

Report

Report subject: New Cemetery - Update

Report to: City Area Committee (Community)

Date: Tuesday 25th March 2008

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1. Introduction:

- 1.1. The Committee will be aware that for some time now Officers have been searching for land to provide a new cemetery for the City.
- 1.2. This report gives an update as to the current position in light of recent developments

2. Background:

- 2.1. The Devizes Road cemetery has been full for some time now, the London Road cemetery is virtually full with odd spaces being found in order to provide some space when absolutely necessary.
- 2.2. In the past 2 years, a number of letters have been sent to all known local land owners, estate agents etc highlighting the seriousness of the shortage and asking them to contact Officers in the event of suitable land becoming available for purchase. No leads have been forthcoming.
- 2.3. In addition, City planning applications have been monitored to see if any potential sites might become available - again nothing has been identified.
- 2.4. Realistically, there have only ever been 3 possible new locations identified
 - 2.4.1 St Andrew's Church land, Laverstock - the Committee may recall that this location appeared quite promising but eventually the church withdrew the offer in light primarily of objections locally from the Laverstock PC, residents nearby and the Laverstock sports club.
 - 2.4.2 Fugglestone Red - this was a site identified as part of the Wilton estate's desire to develop land in their ownership for housing etc adjacent the Fugglestone / Bemerton Heath area. The proposal was refused by the Local Plan inspector in 2003 and with it went the cemetery opportunity.
 - 2.4.3 Cow Lane - this has been the most promising site of the three. However there have always been issues with the water table and proximity to bore holes managed by the Environment Agency. After a significant amount of exploratory and background work, the Environment Agency have now confirmed that they would object to any planning application submitted for a cemetery in this location. Realistically this stops this location from being progressed further as the Agency is a critical and primary consultee for a project such as this.

3. What Next?

- 3.1. As a result of the Environment Agency's statement referred to at 2.4.3 above, the Committee is once again faced with a need for cemetery space and no apparent solution.
- 3.2. Since the Agency's letter dated 10th January however, a couple of reasonably positive situations have arisen as follows



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- 3.2.1 The development of the Fugglestone area owned by the Wilton estate (referred to at 2.4.2 above) has again been identified for inclusion in the LDF currently being progressed by the Forward Planning Department. This provisionally includes a new cemetery site. However, it is unlikely that any new facility could come on line before around 2015
 - 3.2.2 Staff at the Crematorium have re-surveyed the London Road cemetery and have identified 2 areas for possible burial use.
 - The first involves the removal of the existing roadway which goes through sections K and G. This would then need soiling to rebuild levels and seeding before being available for use. Removal of this section will not hinder vehicles being able to drive around the cemetery in a large circle, it may mean further to walk though for visitors to graves in the vicinity of the removed road.
 - The second would be to use the second half of section W near the main access gates. This area would require the removal of a large concrete base and footings from a building removed long ago.
 - 3.2.3 It is believed that undertaking both of these options will create space for maybe 7 - 10 years
4. Finance:
 - 4.1. The Committee has had a sum of money ring fenced within its reserve account specifically for costs associated with the provision of a new cemetery. As of writing the report the sum stands at around £39,000.
 - 4.2. It is estimated that to create the 2 areas referred to at 3.2.2 above will cost approximately £26,000 nett. Once undertaken, the areas will of course bring in an income - it is likely the expenditure will have been recovered via fees in about 5 or 6 years.
 - 4.3. It is strongly recommended that if Members are minded to approve this opportunity, that both options are pursued together in order to obtain the best economies of scale.
 - 4.4. There will be no increase in revenue costs should the Committee wish to pursue this approach
 5. Summary:
 - 5.1. With no obvious short to medium term solution in the search for a new cemetery location, the option to utilise spare land at the London Road cemetery would appear to be eminently sensible if the Committee wishes to continue providing burial space within the City (Note: the Committee has no statutory duty to provide burial space). Whilst there is a cost implication, this will be recouped within a few years. In the longer term, the Fugglestone provision appears promising but it is still subject to a number of significant hurdles before it could come to fruition.
 - 5.2. Pursuing this option does not, however, resolve the outstanding issue of creating an area for other faith burials for 2 primary reasons
 - 5.2.1 The space created will not allow for areas to be easily demarcated for differing faiths due mainly to the layout of the new areas
 - 5.2.2 More importantly, the areas concerned are all on consecrated land which immediately prevents burials by other faiths.
 - 5.3. Realistically, burial provision for other faiths is only going to be achieved when a brand new cemetery site becomes available
 6. Recommendations:
 - 6.1. The Committee is requested to determine whether or not to support the option of utilising spare land at the London Road cemetery as outlined at 3.2.2 above, and if so,
 - 6.2. To approve the use of up to £26,000 from the ring fenced reserve account sum, as outlined at 4.1 above, to carry out the initial laying out works required
 - 6.3. That a further report be brought to the Committee once more details are known regarding the situation at Fugglestone Red
 - 6.4. That Officer's continue to highlight the need for a new cemetery with new development applications in the future
 7. Implications:
 - 7.1. Financial: As outlined in the report
 - 7.2. Legal: As outlined in the report
 - 7.3. Personnel: None at this stage
 - 7.4. Community Safety: None at this stage
 - 7.5. Environmental: This proposal will potentially safeguard the provision of burial space in the City in the short to medium future.
 - 7.6. Human Rights: As outlined in the report
 - 7.7. Ward(s) Affected: Bishopdown