

1. UPDATE ON CEMETERY SECURITY

Officer contact: Elaine Jewell; elaine.jewell@wycombe.gov.uk; ext:3800

Wards affected: Town Wards

PROPOSED DECISION

To note that the agreed works at High Wycombe Cemetery appear to have been successful in addressing incidents of vandalism.

Reason for Decision

There has been resident concern about suspected incidents of vandalism at the Cemetery. Last year the Town Committee delegated authority to the Head of Community Services to implement some or all of a list of measures to address concerns about Cemetery security. This report provides an update on progress.

Corporate Implications

The report contains no additional financial requirements.

Section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972 empowers the Council to do anything, including incurring expenditure, which is conducive or incidental to the discharge of any of its functions; as a burial authority under Section 214, the Council already has power to provide and maintain cemeteries in our outside its area. In addition, Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 (“general power of competence”) provides power to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to the provisions of Ss 2-4. These powers enable the Council, if it wishes, to implement all or any of the measures outlined in this report.

Executive Summary

Five potential security measures were suggested, which could provide reassurance to the bereaved that the Cemetery is monitored and reasonably secure. As a public Cemetery crossed by footpaths used by the public the site can never be completely secure and the measures implemented have left unfettered public access in daylight hours while increasing security at weaker points and monitoring visitors at the main entry points.

Sustainable Community Strategy / Council Priorities - Implications

People – the additional security measures should reassure bereaved relatives about the safety of the service.

Background and Issues

The work last year was initiated in response to a petition for 24 hour CCTV, which had been referred to the Committee by Cabinet for consideration. Given the large volume of space to be covered this was not supported at the time as it was an expensive option that would fundamentally affect the Cemetery in negative ways, as

the majority of trees would need to be removed to aid visibility; night time lighting would also be needed.

Last year's report identified five additional measures that could be undertaken as follows.

1. Additional fencing on the northern footpath side - £20,000
2. Additional planting along the eastern and southern edges – existing maintenance budget as minimal cost
3. Installation of locally recorded CCTV at the two main gateways and on the rear entrance to the Snowdrop Garden - £3,000
4. Installation of higher gates at the Lodge, Office and Snowdrop entrances - £9,000
5. Permanent closure of the Hampden Road/Snowdrop entrance – no cost if combined with 4.

To date actions 3 and 5 have been implemented at a cost of £3,895. It remains the intention to install additional fencing and planting but given the two recent wall collapses, undertaking reinstatement works has taken precedence. Additional fencing will be implemented this financial year, using the already agreed funding reserved by the Committee.

At present there is no intention to proceed with the installation of higher gates as CCTV is in place and out of hours access by climbing over the current gates has not been evidenced.

Report on recent incidents

Thames Valley Police has been asked and has no reports from members of the public of any damage to memorials. One resident who campaigned for CCTV has been contacted and has not received any reported concerns.

We are aware that for a short period the public toilets on site were being used for drug dealing and have been working with the Police to stop this. Unfortunately one of the additional cameras that we installed on the path way adjacent to the toilets is not working yet due to a connection issue.

No issues of vandalism or damage to memorials have been reported to the Cemetery Officer, who works and lives on site.

Options

Not applicable

Conclusions

The Committee is asked to note the work undertaken to date and the reduction in incidents of vandalism to nil for the current year.

Next Steps

To complete fencing and planting works and resolve connection issues to the 7th camera. The Committee may wish to request that an annual report on incidents relating to the Cemetery be produced from now on.

Background Papers

Petition to Council on CCTV at the Cemetery and previous Committee reports.