

TITLE OF REPORT : ST JOHN'S CEMETERY GARDEN OF REMEMBRANCE

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Following the reporting to Cabinet on 13 December 2011 (Minute 77 (4) a,b,and c) refers) and subsequent report to the Hitchin Area Committee on 10 January 2012 (Minute 84 refers) this is an update report regarding the progress made towards developing a Garden of Remembrance in St John's Cemetery, Hitchin.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Committee note progress to date and comment upon the proposals presented if appropriate within Appendix A.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 To note the development and progress towards developing a Garden of Remembrance as previously requested by the Area Committee.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 None

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 The proposal (Appendix A) has been developed in conjunction with Countryside Management Services. Consultation with Ward Members has taken place prior to this meeting.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This item was first identified on the Forward Plan in 2011.

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 On 13 December 2011 (Minute 77 refers) it was reported to Cabinet that the cemeteries in Hitchin, Baldock and Royston had an issue regarding ongoing capacity. Subsequent consultation with the Hitchin Area Committee in 2012 identified that due to the location of Wilbury Hills Cemetery it would be appropriate for burials to be relocate to Wilbury Hills once the maximum capacity had been achieved at St John's Cemetery.
- 7.2 The Hitchin Area Committee did identify that it would like to see provision for the burial of infants retained at St John's and that existing used burial space be used for a garden of remembrance for the use of everyone as appropriate.

- 7.3 Since the previous reporting of these issues to the Hitchin Area Committee the Service Manager for Grounds has been working with Countryside Management Services to develop the proposals contained within Appendix A.

8. ISSUES

- 8.1 Due to the sensitivity of the site there will be a need to communicate these proposals to the visitors of the Cemetery and as such interpretation panels and signage will be used on site to advise people what is happening and why.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Area Committees within their Terms of Reference may “provide local input into centrally determined specifications for all services”. As a burial authority under section 214 Local Government Act 1972 the District Council has a statutory duty to provide facilities for the burial of the dead on behalf of the community it serves.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 As no additional financial resource has been made available to introduce a new garden of remembrance the proposal is intended to be achievable within existing resources and to be delivered over a period of time.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None identified.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 The provision of place of contemplation will benefit that visit the cemetery. It is of utmost importance that the interpretation panels and signage are presented in a format that all visitors fully understand the message. i.e., those who are visually impaired, those who do have English as their first written language etc.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 As the recommendations made in this report, or in particular that element which relates to the proposal to work with Countryside Management Service to achieve this garden, it does constitute a public service contract, the measurement of ‘social value’ as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 needs to be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at section 12. Any individual award of a public service contract will need to be evaluated in terms of its social value through the Council’s procurement processes.

- 13.2 There are also environmental benefits as the proposal entails the encouragement and introduction of a greater variety of plant species and more appropriate maintenance regimes with this benefit in mind.
- 13.3 The garden would be a new feature for the cemetery and would be of benefit to anyone who is unable to travel to any other cemetery in North Herts or would like an appropriate place for quiet contemplation.

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 Appendix A – Completed Proposal – CMS

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1 Andrew Mills x 4272
Service Manager Grounds

17. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 17.1 Cabinet Committee Papers December 2011

- THIS PAGE IS BLANK -