



CABINET

17<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2019

AGENDA ITEM (14)

**SAFETY IMPROVEMENTS TO MEMORIALS AT COUNCIL CEMETERIES**

<b>Accountable Members</b>	Councillor NJW Parsons Deputy Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Forward Planning  Councillor Sue Coakley Cabinet Member for Environment
<b>Accountable Officer</b>	Claire Locke Group Manager - Council Advisory Services 01285 623427 <a href="mailto:claire.locke@cotswold.gov.uk">claire.locke@cotswold.gov.uk</a>

<b>Purpose of Report</b>	To allocate funding, and agree actions to be taken, to improve memorial safety in the Councils Cemeteries.
<b>Recommendations</b>	<p>(a) That a sum of £10,000 be allocated from the Council Priorities Fund Earmarked Revenue Reserve to undertake a full survey of memorials at Chesterton, Stratton and Watermoor Cemeteries;</p> <p>(b) that a further allocation be made of up to £20,000 to undertake repairs or to lay flat those memorials in most urgent need of repair;</p> <p>(c) that the process set out in this report for attempting to contact the families of those buried in the plots with dangerous memorials be agreed;</p> <p>(d) that an annual allocation of £2,000 be made from the Council Priorities Fund for a rolling programme of memorial inspections and safety improvements.</p>
<b>Reason(s) for Recommendation(s)</b>	To ensure that public and employee safety is protected and the wishes of family members of those buried at the cemeteries are respected.

<b>Ward(s) Affected</b>	Chesterton, Stratton and Watermoor
<b>Key Decision</b>	Yes
<b>Recommendation to Council</b>	No

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>The cost of the initial survey is estimated at £10,000, based on an estimate provided by a specialist contractor.</p> <p>There are various options in terms of making safe - laying flat; socketing; and dowelling. The costs vary across each option. The precise 'make safe' requirements will not be known until the survey work is complete. The estimated cost of £20,000 for such work is therefore indicative at this time; and should further funding be required, a report will be presented to Members.</p>
<b>Legal and Human Rights Implications</b>	<p>When a plot is purchased for burial it is effectively leased for a set period. In some cases the contact details of the family who purchased the plot will be held on record but as most of the graves that will require safety improvements are very old it is highly likely the Council will not hold up-to-date contact details for the family and will have no practical affordable way of tracing them.</p> <p>The Council is responsible for health and safety in the cemeteries which are under their ownership or management. The Council must therefore ensure the cemeteries remain a safe environment for visitors and grounds maintenance staff.</p> <p>The Council has no legal responsibility to repair memorials.</p>
<b>Environmental and Sustainability Implications</b>	None
<b>Human Resource Implications</b>	None

<b>Key Risks</b>	<p>If the Council fails to take action to inspect and make safe any dangerous memorials, there is a risk someone could be injured or killed if a memorial falls on them.</p> <p>If the Council lays flat or repairs a memorial, there is a risk the surviving family could complain. In order to mitigate this risk, signage will be erected in the cemeteries, a press statement will be issued and attempts will be made to contact families using last known contact details held for the plot.</p>
<b>Equalities Analysis</b>	None

<b>Related Decisions</b>	None
<b>Background Documents</b>	None
<b>Appendices</b>	None

<b>Performance Management Follow Up</b>	A summary of actions taken and costs incurred will be reported in the quarterly finance update.
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**Background**

1. The Council owns Chesterton and Stratton cemeteries and manages a small closed cemetery at Watermoor. Chesterton has around 3000 plots, Stratton has around 600 plots and Watermoor cemetery only has around 40 plots.
2. A recent assessment of risks has highlighted that there are a large number of memorials at Chesterton (around 1500), a few at Stratton and the small number that exist at Watermoor that are tall and potentially unstable. A thorough inspection is therefore required to ensure these memorials do not pose a risk to visitors and workers.
3. An inspection has been commissioned using specialists in memorial safety who will undertake a visual and physical inspection of each memorial, which will then be photographed for a report.
4. Any memorials found to be in an unstable condition such that they pose an imminent risk of collapse will be immediately laid flat by the personnel carrying out the inspection.
5. Any other memorials that are found to be unstable but do not pose an imminent threat will need to be remedied but the Council will first:
  - place a temporary sign on them inviting family to contact the Council and discuss the work required; and
  - review cemetery records and write to family members where contact details are still held.
6. Any family members who make contact with the Council will then be involved in the decision on what alterations are made to the memorial. They could choose to undertake full repairs or replacement of stonework but would need to undertake this at their own cost.
7. If family members do not make contact or fail to carry our repairs within a reasonable period (to be specified depending on risk), the Council will proceed with making the memorial safe.
8. Laying the memorial flat is the cheapest option but this may be difficult if a large number of large memorials are close together and will affect the appearance of the cemetery. There is also the risk of becoming a trip hazard and infringing upon grounds maintenance works.
9. There are also options to repair the memorials using a stainless steel dowelling system or via socketing (although this is not suitable for all memorials). These are more expensive options, the costs of which are set out in the appendix.
10. Work will be prioritised according to risk with the oldest memorials inspected first. Once a full inspection of all memorials has been carried out in 2019, there will be a need for a rolling inspection programme for some of the older memorials each year and further safety improvements as conditions deteriorate. An annual revenue sum of £2,000 is therefore sought to support this rolling programme.

(END)