

Public Document Pack

Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee

To: All members of the Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint committee:-

Councillors Edward Joyce, Barry Lewis, Sam Martin, Simon Fox and Scott Roche

Substitutes: Councillor Jayne McCoy

A meeting of the **Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee** will be held on **Monday, 18 July 2022** at **5.30 pm** in **Cemetery Chapel, Plough Lane, Wallington**

KATHERINE KERSWELL
Chief Executive
London Borough of Croydon
Bernard Weatherill House
8 Mint Walk, Croydon CR0 1EA

Jayde Watts
020 8726 6000
Jayde.watts@croydon.gov.uk
www.croydon.gov.uk/meetings

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AGENDA

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Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee

18 July 2022

5.30 pm at the

Cemetery Chapel, Plough Lane, Wallington



To all members of the Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee:-

Chair: To be elected for 2022/23 at the first meeting of the committee
Vice-Chair To be elected for 2022/23 at the first meeting of the committee
Councillors: Edward Joyce, Barry Lewis, Sam Martin, Simon Fox and Scott Roche

Substitutes: Councillor Jayne McCoy

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Helen Bailey
Chief Executive
Friday, 8 July 2022

Enquiries to: Ben Kiang, Committee Services Officer

Email: committee.services@sutton.gov.uk

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A G E N D A

1 Welcome and introductions

2 Apologies for absence

3 Declarations of interest

4 Minutes of the previous meeting

3 - 6

To approve as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2021.

5 Any urgent business

To consider any items which, in the view of the Chair, should be dealt with as a matter of urgency because of special circumstances (*in accordance with S100B(4) of the Local Government Act 1972*).

6 Election of a Chair and Vice Chair

7 Report of the Treasurer

7 - 14

8 Report of the Surveyor

15 - 20

9 Exclusion of the public and press

The following motion should be moved, seconded and approved if the committee wishes to exclude the public and press to deal with reports revealing exempt information:

“That the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph X Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.”

Reminder – Declarations of Interests

Members should consider the following interests and whether they have any they should declare.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and you have either declared it beforehand in the Register of Members' Interests or to the Monitoring Officer for entry in the Register you must state at this meeting that you have such an interest and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Where you have a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest in any business of the Authority at this meeting and have not previously declared it you must declare the nature of that interest at this meeting and then withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Other Pecuniary and Non-Pecuniary Interests

Where you have any other pecuniary or non-pecuniary interest in any business at this meeting you must declare that interest, but may continue to speak and vote on the matter. However, if the interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice your judgement of the public interest then you should declare the interest and withdraw from the room or chamber where the meeting is being held whilst that business is considered.

Further information on these matters can be found in the Council's Code of Conduct and Constitution. If you are in any doubt as to whether you have an interest you should seek advice **before** the committee meeting from Alexa Coates.

If, during the course of the committee meeting, you consider you may have an interest you should always declare it.

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Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee**29 November 2021****BANDON HILL CEMETERY JOINT COMMITTEE****29 November 2021 at 6.30 pm**

MEMBERS: Councillor Muhammad Sadiq (Chair), and Councillors Robert Canning, Edward Joyce, Barry Lewis, Oliver Lewis and Prince

ABSENT None

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

The Chair, Councillor Muhammad Sadiq, welcomed those present.

2. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for lateness were received from Councillor Barry Lewis.

3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

4. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2020 be agreed as an accurate record.

5. ANY URGENT BUSINESS

In a slight change to the order of the printed agenda, the Chair advised that, in accordance with convention, the Chair for the 2021/22 municipal year should be a councillor from the London Borough of Croydon.

A motion to appoint Councillor Oliver Lewis as Chair for the 2021/22 municipal year was moved by Councillor Robert Canning and seconded by Councillor Barry Lewis.

RESOLVED:

1. That Councillor Oliver Lewis be elected as Chair for the 2021/22 municipal year

6. REPORT OF THE TREASURER

The Treasurer to the committee presented the report.

