

REFERRAL FROM THE HIGH WYCOMBE TOWN COMMITTEE – CEMETERY SECURITY

Chairman of the High Wycombe Town Committee: Councillor T Green

Wards Affected: All High Wycombe Town unparished wards

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PROPOSED RECOMMENDATION TO CABINET

That:

- (i) options 2, 3 and 5 as set out in paragraph 11 of the report be agreed; and
- (ii) delegated authority be granted to the Head of Community to implement options 1 and 4 should the need arise following a review to be held in the Autumn 2017; to release up to a maximum of £32k from the Special Expenses Reserve.

Reason for Decision

There has been resident concern about suspected incidents of vandalism at the Cemetery. Only a few incidents have been reported to WDC and the Police and two residents, whose children are buried in the Cemetery, have written to the Bucks Free Press about their concerns. One of these residents presented a recent petition to the Council seeking 24/7 CCTV coverage.

Corporate Implications

1. The report includes items, which, if all required, would cost an estimated £32,000. There are sufficient funds available in the Special Expenses Reserve if all items are supported.
2. 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

3. The High Wycombe Town Committee considered this report at their meeting held on 13th June. The Committee thanked the officers for looking in detail at the options available and supported options 2, 3 and 5 as set out in paragraph 11 of the report. Members agreed that a further review of incidents and resident concerns should be undertaken in the Autumn 2017, and that delegated authority should be granted to the Head of Community, should there be the need, to also implement options 1 and 5. A further report will be presented to the Town Committee on the review.

Sustainable Community Strategy/Council Priorities - Implications

4. People – the report suggests additional security measures, which could reassure bereaved relatives about the safety of the service.

Background and Issues

5. The petition for 24 hour CCTV was referred to the High Wycombe Town Committee by Cabinet for consideration earlier this year. 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.
6. Officers agreed to look at a range of alternative measures to improve the security of the Cemetery. Signs have already been installed alerting people to report any incidents. The Cemetery Officer is now taking photos of removed items when he tidies and has a form to record incidents on.
7. A site visit has been undertaken. The boundary on the Benjamin Road and Priory Road side is satisfactory. A large part of the northern boundary was secured a few years ago by additional fencing. There is a lower stretch towards Priory Road, which is low enough for a determined person to scale.



8. The remainder of the eastern and southern boundaries are largely protected by dense shrubs. However there are some gaps that could be replanted to provide a complete barrier.



9. The two gateways have been described as weak points. The gates are of average size but could be increased in height. In both cases there are buildings adjacent, the Office and the Lodge. CCTV cameras could be attached to each building with recorders placed securely inside to monitor the access gates.
10. The Snowdrop Garden is a particular concern as it is well screened from the rest of the Cemetery and adjacent housing and roadway and provides a welcoming, secluded environment for street drinkers. It is possible to lock the gates and route visitors through the main Cemetery, which will mean that almost all visitors can be monitored by CCTV.
11. In summary therefore the potential actions, with estimated costs, are 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.

Consultation

12. A petition to provide CCTV to protect graves from theft of items and anti-social behaviour within High Wycombe Cemetery was presented to Council in October 2016; it contained 2,035 signatories. Cabinet considered the petition on 14 November 2016 and requested it be passed to High Wycombe Town Committee for consideration. Consultation was then undertaken with High Wycombe Town Committee at its meeting on 17 January 2017.

Options

13. Cabinet can accept, amend or reject the High Wycombe Town Committee's recommendations.

Conclusions

14. Cabinet is asked to agree the High Wycombe Town Committee's recommendation for implementation.

Next Steps

15. If agreed then the ordering of works would begin and a review report would be presented to the Town Committee in the Autumn 2017.

Background Papers

Link to the petition as featured on the Council website:

<https://councillors.wycombe.gov.uk/mgEPetitionDisplay.aspx?ID=88&RPID=31579215&HPID=31579215>

Link to the Cabinet report, 14 November 2016, as featured on the Council website:

<https://councillors.wycombe.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=118&MId=5582&Ver=4>

Link to the High Wycombe Town Committee minutes, 17 January 2017, as featured on the Council website:

<https://councillors.wycombe.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=168&MId=5612&Ver=4>

Link to the High Wycombe Town Committee agenda, 13 June 2017, as featured on the Council website:

<https://councillors.wycombe.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=168&MId=5840&Ver=4>