

RECORD OF OFFICER DECISION

APPROVAL FOR THE TEMPORARY CLOSURE OF COUNCIL CHAPELS

Decision made

To approve the temporary closure of council owned chapels at Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury Chapels.

Made by: Parvis Khansari – Director - Highways and Environment

Background

1. Pursuant to paragraph 4 of Part 3 Section D, the Directors of Wiltshire Council are empowered to take all necessary decisions in cases of emergency. This decision is being taken by Parvis Khansari using these powers in circumstances where the Director concerned believes that there is a risk of damage to property, a threat to the health or wellbeing of an individual and/or that the interests of the Council may be compromised if this decision is not otherwise taken.

Reason for decision

2. This decision would in other circumstances be taken by the relevant Cabinet Member. However, in circumstances where the Cabinet Member is unable to meet to expedite its functions in a timely manner during the COVID-19 pandemic, this decision is being taken in accordance with the power referred to in paragraph 1 above. This decision will be reported to the next meeting of Cabinet.
3. Wiltshire Council owns and manages seven cemeteries in the former West Wiltshire District Council Area. The cemeteries at Bradford on Avon, Trowbridge and Westbury have chapels within their boundaries which under normal circumstances can be booked by mourners to conduct funeral services. The chapels are not regularly booked and at the time this decision was made, no future chapel bookings had been made.
4. In light of measures brought in by Central Government, the council was required to consider how to facilitate funerals at its cemeteries whilst ensuring that social distancing could be observed. It is considered that the chapels are not large enough to allow even a very small number of mourners to be at least 2m apart from each other. The council also has no running water at the chapels to allow mourners to wash their hands before and after the chapel is used.
5. Government guidance has also been issued advising that places of worship should be temporarily closed.
6. Mourners can conduct graveside services and no further chapel booking requests have been received. The council has received no complaints from Funeral Directors or families regarding this decision.

7. I confirm that in making this decision I have considered the following in line with Wiltshire Council's Constitution: **(Please insert 'Yes' / 'No' / 'Not Applicable' and any other comments necessary to evidence the issue identified has been addressed)**

Key decision requirements	Yes
Views of relevant cabinet member(s), committee chairman, area board(s)	Yes
Consideration of the area boards and delegated decision checklist for officers on the issue of when and how to involve local councillors and area boards in decisions about local services	Yes
Implication of any council policy, initiative, strategy or procedure	Yes
Consultation in accordance with requirements and expectations of consultation with the public	Yes
Range of options available	Yes
Staffing, financial and legal implications	Yes
Risk assessment	Yes
Involvement of statutory officers and/or directors	Yes
Regional or national guidance from other bodies	Yes
The council's constitution	Yes
This contract is suitable for execution under the e-signature process.	N/A

Conflict of Interest

8. Not applicable

Other options considered

9. Continue to allow chapels to be used. This was rejected as no running water to allow mourners to wash their hands, and the chapels are not large enough to allow social distancing to be observed.



Made by:

Parvis Khansari, Director – Highways and Waste

Date: 24 April 2020