

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 5 June 2023

Title: Holy Trinity boundary wall railings

Contact Officer: Operations Manager - Angus Whitburn

Background

The probation service has been working in Witney recently and has approached both St Marys and Holy Trinity Churches for work. At St Mary's they have been removing ivy from memorials and cleaning up the edges of the grass. It's not understood what communication the probation service has had with Holy Trinity, but the church has requested through the council that the probation service prepare and paint all the metal railings around the boundary of the church and the council funds the required materials.

Under the Local Government Act 1972, the council (Witney Town Council) maintains the walls and fences of both Holy Trinity and St Marys's Church. The definition of maintenance is to be kept in decent order.

Current Situation

The Operations Manager has raised concerns with Holy Trinity representatives about the probation service carrying out this task. The work they were undertaking at St Mary had to be stopped due to quality and potential further damages. As this would be a larger undertaking there are substantial concerns. They are not a professional contractor, nor do they undertake this level of work regularly, so lack the experience to be able to complete the task.

There is no Diocesan Faculty required for these works, but communication has already been had with the diocese on the materials required and the programme of works that need to be undertaken.

The railings are currently in a presentable state and do not look particularly dilapidated, they do need to be painted but their condition as experts would state 'adds to the character of the wall'. And under this statement, you do need to be cautious about what would you undertake, shiny jet-black painted railings don't blend harmoniously into an old stone wall.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

As aforementioned, Witney Town Council are responsible for the maintenance of churchyard boundary walls. Should they fall into disrepair it would be the responsibility of the council to recover them to their original condition.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- There is a small budget of £1000.00 split across both closed church yards to cover any maintenance work required.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report and consider the following:

1. Reject the request for the probation service to carry out the painting of the railings at Holy Trinity Church.
2. Defer the request of painting the railings until 2023-24 to see if a suitable budget can be found.