

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT
REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT & REGULATORY SERVICES

Report prepared by:

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1. MAIDSTONE CEMETERY – THE SUPERVISOR’S HOUSE

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To agree the freehold disposal of The Supervisor’s House and garden (the property), at the Maidstone Cemetery.

1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Environment & Regulatory Services

1.2.1 It is recommended that:

- i) the property, as shown on the plan attached as **Appendix A**, is declared non operational;
- ii) the Director of Change, Planning and the Environment be authorised to place a public notice pursuant to Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 in respect of the disposal of open space and that any objections or representations which might be received in response to the advertisement be considered by the Cabinet Member for Environment;
- iii) the final decision on disposal be made when the property has been advertised as a disposal of open space and any representations have been considered.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The property is located adjacent to the cemetery car park and access is currently via the main entrance gates to the cemetery. The property has an extensive garden and the rear boundary wall backs onto Pheasant Lane with another boundary adjacent to the

cemetery grounds.

1.3.2 The property was originally provided as an on site residence for the cemetery supervisor. The supervisor retired approximately ten years ago, but remained in the property fulfilling a gate locking duty. The property is now vacant and the gate locking duties have been absorbed into the general operation and management of the site and there is no specific need identified for an on-site employee.

1.3.3 The building is a Hawthorn Leslie steel framed detached house with an integral garage. These buildings were developed in the mid 1960's and are basic in design and in quality of construction. The cemetery house is not in a good condition and it would require considerable funds to bring it up to an acceptable modern condition and this is considered uneconomical.

1.3.4 Consequently, as there is no operational requirement for the property it is considered that disposal of the property's freehold by way of a private treaty arrangement would be the best option at the earliest opportunity to avoid any on going maintenance issues , subject to:

- the consideration for any response to a Section 123 (Local Government Act 1972) public notice advertising the intention to dispose of public open space;
- appropriate consents for the disposal/demolition being obtained;
- the production of a development brief.

1.3.5 It is envisaged that any development brief would include the demolition of the house and consideration for a number of dwellings to be built on the available land and for access to be achieved via Pheasant Lane or by realigning the main entrance to the cemetery.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The property occupies land that adjoins the cemetery and one alternative for its use would be to demolish the house and integrate the land holding into the cemetery to provide burial space in the future. The potential future demand for grave space at the cemetery has been reviewed and based on the present usage trends and the number of available new grave plots indicates that there is a minimum of fifty years space available. There is also the likelihood that within this time frame burial legislation will change due to the acute shortages experienced, especially in the London boroughs, to allow other ways to extend the use of the current land bank in cemeteries therefore removing

the need for burial authorities to provide more ground for burial in the future. It is not considered necessary, or appropriate, at this time to secure the land for future burial use.

1.4.2 Currently there is a wooden site hut located in the cemetery close to the main entrance and car park. This hut is used as the base for the Maidstone Borough Services ground staff working in the cemetery. The hut provides very basic facilities and does not have any mains drainage. Upgrading this facility, or providing an alternative, would be desirable although this is estimated to cost in excess of £50,000. However, it is not considered that the Supervisor's house would be a suitable alternative due to the problems reported above and the potentially high cost to undertake the necessary upgrading.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 The disposal of the Property and the eventual development of new modern properties would support the strategic priority outcome to provide decent affordable housing in the right places across a range of tenures.

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 The risks associated with making this decision are:

There could be some objections from the community after seeing the advert to dispose of public open space for housing development rather than retaining the land as open space. However, there are large areas of public open space in close proximity to this area, i.e. South Park, and Mote Park is approximately 1/2 mile away. It would be reasonable therefore to make any objectors aware of all of these areas.

The development of the property would benefit from access being from Pheasant Lane, but there is a risk that the highway authority may not allow this alternative access point. Every effort will be made prior to disposal to satisfy any concerns that might compromise this access being agreed through the production of a development brief.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing

X

3.	Legal	
4.	Social Inclusion	
5.	Environmental/Sustainable Development	
6.	Community Safety	
7.	Human Rights Act	
8.	Procurement	
9.	Asset Management	X

1.7.2 Financial implications:

If the property is eventually disposed of then the council will receive a capital sum. It may be appropriate for some consideration to be made to improving the staff facilities on site from the funds received.

Another consideration will be the loss of the rent (£5,990) from the property and this will need to be adjusted for as a growth item in the current and future years' revenue budget. It is envisaged that this shortfall can be covered from the anticipated additional income from new memorial sales within Bereavement Services.

Associated revenue costs for repairs would be saved if the property is disposed of.

1.7.3 Asset management implications:

The freehold disposal of the property will result in a reduction in the council's portfolio of properties.

1.8 Background Documents

1.8.1 Cemetery burial records – held in the Bereavement Services office at the Vinters Park Crematorium.

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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