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Date	9 December 2014		
Ward (s) affected	All	Key Decision	No

Subject	Dorking Cemetery
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RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Executive notes the timescale for the continuation of burials at Dorking Cemetery.
2. That Executive endorses the policy decision made by the Council's Strategy Committee on 9 July 2002 which states:

 "The Dorking Cemetery will continue to be managed by the Council. The Council will not seek to provide a new cemetery once Dorking Cemetery has no space for new burials."
3. That commercial operators be invited to express an interest in working with the Council on additional cemetery provision in the District during the last quarter of 2014/15.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In July 2002 the Council's Strategy Committee resolved that "The Dorking Cemetery will continue to be managed by the Council. The Council will not seek to provide a new cemetery once Dorking Cemetery has no space for new burials."

In the period since then, the Cemetery was expanded (2013/14) to enable an additional 100 burial spaces to be created, which should enable the cemetery to continue to be operational through to mid 2018. The Council has also entered into a unique arrangement with Clandon Wood Natural Burial Site to give Mole Valley residents access to a burial there at the same charge as Dorking Cemetery.

This report provides an opportunity to review that decision and asks Executive to confirm the decision, or ask officers to develop a strategy to enable cemetery provision to continue.

CORPORATE PRIORITIES

The continuation of a Cemetery Service does not significantly contribute towards any of the Council's priorities

The Executive has the authority to determine the Recommendations

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 Dorking Cemetery is a 14 acre site which has been operating since 1855. It has a total capacity of around 9,600, and at the time of preparing the report (November 2014), there are a little over 200 spaces remaining on the lawn section which is the last area used for traditional burials.
- 1.2 The burial provision was extended during 2013/14 by clearing and levelling the last unused plots within the cemetery. Based on current trends of usage, it is anticipated that there is sufficient capacity in the cemetery to allow it to continue to be used until mid 2018. Once the cemetery is full, it will be maintained as a closed cemetery and the only burials that can take place would be in purchased graves where there is sufficient space available.
- 1.3 There is no legal requirement for local authorities to provide cemeteries. The Local Government Act 1972 established local authorities as burial authorities and provided the opportunity for them to provide cemeteries. All of the Districts and Boroughs in Surrey currently provide a burial function, with the exception of Surrey Heath Borough Council.
- 1.4 At its meeting on 9 July 2002, the Council's Strategy Committee considered future cemetery provision in Dorking and agreed "That the Dorking cemetery continue to be managed by the Council but that the Council does not seek to provide a new cemetery once Dorking Cemetery has no space for new burials." The decision was based on the following rationale:
- Significant cost implications to develop a new cemetery (expert consultancy advice, site purchase, preparation, and infrastructure)
 - Other burial alternatives within and outside Mole Valley
 - There was no aspect of cemetery provision that fell within the Council's priorities
- 1.5 The purpose of this report is to enable the Executive to review the decision taken 12 years ago, and identify if there have been any changes in local circumstances to change that decision.

2. CURRENT BURIAL PROVISION AND AVAILABILITY

- 2.1 In addition to the lawn cemetery which provides traditional burials, the Cemetery provides additional specific facilities. These, together with the total amount of space and remaining capacity are set out below:
- Muslim Burial Site: This was created in partnership with the Dorking Muslim Community Association in 2012 and provides 18 plots. At the current time there have been no burials although the Council continues to work with the Association to promote this facility.
 - Natural Burials: There is a total capacity of around 193 for green burials, with an estimated 48 spaces remaining. The most recently cleared area is only suitable for natural burials (single depth only) and should provide a further 100 spaces.

- Children's Plots: There is a total capacity of around 44 in this area, with an estimated 34 spaces remaining.

2.2 In March 2014 the Council entered into an arrangement with Clandon Wood, a natural burial site in Guildford Borough. This was the first arrangement of its sort in the country between a private burial provider and a local authority and it enables Mole Valley residents to purchase a natural burial spot at Clandon Wood at the same rate as the Council charges at Dorking Cemetery.

3.0 CEMETERY USAGE AND DEMAND

3.1 The cemetery is available for everyone. The charges for burials and interments are three times higher for non Mole Valley residents than they are for people who lived in the District, although there are exceptions to this in some specific circumstances.

3.2 An analysis of demand for the cemetery in the period 2011–2013 has been undertaken, which is attached at Appendix 1. This shows that although the majority of the demand is from the Dorking area (i.e. Dorking North and South wards, and other wards where residents would consider themselves living in Dorking) there is use from across the District and from outside Mole Valley.

