

## CABINET

20 September 2016

<b>Title:</b> Chadwell Heath Cemetery Extension	
<b>Report of the Cabinet Member for Enforcement and Community Safety</b>	
<b>Open Report</b>	<b>For Decision</b>
<b>Wards Affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Yes
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<b>Accountable Strategic Director:</b> Claire Symonds, Strategic Director Customer, Commercial and Service Delivery	
<b>Summary</b>	
<p>Like many boroughs, Barking &amp; Dagenham is experiencing a shortage of burial space. By 2018 the Council will not have any space for new burials in two of the three cemeteries in the borough. This business case ensures that the large space available within Chadwell Heath cemetery is enhanced in line with the other two sites and offers the same tranquillity and ascetically pleasing surroundings.</p> <p>Works have previously been undertaken on remediation and raising the land up, as well as providing an infrastructure of paths and roads at the extension of Chadwell Heath Cemetery. However, the site has not been fully landscaped which has resulted in a visually uninspiring featureless burial space. The extension therefore remains as a plot of semi-prepared burial land.</p> <p>A £400,000 investment is proposed to complete, and further enhance, the Chadwell Heath Cemetery extension. This work would include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• landscaping work to enhance the whole site</li><li>• installation of a above ground vaults</li><li>• development of a new scattering area</li><li>• development of a new bespoke area for Muslim burials</li><li>• a Pet Cemetery</li></ul> <p>This scheme has the potential to generate income to the value of at least £6m over the next 20 years, not including any additional income for the proposed Pet Cemetery. These income figures are conservative and based on new grave sales with one burial per plot only and indicative pricing.</p>	

## **Recommendation(s)**

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- (i) Agree an investment of £400,000 to complete the extension of Chadwell Heath Cemetery as detailed in the report, which shall include:
  - landscaping work to enhance the whole site
  - installation of above ground vaults
  - development of a new scattering area
  - development of a new bespoke area for Muslim burials
  - development of a Pet Cemetery
- (ii) Note that officers are to undertake an options appraisal for a new car parking area to serve the Cemetery.

## **Reason(s)**

The current extension to Chadwell Heath remains an unfinished project, and it has been confirmed that the borough's two remaining active cemeteries (Rippleside and Eastbrookend) will no longer take new burials from 2018.

This project will allow Barking and Dagenham Council to:

- continue to meet the borough's residents' needs
- offer a high quality service offer to the residents
- increase income opportunities to support in closing the Council budget gap.

## **1 Introduction and Background**

1.1 Barking & Dagenham Council currently manages three active cemeteries within the borough. These are:

- Eastbrookend
- Rippleside
- Chadwell Heath

1.2 Eastbrookend is almost at full capacity for new lawn graves. In June 2015, the service designed a scheme whereby reusing a previous amenity area enabled the creation of approximately 120 new mixed faith lawn graves (10 burials to date). The potential income over the next three years for these new graves would amount to £278k.

1.3 Rippleside benefitted from a recent capital investment of £56k which created 120 new lawn graves whilst removing one of the sites most extensively damaged roads. The area was opened in October 2014 and has already generated income to the value of £90k, and will enable a total income of £260k by 2018.

1.4 Chadwell Heath is at full capacity and is now only able to offer burials for existing purchased graves with space. Previous investment in the cemetery extension was

for remediation works and raising the land up, as well as providing an infrastructure of paths and roads. The extension however has not been fully landscaped which has resulted in a visually uninspiring featureless burial space. The raising of the land means that the high water course within the older cemetery is not an issue for the planned burials within the extension.

- 1.5 The proposed extension has already received planning consent for use as a burial ground, in August 2003, with no end date. The extension, which has already been prepared as a burial site, will be of significant importance in terms of strategic future planning of burials within the borough. However, burials are not taking place within the extension as it is seen as neglected open space with no redeeming aesthetics. The extension should have answered the need of residents who wish to pay respect to deceased loved ones, in accordance with a range of cultural or religious traditions, within a reasonable distance to the place where the deceased was born or lived for a long time. Unfortunately due to incomplete works this is not the case.

## **2 Proposal and Issues**

- 2.1 It is proposed that with investment this site could reach its original vision by creating an atmosphere suitable for burial for local residents. It is also predicted that the extension will generate income to fund its operation, along with future improvements.

- 2.2 This work will include:

- landscaping work to enhance the whole site
- installation of above ground vaults
- development of a new scattering area
- development of a new bespoke area for Muslim burials
- development of a Pet Cemetery

### **Landscaping**

- 2.3 Hard and soft landscaping works are essential for this proposal to make the burial ground more attractive and to subsequently increase the number of burials over future years. It is envisaged that the number of burials in the cemetery will rise as the planting establishes and the site becomes aphetically tranquil.