The committee discussed the level of the cemetery's financial reserves and highlighted the importance of generating enough income to maintain the cemetery as well as ensure the accumulation of reserves as contingency for future years when burial space would be depleted and income would be reduced. Officers confirmed that space in the cemetery would not be exhausted for approximately 20 years but added that options for creating more burial space could be explored, particularly as legislation is changed. The Treasurer confirmed that the council would need to calculate the cost of different longer-term options but clarified that the cemetery had relatively healthy reserves in the short term. It was noted that making long-term predictions about the cemetery's finances was difficult as a result of variables such as consumer trends, the level of fees and charges set and changing legislation on the use of burial sites

The committee discussed the rate of inflation and the financial impact on the council of not raising the cemetery's fees and charges in line with inflation. It was clarified that, under the existing contract, the committee was limited in its ability to adjust fees and charges and that the financial impact of inflation would largely be borne by the council.

The committee sought clarity on the costs and benefits associated with including the cemetery's accounts in the internal audit process. The treasurer estimated that the cost of maintaining this process would be low but offered to carry out calculations and report back to the committee. It was also highlighted that it was good practice to have auditing of accounts by a body outside of the cemetery and the committee.

The committee also discussed the recommendation regarding the introduction of a risk register. The Treasurer confirmed that the keeping of a risk register was good practice to assess financial and operational risks and that an update would be presented biannually as part of the Treasurer's Report.

Councillor Oliver Lewis moved the following amendment to the officers' recommendations:

2.6 To confirm that an ongoing annual Internal Audit review of the year-end accounts is required on the basis that the cost of doing so is reported back to the committee annually.

2.7 To agree to prepare and maintain a risk register which should be presented to the joint committee as a standing item.

Councillor Muhammad Sadiq seconded the amendment which was put to the vote and won.

RESOLVED:

1. To note the financial outturn for 2019/20
2. To note the provisional financial outturn for 2020/21
3. To note the forecast outturn position for 2021/22
4. To approve the budget for 2022/23
5. To approve the fees and charges for 2022/23
6. To confirm that an ongoing annual Internal Audit review of the year-end accounts is required on the basis that the cost of doing so is reported back to the committee annually.
7. To agree to prepare and maintain a risk register which should be presented to the joint committee as a standing item.

Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee**29 November 2021****7. REPORT OF THE SURVEYOR**

The Surveyor to the committee presented the report.

The committee discussed the planting of 20 additional trees over the next three years. The Surveyor recognised that the cost of planting and maintaining the trees was high but was necessary to ensure their survival.

The committee also discussed the installation of a new hard surface pathway leading to a building. The Surveyor confirmed that the use of the building had changed, meaning that a new pathway was necessary. It was also confirmed that the pathway would be tarmac rather than loose gravel.

The committee discussed options for making new grave spaces available, including possibly exploring green burial sites. The surveyor clarified that the recommendation was to put £5k aside for this purpose but that the final cost may be less. It was confirmed that trials on depth would need to be carried out but the work could lead to approximately 60 new spaces.

The committee discussed the installation of signage in the cemetery that had been agreed following a joint visit by members. The Surveyor agreed to follow-up this request following the meeting.

The committee also raised the issue of headstones being moved and left at the end of rows. The Surveyor confirmed that this was done by the contracted maintenance company as part of an arranged piece of work to recover grave space but explained that there had been delays in collecting the headstones.

RESOLVED:

1. To approve funding of £12,000 to plant and water a further 20 trees within the cemetery over the next 3 years.
2. To approve funding of up to £5,000 for specialist services related to making new grave spaces available.
3. To approve funding of £3,000 for shrub planting on the Plough Lane boundary.
4. To approve funding not to exceed £5,000 to provide hard surface access to the old mortuary building.

Before closing the meeting, the Chair requested that the Clerk explore potential dates for the next meeting of the committee and provide members with options outside of the meeting.

Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee

29 November 2021


The meeting ended at 7.24 pm

Chair:

.....