4.0 ADDITIONAL FACILITIES

4.1 There are a number of Parish churchyards in the District which are generally only available for residents who live in the Ecclesiastical Parish. A table, which sets out the capacity of each of these burial grounds is set out at Appendix 2. There is also a private cemetery at Randalls Park, Leatherhead.

4.2 Cremations are becoming increasingly popular. Nationally, in 2012 74% of people were cremated following their death. Statistics produced by the Cremation Society of Great Britain show that this percentage is growing on a year by year basis. Randalls Park Crematorium, in Leatherhead, is the only facility based in the District, with some local residents choosing to use the facilities at Crawley or Guildford or others further afield.

5.0 LAND AVAILABILITY FOR CEMETERY PROVISION

5.1 The Environment Agency set the regulations around the provision of burial grounds. These state that burial grounds must:

- Not be in standing water
- Have at least 1 metre of soil below the base of the grave, making the overall depth required 3.5m below ground level.
- Be at least 250m away from the nearest potable groundwater supply source.
- Be at least 30m away from any spring or water course.
- Be at least 10m away from any existing field drains.

5.2 A review of Mole Valley District Council owned land has been undertaken. None of the land within the Council's ownership is suitable for a cemetery. A high level summary of the analysis is set out at Appendix 3.

6 IMPLICATIONS OF A DECISION

- 6.1 If the decision is taken to overturn the previous Council decision, a strategy to enable future burial provision will be developed.
- 6.2 If it is decided that the Council should not continue with the service the only ongoing legal requirement for the Council is to continue to provide welfare funerals in accordance with the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. This applies where a resident passes away outside hospital and it appears that no suitable arrangements have been or are being made. The Council provides a very small number of these each year, with around one/two annually being typical. We arrange a burial where the Council has reason to believe that cremation would be contrary to the deceased's wishes.
- 6.3 There is flexibility in the use of space at Dorking Cemetery which would enable this service to continue into the long term. There is capacity for burials in the older part of the cemetery (as gravestones are not provided for welfare burials).
- 6.4 A key difference between now and when the Council made its decision in 2002 is the arrangement we have entered into with Clandon Wood. This has created a new opportunity for residents to have a green burial in a beautiful setting at the same rate as the Council charges for burials. Once Dorking Cemetery is full, we will continue to set a burial fee which will allow people to access Clandon Wood at a local authority rate.
- 6.5 In terms of the impact on the community, the options available to residents would be:
- Woodland burial at Clandon Wood, either through the agreement they have with the Council or in line with their normal services and prices
 - Burial at a parish churchyard, providing they meet the required criteria
 - Burial at a private cemetery, either within or outside of Mole Valley
 - Cremation
- 6.6 Once the existing cemetery is full, it will continue to need appropriate maintenance and management, and would be available for pre-booked graves. Facilities for visitors to the cemetery and for storage of maintenance equipment will continue to be needed for some considerable time.

7. PRIVATE SECTOR PROVISION

- 7.1 There is a private cemetery and crematorium in Leatherhead. Officers will contact providers to discuss whether they would be interested in working with the Council to provide an additional site in the District.

8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 The costs and income from Dorking cemetery currently provide a net £1,250 income. Once the cemetery is full, the Council will need to continue to maintain the site, and therefore there will be additional cost implications which will start to impact from 2018/19.
- 8.2 If the Council was to commence a project to develop a new cemetery, there would be significant cost implications both in terms of specialist support to identify a site and in its delivery. These will be addressed in more detail as part of a strategy to deliver a new cemetery, if required.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Local authorities are not legally required to provide a burial facility, although the Local Government Act 1972 established local authorities as burial authorities and provides the opportunity for them to provide cemeteries.
- 9.2 Local authorities are also required to provide welfare funerals in line with the Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984. There is long term capacity at Dorking Cemetery to enable the Council to continue with this service.
- 9.3 There are no direct legal implications arising from this report. There will be implications if the Council decides to continue with service provision and these will be addressed in the strategy.

10. OPTIONS

- 10.1. There are two options available to the Executive.
- 10.2 Option 1 is to agree with the decision made by the Council in 2002 to not continue with a cemetery service once Dorking Cemetery is full, as set out in the recommendations.
- 10.3 Option 2 is to request that officers undertake work to develop a strategy to enable cemetery provision to be continued into the longer term.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Monitoring Officer Commentary

The Monitoring Officer is satisfied that all relevant legal implications have been taken into account in the report

S151 Officer Commentary

The S151 Officer confirms that all risks and financial implications have been taken into account.

Risk Implications

Current service delivery at Dorking Cemetery will continue until there is no further capacity and people who have reserved plots will be able to use them when they are required. Therefore there is no impact on day to day service delivery.