- 2.4 To address the specific needs of borough residents, and to incorporate a bespoke area for the Muslim community, a business case has been developed. It proposes that the Council undertakes all the landscaping works which fall into four distinct categories:

1. Heavy Standard Tree Planting
2. Landscaping and aftercare – Shrubs and plants
3. Hard Infrastructure – Footpaths, Fencing and Pergolas
4. Above ground Vaults Columbarium

- 2.5 Investment required to the sum of £321k for items 1 – 3 and item 4 is £79k and will include:

- introducing focal points and structured features throughout the extension;
- planting specimen semi mature trees and hedges to give an established feel;

- allocating areas for different religious groups and designing Muslim areas by use of plants from the Quran;
- planting to create an escape from the whirlpool of modern life;
- introducing hedges, trees and solid barriers to segregate areas, shut off surrounding noise pollution, and to create an atmosphere of seclusion, and solemnity;
- improving accessibility by designing a new access roadway from the established original majestic cemetery into the new extension. This access way will be under a pergola which will run from old to new, and start behind the war memorial. In front of this will be a roped handrail leading up to the memorial;
- providing convenience and comfort of the public by introducing adequate protection and shelter from strong cold winds. This will be by planted and covered areas along with the introduction of pergola.

2.6 Once landscaping works are complete, the burial space will be more attractive and it is anticipated the burial rate will steadily grow over future years from where they are now to 20-25 per year. This will also be supported by a marketing plan. It is acknowledged that by landscaping the site, approximately 5% of graves will be lost due to new planting. However, without the landscaping this site will be far less desirable and unlikely to reach full capacity. Site plans are at Appendices 1 -3.

### **Columbarium Installation with landscaped Scattering Area – Addition of Above Ground Vaults**

2.7 In 2014, the national average for cremation was 74%. (*Source: Cremation Society of Great Britain*) and evidence nationally show this to be steadily rising. Based upon deaths registered in Barking and Dagenham, approximately 1,000 cremations a year are taking place outside of the borough, but only a small amount of these are then interred within the borough's cemeteries. There is a lack of options available within our cemeteries to inter ashes.

2.8 A columbarium is a place for the respectful and usually public storage of urns holding a deceased's cremated remains – examples are shown at Appendix 4. A structure of vaults lined with recesses for urns is usually constructed within a peaceful area with a suitable atmosphere. The investment would generate an income stream which would help subsidise the long term cost of operating such a valuable service. The scheme will include:

- small scale landscaping of the existing cemetery;
- introduction of the Barbican 192 Memorial and Sanctum 12 walled vaults;
- new introduced scattering areas by use of Horticultural planting;
- installation of resin bound gravel for surrounds of Columbaria.

2.9 Costs to create a Columbarium will be £79k with full income recovery possible within eight years. Income is expected in the region of £16k per annum, with first leases expected to be in place at £167k within ten years. As a result of the rolling lease periods the same infrastructure can be re-leased after 10-15 years dependant on memorial. This will generate a further £246k.

2.10 The scheme design means that the infrastructure can be easily extended so that the perpetual income increases as demand grows. Periods of lease are proposed at between 10-15 years. The authority already has experience with above ground

vaults and due to their popularity all above ground vaults in Rippleside Cemetery are in use.

2.11 The option to create a crematorium within the borough has been investigated previously. It was established this is not feasible due to the associated costs, the land that would be required and the associated planning permission.