Date:

.....

| | | | |
|--|---|-------------|-------------|
| Report Title | Report of the Treasurer | | |
| Committee | Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee | | |
| Meeting Date | 18 July 2022 | | |
| Chair | To be elected at the meeting of the committee | | |
| Report From | Richard Simpson, Strategic Director of Resources | | |
| Report Author(s) | Miguel Fernandez, Head of Financial Planning and Business Partnering, 020 8547 5955 | | |
| Ward(s) Affected | London Borough of Croydon and London Borough of Sutton | | |
| Ambitious for Sutton priorities | Making Informed Choices Keeping people safe | | |
| Open/Exempt | Open | | |
| Signed |  | Date | 6 July 2022 |

1 Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the provisional outturn position for the financial year 2021/22 and an update on the risk register.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 To note the provisional financial outturn for 2021/22
- 2.2 To note the estimated cost of the Internal Audit review of the year-end accounts and agree to these being charged to the Bandon Hill Cemetery accounts (Section 5).
- 2.3 To review the proposed Risk Register and provide any comments for officers' consideration.

3 Background and Key Information

- 3.1 The Cemetery is jointly run by the London Boroughs of Croydon and Sutton. Concern was raised at a Committee meeting in July 2006 regarding the funding of maintenance costs once all burial spaces are used up and an annual income can no longer be generated.
- 3.2 As a result it was decided to adopt a fair pricing policy, which will ensure (as far as possible) that the Cemetery generates an annual provision that can be invested and used in the future to maintain the Cemetery. The reserves held by the Committee totalled £455,377 as at 31 March 2021.
- 3.3 At the meeting held on 29 November 2021, the Treasurer presented an update on the financial accounts from 2019/20 and 2020/21 (due to the pandemic, the meetings in 2020 and 2021 were cancelled).

4 Provisional Outturn 2021/22

- 4.1 The provisional outturn for 2021/22 is a surplus of £68,414, this was slightly higher than the budgeted surplus and due to increased guaranteed income from the contractor.
- 4.2 The outturn is still provisional at this stage until final sign off from the Council's appointed external auditors as part of the overall audit of the Council's accounts.
- 4.3 Appendix A shows the financial statements for 2021/22: the Comprehensive Income & Expenditure Account, the Balance Sheet and the Movement in Reserves. The Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account shows a surplus of £42,214. The figure also includes a charge for depreciation. The notional entry does not affect the trading surplus of £68,414.
- 4.4 The London Borough of Sutton Head of Internal Audit has examined the Bandon Hill Cemetery statements of account for 2021/22. The Council's financial systems have been examined and further explanations obtained in relation to the income and expenditure for the year and confirms that the statements of account for 2021/22 are in accordance with its financial records.

5 Internal Audit review

- 5.1 The Committee agreed at the meeting held on 29 November 2021 *"to confirm that an ongoing annual Internal Audit review of the year-end accounts is required on the basis that the cost of doing so is reported back to the committee annually"*.
- 5.2 It has been established from the Head of Internal Audit that they have four days allocated for the review of the Bandon Hill Cemetery accounts. Internal Audit's daily charge is £380, therefore the estimated cost is £1,520. The audit is included in their agreed audit plan and

the charges for 2021/22 and prior years have been paid by Sutton Council.

- 5.3 It is recommended that for 2022/23 and subsequent years, these are charged to the Bandon Hill Cemetery accounts and a budget provision is created to allow for it.

6. Risk register

- 6.1 It was recommended at the Committee meeting held on the 29th November 2021 that *“in light of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and its impact on all Council services, consideration should be given to preparing and maintaining a risk register which should be routinely presented to the joint committee”*.

- 6.2 Appendix B shows the proposed risk register for the Committee's consideration.

7. Impacts and Implications

Financial

- 7.1 Included within the report

Legal implications

- 7.2 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Legal risks

- 7.3 There are no legal risks arising from the recommendations in this report.

