

06 February 2018

Policy, Projects & Resources Committee

Memorial Walls

Report of: *Ray Inns – Interim Project Accountant*

Wards Affected: *All – Warley Initially*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report continues from the report made to the November Committee where officers put forward an outline idea, for agreement in principle, to build a Memorial Wall scheme which would in turn enhance the appearance of Woodman Road Cemetery.

Since then the scheme has been developed further and new ideas have emerged.

The central area of the Cemetery lends itself to becoming the next “section” to be developed, and rather than just building a wall there are some more attractive ready-made options available that are relatively easy to install, more cost effective than a wall, plus they store ashes. By using a combination of granite “Columbaria” and granite “Sanctums” (Vaults), see pictures later in the report, the development could provide an attractive and desirable memorial.

At the far end of the cemetery, the boundary fence is in a bad state of repair. By investing in good quality fencing, it will be possible to develop this area into a “pet” memorial section where people can purchase a plaque to place on the fence to remember their beloved pet. It is not envisaged at this stage to register the Council for the appropriate licences to accept ashes from pets, but this will be reviewed.

A business case has been drawn up for the scheme charging £1,200 for a niche in a Columbarium or £1,500 for a personal Sanctum. These will be offered for an initial time period of 25 years, renewable thereafter for 10 yearly periods (fees to be agreed). Income of £22k per annum can be expected if the current practice of ground burials (interments) of ashes is moved away from or fees and charges increased to match the charges for the Columbaria. If the choice for ground interment of ashes is retained and

only half of those choose to switch to the new scheme, then the additional income to the Council will only be £19k. The difference in income is effectively down to customers continuing to pay a third party for a headstone to accompany the ground burial which will not be required under the new scheme. It is not proposed to charge customers much more for the new options than they pay currently.

NB These figures exclude income from pets. No market information has been sought on potential volumes/demand for pet memorial plaques on which to base firm figures. What may be relevant for one area of the country may not be relevant for Brentwood and only time and marketing will tell. Capital investment is minimal. It is proposed that a reasonable fee for a plaque would be £300 excl VAT. Of this, £50 would cover the cost of the plaque/engraving, so if say 5 were sold per month, this would return a net income of £15,000 to the Council per year (2 per month would achieve £6,000 pa). Agreements would be for a 10-year display, renewable thereafter in 10-year periods.

The capital cost for each Columbarium is £7,000 and each contains 36 niches. Each Sanctum has a capital cost of £400. The cost of these can be met within existing capital resources along with the bench and tree grill. Car parking provision, improvements to the path and planting are also being considered and can be covered by the 2018/19 cemeteries budget if it is approved. Approval is now being sought from this committee to proceed with this project in accordance with the recommendations below.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1 That approval be given to the proposed design, fees and length of agreement; and, subject to compliance with procurement regulations and requirements, to order 60 Sanctums, 2 Columbaria, a bench and tree grill along with the appropriate construction necessary to allow for the fitting of these.

2.2 That a section of boundary fencing be purchased, subject to compliance with procurement regulations and requirements, and used for displaying Pet Memorial Plaques, in a separate area from the human areas of the cemetery, at the proposed fee rate and length of agreement.

2.3 That a report is made to the Environment and Enforcement Committee to propose a move away from ground interments of ashes or, alternatively, approve higher fees for ground interments of ashes wef 2019/20 or sooner.

3. Introduction and Background

3.1 This report continues from the report made to the November Committee where officers put forward an outline idea, for agreement in principle, to build a Memorial Wall scheme which would in turn enhance the appearance of Woodman Road Cemetery.

3.2 Since then the scheme has been developed further and new ideas have emerged which officers have designed into the scheme

3.3 The central area of the Cemetery lends itself to becoming the next “section” to be developed, and rather than just building a wall there are some more attractive ready-made options available that are relatively easy to install, more cost effective than a wall, plus they store ashes. By using a combination of granite Columbaria and granite Sanctums (Vaults), the development could provide an attractive and desirable memorial.