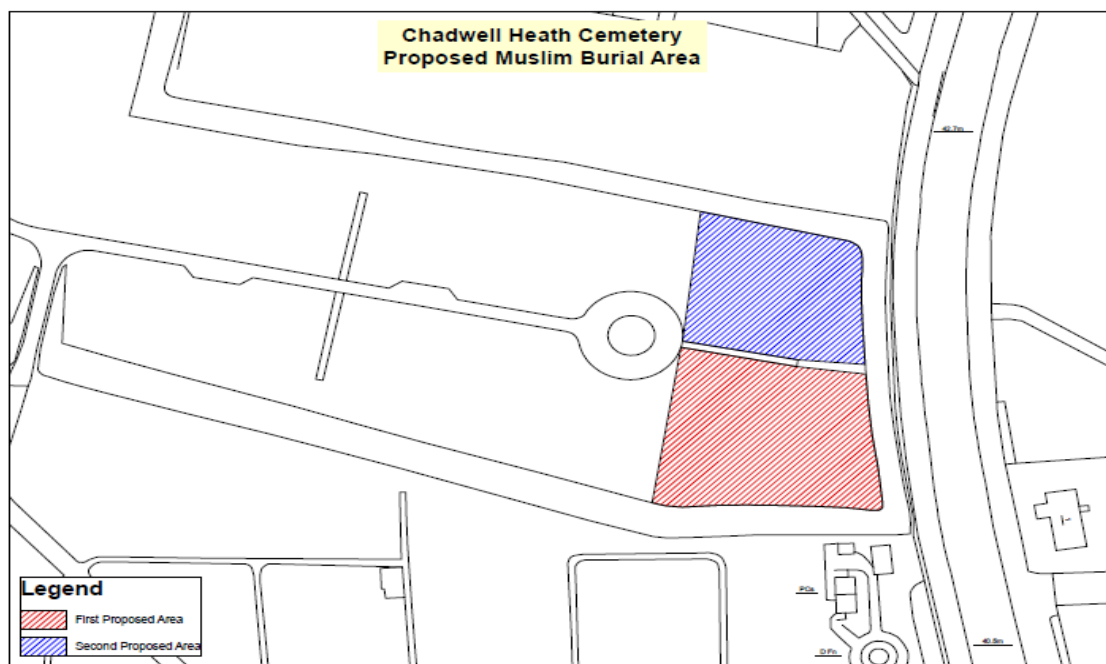
### **Creation of a bespoke area for Muslim burials**

2.12 The Census shows an increase in numbers for all religious groups in the borough, and although not the highest increase, the Muslim faith has seen significant growth between 2001 and 2011. With the lack of suitable burial space offered by the Council, residents looking for available options have no option but to find alternatives.

2.13 It is important to note that the new Five Oaks Muslim Cemetery of five hectares has just been constructed at Five Oaks Lane, Hainault. This has extended from the Garden of Peace Muslim Cemetery, and is very close to Chadwell Heath. It is also worth mentioning that Redbridge Council has a range of cultures and offers final resting places for loved ones, with more than 30 years of burial space at its disposal including Forest Park.

2.14 To address this borough's need, it is suggested that the design is bespoke and an allocation of 20% of the Chadwell Heath Cemetery extension is solely for Muslim burials (in line with the population growth in the borough). It is recommended:

1. Chadwell Heath will initially provide 500 graves (10%) for Muslim burials, protecting a further 10% for development at a further date.
2. The option to extend this to the 20% (originally proposed) is considered after a review within the next 10 years (by which time it is expected Five Oaks Lane will be at full capacity).



**Figure 1 – Proposed bespoke Muslim Burial Area**

- 2.15 If the authority were to offer mounded graves, the current maintenance approach of mowing grass would need to be changed, to accommodate the design and maintenance required to keep the mounds in good order. It is expected this additional work will be accommodated by the existing workforce through operational efficiencies.
- 2.16 Current benchmarking information shows that a mounded Muslim burial for one only is charged at £2,800, compared to a Barking and Dagenham lawn grave offered for two at £2,505. New fees and charges will need to be developed and benchmarked to reflect the increased costs associated with the mounded grave.

### Creation of a Pet Cemetery

- 2.17 There is an underground spring under a section of Chadwell Heath Cemetery that prevents it from being fit for human burials. To ensure full utilisation of the existing Cemetery it is proposed this area be used as a Pet Cemetery. This could be created at no additional cost and will create a new income stream. Additionally, it would create new footfall and fill a gap in the market in a borough.
- 2.18 According to Google Maps the nearest Pet Cemetery is 46 miles from Barking (Chestnut Lodge, East Grinstead). As Barking and Dagenham anecdotally has a large population of household pets, and have strong existing relationships with Dog Owners/Vets through the Dog DNA Pilot, it is proposed that a Pet Cemetery is created. No income target has been identified for this, however, a conservative annual estimate is £20k.

