

REPORT TO:	FINANCE AND MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 12
DATE OF MEETING:	14TH FEBRUARY 2019	CATEGORY: RECOMMENDED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)	OPEN
MEMBERS' CONTACT POINT:	MALCOLM ROSEBURGH 01283 595774 malcolm.roseburgh@south-derbys.gov.uk	DOC:
SUBJECT:	CHURCH GRESLEY CEMETERY – LAYOUT CHANGES	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	CHURCH GRESLEY, SWADLINCOTE, NEWHALL, WOODVILLE, LINTON, CASTLE GRESLEY	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 Further to a recommendation from Housing and Community Services Committee on January 29 2019 to seek approval to utilise £17,700 from the General Fund Repairs and Maintenance Reserve to remove two adjacent non-essential paths at Church Gresley Cemetery in order to use the recovered land to provide additional burial space therein.
- 1.2 Further to a recommendation from Housing and Community Services Committee on January 29 2019 to seek approval to cease the practice of allowing people to pre-purchase graves within cemeteries managed by the District Council except where ground conditions restrict the use of double graves.
- 1.3 Further to a recommendation from Housing and Community Services Committee on January 29 2019 to seek approval for officers to investigate the identification of possible cemetery space within the Swadlincote urban core.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 To advise the Committee that Church Gresley Cemetery is approaching capacity for burials.
- 2.2 To seek approval to remove two adjacent paths as identified in the plan attached at Appendix 2 in order to provide extra burial space within Church Gresley Cemetery.
- 2.3 To seek approval for officers to continue working towards identifying potential land within the urban core for future burial use.
- 2.4 To seek approval to stop the practice of allowing people to pre-purchase graves within Council managed cemeteries except where ground conditions restrict the use of double graves.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 Church Gresley Cemetery is the largest cemetery managed by the District Council. The first interment within the cemetery took place in 1881. Over the last 138 years the cemetery has provided burial space for the residents of Church Gresley, Swadlincote and the surrounding villages.
- 3.2 Over the last ten years there has been an average of 11 new full burials per year undertaken within Church Gresley Cemetery.
- 3.3 Over the last eight years the number of remaining burial spaces has dwindled and necessitated the use of borders so that local residents could continue to be buried within the cemetery. By utilising the last available border and subject to suitable ground conditions there is currently a maximum of ten burial spaces remaining. However the cemetery is now at the stage where all available space has been reviewed and allocated and the only option to allow burials to continue in the cemetery is to dig up two adjacent non-critical paths and utilise the recovered space for burials.
- 3.4 A map showing the general shape and location of Church Gresley Cemetery is attached as Appendix 1. A detailed map showing the location of the paths proposed for removal to accommodate further use of the cemetery for burials is attached as Appendix 2.
- 3.5 It has been estimated that the removal of the paths would allow for provision of between 72 and 108 plots dependent on the ground conditions and the nature of services etc. that are found once the work to remove the paths has been undertaken.
- 3.6 Based on interment averages and the minimum number of plots that the work could create, it is estimated that burial provision at Church Gresley cemetery could be extended for a minimum of six and a half years.
- 3.7 Any extension to burial space at the cemetery would allow time to investigate options for alternative burial provision within or near to the urban core. Opportunities have previously been investigated but no suitable sites have materialised.
- 3.6 To further extend burial provision across the District Council's cemeteries it is proposed to cease the practice of allowing people to pre-purchase a burial plot in advance for future use with the exception of where ground conditions do not permit the use of double graves.
- 3.7 Where it is not possible to accommodate a double grave it is proposed to allow families to purchase an adjacent grave at the same time to allow for spouses/partners to be buried alongside each other.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 An initial estimate for the cost of the works to enable provision of additional burial space including path removal, single tree removal and adjacent path repairs has been sourced and the works priced at £17,700. This report proposes that the works are funded from the General Fund Repairs and Maintenance Reserve. Subject to Committee approval further quotations would be sought in line with the Council's financial procedures.

- 4.2 Additional finance would be required should future investigations identify potential suitable land for burials in the Swadlincote area. However, should potential sites be identified then further reports to Committee would be necessary.
- 4.3 The cessation of pre-purchasing graves will have negligible immediate impact on ongoing revenue incomes.

5.0 Corporate Implications

- 5.1 **Employment Implications** - None
- 5.2 **Legal Implications** – None. Provision of burial space is not a statutory requirement.
- 5.3 **Corporate Plan Implications** - Whilst there are no direct links to the Corporate Plan, the provision of burial space for the communities of Church Gresley/Swadlincote and its environs links indirectly to the themes of People and Place.
- 5.4 **Risk Impact** – Although provision of burial space is not a statutory requirement it is a very emotive issue. The key risk to the Council is reputational in that closure of the cemetery is likely to prove unpopular with local residents notwithstanding the fact that the duty to provide burial space is not statutory and attempts have been made to locate and provide suitable alternatives.
- 5.5 The decision to remove a path may also prove unpopular with some cemetery users as they may fear it will impact on either their use or the aesthetics of the surrounds. However, it is considered that the path is non-essential and the required vehicular and ambulatory access is allowed for within the proposals.

6.0 Community Impact

- 6.1 **Consultation** – None to date.
- 6.2 **Equality and Diversity Impact** – Not applicable.
- 6.3 **Social Value Impact** - The proposal to remove the paths will enable the local community to continue to bury their loved one within their neighbourhood for an extended period of time rather than having to travel to other cemeteries located within the District or elsewhere.
- 6.4 The extension in the time of operations at Church Gresley Cemetery consequent to this proposal will also provide additional time to seek alternative burial provision to serve the urban core in the future.
- 6.5 **Environmental Sustainability** - Not applicable.

7.0 Conclusions

- 7.1 The proposals included within the report will safeguard the provision of burials within Church Gresley/Swadlincote area in the interim whilst officers investigate the longer term provision of burial space for the area.
- 7.2 The cessation of allowing the pre-purchase of graves within District Council managed cemeteries will extend the provision of graves across the district for the future.

8.0 Background Papers

8.1 None.