3.4 One option to offer is the hexagonal “Columbarium”. This holds urns for ashes within 36 securely closable niches. They cost £7,000 and are relatively easy to install on flat ground. Up to 2 urns can be fitted into each niche so that family members can be kept together.

3.5 It is proposed that a reasonable charge would be £1,200 per niche which would include the Memorial Plaque and engraving on the front. This compares to the current charge of a ground interment of nearly £600 paid to the Council plus approximately £600 for a Headstone. (Currently paid to a third Party). Proposed fees will be £300 for each additional family member being placed in an existing niche.

3.6 The other offer is for individual vaults called Sanctums. These cost £400 each and again are relatively easy to install on flat ground. They also hold up to 2 urns.

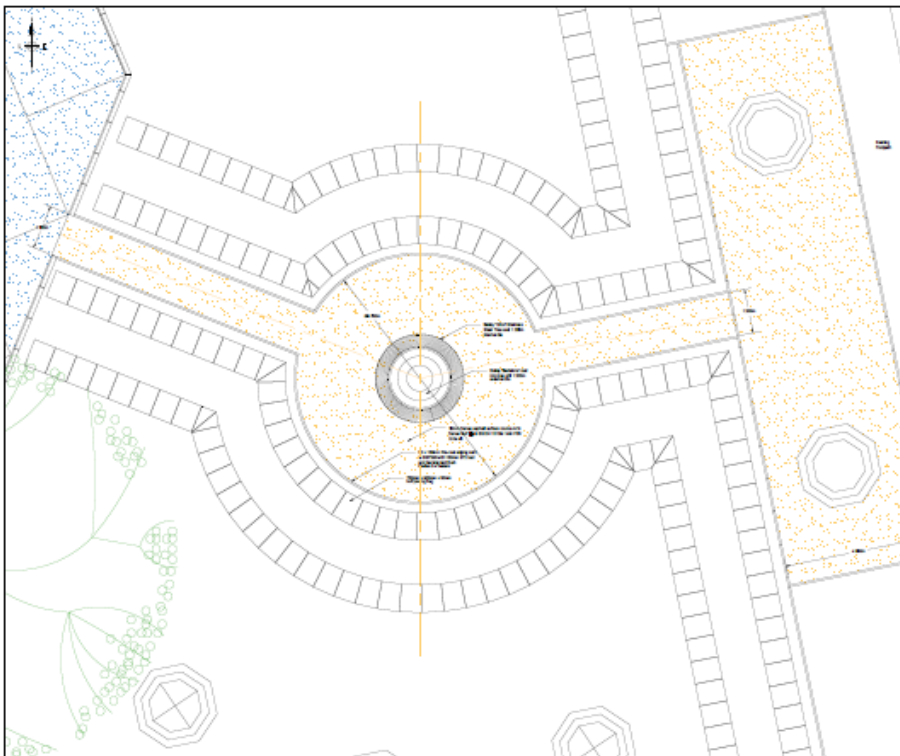
3.7 It is proposed that a reasonable charge, given the “exclusivity” element and as evidenced elsewhere in the country, would be £1,500 for the first interment and £400 for each additional family member.



3.8 These Sanctums or “Vaults” can be laid out in long lines to mimic a wall and the manufacturer has indicated that they can cut them so that they can be put together to form a curve shape in order to form a circular format.

3.9 It is proposed to purchase 60 of these to start off with but more can be added if demand outstrips supply to ensure a uniform appearance for the initial development.

3.10 The design for the scheme will be based on the diagram below:



3.11 Construction costs will be capital by their nature. The provision and “sale” of plaques will be revenue. Maintenance costs are expected to be covered within existing resources initially and eventually the revenue stream from “sale” of plaques.