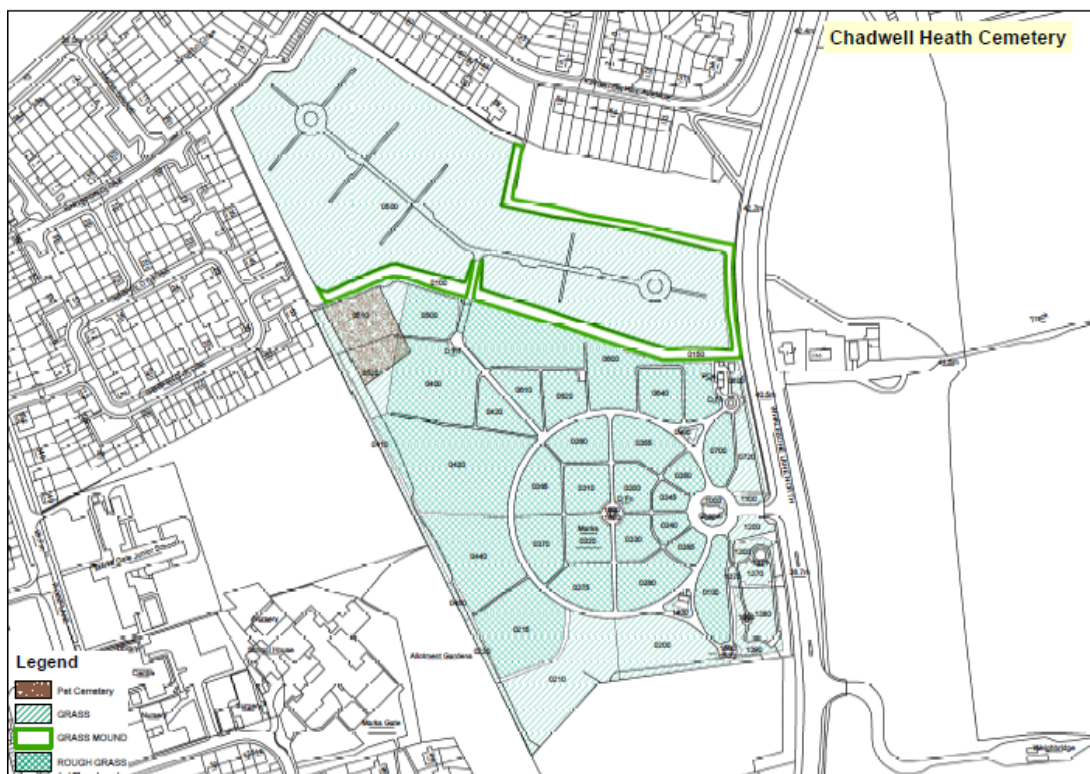


Figure 2 – Proposed Pet Cemetery Area

## **Out of Scope**

- 2.19 Parking is currently readily available and free of charge for Chadwell Heath Cemetery (including disability access by the chapel). However, with the cemetery's expected increase in footfall this may need to be reviewed at a later date. It is proposed this is undertaken as part of a second phase of this project. This would include an options appraisal for a new car parking area, which could be constructed at the edge of Kingston Hill Playing Field. This land has the added bonus of adjoining Whalebone Lane North where vehicle and pedestrian access could be created.

## **3 Options Appraisal**

- 3.1 A range of options were considered through the development of a full business case (Appendix 5). These included:
- Council management of Cemetery extension for the whole community
  - Creation and running of the Muslim burial element of Chadwell Heath by another provider
  - Market Test for others to run the whole of the Chadwell Heath Cemetery including development of the extension.
  - Freehold Sale of Land – Unrestricted
- 3.2 "Council management of Cemetery extension for the whole community" was agreed as the preferred option by Councillors and Officers.
- 3.3 As detailed in section 2 of this report, the recommended option includes the addition of a small scale landscaping scheme which will enable the introduction of Columbarium. In addition, it is proposed to have a new scattering area for ashes.
- 3.4 This option also allows for the Council to landscape the full area and designate a bespoke landscaped area for Muslim burials – approx. 20% of the site. The Council will continue to retain full management and will look to adapt to offer Muslim burial services within or as close as possible to twenty-four hours.
- 3.5 To achieve the market share hoped for, and enable swift recovery of investment, the service will need to carefully market the improvements to all stakeholders throughout its development. This option will allow the authority to control, recoup its capital investment, and grow the service whilst benefitting from a healthy revenue stream.
- 3.6 It is envisaged that the service will develop apprenticeships, so that the service as a whole can deliver and adapt to changing needs. This investment and growth will enable succession planning for these skills and knowledge to be passed on.
- 3.7 A key area in respect of marketing and growth for the service will be networking with established faith groups, who have already offered advice and expertise through the setting up of working groups. These groups include the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and Garden of Peace at Hainault.
- 3.8 Additionally, as detailed previously, a Pet Cemetery will be developed to create a new income stream.

## Cost/Benefits

- 3.9 As per section 2.5 of this report, an investment of £400k is required to complete the planting and hard infrastructure works required.
- 3.10 This investment would have a payment period of 15 years, based on 4% fixed annual capital repayment and interest payments on the reduced capital balance each year.
- 3.11 The existing service maintains and manages three operational cemeteries of 61 acres with associated costs in the region of £480k per annum. It is proposed there are no additional operational costs for the Service to maintain the extended site.
- 3.12 Charges for the burial plots, columbarium etc. will be confirmed as part of the “Fees and Charges” report going to Cabinet in November 2016. A conservative price has been used within the development of the business case for the Chadwell Heath extension.
- 3.13 Below is the breakdown of cost/benefits over the next 5 years.

