

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR and ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES MANAGER

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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Report Author: Philip Mousdale /David Walker

Tel. No: 01282 661634 and 661746

E-mail: Philip.Mousdale@pendle.gov.uk and David.Walker@pendle.gov.uk

NELSON CEMETERY PROVISION

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide an update on progress with the search for new cemetery provision within the Nelson area.

RECOMMENDATION

That the report be noted and that a further report be submitted to the next meeting.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure sufficient burial space is available for future needs.

1. Nelson cemetery is considered to have sufficient capacity to provide 5 years of space for Muslim vaults and 10 years for non-Muslim burials. Members are concerned about this and have requested a review of suitable sites within the Nelson area which would potentially meet the criteria for additional capacity.
2. To put this in its Borough wide context the following is the position in the Council's other cemeteries:
 - Colne Cemetery at the pre pandemic rate has enough capacity for the next 6 years with additional Council owned land below the existing cemetery already identified for a future extension.
 - Barrowford Cemetery at the pre pandemic rate has enough capacity for the next 4 years with additional adjoining Council owned land already identified for a future extension.
 - Earby Cemetery at the pre pandemic rate has enough capacity for the next 9 years. Additional land for an extension has been identified.

- Ghyll Cemetery at the pre pandemic rate room has enough capacity for the next 3-4 years with additional adjoining land already identified for a future extension.
 - Salterforth Cemetery at the pre pandemic rate has enough capacity for the next 40+ years.
3. Bereavement Services staff assessed an initial list of sites and the following were reported to this Committee on 24th June 2021 as potentially suitable:
- Nelson Cemetery allotments
 - Land adjacent Marsden Park Golf course
 - Land adjacent Halifax Road Allotments
 - Land off Carr Hall Road / Park Avenue Barrowford
 - Land off Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road
4. The Land adjacent to Marsden Park Golf course was later removed from the list as it was clear it needed to be retained for other use. The Land off Carr Hall Road/Park Avenue was also removed as serious concerns of potential flooding and groundwater protection became clear.
5. Three sites therefore remain under consideration.
6. **The Nelson Cemetery Allotments** are owned by Pendle Council. The land was originally acquired partly for cemetery extension and partly for housing in mind but it has been used for many years as non- statutory allotments managed by the Nelson Cemetery Allotments Society.
7. **The land adjacent Halifax Road Allotments** is owned by Pendle Council. The allotments are owned by Brierfield Town Council.
8. **The land off Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road** is partly owned by Pendle Council and partly by Lancashire County Council.
9. An accessibility study was commissioned by the Council's Engineering Services section on these three remaining sites. The study advised upon the potential access routes into each and provided a high level overview of the potential works that would be required.
10. The findings of the study in summary were:
- **Nelson Cemetery allotments.** It would be preferable to extend the existing access road within the cemetery to form a new access to the site. Existing infrastructure would only require minor works to remove fence lines and vegetation currently located on the boundary of the site.
 - **Land adjacent Halifax Road Allotments.** The existing access road could be utilised for cemetery development but improvement works would be required for it to reach a suitable standard. A formal design would be required for detailed costings to be provided.
 - **Land off Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road.** Edge End Avenue would form the most suitable access point with only minor works required. Access from Halifax Road would be possible from three potential points but would require formal designs for detailed costings to be provided. Several open and culverted watercourses run through the site one of which has a history of causing flooding to residential properties upon Edge End Avenue and Lane Ends.

Any development as a cemetery would need to take account of works to reduce the risk of flooding.

11. To further investigate and fully understand the suitability of the sites for burials we have arranged for them to be surveyed by Betts Associates (Geotechnical). In the case of the Land at /Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road this has involved obtaining a licence from the County Council for it to be undertaken on their part of the site.
12. The site survey work was carried out in the first week of March. The full results are awaited but in summary a 2 metre depth of clay overlying the weathered bedrock was found. This is shallower than expected. It is within the minimum risk category but the approval of the Environment Agency will be required.
13. In recent months councillors have indicated that the Land at Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road is their preferred site. When considering the draft Nelson Masterplan the site was removed as a “housing opportunity” and the decision at the Council meeting in December not to proceed with the Local Plan in its present form effectively removes it as a potential housing site.
14. In addition the Leader of the Council has written to County Councillor Alan Vincent who is the portfolio holder for Resources, HR and Property. He appraised him of the Council’s interest in the site as a cemetery extension and asked that the County Council hold off marketing its part of the site for sale.
15. We have additionally requested from the County Council an indication of the price of purchasing their land. This is awaited and would need to be the subject of negotiation.
16. Councillors will appreciate that once a decision has been taken on a new site considerable further preparatory work will be required on site acquisition if necessary, detailed design, costings, planning permission and then on physical layout. Further information on this will be contained in a further report.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Council’s policy is to provide adequate burial facilities across the Borough.

Financial: The development of the extension will have a significant cost. It has already cost in the region of £10,000 for the investigation and survey work. There will be further significant costs not yet quantified on the items mentioned in paragraph 16. The operation of the new cemetery will add to the cost of the present burial service and will inevitably have an impact on fees and charges.

Legal: None arising directly from this report.

Risk Management: None arising directly from the report.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Sustainability: None arising directly from the report

Community Safety: None arising directly from the report

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from the report

APPENDICES - none

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS – none