

Item No. 7.	Classification: Open	Date: 19 June 2012	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Future of Cemeteries Service – Supplementary Information	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Transport, Environment & Recycling	

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee considered the draft Cemetery Strategy report at its meeting on 8 May 2012. The committee noted that three additional potential sites for burial in Camberwell Old Cemetery had been identified after the main consultation was under way, and that residents closest to these sites may not be aware of this. The committee therefore recommended that the Cabinet request officers to carry out a risk assessment on the consultation process and consider whether any additional work was required in respect of these particular sites.
2. The three additional sites for burial in Camberwell Old Cemetery are:
 - a. Site G1/G2 – would involve re-use of graves under faculty. Initial appraisal of date of last burial suggests that all plots are likely to have been used before 1927. There are however records of common graves being distributed (generally in the early 1940s) in Camberwell Old Cemetery and as such more detailed research is required to be undertaken to gain a better understanding of the age structure of the graves in this site.
 - b. Site Z – contains a mixture of consecrated and unconsecrated land; private and public burials with some private graves as recent as the 1940s. More detailed research is required to be undertaken to gain a better understanding of both the age structure and status of the land and there is also the added issue of the need for remediation and the associated significant cost implication.
 - c. Site H1/H2/H3 - Initial appraisal suggests site H1 was previously buried in (public graves) before 1927 with parts of the site pre 1900. The site was subsequently topped up with soil (the date of which is unknown). The site would deliver 480 double depth plots once completed which is the equivalent two years burial plus burial in the second grave space over the next 50 plus years.

Risk Assessment

3. A risk assessment of the consultation process undertaken in respect to these sites was carried out and this included:

- a. A review of the consultation on the future cemetery strategy undertaken in the Summer of 2011
 - b. A meeting with local ward councillors in May 2012 to review in detail the impact of burying in the three sites would have on neighbouring residents
 - c. A meeting with residents from Ryedale and Forest Hill to provide further detail on the proposals for area H1.
4. The assessment of the consultation exercise undertaken in summer 2011 highlighted that it was clear that an option for future burial space was reusing existing burial space in Camberwell Old Cemetery. It was also identified that residents from both Ryedale and Forest Hill responded to this consultation.
5. It was also identified that a meeting was held on the 11 August with residents from Ryedale as part of this consultation to inform them of the options being considered in terms of future burial space and site H1 was discussed at this meeting.
6. The meeting held on site with local ward councillors in May 2012 concluded that sites G1/G2 and Z would remain well screened when developed from neighbouring residents as a result of the mature trees along the boundary of the cemetery and as such it was considered that these proposals were appropriate recommendations.
7. It was agreed; however, that a meeting should be arranged with residents living on Ryedale and Forest Hill to provide further detail on the proposals for site H1 and to also seek views on these proposals in advance of Cabinet on the 19 June 2012.
8. The meeting was with residents living on Ryedale and Forest Hill and was held on 12 June 2012 at Honor Oak Baptist Church. The feedback from residents can be summarised as follows:
 - a. Questions were raised around the relatively small capacity offered by site H1. It will provide 480 new plots which at current rate will last only two years. This loss of visual amenity and impact on residents was considered disproportionately high price to pay for just two years worth of burial.
 - b. Concern about the impact of using the area for burial centred on the visual impact of having burial in close proximity to back gardens; the loss of privacy; the removal of valuable amenity open space; reduced security and of residences as the space becomes more used and trees removed resulting in properties being more vulnerable.
 - c. Mitigation of these impacts through screening was discussed. Questions arose around the potential impact on light and the effectiveness of tree / planted boundaries given the raised level of the land.
 - d. A lengthy discussion on the reason for starting burial in site H1 before using the much larger piece of land available at site Z. Residents queried why this land could not be prepared for use straight away as the area is not close to any properties and would have little impact on residents. It was explained that this site has complex issues, the whole site needs to be remediated first and in some areas of the site burials have taken place too recently for it to be re-used.

- e. Concern was expressed about the time given to residents to consider the implications of the cemetery strategy and formulate a response with consultation meeting is being held a week before the Cabinet Meeting. The council previously met with residents of Ryedale in August 2011 as part of the wider consultation and had discussed the potential of site H1 for use in the short term. However, there was dissatisfaction that the Cemetery Strategy has not been discussed with residents sooner.

Response to concerns raised by residents of Ryedale and Forest Hill

Need to use Area H1

9. The basis of the proposed cemetery strategy is to reuse and reclaim burial space in the three cemeteries owned and managed by the London Borough of Southwark and this strategy is based on the response to the consultation undertaken in the summer of 2011.
10. This consultation emphasised the need to continue to bury in Southwark and also highlighted the significant opposition to using Honor Oak Recreation Ground for future burial space. This can only be achieved by maximising the use or re-use of the space with the current cemetery lands. Much of the previously used land within Camberwell Old Cemetery has not been actively managed and thus has taken on the character of amenity open space and woodland. These spaces will need to be more actively managed to ensure that their future use for burials is not compromised. This may give rise to concern from users and neighbours of the cemetery. While the impact may be mitigated by sympathetic landscaping and bio-diversity plans, the primary use of the land is for burial and as such there may be some loss of amenity.
11. Whilst understanding the concerns of some of the residents of Forest Hill and Ryedale it is proposed to keep the plans for burials site H1 in the proposals as to remove area H1 would result in the loss of two years burial provision, with no readily available alternative.
12. The decision to implement Area H before Sites G1/G2, Z, J, K, L and H2/H3 was taken due to the relative simplicity and low cost of delivering Site H1 against the complexity of delivering the other sites.