<b>Cost/ Benefit Analysis</b>						
<b>Costs</b>	<b>Year 1 (16/17)</b>	<b>Year 2 (17/18)</b>	<b>Year 3 (18/19)</b>	<b>Year 4 (19/20)</b>	<b>Year 5 (20/21)</b>	<b>Total (Year 1-5)</b>
Total Annual Cost <sup>1</sup>	£16,000	£47,275	£46,024	£44,773	£43,522	£197,594
Total Annual Financial Benefits	£0	£6,850	£87,953	£136,022	£164,245	£395,070
Net Benefit	-£16,000	-£40,425	£41,929	£91,249	£120,723	£197,476
<b>Cumulative Return on Investment (R.O.I.)</b>	<b>-100%</b>	<b>-86%</b>	<b>91%</b>	<b>204%</b>	<b>277%</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Table 1 – Cost/Benefit Analysis for years 1-5**

## 4 Consultation

4.1 The extension has already received planning consent for use as a burial ground in August 2003 with no end date. The eastern most part of the site is Green Belt with the remainder of the site being confirmed as the extension to the cemetery. The site has been measured as follows:

- Total Area           2.98 hectares           (7.36 acres)
- Greenbelt            0.55 hectares           (1.36 acres)
- Non-greenbelt      2.43 hectares           (6.00 acres)

4.2 In accordance with the Local Government Act 1972, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is recognised as a burial authority vested with the power to provide and maintain cemeteries whether they are inside or outside the borough boundaries.

4.3 As part of developing the Business Case we have engaged informally with all the main providers of undertaking services in the borough, including the current

<sup>1</sup> This is the Council’s annual repayment. This is based on a 4% fixed annual capital repayment and interest payments on the reduced capital balance each year (over a period of 15 years).



operational manager for the two bespoke nearby Muslim burial sites. This approach has been taken to ensure that there will be an understanding that Chadwell Heath will be a more aesthetically pleasing site and alternative to existing facilities (subject to approval). Once approval has been received there will be a series of engagement meetings held with each funeral care provider from January to ensure the site is fully marketed and local support groups and bereavement councillors. The registrars will also be fully aware of the proposed changes as they are often one of the first points of contact for the bereaved.

- 4.4 There has been engagement with the Cabinet members and the three ward councillors (Cllr Bright, Cllr Tarry and Cllr Wade) have been written to advising them of the project and the enhancements it will bring to Chadwell Heath Cemetery.

## **5 Financial Implications**

Implications completed by: Katherine Heffernan - Group Manager

- 5.1 This report recommends a capital investment of £0.4m to improve the facilities at the Chadwell Heath cemetery, assuming this funding is borrowed at 4% interest and repaid over 15 years
- 5.2 In addition the increased income will contribute to the MTFS target as it will produce around £0.165m additional income by 2019/20. Once the new site is fully established it is expected to sell around 100 plots a year with an increased income of £0.25m at today's prices plus £17k from the Columbarium. This assumes that there will be no additional marginal costs from the site extension.
- 5.3 Assuming a steady build up of sale to around 100 a year, no additional marginal costs, year on year inflation of 1.55% and a discount rate of 6.09%, the net present value of this scheme over 51 years is £5.3m.

## **6 Legal Implications**

Implications completed by: Christopher Pickering - Principal Solicitor

- 6.1 Pursuant to section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972, the London Borough of Barking and Dagenham is deemed to be a burial authority and may provide and maintain cemeteries within or outside the borough boundaries. This report sets out a proposal for investment in one of the Council's existing cemeteries to meet demand. The report includes necessary consultation. Because of the value of the proposal, if this is to be one contract, then EU Procurement rules will apply to the awarding of the contract.

## **7 Other Implications**

- 7.1 **Risk Management** – this investment will mitigate the risk that the Council will face from 2018 where the other two cemeteries will be at capacity.
- 7.2 **Contractual Issues** – the four distinct lots identified within this report fall under 100k with advice sought from Procurement who have been fully engaged and consulted.

**Public Background Papers Used in the Preparation of the Report: None**

**List of appendices:**

- Appendix 1: Plan and Dimensions of Site
- Appendix 2: Chadwell Heath Cemetery Landscaping to Site
- Appendix 3: Chadwell Heath Cemetery Above Ground Vaults
- Appendix 4: Above Ground Vaults - Examples
- Appendix 5: Alternative options considered