

Report to Overview and Scrutiny Commission 11 November 2013

Report to Cabinet 13 November 2013

New Crawley Cemetery - Provision of Burial Services

Report of the *Director of Community Services* – DCS/023

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To evaluate the options open to the Council for extending the life of the existing Snell Hatch Cemetery and for establishing replacement burial facilities in the future.

2. Recommendations

2.1 To the Overview and Scrutiny Commission:

That the Commission consider the report and decide what comments, if any, it wishes to submit to the Cabinet.

2.2 To the Cabinet

2.2 The Cabinet is recommended to:

- a) **Approve proposals to extend the existing space available for Muslim burials at Snell Hatch cemetery.**
- b) **Reject Ewhurst playing fields as a potential site for a replacement/new cemetery for Crawley.**
- c) **Request that the Heads of Property and Amenity Services evaluate all potential burial sites identified through the recent consultation process, and; notwithstanding the above, progress the search for a suitable site, extending this search to include consideration of suitable sites which may be located outside of the Borough boundary.**
- d) **Note the need to identify and acquire a suitable site for a new cemetery by April 2016.**

3. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 3.1 The Muslim section of Snell Hatch Cemetery is almost full. Other religious sections will be full in the next few years. In order to ensure service continuity the Council has for some time been seeking to identify a site for a new cemetery. A detailed survey and soil analysis of the Ewhurst playing field site has indicated that prevailing sub soil strata and water table would necessitate expensive construction methods for burial chambers if this site were to be used as a cemetery.

4. Background

- 4.1 For the past 8 years the Council has been seeking to identify a suitable location for a new cemetery. To date over 40 sites consisting of locations both within and just outside of the borough have been considered by the Council.
- 4.2 Sites have been rejected for a variety of reasons, land scheduled as ancient woodland, land within a designated flood plain and land within the safeguarding zone of Gatwick Airport for instance. Additionally, there have been a range of other factors which have been taken into account, these include the size and configuration of the site, issues relating to access, proximity of public transport and site availability.
- 4.3 Throughout this process a key requirement has been the need to satisfy the Environment Agency that any land under consideration would be suitable for burial purposes. The soil testing required by the Environment Agency is comprehensive and costly.
- 4.4 Consultation on proposals to utilise Ewhurst playing fields as Crawley's new cemetery took place between 3 June and 1 July 2013. 1,298 people answered the questions about a cemetery, 49% disagreed, 35% agreed and 16% didn't know whether or not they agreed to utilising the Ewhurst site. Responses came mainly from areas near the proposal; Ifield, Langley Green, Bewbush and Broadfield.
- 4.5 The main reasons for disagreeing were; negative impact on local residents, perceived difficulties with the site itself, and objecting to using playing fields/valuable land to accommodate the dead. There was a perception from some respondents that a cemetery should be located on the edge of the town, or beyond its boundary.
- 4.6 A number of those supporting the proposal felt it was a good central location and would prevent any housing being developed on the site.
- 4.7 Respondents put forward a number of alternative sites within or just outside Crawley and all of these examined to date are very challenging e.g. flood plain, scheduled ancient woodland, already earmarked for large scale housing development. Most of these sites have already been considered and rejected, though some have previously not been considered. An update of the rejected sites is provided in Appendix 1.
- 4.8 Following consultation, a petition against using Ewhurst playing fields as a cemetery, containing 1,346 signatories, was considered by Full Council on 24 July 2013. Reassurance was given to those objecting to a cemetery at Ewhurst that no decision would be taken until results of site surveys were available, and feedback from the recent consultation and petition had been fully considered.
- 4.9 Following initial desk top analysis of over 40 sites Ewhurst was considered as the most suitable location for a new cemetery. Accordingly a comprehensive survey and analysis of pertaining ground conditions was commissioned. The ground investigation involved the drilling of bore holes across the site. The geology encountered was largely as anticipated and ground water was encountered between three to five metres below ground level, shallower than expected. However by the time the remaining work had been completed the water level had risen to between 1.7m & 2.8m below ground level. This is likely to be an issue for the proposed use of the site, as the Environment Agency recommends that the water table should be at least 3.5 metres below ground level for double depth burials (one metre below coffin depth).

