

## STRONGER COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

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**Date:** Monday 6<sup>th</sup> July 2020

**Title:** COVID-19 – Request from the Rotary Club of Witney Joint Project for a commemorative bench and tree

**Contact Officer:** Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

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### Background

The attached communication has been received from the Rotary Club of Witney.

The bench and tree could be a place where families could sit and focus on their loss in pleasant and peaceful surroundings.

Ideally the Club would like the planting to take place this autumn.

Rotary also ask what percentage of the cost would the Council wish to contribute.

### Current Situation

The Operations and Estates Officer has considered suitable locations within the Town.

1. Church Green WTC has permission to install up to 10 benches on Church Green, however further permissions would be required to plant a tree, also the area is not particularly peaceful for families to sit and contemplate their loss.
2. Tower Hill Cemetery Lower Area. Although peaceful and quite it may be difficult to find a suitable space for this that does not have interments already.
3. Windrush Cemetery, Peaceful surroundings with views over the Town and surrounding countryside. Possible area at top end of ashes path which would give good access via paths from car parking close by. Possibility of including flower beds in this location as well. The majority of burials and ashes during this period have been at this cemetery so more likely this is the area those that have lost family within the Town are visiting this location. The area could also be used as an area for quiet contemplation by all other users of the cemetery.

Council should also remember future up keep and maintenance of the area will fall to WTC, if flower beds are added to the area then these could be added to the existing grounds contract for up keep and maintenance.

The Operations and Estates Officer would suggest that rather than just a bench and tree some flower beds etc. are incorporated as well to make an actual commemorative area for quiet contemplation for all rather than just a bench and tree on their own.

It is difficult for the Operations and Estates Officer to estimate a cost for this project for Council to give a percentage it would wish to contribute until a site and associated costs etc. is known. Perhaps council could offer to match fund the project up to a certain limit.

Although there are many benches dotted around Windrush Cemetery there are no real specified areas for bereaved families to be able to site and contemplate their loss and no areas of flower beds etc. within the cemetery.

Once a suitable site is suggested the Operations and estates Officer can meet with members of Rotary to come up with a design etc.

### **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.

### **Financial implications**

The costs associated with any amounts council may agree to contribute towards this project, and any costs for the ongoing maintenance and upkeep of the area.

### **Recommendations**

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

1. if it wants to work in partnership with the Rotary Club of Witney in delivering a Covid 19 commemorative bench and tree;
2. here would be a suitable location;
3. how would the Council envisage the commemorative area to look;
4. what financial contribution would the Council wish to make towards the project;
5. is the Council happy to fund on-going maintenance/upkeep of any flower beds grass etc. and add it to the existing grounds contract.