

AGENDA ITEM:**SUMMARY**

WYCOMBE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

Report For:	High Wycombe Town Committee
Meeting Date:	March 2019
Part:	Part 1 - Open
If Part 2, reason:	N/A

Title of Report:	Renaming of Library Gardens as Memorial Gardens
Officer Contact: Direct Dial: Email:	Elaine Jewell 01494 421800 Elaine.jewell@wycombe.gov.uk
Ward(s) affected:	Abbey
Reason for the Decision:	A resident has asked for the renaming of Library Gardens to be considered as a way of marking the end of the World War One centenary commemorations.
Proposed Recommendation:	That Cabinet be recommended to approve the renaming of "Library Gardens" to "Memorial Gardens" to mark the end of the centenary commemorations of World War One.
Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications	Risk: None Equalities: None Health & Safety: None
Monitoring Officer/ S.151 Officer Comments	Monitoring Officer: In the absence of any other specific legal power to re-name land owned by the Council, there is power under Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 to do so. S.151 Officer: The cost of any associated change will need to be met

	from within existing approved budgets.
Consultees:	There has been supportive correspondence from the Bucks Free Press, including articles in the paper, and from the Chair of the High Wycombe Society.
Options:	To rename Library Gardens, which will involve a small amount of work to reregister the land. Not to rename Library Gardens, which involves no additional work.
Next Steps:	To refer the decision on to the Leader/Cabinet To reregister the land under the new name
Background Papers:	None
Abbreviations:	None

1. High Wycombe Library, which has given its name to Library Gardens, closed a decade ago. The Gardens existed before the Library was built and must have had an informal name before their current one. It is not certain what this name was but there are captioned photographs describing it as Memorial Gardens.
2. Whatever its older name this is a useful point in time to consider renaming the Gardens. The Library association has passed with the closure of the building and relocation of the Library into the Eden Shopping Centre. There is a proposal for the former library to be repurposed as staff office space by Bucks County Council, though the recent Unitary Council decision may affect this.
3. Information on the history of the open space has been supplied by the High Wycombe Society as follows.
 - 1) Before World War I (but following the removal of the Prince Rupert Gates to their current location on Marlow Hill), there was nothing special about this bit of land - it appears to have been fairly rough grassland. In several pictures in the Bucks County Council photographic collection it appears to have a FOR SALE sign on it (but it is unclear whether that was indicating the land was for sale or just an advertising poster for something else for sale).
 - 2) July 1923 - there is a photo on the database Sharing Wycombe's Old Photos (SWOP – www.swop.org.uk) catalogue number RHW:12010 showing 3 field guns in the "municipal" gardens. Field guns would have been an appropriate war memorial for High Wycombe because of its role in WWI as a centre for the Royal Field Artillery training. It seems likely to me that these might have been offered to the corporation, but this is just speculation. Many war memorials were still being created locally in 1923 e.g. the stained glass at the Guildhall and the War Memorial Hospital.
 - 3) By June 1928 (before the 10 year commemoration of the end of World War I), the area was surrounded by a very ordinary fence in the form of railings and the guns are not in evidence. SWOP RHW:14033 shows some evidence of planting of flowerbeds (or they could be memorials).

- 4) By September 1934, the area was surrounded with nice quite distinctive railings on top of a low wall. There are quite a few photos which give a good view of what these railings looked like. See SWOP ref BFP:33284
 - 5) In November 1934 (the 20 year commemoration of the end of World War I) a SWOP photo ref RHW:14011 shows the gardens in use as a "Field of Remembrance". There are people in the gardens and there is obviously a ceremony taking place.
 - 6) After World War II - all photos confirm that the railings are no more, confirming the view that these were sent to contribute to the war effort.
 - 7) In the gardens there is a later memorial to those who did National Service - presumably erected around 1957-8 when conscription finally came to an end.
4. While there is not clear evidence as to the former name of the Gardens changing their name to Memorial Gardens appears to be an appropriate way to close the centenary commemorations of World War One, while also recognising the change in use of the adjacent former Library building.