr Hemsley to volunteer.

15. Christmas in Congleton 2021

CE/37/2122 Resolved to note the report on activities planned for Christmas 2021. Committee gave a formal thank you to Martha Hayes, the Town Centre and Events Officer for her tremendous work on Congleton events over the past few years.

16. Green Fayre and Climate Week

CE/38/2122 Resolved to receive the report on the Green Fayre and Climate Week.

Action to explore initiating a '*Citizen's Assembly for Climate*' to engage more people.

17. Presentation on Climate Emergency Measures

CE/39/2122 Resolved to receive and discuss the presentation on measures and actions taken since Congleton Town Council signed a Climate Emergency in October 2019.

[The report and presentation on Climate Emergency Measures can be located as an additional agenda item on the Town Council's website.](#)

**Cllr Kay Wesley
(Chair)**

APPENDIX 1

Agenda Item 4. Questions from Members of the Public.

We have received two sets of questions. One set from Jackie Kay, from the Congleton Climate Action Group and one set from Olga Whitmore. The questions relate to the activities of the Congleton Tree Group.

Paraphrased questions from Jackie Kay

- 1. Who decides where trees will be planted and is this in full agreement with CTC?**
- 2. Who decides which residents will be consulted and if for example it is on CTC owned land why all Congleton residents are not consulted?**
- 3. What is the policy when residents object. Is there a CTC policy to fully commit to the proposed tree planting or is it just a statement of support, if tree planting is stopped due to objections what is the policy for other Congleton residents to object to this decision and possibly reverse it?**

And two paraphrased questions from Olga Whitmore

- 4. Who is responsible for the trees once planted?**
- 5. Who leads the Congleton Tree group and how can people find out more about their actions?**

BACKGROUND:

As part of the Climate Emergency, Congleton Town Council agreed to support a tree planting project in Congleton and the surrounding area, with an ambitious project of 30,000 trees (one for each resident)

A Tree group was formed under the umbrella of the Congleton Sustainability Group (CSG) with the support of Cheshire Wildlife Trust (Adam Linnet) and the advice of an experienced landscape architect Ruth Benson. The plans are drawn up by Ruth Benson (as a landscape architect) she researches the soil in the areas and how the area is used and then chooses appropriate native trees and a suitable planting density to reflect the nature of the site. Glen Williams and Margaret Gartside usually deliver the leaflets. Congleton Town Council's Streetscape Development Manager, Ruth Burgess, supports the group helping to establish land ownership and obtaining site plan approvals from Cheshire East Council.

1. Deciding where planted

Locations for trees have come about through local knowledge and approaches from local people. To date, the majority of tree planting has been on Cheshire East land and plans need to be approved by CEC and supported by the majority of people in the locality before planting happens. Some locations that look ideal to the public are not suitable for planting due to underground services – you cannot plant within 6m of a mains gas pipe.

2. Deciding on Consultation

Although we understand in most of Cheshire East trees are just planted, in Congleton Cheshire East Council has asked that the tree group gains support from the majority of people in a locality before planting trees. The tree group supports this principle. Before any consultation is carried out the plans are shared with Cheshire East Council. CTC does not own any land. We have taken locality to mean people in the immediate vicinity, as you would with a planning application – but plans are also placed on the Partnership and Town Council website. The group is keen to work in areas where the neighbours support the project and the trees.

3. What happens when we receive objections?

When objections are received, the first thing is to ask why and what can be done to mitigate the issue. Sometimes it has been a different type of tree, changing the amount of trees to be planted or slightly varying the location. Where there have been a large number of objections, or no support received then the scheme will not go ahead. It is important that the people living in the immediate area are happy with the planting and in many cases willing to help care for the trees.

4. Who is responsible for maintaining the trees once planted?

As Cheshire East's agents for the area Streetscape will be responsible for the maintenance of trees which are agreed and planted by the Tree Group. As part of the agreement between CTC and CEC, the Town Council is responsible for minor tree works on trees on Cheshire East land until they are more than 380mm in diameter – then they become the responsibility of Cheshire East Council. When working with volunteers who live near-by to planting it is great when neighbourhood volunteer groups are formed to keep an eye on the trees.

5. Who is the leader of the Tree Planting Group and what is the main website for the group? Where can residents see about planting events in November and December?

There is no overall leader of the Tree Planting Group. Different members lead on different aspects of the project and form a team. There is a Facebook page which is regularly updated with helpful tips and volunteer dates, there is no group leader, but team members lead in different aspects of the group. Planting events in November and December have been issued on the tree groups Facebook page, are on the Partnership Website and will be placed in a more prominent location on the Town Council's website.

Additional questions from Olga

1. Is it correct that the plans to plant trees at Thirlmere Court were shelved? If they did, why? Can I ask what arguments residents presented against trees being planted?

Plans for planting at Thirlmere Court were not supported and will not be going ahead as planned as the team concentrates efforts on supported schemes. The scheme may be revisited next year with an alternative scheme based more around hedge planting.

2. Is CTC going to spend £2K or similar amount of money on a felled Christmas tree which will last 2 weeks and be discarded after the festive season?

When the redevelopment of the pedestrian area took place, the idea of a permanent living Christmas tree was explored but found not to be feasible. Purchasing, installing, decorating, and removing the Town's Christmas tree costs around £1500 per year and this is either fully or partially sponsored. The tree comes from sustainably managed forests, the branches are used to for mulch afterwards and the larger wood chopped, dried, and used for fuel. The tree is in place for approximately 6 weeks. Decorating the town for Christmas is part of promoting and supporting our local businesses and attracting people into town at Christmas.

APPENDIX 2 - UPDATE FROM CHESHIRE POLICE - ITEM 7

Changes to areas of responsibility and priority period reflected in data – so year on year comparisons no longer compare like with like. From next meeting will just bring figures for Congleton East and Congleton West. These figures are for Congleton East/West, Alsager and Odd Rode. Note that the new Chief Superintendent for the Policing Unit is Claire Jesson.

Drugs and Alcohol

WEST – Drink Spiking Series (4 in period, 8 incidents total). No associated sexual assaults or other crime and no reports of injections to date.

- Continue to work with PubWatch and our licensees
- Force Funding for testing kits + Town Councils
- Prevention/Education campaign (online and sixth forms)
- Signage up in the clubs/pubs – what to do.
- Regular VLP (Visiting Licenced Premises) and Night Time Economy patrols. .
- Op Empower begins 03/12 – safety bus (IDVA/Nurse/Police) plain clothes officers in premises.

Anti-Social Behaviour: 54 incidents

ASB Congleton hotspots:

- Reduction at Bromley community centre (1) still on our patrol plan.
- Support for Testers (swab squad) who report being abused in Congleton.
- Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) - Plain clothes officers outside the high schools following 1 Incident of girl being followed – 3 arrested.

Op Treacle - force response to bonfire night and Halloween

- PCSOs either given safety/ASB prevention presentation at primaries or given resources to school to do their own.
- Additional staff on duty
- Low Demand for Congleton: 3 Anti-Social Behaviour incident including a fire in woods
- Busy Night-time Economy saw no incidents

Domestic Abuse Incidents: 48

Total Sexual Offences: 14

Hate

Four Incidents reported (Learning difficulties/Race/Gender/Nationality)

Congleton Priorities

1. Drug Enforcement EAST
2. Reports of Spiking WEST
3. Violence against women and young girls ALL

AOB

Q. Bath Vale

- No incident since 02/11 then 27/09 - request to report crimes to 101.