8 Appendices and Background Documents8.1 Appendices

| Appendix Letter | Appendix Title |
|------------------------|--|
| A | Appendix A-2021/22 provisional accounts |
| B | Appendix B-Risk register. Bandon Hill Cemetery |

8.2 Background Documents

| Date of Expiry | Background Document |
|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| N/A | None |

8.3 **Consultations**

| Consultees | Yes/No | Officer | Date of Comments |
|-------------------|---------------|--|-------------------------|
| Finance | No | N/A | N/A |
| Legal | Yes | Tracy Swan Head of Law Property, Planning and Employment | 06/07/2022 |
| EQIA | No | N/A | N/A |

Appendix A- Report of the Treasurer

| Bandon Hill Cemetery | | |
|---|--|------------------|
| Comprehensive Income and Expenditure Account 2021/22 | | |
| 2020/21 | | 2021/22 |
| (£) | | (£) |
| | Income | |
| 169,247 | Fees and Charges | 253,569 |
| 0 | Movement in market value of Investment Properties | 0 |
| 169,247 | Total Income | 253,569 |
| | Expenditure | |
| 0 | Staffing costs | (37) |
| (159,118) | Premises related including Grounds maintenance | (168,099) |
| 0 | Transport Costs | 0 |
| (291) | Equipment and Materials | (5,711) |
| (718) | Bank Charges | 0 |
| (943) | Third Party payments – Legal Costs | 0 |
| (293) | Third Party Payments – Construction and Property | 0 |
| (12,300) | Support Costs (detailed in appendix D) | (12,137) |
| 0 | Impairment on Land Value | 0 |
| (26,200) | Depreciation | (26,200) |
| (199,862) | Total Expenditure | (212,183) |
| (30,615) | Net Cost of Services | 41,386 |
| 0 | Bank Interest | 828 |
| (30,615) | Net Surplus/(Deficit) for the Year | 42,214 |
| 0 | Net Surplus arising on Revaluation of Property Plant and Equipment Assets | 0 |
| 0 | Actuarial Gains/(Losses) on Pension fund assets and liabilities | 0 |
| 0 | Other Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | 0 |
| (30,615) | Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | 42,214 |

| BANDON HILL CEMETERY | | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| MOVEMENT IN RESERVES STATEMENT | | | | | |
| FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021 and 31 MARCH 2022 | | | | | |
| | General Fund Balance £ | Earmarked GF Reserves £ | Total Usable Reserves £ | Unusable Reserves £ | Total Authority Reserves £ |
| Balance at 31 March 2020 carried forward | 459,792 | 149,915 | 609,707 | 2,071,800 | 2,681,507 |
| Surplus or (deficit) on provision of services (accounting basis) | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income | (30,615) | 0 | (30,615) | 0 | (30,615) |
| Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | (30,615) | 0 | (30,615) | 0 | (30,615) |
| Adjustments Between Accounting basis & funding basis under regulations | 26,200 | 0 | 26,200 | (26,200) | 0 |
| Net Increase / Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves | (4,415) | 0 | (4,415) | (26,200) | (30,615) |
| Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves | | | | | 0 |
| Reserve adjustments for Pension liability no longer required | | | | | 0 |
| Increase / Decrease in Year | (4,415) | 0 | (4,415) | (26,200) | (30,615) |
| Balance at 31 March 2021 carried forward | 455,377 | 149,915 | 605,292 | 2,045,600 | 2,650,892 |
| Surplus or (deficit) on provision of services (accounting basis) | | | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Other Comprehensive Expenditure and Income | 42,214 | 0 | 42,214 | 0 | 42,214 |
| Total Comprehensive Income and Expenditure | 42,214 | 0 | 42,214 | 0 | 42,214 |
| Adjustments Between Accounting basis & funding basis under regulations | 26,200 | 0 | 26,200 | (26,200) | 0 |
| Net Increase / Decrease before Transfers to Earmarked Reserves | 68,414 | 0 | 68,414 | (26,200) | 42,214 |
| Transfers to / from Earmarked Reserves | | | | | 0 |
| Reserve adjustments for Pension liability no longer required | | | | | 0 |
| Increase / Decrease in Year | 68,414 | 0 | 68,414 | (26,200) | 42,214 |
| Balance at 31 March 2022 | 523,791 | 149,915 | 673,706 | 2,019,400 | 2,693,106 |

