

HALLS, CEMETERIES AND ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday 14 September 2020

Title: Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries, and St Mary's Closed Churchyard - Update

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Officer – John Hickman

Background

The purpose of this report is to update Members on the progress of improvements and repairs since the last meeting.

Current Situation

Burials

Numbers of full interments at Windrush and Tower Hill Cemeteries are currently running at approximately normal levels.

Ground Water Risk Assessment – Windrush Cemetery

The Operations and Estates Officer has yet to fully review the ground water risk assessment provided by CDS due to time constraints. He will make the required adjustments to the burial procedures at Windrush Cemetery once the Risk Assessment has been fully reviewed and the current procedures evaluated for where changes are required.

Windrush Cemetery Meadow Burial Area

Grounds Contractors will be cutting and collecting the Meadow burial area at Windrush Cemetery shortly they will be removing approx. 50% of the grass over approx. 200sqm of the area and then seeding with yellow rattle to start the process of developing a wildflower meadow burial area.

Tower Hill Cemetery additional pedestrian access from Smiths Estate.

The Chair has requested that the additional pedestrian access via Smiths Estate be looked at again after she received another request from an elderly resident of Smiths Estate.

This was previously discussed in September 2019 with the Operations and Estates Officer gaining 2 x quotes for associated footpath works of approx. £9,000 and £13,000, [copy report attached] there would also be additional costs to open a space in the Cemetery dry stone boundary wall sufficiently large enough to take a disabled gate.

Councillors also met with the Operations and Estates Officer on site to consider the previous request.

Tower Hill Cemetery

For information only - One of the mature Beech Trees along the middle path way was badly damaged in one of the storms recently, a very large bow split out of the tree on one side, the resulting damage made the remaining tree unsafe and the tree had to be cut down to ground level. Two large pieces of the trunk have been retained at the Cemetery and laid on their side to form seating. The Operations and Estates Officer has been planting Beech Trees in this area in previous years in preparation for the loss of these trees in years to come. A further Beech tree will be planted in WTC annual tree planting in an area close to the original tree to compensate for the loss of the Beech.

Tower Hill lower area section 9, the works team have started to clear this area in preparation for it to be prepared for ashes interments.

The works team have removed all the Ivy and overgrown shrubs to the boundary wall of Tower Hill Cemetery.

Closed Church Yards

For information only - Cedar of Lebanon T583 the faculty has now been provided by the Diocese to fell this tree, the Operations and Estates Officer is currently setting a date for the works with the tree surgeons.

The faculty for the wall, arch and pillars repairs is still to be provided by the Diocese – and therefore the entrance remains fenced in order to protect the general public using this entrance to access the footpath.

The Operations and Estates Officer has still to fully review the Condition Survey of St Mary's boundary wall due to time constraints, to form the program of works required and bring the recommendations for repairs and maintenance to council.

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.

Obviously, the loss of trees is regrettable, however the Council did have the foresight to plant Beech trees in Tower Hill Cemetery for the eventual replacement of some of the older trees which were either decaying or could become unstable in high winds.

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

Works undertaken in this report have been covered within existing budgets already agreed.

With regard to the additional pedestrian access this would need to be budgeted for in the next financial year if these works are agreed, because there is no budget currently set for this project.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report, and consider the situation regarding the additional pedestrian access via Smiths Estate to the Tower Hill Cemetery.