

ABINGDON-ON-THAMES TOWN COUNCIL

Notes of the NEW CEMETERY WORKING PARTY

Meeting held on WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY 2022

The working group consisting of Cllrs Grace Clifton, Eric de la Harpe and Jim Halliday met with the Cemetery and Outdoor Services Manager, Properties Officer and Town Clerk.

Procedural Matters

Cllr Jim Halliday was elected chair of the working party, and Cllr Eric de la Harpe the Vice-Chair.

Summary of position to date

1. The working party was advised that In May 2017 it had been estimated that the cemeteries had another 11 years and 8 months of capacity before they became full, i.e. until January 2029, and that the council had for a number of years been setting funds aside in an earmarked reserve - as of 31 March 2021, this reserve amounted to £899,069.
2. In 2021/2 the council had set aside £20,000 to allow for appointment of external consultancy from a company with the expertise and experience to assist in gathering the information required to write an informed business case.
3. Officers met with Darryl Kelly at Cemetery Development Services ([CDS](#)). CDS offers a range of services from initial feasibility, handling the planning process, organising the tender process for works, undertaking project management, through to completion. It was clear that CDS had considerable experience in cemetery development and had suggested a number of innovative ideas which the Town Council might wish to consider. These included ideas about how biodiversity could be designed in a project from the outset – orchards, wildflower, collection and use of rainwater on site, hardstanding using recycled plastic bitumen, and into operational aspects, for example requiring the use of local stone for memorials, rather than imported granite.
4. CDS suggested that the first step should be to carry out a land feasibility study of potential cemetery sites and that this would provide firm data for use in a business case.

Next Steps

5. The Working Party agreed :
 - a. To ask the Town Clerk to draft a detailed specification for a feasibility study to include:
 - i. High-level review of possible sites in Abingdon
 - ii. Planning policy issues
 - iii. Environmental aspects - including groundwater and site suitability

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- iv. Archaeology
 - v. Ecological habitat
 - vi. Highway feasibility
- b. To seek a quotation from CDS to carry out this work, and in consultation with the Chair of the Working Party to commission the work – ideally with a completion date of Friday 4 March 2022.
- c. To start drafting, in consultation with Working Party members as appropriate, an initial business case for a new cemetery including an assessment of need, options, capital and revenue costs, in anticipation of the land feasibility study report. This should also include a review of the future operational needs of the Outdoor Services Team.
- d. To review (by email) draft sections of the Business Plan as they were written, with the aim of having a first initial draft ready by mid/end March (providing CDS had delivered their report by early March).

Nigel Warner
Town Clerk
5 January 2022