Clandon Wood could decide to remove the offer that is currently available to Mole Valley residents. This risk is considered to be low, at the current time. Furthermore, based on current pricing, their lowest cost service costs the same as a burial at Dorking Cemetery.

There may be reputational risks, although the recommendation is to confirm an existing Council decision.

Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken on the recommendations. In terms of the protected characteristics identified by the Equality Act 2010, there are no groups within that who will be affected to any greater extent than the community as a whole.

Employment Issues

None.

Sustainability Issues

The Cemetery will continue to be managed under the Grounds Maintenance contract. There are no specific sustainability implications as a consequence of this report.

Reputational Implications

The report recommends that Executive endorses the decision taken in July 2002 and therefore there will be no change in policy if the recommendations are approved. Nonetheless, there may be reputational implications as a consequence of this report.

There are no risks around people having to pay increased costs for burials as a result of the unique partnership with Clandon Wood, whereby residents will continue to be able to access burials in line with the Mole Valley District Council fees and charges.

Consultation Issues

None

Communication Implications

The Parks Team will take the lead role in communicating with key stakeholders, which include undertakers, faith representatives and local residents who want advice about the cemetery.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Report to Strategy Committee – 9 July 2002

APPENDIX 1 – ANALYSIS OF DEMAND – 2011 – 2013

The table below sets out demand for Dorking Cemetery in the period 2011 – 2013:

Area	2011	2012	2013	Total
Ashtead	3	0	2	5
Beare Green	2	2	1	5
Bookham	3	2	2	7
Box Hill & Headley	0	0	1	1
Brockham, Betchworth & Buckland	1	2	8	11
Capel, Leigh & Newdigate	1	0	0	1
Charlwood	0	0	0	0
Dorking	11	39	30	80
Fetcham	1	1	1	3
Holmwoods	10	5	3	18
Leatherhead	1	3	3	7
Leith Hill	0	0	0	0
Mickleham, Westhumble & Pixham	4	0	0	4
Okewood	0	0	1	1
Westcott	0	1	0	1
Burials from outside Mole Valley	21	9	18	48
Total	58	64	70	192

APPENDIX 2 – CAPACITY IN PARISH CHURCHYARDS

Dorking Deanery	Burial Life (Years)	Burial of Cremated Remains Life (Years)	Notes
Abinger	10	15	
Coldharbour	7	15	
Dorking St Paul's	0	0	No Burial Ground
Holmwood	0	0	
North Holmwood	0	0	No Burial Ground
Ranmore	10+	10+	
Wotton	10+	10+	
Capel	30	30	
Dorking St Martin's	0	10	
Holmbury St Mary	3	10+	Not in Mole Valley
Newdigate	8	10+	
Ockley and Forest Green	NR	NR	
Westcott	40	10+	
Leatherhead Deanery			
Ashted (St Giles)	10 to 20	20	80 spaces left
East Horsley	NR	NR	Not in Mole Valley
Fetcham	NR	NR	
Leatherhead	1	10	2-3 spaces left
Mickleham	150	200	
Oxshott	0	12	Not in Mole Valley
West Horsley	10	20	Not in Mole Valley
Cobham	0	<	Not in Mole Valley
Effingham	NR	NR	Not in Mole Valley *
Gt Bookham	0	10+	
Ockham	NR	NR	Not in Mole Valley
Stoke d'Abernon	0	10+	Not in Mole Valley
NR = No Response			

*Although it is not in Mole Valley, it serves residents of the Little Bookham Ecclesiastical Parish.

In addition, the Roman Catholic Parish of Effingham and Fetcham has around 600 burial plots (half an acre) available for people who live in the Ecclesiastical Parishes of Effingham, Fetcham, Bookham, and East and West Horsley.

APPENDIX 3 – Analysis of Mole Valley District Council owned land and suitability for cemetery provision

Town/Village	No. of sites	No. Suitable	Unsuitable for Cemetery (Reason)									
			Planning policies	Common land	Protected playing field	Charity	Gifted to Residents	Other Designation	Other*	Size	Licences /Leases	Football Pitch
Ashtead	6	0	0	1	1	0	0	2	1	2	2	0
Beare Green	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0
Bookham	10	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	2	7	1	1
Brockham	2	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	1
Dorking	16	0	1	1	0	0	1	2	6	6	4	2
Fetcham	7	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	3	5	1	0
Leatherhead	14	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	7	5	2	1
North Holmwood	3	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
Westcott	2	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

*Other Includes:

- Allotments
- On Flood Plain
- Restrictive Covenants
- Town Centre Park
- War Memorial
- Water Table too high