

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 22 January 2024

Title: Cemetery Mapping

Contact Officer: Operations Manager

Background

In 2022 Witney Town Council commissioned Cemetery Design Services (CDS) to update the mapping of Windrush Cemetery and provide a plan for future burials. This mapping was to be accurate to GPS points and be digitally available for implementation into our burial administration software through Pear technologies.

This mapping is all now complete discounting a few final grave number adjustments. It will be passed to PEAR Mapping for input into the Council's mapping software.

Current Situation

The final stage of this work is to physically mark out the future and current burial plots at Windrush Cemetery. This will be achieved via drilling into the ground using a drilling rig and installing steel marker posts. The drilling would remove the need for any excess excavation or concreting of posts. The posts would stand around 250mm above the surface with colour tops and engraved with unique ID tags over a rust-proof layer.

The current process of marking out requires officers to physically mark out each new section of the cemetery with pins. This process has worked; however, its accuracy has caused minor issues with grave placement. Due to the ground conditions at the cemetery, they are notoriously hard to locate and clearly identify correct burial locations. There is the potential for mistakes for placement which creates future issues for future staff and burial plot owners.

With all identified in the report above it is important for councillors to understand this marking system is something that will be used through the lifespan of Windrush Cemetery.

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.

These steel markers will be visible to cemetery visitors and could cause criticism due to their appearance. After burial sections are filled they can be removed but this could take many years.

As the burial authority, Witney Town council has a requirement under the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 to be able to identify any buried person.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- The cost to mark out the burial sections with steel posts was previously quoted in the region of £2,500.00 ex Vat. A renewed quote will be supplied for the meeting on the 22nd of January 2024.
- There is an earmarked reserve for the internal layout of Windrush Cemetery with a balance of £93,853.

Recommendations

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

1. To agree to commissioning the datum marking of Windrush Cemetery.