

Cemetery Improvements Update

Final Decision-Maker	Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service/Lead Director	William Cornall, Director of Regeneration and Place
Lead Officer and Report Author	Jennifer Shepherd, Head of Environment and Public Realm
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All, but specifically Shepway North

Executive Summary

Following approval from Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee in September 2018, this report outlines the progress made so far to improvements at Maidstone Cemetery. The report also proposes a revised budget considering the reduced capital funding now available for the project.

This report makes the following recommendations to Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee

1. That continuing to deliver the Cemetery improvements through a two phased approach is agreed
2. That the car park expansion is delayed until Phase 2 of the improvements
3. That £70,000 surplus income generated by Bereavement Services and Grounds Maintenance in 2018/19 is used to support the remaining capital budget for the project

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Corporate Leadership Team	Tuesday 5 March 2019
Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee	Tuesday 2 April 2019

Cemetery Improvements Update

1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In September 2018, the Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee approved the investment of capital funding originally set aside for the delivery of a Pet Crematorium towards improvements at Maidstone Cemetery. A map of the Cemetery is provided in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 The Committee agreed that a two-stage development should be carried out to improve the welfare facilities, parking, cremated remains section and reopen the Chapel.
- 1.3 The report set out that the projected cost for Phase 1 of the improvements would be £205,500 including demolishing the gate keepers house, creating a new staff welfare facility, extending the cremated remains section, increasing security of the site and extending the existing car park. At the time of the report, there was £213,000 remaining in the Capital Fund for Bereavement Services. The Committee agreed that this funding should be used for Phase 1 of the improvements.
- 1.4 Phase 2 of the work would be the repair to the Chapel, which has been closed since 2006. Previous condition surveys had identified that structural repairs are needed to the spire as the risk of falling masonry was the primary reason for the Chapel's closure. Electrical work, internal repairs and decoration, removal of asbestos and roof repairs are also required. The projected cost to reopen the Chapel and refurbish the neighbouring toilet block is £222,000. The Committee supported this work and recognised that further funding would have to be requested through the Policy and Resources Committee for the work to be undertaken. The intention was for this funding to be sought once the work on Phase 1 was progressing and actual costs had been established.

Progress Update

- 1.5 The first step of the Phase 1 improvements was gaining planning permission for the demolition of the Gate Keepers House within the Cemetery. This was granted on 29 November 2018.
- 1.6 A procurement process was then carried out for the work and Bromley Demolition was appointed to carry out the work at a cost of almost £30,000. This is significantly more than the original estimate for the work obtained as part of the business case for the improvements.
- 1.7 The stone pillar in the middle of the gate has been temporarily removed to enable large vehicle access to the site for the demolition. This is currently being stored and will be reinstated once the work on site has been completed.



Photo 1: The widened gateway into the Cemetery

- 1.8 Demolition of the Gate Keeper's House is progressing well with only the remaining rubble left to be removed from site.



Photo 2: The remains of the building being removed from site



Photo 3: Remaining base of building

1.9 It was determined that a decision about the provision of new welfare facilities should be made once the Gate Keepers House is removed as this will enable further assessment of the condition of buildings foundations and whether this location or the original location of the welfare facilities would be most suitable for the future. The demolition of the house is due to be completed by the end of March 2018.

1.10 As the staff welfare facilities are unlikely to be in place until Autumn 2019, work has been undertaken to improve the existing facilities including a deep clean and new furniture. Staff will be consulted on the proposed welfare facilities to enable them to contribute ideas and suggestions for the new building.

Financial Update

1.11 The original estimate for Phase 1 of the improvements is set out below:

Phase 1	£
Demolishing Gate Keepers House	15,500
New staff welfare facilities	125,000
Extension of Cremated Remains Section	15,000
CCTV / Security	10,000
Car Park expansion	40,000
TOTAL	205,500

1.12 However, the demolition of the Gate Keepers House and temporary access changes have increased this cost by almost £19,500.

1.13 At the time of the last report to the Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee the intention was to fund Phase 1 from the remaining Capital Fund for Bereavement Services. This was identified as £213,000, as funding had already been used to carry out significant expansion of the Crematorium car park as well as funding a replacement cremulator, Cremator relining and provision of fireproof cabinets.

1.14 Regrettably the full cost of the Crematorium car park work was not accounted for at that time as additional work was required than originally priced including the provision of a retaining wall, additional drainage and the inclusion of a horse-box area. This has resulted in the actual remaining budget being only £116,700, which is insufficient to cover the full cost of Phase 1.

