

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 14 March 2022

Title: Windrush Cemetery Mapping

Contact Officer: Operations & Estates Advisor - John Hickman

Background

The Council has commissioned Cemetery Development Services (CDS) to carry out a topographical survey, update mapping of the existing graves Windrush Cemetery and provide a future burial layout plan with datum marking. Currently the topographical survey and updated mapping of the existing graves has been completed.

Current Situation

With the planned development adjacent to the cemetery and the possibility of a new entrance, the Operations and Estates Advisor has also asked if CDS can include mapping for the possible new entrance at the bottom of the cemetery and additional roadways, footpaths, and small car park area within the cemetery on the future burial layout plan.

CDS have stated that this will incur additional costs as the plan will change from a burial layout plan to a new concept plan, details of the additional costs to council are provided separately.

More than 1/3 of Windrush cemetery cannot currently be used for interments due the archaeological remains on the site, the difficulties in finding burial sites and the reduction in possible numbers of interments possible on the site due to the increased size of grave spaces at Windrush Cemetery. The Operations and Estates Advisor spoke to CDS regarding the archaeological remains at the top of the cemetery site to see if there was any possibility of using these areas for interments (ashes or full burial). CDS has suggested the Council consults with the County Archaeologist regarding possible uses for this ground, although the original intention was that this area would remain open in character, affording views over Witney and the surrounding countryside. A copy of the site plan showing the area of Archaeological remains is provided separately.

A report carried out by Peter Mitchell regarding Windrush Cemetery procedures and practices in 2017 also suggested the possibility of using this ground for some form of interment although again, suggesting that the County Archaeologist should be consulted as to what might be possible on this area of the cemetery. A copy of Peter Mitchell's and the Archaeological report are provided separately.

The use of this area would also bring in much needed funds to maintain the cemetery into the future when existing available burial areas are full to capacity and would extend the time before a new burial ground is required.

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.

Being able to use the area currently restricted from interments at Windrush Cemetery could reduce Council's liability to find a new burial ground for a significant number of years.

The potential new entrance has yet to be delivered and planning has not been granted, although there is a verbal undertaking from the developer to provide a road to the proposed area. Any layout should account for the possibility the roads and walkway can be used from the existing entrance if required.

Financial implications

Described here or as stated in the report above.

- 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. The additional sum required to develop a new concept plan for Windrush Cemetery.
2. Permission for Officers to contact the County Architect regarding the possibilities of use for the area of archaeological remains.