

REPORT FROM: CORPORATE DIRECTOR

TO: POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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NEW CEMETERY FOR NELSON AND BRIERFIELD

PURPOSE OF REPORT:

To report on progress with the provision of the new cemetery.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the purchase price of £840,000 plus LCC fees of £10,000 plus Land Registry fees and stamp duty of £31,600 be approved.
- (2) That the provisional estimate of £500,000 for the various works to be carried out on site be noted.
- (3) That the Environmental Services manager be authorised to submit a planning application.
- (4) That a bid to the capital programme be submitted.

REASON FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

To ensure sufficient burial space is available for future needs.

1. At the March 2022 meeting the Committee resolved that the land off Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road is its preferred site for new cemetery provision. It also requested a further detailed report on site investigations, cost of purchase, timescales and site preparation etc.
2. The site is shown on the plan attached. Negotiations with the County Council have been on the basis that Pendle will acquire the whole of the site unconditionally. Their offer is to sell the site to the Council for £840,000 plus £10,000 contribution to their surveyor and legal costs. Liberata Property Services consider this to be a reasonable price taking into account comparable disposals in the area and the Council's proposed use and recommend acceptance of it. There will also be stamp duty and Land Registry fees amounting to £31,600.

3. The broad expectation based on the site survey commissioned by the Council is that approximately 4 of the 6.3 hectares will be suitable for burial space which would mean a provision of about 7,400 graves. Overall across the Borough the number of burial spaces would increase from around 1,120 to 8,520.
4. The remainder of the site would be taken up with road and pathways, car parking space, a small building for storage, niche walls for ashes etc. There would also be tree planting. The provisional estimated cost of this is £500,000 including fees.
5. An application for planning permission will need to be made which will cover the detailed layout of the site. The intention will be to provide significant and dignified burial space and related features in an attractive green environment.
6. Access into the site will be from Edge End Avenue and/or Halifax Road possibly using the land already in the Council's ownership as shown on the plan.
7. A detailed implementation plan with phases and timings is in preparation. Funeral Directors and other interested parties will be consulted.
8. A bid into the capital programme will need to be made to cover the costs of purchase, design, and construction.
9. There are three main options for funding:
 - Reprioritise the existing Capital Programme to remove schemes which are of lower priority. A review is due to take place shortly.
 - Add the scheme to the existing capital programme. This would add approximately £112,000 to the central minimum revenue provision and external borrowing budget which would need to be funded from additional savings.
 - Add the cost of the scheme to cemetery fees. For this site alone it would mean £181 per burial plot. If it was added to all cemeteries across the Borough it would be an increase of £164.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: The Council's policy is to provide additional burial space for Nelson and Brierfield on the site at Edge End Avenue/Halifax Road.

Financial: The cost of acquisition of the site is £840,000 plus £10,000 LCC fees and Land Registry fees and stamp duty of £31,600.

The estimated capital cost of provision (including site acquisition) is c£1,400,000 which will come from the Council's Capital Programme.

The revenue implications of such a bid would be approximately £112,000 per annum.

It should be noted that this is an additional facility to the cemeteries the Council currently operates, though the present cemetery in Nelson is expected to be full within the next 5 years.

Whilst there are no immediate significant manpower resource implications for the service, it is possible that once the cemetery is open requests for burials in both the existing and new cemeteries may be made which will be a pull on the resources available.

Legal: The Council has the legal powers to provide cemeteries. The legal work on the transfer of the site from the County Council will be dealt with by in house Legal Services.

Risk Management: The new cemetery will significantly reduce the possibility of running out of burial spaces in Nelson and Brierfield in the foreseeable future.

Health and Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Climate Change: Tree planting, wildflower planting and differential mowing techniques on the site will help offset the Council's carbon footprint.

Community Safety: None arising directly from the report.

Equality and Diversity: None arising directly from the report.

APPENDICES

Site Plan

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

None