- 4.10 Single depth burial, or 'green burial' may be acceptable at this site, but conditions across a large part of the site would necessitate burial in sealed underground concrete chambers (currently being trialled at Snell Hatch Cemetery). This would significantly reduce the life of the cemetery and/or increase costs. Underground burial chambers cost in the region of £1,500 each, with up to 80 new graves required per year.
- 4.11 The comprehensive soil tests and analysis report referred to at 4.9 above, cost approximately £38,000.

5. Proposed Way Forward

- 5.1 Based on current trends and demographics it is anticipated that by April 2014 the Muslim section of the Snell Hatch Cemetery will be full.
- 5.2 At the request of the Portfolio Holder for Environmental Services, officers have examined the feasibility of extending the existing area available for Muslim burials. The possibility of utilising space adjacent to the existing Muslim burial plot which is currently occupied by a large garage used to store plant and equipment has been considered. Identified as area 'A' on the attached drawing (Appendix 2), this area was investigated two years ago but the proximity of utility services, and cost/planning considerations were considered to be prohibitive. Subsequent consideration and negotiation with regulatory and utility providers have enabled this option to be brought forward.
- 5.3 Works to accommodate this extension would cost in the region of £35,000. Subject to Cabinet approval, it is proposed that this is funded from the existing budgetary provision (approx £700,000) available for developing a replacement cemetery. Initial discussions with representative faith groups confirm that this proposal would be acceptable.
- 5.4 Officers have also examined the feasibility of utilising the area shown as 'B' on the attached drawing which is currently un-consecrated. Part of this area is prone to water logging in the winter, and a significant portion has already been designated for Catholic burials. However, subject to the cooperation and agreement of all interested parties, it may be possible to utilise part of this area.
- 5.5 Implementation of the proposal described at 5.2 would provide an additional 86 burial spaces, allowing the cemetery to remain open to all sections of the community until at least the end of 2017. It may be possible to extend for up to a further 18 months beyond this if the land referred to at 5.4 was usable. This option will be pursued but at this stage remains uncertain.
- 5.6 A period of eighteen months to two years will be required for the preparation and laying out of any new cemetery. This timescale may be shorter or longer depending on whether or not any new site needs to be purchased, the amount of infrastructure that does/does not already exist and any objections/challenges from consultees etc.
- 5.7 On this basis, and to avoid significant risk of disruption to this service, the Council will need to have acquired/identified a suitable site for a replacement cemetery by **April 2016 at the latest**
- 5.8 Separate to the list of rejected sites contained in appendix 1, the Council is investigating a number of identified sites both inside and outside the borough to ascertain the suitability of these sites based on the criteria contained within appendix

1 (short list). Due to the sensitivity and commercial interest of these sites this list needs to remain confidential

6 Additional Implications

6.1. Financial Implications

- 6.1.1 A budget of approximately £700,000 is currently available for the acquisition and laying out of a new cemetery. It is proposed that the works referred to at 5.3 (extending existing burial capacity at Snell Hatch) are funded from this source.
- 6.1.2 There are no other financial implications at this stage.

6.2 Legal Implications

- 6.2.1 The provision of a burial service is discretionary, not a statutory function of the Borough Council. However, the Local government Act 1972 designates the Council as a burial authority empowering it to provide this service on behalf of local residents.

6.3 Equality Impact Assessment

- 6.3.1 The Councils current policy is to provide a burial service which is inclusive, reflecting and responding to the needs of Crawleys' diverse community. The recommendations set out in this report are in accordance with this policy.

7 Background Papers

- 1. [Full Council minutes of 24 July 2013](#)
- 2. Ewhurst Playing Fields – Interim Summery Report on Ground investigation.
- 3. New Crawley Cemetery – (Part B report) Report no AM/043 to Overview and Scrutiny Commission, 19 March 2012 and Cabinet, 21 March 2012

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ENDS

New Cemetery Criteria

PASS/FAIL CRITERIA

- The ideal size of site will be about 20 acres (8ha). This will fulfil the Borough's need for approximately the next 50 years at the present burial rates. This does not include an area for woodland burial. The minimum size requirement is 10 acres which would give about 25 years of burials and time enough time to find another cemetery site.
- The site ideally will not be on a flood plain and therefore or liable to become waterlogged due to adjacent water courses or a high water table.
- The site must not be located inside of the area safeguarded for the future boundary of Gatwick Airport if a second runway is built.