BANDON HILL CEMETERY
Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2022

| | 2021/22 | |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------------|
| | (£) | (£) |
| Non current assets | | |
| Property Plant and Equipment | | |
| - Other Land and Buildings | 1,964,600 | |
| Investment Properties | 54,800 | |
| Total non-current assets | | 2,019,400 |
| Current Assets | | |
| Debtors | 244,757 | |
| VAT Control Account | 4,040 | |
| Cash Balances at:- | | |
| - High Interest Deposit Account | 301,934 | |
| - Bank Current Account | 2,250 | |
| - Petty Cash | 0 | |
| accrued cash receipts | | |
| - Investment at LB Sutton | 374,254 | |
| Total current assets | | 927,235 |
| Current liabilities | | |
| London Borough of Sutton | 78,857 | |
| Sundry Creditors | 174,672 | |
| Total current liabilities | | 253,529 |
| Non-current liabilities | | |
| Pension Liability | 0 | |
| Total non-current liabilities | | 0 |
| Net Assets | | 2,693,106 |
| REPRESENTED BY: - | | |
| Non-Usable Reserves | | |
| Capital Adjustment Account | 371,000 | |
| Revaluation Reserve | 1,648,400 | |
| | | 2,019,400 |
| Usable Reserves | | |
| Capital Fund Reserve | 136,000 | |
| Revenue Reserve | 13,915 | |
| General Reserve | 523,791 | |
| | | 673,706 |
| Total Reserves | | £2,693,106 |

APPENDIX B RISK REGISTER-BANDON HILL CEMETERY JOINT COMMITTEE

KEY

| Likelihood | Meaning | Impact | Meaning | Risk Score | RAG Rating | Meaning |
|------------|----------------|--------|---------------|------------|------------|---|
| 5 | Almost Certain | 5 | Critical | 1 - 8 | GREEN | Very low / low risk little risk of failure to deliver core deliverables |
| 4 | Likely | 4 | Major | 9-15 | AMBER | Moderate risk some risk of failure to deliver core deliverables |
| 3 | Possible | 3 | Moderate | 16 - 25 | RED | High risk significant risk of failure to deliver core deliverables |
| 2 | Unlikely | 2 | Minor | | | |
| 1 | Rare | 1 | Insignificant | | | |

| Risk Code | Description of Risk(s) | Risk Owner | Current Risk Likelihood | Current Risk Impact | Current Risk Score | Mitigation | Target Risk Likelihood | Target Impact | AFTER MITIGATION | |
|-----------|---|------------|-------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|--|------------------------|---------------|-------------------|-------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | | | Target Risk Score | Date of Risk Review or Update |
| BH-1 | Cemetery running out of spaces | MD | 1 | 5 | 5 | Management will continue to reclaim graves to provide for new business. | 1 | 4 | 4 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-2 | Risk of a new Covid-19 wave having an operational and financial impact on the running of the cemetery | MF/MD | 3 | 2 | 6 | Previous covid waves have shown that the cemetery could manage increased demand for burial without significant issues. The burial rate remains under review. | 3 | 1 | 3 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-3 | Financial pressures | MF | 3 | 3 | 9 | Potentially the cemetery could increase fees and charges further to cover cost increases | 3 | 2 | 6 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-4 | Poor operational service delivery | MD | 2 | 3 | 6 | The work of the contractor is monitored by the Client Team to ensure contract standards are maintained. | 1 | 3 | 3 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-5 | Contractor failure/contractor handing back contract | MD | 1 | 1 | 1 | Client-side monitor the performance of the contract and the level of complaints this includes regular meetings initiated due to Covid 19. | 1 | 1 | 1 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-6 | Lack of robust governance and accountability arrangements | MF | 2 | 4 | 8 | Cemetery has a well established process of regular meetings with Councillors representing both Councils. Accounts are independently verified by Internal Audit | 1 | 4 | 4 | 18/7/22 |
| BH-7 | Cost of providing burials and grounds maintenance increases above inflation when contract is re-let affecting the financial viability of the cemetery | MF/MD | 5 | 5 | 25 | A rigorous procurement process will be used and costs benchmarked with neighbouring boroughs. The Committee may also wish to consider reviewing the fees and charges to increase income to offset costs. | 3 | 5 | 15 | 18/7/22 |