- 3.12 The plaques will have space for a set number of words to be provided by the customer and an option for a photograph to be added. This is a service included by the manufacturer. The customer deals directly with them and a proof is sent to Council for approval before the plaque is finally manufactured and sent back to the Council for fitting.
- 3.13 An appropriate agreement and conditions will be developed for the scheme based on the parameters set out in this report. At this stage a 25-year initial agreement is anticipated with the option to renew for further 10-year intervals thereafter which is in line with many other Councils in the country. The customer will be given 2 options at the expiry of each term: Take the ashes away for storage elsewhere or renew. If they do neither the Council will scatter the ashes in an area of the cemetery to be designated for such purpose. As storage of the ashes is above-ground there are no exhumation implications.
- 3.14 A benchmarking exercise has been completed & shows the proposed prices for sanctums are identical to nearby authorities who offer this (Southend and Lambeth).
This comparison also shows that the proposed price for future ground interments is cheaper than Chelmsford City Council but more expensive than Southend and Thurrock.

4. Issue, Options and Analysis of Options

- 4.1 Discussions have taken place with Colchester Cemetery and Crematorium who have since suggested the idea of Columbaria instead of a purpose-built wall. A meeting was subsequently held with the managing director of the granite firm who supplies the Columbaria to Colchester and he said that nationally the Sanctums are outselling the Columbaria and command a higher price as they are seen as a more "individual" place to be laid to rest. They can be installed side by side to mimic a wall. Other sites for the Borough will be considered depending upon the take-up of the opportunity at this pilot site.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 This scheme will enhance the appearance and attractiveness of Woodman Road cemetery. People will have more choice for storage of ashes and a peaceful place to sit and reflect upon their loved ones in a pleasant environment. It also introduces a memorial area for pets.

6. Consultation

6.1 Initial enquiries have been made with the Council’s Planning Department, at this stage it is assumed there will be no objections for this initiative to proceed.

7. References to Corporate Plan

7.1 “Our Borough is a great place to live, work and visit; with strong, healthy and vibrant communities along with a beautiful green environment to enjoy. We want to keep it that way and are working hard to produce a new Local Plan which both protects the essential qualities of the Borough, while at the same time delivering the right mix of housing, jobs, open space and other infrastructure that will be required in the future”

7.2 “Consider how Council assets can be utilised to promote sustainable development in the Borough”

8. Implications

Financial Implications

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8.1 See Business Case for full details.

	Columbaria x 2 (36 spaces) option				ground interment increase to £1,200 after yr2	Income Yr1 Vault x15 Colum x4 ground x5	Income Yr1 Vault x15 Colum x4 ground x5	"do nothing" income	Estimated new income to BBC	Less Capital Invest- ment	Profit /Loss per annum
	Vault x 60 spaces		Likely Case 4 PA								
	Spaces	Income	Spaces	Income							
Year1	60	22,500	36	4,800	33,960	30,130		11,320	18,810	71,000	-52,190
Year2	45	22,500	32	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year3	30	22,500	28	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year4	15	22,500	24	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year5	60	22,500	20	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	27,500	-5,520
Year6	45	22,500	16	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year7	30	22,500	12	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year8	15	22,500	8	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Year9	60	22,500	4	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	27,500	-5,520
Year10	45	22,500	0	4,800	72,000		33,300	11,320	21,980	0	21,980
Total		225,000		48,000	681,960	30,130	299,700	113,200	216,630	126,000	90,630

If current ground interments are removed as an option or charges increased to deter then it is assumed £22k additional revenue per annum would be achieved.

There is a further opportunity for income with the pets memorial fence representing new income in the region of £6k to £15k pa. however, as demand is unknown this has been excluded from the above table.

Legal Implications

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- 8.1 The Council must ensure that the procurement of works, supplies and goods comply with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015, and related legislative and Constitutional requirements. Legal Services are available to advise and assist with appropriate agreements and conditions for the scheme.
- 8.2 Legal Services are available to assist the Assets team with undertaking title searches and to make sure there are no restrictions on use of the pilot site.

Other Implications (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

8.3 N/A

9. Background Papers (include their location and identify whether any are exempt or protected by copyright)

9.1 N/A

10. Appendices to this report

Appendix A - Business Case

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