SHORT LIST CRITERIA

- The cemetery site should not be the subject of undue planning constraints that would be difficult to mitigate.
- The cemetery must be located in such a position that drainage from the graves does not pollute the domestic water supply and thus endanger public health.
- The site should have a good soil suitable for excavation and double depth burials
- The cost of purchase and infrastructure should not be prohibitive.
- The site should be easily accessible by car.
- The site should have a public transport link.
- The site should be level or undulating ground not sloping
- Heavily wooded areas should be avoided; A site with some trees however is preferable, as this will give some instant maturity to the landscape.
- The site should be tranquil and not be subject to noise or fumes from factories, aerodromes, schools etc.
- Water, gas and electricity supplies will be required.
- The site should be in location where there is regular surveillance to prevent anti-social behaviour.

REJECTED CEMETERY SITES

28th October 2013

Due to;

Size; Must be at least 10 acres to give 20 - 25 Years of use and allow time for acquisition of another cemetery

Flooding; A cemetery site that is low lying and liable to become waterlogged is unsuitable for use as a cemetery

Safeguarding = A site is unsuitable if wholly or in part within the area of the future boundary of Gatwick Airport if a second runway is built.

Sites in *italics* were suggested during the local plan consultation process

Ref	SITE NAME		Size Acres	Private/CBC	Reason for rejection ticked			COMMENTS
					SIZE	FLOODING	SAFEGUARDING	
2	Gossops Green PF incl allotments + play area	GG	7.24	CBC	✓			
3	Bewbush Western Strip PF	BW	9.66	Private	✓	✓		
4	Furnace Green PF	FG	12.43	CBC		✓		
5	Loppets Road PF	FG	8.99	CBC	✓			
7	Knepp Close PF	PHS	7.21	CBC	✓			
10	West of Fir Tree Close (raised by PS&P)	LG	1.94	Private	✓			
11	East of Fir Tree Close	LG	4.75	Private	✓			
12	East of Ifield Court Farm	IF	25.52	Private		✓	✓	
13	South of Ifield Court Farm	IF	18.58	Private		✓	✓	
15	West of Rectory Farm House	IF	25.25	Private		✓		
16	East of Ifield Mill Stream	IF	14.85	Private		✓		
20	North of Radford Road	PH	17.87	Private			✓	
21	East of Radford Road	PH	29.64	Private			✓	
22	South of Antlands Lane	LG	25.60	Private			✓	
23	Southways, East of London Road	LG	24.04	Private			✓	
25	West of Beehive	NG	27.88	Private			✓	
26	West of County Oak	LG	21.52	Private			✓	
27	East of London Road	LG	25.22	Private			✓	
30	Outreach 3 way site		39.99	Private			✓	
31	Ifield Green Sports Ground (Edwards Private Playing Field)	IF	7.27	Private	✓			
33	Perrywood Scout Camp		7.61	Private	✓			
34	Pease Pottage Horsham Rd		4.34	Private	✓			

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					SIZE	FLOODING	SAFEGUARDING	
50	Pease Pottage Drivibg Range, Horsham Road		11	Private				A bid was made for this land but the Council was not successful
35	<i>Ashes area Snell Hatch as PMA</i>	WG	1	CBC	✓			
35	<i>Back Gardens Snell Hatch</i>	WG	0.1	CBC	✓			
38	Creaseys Drive PF	BF	8.95	CBC	✓			
46	<i>Broadfield Stadium Site (SHOULD cffc MOVE PREMISES)</i>	BF	7.67	CBC	✓			
47	<i>lfield Community College Housing Site (Lady Margaret Road)</i>	IF	7	Private	✓			Elizabeth supplying information about the site location and area
48	<i>Grattons Park 'Railway Field'</i>	PH	5	CBC	✓			
49	<i>Land around worth church</i>	PH	5.73	Private	✓			
51	Turners Hill Land adjacent to Maize Maze		17.00	Private				No longer available
52	<i>Turners Hill Agricultural Land - opposite world of water</i>							Investigated but early reservations concerning a water course and planning prevented this being taken further
32	TOTAL NUMBER OF SITES							

Rejected Cemetery Sites

- Private
- Public