Current Scheduling of works

13. Table 1 illustrates the scheduling of burial in those sites as set out in the cemetery strategy.

Table 1: Cemetery Strategy Plan for Burial

Site	Proposed Date of First Burial
B	2017
D1	2017
H1	2021
G1/G2	2022
Z	2024
H2/H3	2027
J, K, L	2029
D2 (Camberwell New cemetery)	2032

14. Officers have considered whether it was possible to re-arrange the scheduling of the proposed burial options to delay the use of site H1. Area H1 is currently phased in the short term action plan and is due to be delivered in 2019 with burials commencing in 2021. Sites G1/G2 and Site Z are phased directly after H1 in the medium term action plan along with site H2/H3 and Sites J, K, L which are also located in Camberwell Old Cemetery. Site D2 is also in the medium term action plan but is located in Camberwell New Cemetery.

Age profile of burials at alternate sites

15. National best practice guidance suggests that burial rights should not be extinguished in graves less than 75 years old. Thus in order to be able to change the scheduling and deliver the above sites from 2019 (scheduled date for construction of H1) no graves aged later than 1944 must be present in the alternative sites.
16. Current records indicate that site D2 has private graves dating up to 1955 and thus cannot be used for reburials until 2032 at the earliest. For all the other alternative sites a detailed age profile of burials remains to be undertaken. This requires the digitising and filtering of records so as to establish a more accurate age structure in these areas and will be completed by 2014. There is a risk that use of all the sites requires disturbance of graves dating up to and beyond the end of the second world war, meaning that the earliest that burial rights could be extinguished is at least 2020 and possibly beyond.
17. In addition to the age profile the specific issues of faculty permission, ground contamination and tree loss need to be considered at specific sites.

Faculty permission

18. In order to facilitate use of consecrated areas prior to the use of H1 faculty permission would be required for Sites G1/G2 and Z. The Diocese has indicated that such a faculty would be likely and thus this offers no impediment to the use of these areas.

Potentially contaminated ground

19. Site Z has been subject to unauthorised topping up and one soil sample (out of sixty taken) has indicated contamination. Further work is needed to finalise decontamination plans but again there is no impediment to these works being undertaken prior to the use of site H1.

Tree loss

20. The implementation of Sites J, K and L involves significant tree loss. Whilst this is less likely to impact on the amenity of site H1, it will require significant consultation prior to implementation.

Options for scheduling works to delay use of site H1

21. From paragraphs 15 -19 it is clear that changes to the scheduling of works in the medium term action plan may be considered on the completion of the detailed age profile for Camberwell Old; the agreement of the remediation of site a Z; the approval of faculty for use of sites G1, G2 & Z; and the outcome of consultation on the proposed tree loss in areas J, K & L. All of these do present significant

risk but in the event that all of these studies deliver no impediment the use of the areas the phasing of works set out in table 2 would be possible, with the prospect of site H1 coming into use in 2031.

Table 2: Re-scheduled Programme (subject to detailed review of grave records)

Site	Potential revised Date Of Burial
B	2017
D1	2017
G1/G2	2021
Z	2023
H2/H3	2026
J. K and L	2028
H1	2031
D2 (Camberwell New)	2032

Mitigation of loss of amenity

22. It is proposed that more detailed communication be undertaken with residents should the strategy be approved to work with them to reduce the impact as much as possible by identifying appropriate measures that could be implemented; e.g. implementation of soft landscaping as screening but it is understood that these measures do not negate the concerns raised at the meeting

SUPPLEMENTARY ADVICE FROM OTHER OFFICERS

Strategic Director of Law, Communities & Governance

23. As indicated in the main report, general consultation has taken place widely to enable the council to review its burial provision, the details of which are set out in appendix E to that report. Concern was raised at the Overview and Scrutiny Committee about three proposed sites for burial in Camberwell Old Cemetery and the possible impact on residents living near to those sites. Members will note from this supplementary report the subsequent action taken by officers to address these concerns, the outcome of further consultation with residents and the officer's response to it. Members are reminded that the product of consultation must be carefully considered before reaching a decision on the recommendations before them.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
See main report		

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Barrie Hargrove, Cabinet Member for Transport, Environment and Recycling	
Lead Officer	Deborah Collins, Strategic Director, Environment and Leisure	
Report Author	Des Waters, Head of Public Realm	
Version	Final	
Dated	18 June 2012	
Key Decision?	Yes	
CONSULTATION WITH OTHER OFFICERS / DIRECTORATES / CABINET MEMBER		
Officer Title	Comments Sought	Comments included
Strategic Director of Communities, Law & Governance	Yes	Yes
Finance Director	Yes	Yes
Cabinet Member	Yes	Yes
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