

Halls and Green Spaces Committee

Date: Monday 9 September 2019

Title: Tower Hill Cemetery – Additional Pedestrian Entrance

Contact Officer: Operations & Estates Officer - John Hickman

Background

A request has been received from Cllr Andrew Coles regarding a 99-year-old resident on Smiths Estate who is requesting if it is possible for Witney Town Council to make a pedestrian access from Smiths Estate into Tower Hill Cemetery. This gentle man has been helped before by Cllr Laura Price when Cllr Price funded a handrail up the hill from the kissing gate on Tower Hill to the top section of Tower Hill Cemetery.

Action Taken

The Operations and Estates Officer has previously investigated making an entrance from Smiths Estate into Tower Hill Cemetery when considering disabled access into the cemetery for the Halls and Green Spaces Committee on 1st July 2019.

Current situation

It is possible to make an entrance through the wall at the far top corner of Tower Hill Cemetery onto the existing path that leads along the back of the cemetery wall from Fieldmere Close to the Rowing Machine public house. Permissions would need to be gained from the footpath owners.

It would be possible to make a gateway within the wall, there is a gap between the final graves on section 13 and the Cemetery boundary wall and again between the graves on section 13 and section 9 although there is no footpath approx. distance 70m. A footpath of some form would need to be constructed for pedestrians to use this access and would also need to be DDA compliant. There is also a memorial bench that would need to be relocated in order to give enough width for the path.

This could also cause issues on Smiths Estate with people parking on street in order to use this gate to access the cemetery when the cemetery vehicle gates are closed. This may reduce some of the access gained to the cemetery over this wall however it will not prevent it all as the main access of this type is further along the top of the cemetery in the area of the Black Brick memorial wall.

There would most likely be a large increase in pedestrians using the route through the cemetery as a shortcut to Town. It may also be found that not all pedestrians follow the footpath but cut diagonally across the graves in order to shorten their route.

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

There are no financial implications at this time.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider Officers carrying out further research and costings associated to constructing an access gateway and footpath from Smiths Estate into Tower Hill Cemetery.