MF: Miguel Fernandez-Treasurer

MD: Mark Dalzell-Surveyor

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| | | | |
|--|--|-------------|-------------|
| Report Title | Report of the Surveyor | | |
| Committee | Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee | | |
| Meeting Date | 18 July 2022 | | |
| Chair | To be elected at the meeting of the committee | | |
| Report From | Spencer Palmer, Strategic Director of Environment, Housing and Neighbourhoods | | |
| Report Author(s) | Mark Dalzell, Head of Parks and Open Spaces, 0208 770 4695 | | |
| Ward(s) Affected | London Borough of Croydon and London Borough of Sutton | | |
| Ambitious for Sutton priorities | Making Informed Choices Keeping People Safe | | |
| Open/Exempt | Open | | |
| Signed |  | Date | 4 July 2022 |

1 Summary

- 1.1 The report provides an update on the management and maintenance of the cemetery and includes an update on work previously approved, including tree planting, landscape maintenance, boundary fence replacement and redecoration of the chapel. Recommendations for further work including a proposal for a biodiversity area are detailed for consideration.

2 Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Committee is asked to agree that:
- A detailed acid grassland meadow plan is prepared showing how mowing could be adjusted in 2023 on a trial basis.
 - Funding of £600 is made available for a sign explaining the biodiversity of the site and how it is being encouraged through specific maintenance activities.

3 Background and Key Information

3.1 The committee previously approved funding for shrub and tree planting, path improvements and for investigation of the suitability for land to be used for new graves. An update on each of these items is provided below.

3.2 Shrub Planting

The ground on the Plough Lane boundary to the front of the cemetery has been prepared for planting of evergreen shrubs under the trees to provide an attractive appearance and screen the cemetery from the busy road. Shrubs will be ordered and planted during autumn 2022 when the soil is moist and warm and will aid establishment.

3.3 Tree Planting

As agreed by committee, 10 Cherry trees were planted in winter 2021/22 and 10 more will be planted in 2022/23 and in 2023/24. These new trees are filling the gaps left by felling of some of the original cherry trees that had reached the end of their life.

3.4 Possibility of new grave spaces

The land close to the boundary with Plough Lane Close was cleared to the fenceline in 2021 opening up the land to allow for survey work to be carried out to assess the viability of using some of this land for future burials. Officers are looking for suitably experienced surveyors to undertake the work and provide a report on the viability of using the land for burials and will report their findings to a future committee.

3.5 Old mortuary tool store access path

Work to widen the access path to prevent damage to the lawn on either side was completed during last winter.

3.6 New Entrances Signs

New signs were installed at the main entrance in February.

3.7 Carriageway repairs

Tarmac repairs have been completed on the driveway around the cemetery.

3.8 Bandon Hill Cemetery Biodiversity

Sutton's Parks and Open Spaces Strategy (Biodiversity Strategy) sets out a plan to conserve, protect and enhance plants, animals and ecosystems. It shows how the Council intends to deliver locally on the Government's "A Green Future: our 25 year plan to improve the environment". To ensure rare habitats thrive the recommendation is to:

- Implement good conservation practice to enhance for nature
- Diversify and increase the extent and quality of wildlife habitats, including churchyards and allotments
- Raise awareness of the importance of the conservation of biodiversity

3.9 Due to the sandy soil present within the cemetery it is one of the few areas of species-rich, acidic grassland in the borough. The cemetery has several plant species that are rare in London, including thrift, meadow saxifrage and sheep's fescue. Allowing the flowering species to bloom, providing nectar for insects and then to set seed would help conserve this valuable habitat. This would be achieved through alterations to mowing in certain areas (principally in the northern part of the cemetery) between April and September.

3.10 It is recognised that families and visitors have high expectations about the quality of maintenance within the cemetery and while wildflower areas can be beautiful as well as valuable for biodiversity, some visitors may have concerns about whether leaving areas of grass to grow longer in the early summer is respectful to their loved ones. This needs careful consideration and information will need to be shared with visitors about changes in maintenance regimes and visitors given the opportunity to provide feedback. For example by providing temporary notices on site explaining the proposed changes, with both paper feedback forms and an email address to send comments to.

3.11 It would also be desirable to install appropriate interpretation signage and information about the species present and the aims of any changes to maintenance. It would cost approximately £600 to have artwork designed and a display board produced and installed and the Committee is recommended to agree to this funding.