1.15 However, the following revised budget is proposed:

Revised Budget	£
Remaining budget	116,700
Additional income from Crematorium	50,000
Virement from Grounds Maintenance Income	20,000
TOTAL Budget	186,700

Revised Cost of Phase 1 (exc. car park expansion)	185,000
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- 1.16 It is proposed that £50,000 from the additional income generated by the Crematorium this year is transferred to the Capital Fund to support the delivery of Phase 1. In addition, it is proposed that £20,000 is transferred from the additional grounds maintenance commercial income and is used for the extension of the Cremated Remains Section. This will be a one-off transfer of additional income for 2018/19 which is not required to balance the budgets this year.
- 1.17 Given the reduced budget, it is also recommended that the car park expansion is delayed to Phase 2. This will also enable the space created by the demolition of the house and repositioning of the staff welfare facilities to be fully assessed and the options for maximising parking capacity to be explored.
- 1.18 In order to reduce the cost further, it is proposed that options for a prefabricated welfare facility are further considered. Both long term and short term, temporary solutions will be explored, however the complete cost will be factored in to the decision-making process.
- 1.19 Once the full costs of Phase 1 are known, specifically those for the welfare facility, capital funding for Phase 2 will be sought from Policy and Resources Committee. The business case will be presented to demonstrate the potential return on the investment through the generation of income from the Chapel.

2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS

- 2.1 The Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee could decide to continue to support the investment in the Cemetery and agree that the funding outlined in 1.15 is secured for Phase 1 improvements.
- 2.2 The Committee could recommend that a report is taken to Policy and Resources Committee to request capital funding for the completion of Phase 1 including the car park expansion as well as Phase 2.
- 2.3 Alternatively, the Committee could decide that a different programme of investment is considered, and the two-phase approach previously agreed is amended to reflect the Capital Fund available.
- 2.4 The final option that the Committee could consider is that no further investment should be made at the Cemetery once the demolition work is completed.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the option set out in 2.1 is agreed. This will enable work to continue as planned at the Cemetery, improving the facilities for the staff working there and generating long-term income through the extension

of the Cremated Remains Section. This option also utilises additional commercial income generated by Bereavement Services and Grounds Maintenance.

- 3.2 Option 2.2 would also enable the planned work to continue however would rely on further Capital funding being made available by Policy and Resources Committee. As additional capital funding is already required to deliver Phase 2 of the project, reinvestment of income generated by the associated services would be more appropriate.
- 3.3 Options 2.3 and 2.4 are not recommended as this would impact the level of improvements achieved. The staff welfare facilities have already been highlighted as unacceptable for the long term and the existing Cremated Remains Section will be full by 2023. Therefore, the original objectives of the project would not be met.

4. RISK

- 4.1 The risks associated with the original business case for the improvements are still valid and are included in Appendix 2.
- 4.2 There is a risk to the Council if the work is not undertaken as the buildings will continue to deteriorate putting greater risk and financial burden on the Council. In addition, if the staff welfare facilities are not replaced in the medium term, the working practices will need to be changed and consideration made as to whether the staff are based at the Park Wood Depot instead.

5. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 5.1 Once approved, the project team will start evaluating the options for the staff welfare facility.
- 5.2 Engagement with Ward Members, Heritage Culture and Leisure Committee and residents surrounding the Cemetery will be very important, and we will require the Communications team to assist with that. The team will also need to ensure that the Funeral Directors and Arrangers are kept abreast of proposals and the work being undertaken.

6. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	The recommendations support the Council's priority for a <i>Respecting the character and heritage of our Borough</i> through preserving and enhancing Maidstone Cemetery	Head of Environment and Public Realm

	for future generations.	
Risk Management	See Appendix 2	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Financial	The proposals set out in the recommendation can be partly funded from Capital money already set aside from the pet crematorium project. Other funds could be invest to save from the projected revenue or to seek the possibility of additional capital funding.	[Section 151 Officer & Finance Team]
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Legal	<p>Legal Services will work with Procurement and Property to ensure that any contractors used will comply with the Borough Councils guidelines.</p> <p>Any necessary agreements or contracts entered into must be in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules. Agreements and contracts should be in a form approved by the Legal Services Manager and should identify key activities and outputs so that performance can be properly and regularly monitored.</p>	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Privacy and Data Protection	There are no specific privacy or data protection issues to address.	Team Leader (Corporate Governance), MKLS
Equalities	The EqIA should be revisited as part of this decision making to ensure a continued evaluation of the impact of this project on groups with protected characteristics.	Equalities and Corporate Policy Officer.
Public Health		

Crime and Disorder	By making the proposed changes at the Cemetery it is expected that the amount of burglaries and loss of MBC equipment will decrease	Head of Environment and Public Realm
Procurement	Should the value of the works require it, we shall use procurement to find suitable contractors.	[Head of Service & Section 151 Officer]

7. REPORT APPENDICES

- Appendix 1: Map of Cemetery
- Appendix 2: Risk Register

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None