

Burial Space Summary

Objective

-  To inform Members of the current situation and potential options with respect to burial space
-  To inform Members of the plans that are in place to investigate alternative burial space options

Background Information

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Easthampstead Park's burial ground was opened in 1971 and has since developed a reputation for its quality and sensitivity.

In 2016, the burial space issue was discussed but no actions were taken due to election timings.

CURRENT SITUATION

3,700 people are buried at Easthampstead Park.

At present, 92% of bodies brought to EPC&C are cremated and 8% are buried.

Approximately 65 new burials are carried out each year.

FUTURE POSITION

Easthampstead Park Cemetery is expected to run out of burial space in Spring 2022.

The only other burial space that remains in Bracknell Forest is allocated to parishioners of the respective churches.

Financial Context

EPC&C reported a revenue pressure of £187,000 at the end of November 2019.
This could reach £350,000 by the end of the financial year.

| FINANCIAL CONTEXT OF CEMETERY IF NO ACTION IS TAKEN | 2021/22 (Burial Space) | 2022/23 (No Burial Space) |
|--|-----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Income | £199,383 | £56,694 1 |
| Expenditure | £143,396 | £143,396 2 |
| Net Position | £55,987 | -£86,702 3 |

N.B. Figures are based on 20/21 pricing and have not accounted for inflation beyond 20/21

- 1** Once the cemetery is full, income will only be generated from second burials
- 2** The Council remains liable for maintaining the cemetery grounds for 75 years after the last burial
- 3** The revenue pressure will further increase as income from second burials falls

Options



Take no action and accept that burials will not be an option in Bracknell Forest from Spring 2022



Reclaim pitch and putt or driving range land at DGC



Reclaim part of Great Hollands Recreation Ground



Purchase land currently allocated for housing at Beaufort Park



Re-use bungalow and adjacent woodland plot

Locations



Options



Take no action and accept that burials will not be an option in Bracknell Forest from Spring 2022



Reclaim pitch and putt or driving range land at DGC



Reclaim part/all of Great Hollands Recreation Ground



Purchase land currently allocated for housing at Beaufort Park



Re-use bungalow and adjacent woodland plot

To no longer offer a burial service would be politically challenging and would require an Equalities Impact Assessment. However, depending on the costs associated with acquiring alternative land, this could still be the most financially viable option.

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Re-use bungalow and adjacent woodland plot

Costs associated with acquiring this land are not yet known but will include a reduction in EA's management fee and alterations to their lease plus up to two clawback fees to previous landowners (one of which is Wokingham Borough Council).

To make this option cost neutral without accounting for the costs mentioned above, fees for new burials would need to increase by 56% from the 2020/21 prices.

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Re-use bungalow and adjacent woodland plot

If changes are made to Great Hollands Recreation Ground, the council must pay a clawback fee to Homes England. As the land is in use by Bracknell Town Council as two football pitches, Sport England would be very unlikely to approve of the proposed changes without an alternative piece of land being developed into new pitches. The impact of the changes on Bracknell Town Council would need to be assessed and could lead to negotiations that may result in a cost.

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The purchase of new land currently allocated for housing development is estimated at around £2.67M per hectare. As with all other options infrastructure set up costs would need to be added.

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Re-use bungalow and adjacent woodland plot

The existing bungalow could be demolished and combined with a plot of woodland situated to the rear to create a small burial plot. Both plots would need clearing prior to any use. Re-use of the bungalow for these purposes would negate any capital receipt possible from a private sale.

Next Steps:

Overview & Scrutiny Panel to consider alternative burial options

Report back to the Executive in February once a clearer picture has been obtained over the council's position.