3.12 Impact of Coronavirus on cemetery operations

The cemetery was busier during 2021 and 2020 than in 2019, with various peaks in demand, but the number of funerals overall was not exceptionally high. Operating hours have now returned to normal. The table below shows the number of burials by year from 2015 to 2022.

| Number of Burials by year at Bandon Hill cemetery | |
|---|-----|
| 2015 | 178 |
| 2016 | 175 |
| 2017 | 166 |
| 2018 | 162 |
| 2019 | 149 |
| 2020 | 172 |
| 2021 | 182 |
| 2022 to mid June | 85 |

4 Benefits to Sutton and its Residents

- 4.1 Carrying out essential maintenance and improvements benefits visitors and families who attend services in the chapel and have family plots within the cemetery. Keeping the cemetery in good repair means that neighbours and passersby see a well cared for and safe environment.
- 4.2 Planting of trees and shrubs provides environmental benefits. Increasing tree cover helps to mitigate against increasing summer temperatures in urban areas and provides much needed habitat for wildlife.
- 4.3 The cemetery is a key element of traditional community infrastructure and good maintenance will ensure it remains an asset for many years to come.

5 Implications

- 5.1 Making arrangements to conserve wildflowers would benefit biodiversity within the cemetery and provide an attractive wildflower area during the summer months. Providing a sign explaining the biodiversity may increase visitors' understanding and appreciation of the habitat. It is understood that this is a working cemetery and that burials will take priority but even small changes may help to preserve the unusual species present.
- 5.2 Continuing to improve and restore the cemetery reduces complaints and the likelihood of accidents due to unsafe and uneven surfaces. Ensuring the cemetery is well maintained also encourages use of the chapel and cemetery facilities, bringing income to pay for future repair and maintenance.

6 Finance and Legal Commentary

Finance Comment

- 6.1 The reserves held by the Bandon Hill Committee totalled £455,377 as at 31 March 2021 which are considered to be adequate. (The accounts for 2021/22 are being reviewed by Internal Audit). The purpose of generating a small surplus and generating a reserve was that it can be invested and used to maintain the Cemetery.
- 6.2 The proposals from this report contain commitments totalling £600 and will not materially affect the financial position of the Cemetery.

Financial Risks

- 6.3 The financial risks of entering into these new financial commitments are outweighed by the risks to the service of not carrying out the works.

Legal Comment

- 6.4 The owners of the cemetery are both the London Borough of Sutton and London Borough of Croydon (“Councils”) in their capacity as Joint Burial Authorities. The Bandon Hill Cemetery Joint Committee was set up by both Councils to jointly manage the cemetery, which has been maintained jointly since circa 1965.
- 6.5 Burial Authorities have wide powers for the management, regulation and control of a cemetery under the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1977 enabling the proposals in this report. Regulation 3 provides that Burial Authorities may do all such things as they consider necessary or desirable for the proper management, regulation and control of a cemetery. Regulation 4 enables Burial Authorities to lay out and embellish a cemetery in such a manner as they see fit and from time to time improve it whilst keeping the cemetery in good order and repair. S.214 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides Burial Authorities with a discretionary power to contribute towards the provision or maintenance of burial grounds.
- 6.6 In considering the recommendations to develop and trial introducing a detailed acid grassland meadow plan, consideration needs to be given to ensuring Health and Safety legislation requirements are met by the Burial Authorities to maintain the cemetery in a way which ensures it is a safe place for the public to visit.

Legal Risks

- 6.7 None at present.

7 Appendices and Background Documents

7.1 Appendices

| Appendix Letter | Appendix Title |
|-----------------|----------------|
| N/A | N/A |

7.2 Background Documents

| Date of Expiry | Background Document |
|----------------|---------------------|
| N/A | N/A |

8 Consultations

| Consultees | Yes/No | Officer | Date of Comments |
|------------|--------|--|------------------|
| Finance | Yes | Miguel Fernandez Head of Financial Reporting and Business Partnering | 20.6.2022 |
| Legal | Yes | Tracy Swan Property and Commercial Team South London Legal Partnership | 10.6.2022 |