

## Public Questions - APPENDIX A

Public questions at Full Council on Wednesday 21 June 2023:

1. “During the past few weeks I have received a number of comments from concerned residents in relation to the grass cutting in my Cllr division of Cepen Park and Hunters moon especially in Cepen Park South, Queens Crescent and the Derriads area. The main issue is around the public open spaces and the ability of the general public to access them because of the length of grass residents are concerned about unpicked up dog faeces due to the grass being long and the ability to move freely around and play sports and picnic because of the length of grass and weeds. I must also confirm that the local community I represent fully understands the councils steps to support the wildlife and improve the environment but it also needs to understand the needs of its local residents.

Question 1, Would the town council consider reviewing the current policy on grass cutting in relation to the Public open spaces to ensure all the community needs are being met?

Question 2, When will the whole grass cutting policy come up next for review?

Question 3, How will the town council ensure that the community and local residents can actively be part of the next review of the grass cutting policy to help the council not only develop its policy but to ensure the community has its support but has identified areas where the policy can or should be amended?”

2. I am, at this moment in time, very unclear about what the future holds for the Island Park, but I have grave concerns that the redevelopments that are proposed for Emery Gate, by Acorn Developments, could result in removal of trees and paved terracing areas extending towards the riverside.

Our beautiful Island Park is a well-used community space where the folk festival, the River Festival, Pride, and other events during the year take place. It offers a shaded green space to relax in during the summer. I have talked to young people who use this area in the evenings and those who use it as a place to have a relaxed lunch break in the fresh air. It is valued by many who live here and those who come to visit.

It contains a range of mature, varied and beautiful trees along the riverside and that screen the park from the shopping centre. ( see below) Together with the native hedging, which in my opinion could be extended the full length of the fence, and the grassed areas, the Island park also supports a

range of wildlife which helps maintain and increase our biodiversity and contributes towards reducing carbon.

Please could you all support the motion proposed by Councillors Matt Short and Gemma Grimes which will hopefully help to stress to Wiltshire Council how important and valued our Island Park is to so many of us, and ensure that it remains the beautiful, natural and community asset that it is.

3. “When I became aware of climate change, I learnt about the importance of trees as the greatest living capture of carbon as well as being the lungs of the planet. We have lost so much forest already; we can’t afford to lose one more tree. Trees help keep soil healthy, trees can benefit your mental health, trees are home to hundreds of species that help our ecosystems, trees give oxygen, trees are natural air conditioning units - the evaporation from a single tree can produce the cooling effect of air conditioners operating 20 hours a day. Trees can live forever so we should not kill them.

Trees are one of the things that keep us alive, without trees breathing would be dangerous, the air left for marine plants would be filthy and we would have to wear gas masks for the rest of our lives. If you want to help our group, vote for the trees.”

4. “Has anyone looked at Cepen Park North recently? Cycle paths: There are only two signs indicating Cycle Paths, they are in the Willowbank/Blackberry Close area. Nothing noticeable is anywhere else. Most people are unaware that the ‘Red’ paths are actually cycle paths and pedestrian paths and when you are cycling along and you do get some strange looks and some objectional calls like you’re on the pavement but you’re not, you’re on a cycle path - there is no signage around where they are. Whilst cycling on some of them yesterday (20th June) we had to duck under overgrown trees, brambles, and swerving around overgrown hedges on these paths, in some cases less than a metre wide on what should be a 3-metre path and the normal pedestrian paths are just as bad.

The open spaces around Cepen Park North are completely overgrown by tall grasses, some have been cut in the middle but access to them is virtually impossible because even the paths leading onto them are overgrown. When these are cut, if they are cut, the grass is just normally left there, it’s not grass it’s just tall bits of weeds, that kills whatever is left behind. It’s just a mess.

The landscaping appearance has declined over the last twenty years due to the actions of Wiltshire and this Town Council wasting money outsourcing the work and then bringing back the work. We’ve seen it, we’ve been there, we’ve been complaining about it for those 20 years. This has left us with

brambles, chickweed, nettles and it is completely destroying Cepen Park North's "Award Winning Landscape" as mentioned in the national press, it doesn't anymore. There are pockets of tidiness where some of the local residents do appear to try and keep their area clean and tidy but most people have probably given up because they are fighting a losing battle due to the disgraceful landscaping.

You cannot believe how frustrated everyone feels. We are not asking for it to look like John Coles park, just something that looks as if it is cared for. We used to have yearly 'Litter Picks' which used to be a great gathering of the local residents but you can't do it nowadays because you can't actually get in there to see any litter.

We were promised change 15 years ago and more recently when the Town Council took over the landscaping, it hasn't happened and to us, no one appears to accept the responsibility of actually clearing it up. We are willing to meet with any councillors that are willing to come and have a look and we will show you a lot of desolation. Thank you. Can I just say that I am ashamed of where I live, I don't want to live in Chippenham anymore and I don't want to be in Cepen Park North, it's appalling."

## Not Part of the Meeting - APPENDIX B

### Responses to Public Questions - Full Council 21 June 2023

1. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. The grass cutting strategy was adopted in May 2022, small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season. Please note that the strategy is affected by weather conditions, the impact of delays is that it takes time to catch up due to continuous growth. The strategy is an ongoing document and small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season. This will be based on evidence and knowledge of the practical grass-cutting regime as it has developed, this will include residents' views. The Town Council encourages feedback through the reporting system 'Report it'.
2. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Council supported the Councillor motion for the Town Council Chief Executive to write to the Chair of Wiltshire Council and the Chair of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of Island Park.
3. Thank you for your comments at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Council supported the Councillor motion for the Town Council Chief Executive to write to the Chair of Wiltshire Council and the Chair of the Wessex Regional Flood and Coastal Committee to protect and enhance the special environmental characteristics of Island Park.
4. Thank you for your comments and questions asked at Full Council on 21 June 2023. Chippenham Town Council only undertake the grounds maintenance of these pathways, this includes cutting back encroaching undergrowth from the pathway and low hanging branches, the main cutting back is undertaken during the Autumn/Winter maintenance programme any spring and summer growth is given a light cutting back due to the bird nesting season should you see any encroachment this can be reported on the Town Council's 'Report it' system, this can be found on our website here: <https://www.chippenham.gov.uk/report-it/>. These reports are monitored by the Head of Environmental Services who then prioritises works following inspections.

Two members of the Environmental services team are currently cutting back encroaching undergrowth from paths in Cepen Park North following other reports.

Signage for cycle paths, repairs or new markings that are required remain the responsibility of Wiltshire Council and should be reported on the Mywilts app or emailed to: [westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk)

The Town Council adopted a grass cutting strategy in 2022, this is an ongoing document and small reviews are undertaken at the end of each season, your comments have been noted and will be considered for the next review. Chippenham Town Council have made improvements to the estate since taking over the Grounds Maintenance responsibility from Wiltshire Council in 2019. As the grass cutting strategy outlines, Chippenham Town Council are working towards finding a balance of regular maintained areas and areas that benefit wildlife.

Pavements that are overgrown by private residents' hedges or shrubs can be reported to [westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk](mailto:westernhighways@wiltshire.gov.uk). Should encroachment endanger pedestrians using the highway, Wiltshire Council can instruct residents to cut this back.

Chippenham Town Council have a street scene team as well as a grounds maintenance team who work tirelessly emptying bins and litter picking all the housing estates within the Chippenham boundary, but this unfortunately does not deter ongoing littering.