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| SUBJECT: | HS2 vent-shaft construction – potential impact on Chilterns Crematorium |
| REPORT OF: | Clerk of the Crematoria Joint Committee – Bob Smith |
| RESPONSIBLE OFFICER | Head of Environment – Chris Marchant |
| REPORT AUTHOR | Superintendent and Registrar – Charles Howlett |
| WARD/S AFFECTED | All |

1. Purpose of Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to advise members of the potential adverse impact on funerals by the construction of an HS2 vent shaft adjacent to Corns Bridge (where the A413 crosses Whielden Street) less than 200 yards from Crematorium entrance on the A404.

RECOMMENDATION

1. **Members are asked to note the report which is included for information.**

2. Content of Report

2.1 The officers have been aware for several years of the proposal to build a vent shaft for HS2 close to the entrance to the Crematorium. Over this time concern about the potential impact on the cremation service has been raised by both councillors and officers at CDC with the various agencies involved in the planning and implementation of the project. However none of the HS2 agencies involved made any direct contact with the Crematorium.

2.2 The advent of exploratory drilling appearing in neighbouring fields brought home the reality of the project and in the absence of any further information the Superintendent decided to attend a public meeting held at Amersham Community Centre during the summer of 2018.

2.3 In view of the fact that HS2 has been made aware of the Crematorium many times it was hoped that information from the meeting would give some reassurance that the concerns expressed were being taken into account in the plans being developed for the construction works. However, in the event this was not the case; beyond acknowledging the Crematorium's existence, as the meeting progressed it became clear there was no appreciation of how the Crematorium works, how busy it is (currently the busiest in the UK) or the consequent potential for serious disruption to funeral services.

2.4 For the location of the proposed ventilation shaft please see the drawing attached as **Appendix 1**, which was presented to the public meeting.

2.5 Once completed it is very unlikely the presence of the railway line buried deep in a tunnel will have any effect on the Crematorium what-so-ever. The main overriding concern is traffic flow during the construction works. Funeral corteges and people attending funerals, mostly travelling by car, need to get to the Crematorium by the allotted time. The problem of being delayed is not only that people will miss funerals, or parts of them, but if funeral corteges are delayed and funerals start late this will impact on the timing of funerals following. With so many funerals being

booked it is not difficult to see how quickly the car parks would overflow and, without exaggeration, there is a risk the whole process could descend into chaos.

2.6 The main causes of the traffic congestion are the enabling works, including relatively significant road alterations, and then the many thousands of lorry movements involved in the construction of the deep ventilation shaft, not only on this site but also neighbouring ones along the route. Arrows on the drawing show the intended lorry routes. Of particular concern is the intention to deposit some of the excavated material in the field directly next to the Crematorium entrance drive (not a desirable feature in itself) which involves lorries crossing the busy A404.

2.7 Towards the end of the public meeting the Superintendent expressed his concerns from the floor which quickly resulted in a meeting taking place with officials from HS2, Align, and Fusion and also a meeting arranged by CDC Senior Specialist EHO with Bucks Highways. Since then there has been a further meeting with HS2 officials arranged by CDC's HS2 Project Solicitor and Manager. Most recently the Superintendent has attended an update meeting arranged by the Town Council in conjunction with the HS2 Amersham Action Group.

2.8 In summary, concerning the roads and traffic plans these are only proposals out for consultation at this stage and have yet to receive approval, most notably from Bucks CC Highways. The concerns about the impact on the Crematorium are now well known and the officers are being kept in the information loop. However, the concerns remain.

3. Corporate Implications

3.1 Prolonged disruption to funerals travelling to the Crematorium could cause reputational damage to the Council resulting in loss of income.

4. Links to the Crematoria Joint Committee Objectives and Service Plan

4.1 None.

5. Next Step

5.1 The officers will continue to monitor the situation and proactively seek to achieve the best possible outcome for the Crematorium and keep members of the CJC up to date with developments and any matters arising.

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| Background Papers: | None |
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