



Oldham
Council

Delegated Decision

Celebration Woodland/Green Burials

Report of: Helen Lockwood- Executive Director Economy, Skills & Neighbourhoods

Officer contact: Glenn Dale- head of Environmental Management
Ext. 4065

1 June 2017

Reason for Decision

To provide an alternative to the traditional burial & cremation offer, whilst providing a potential income stream through the introduction of a celebration tree planting offer.

Recommendations

To approve the proposal to adopt a pilot green burial & celebration woodland scheme at Crompton cemetery & High Crompton Park respectively

Celebration Woodland/Green Burials

1 Background

- 1.1 Oldham council at present does not have the opportunity to provide an alternative to burial or cremation in the traditional sense, or to recognise a significant event in a person's life unless this is done on an ad-hoc basis. A briefing report was prepared in 2016 seeking approval to request each District Executive to give consideration and identify suitable land.

2 Current Position

- 2.1 A briefing report was submitted to each of the 6 District Executives for further discussion and agreement on suitable locations for the introduction of a Green Burial & Celebration Woodland scheme.

The following responses have been forthcoming:-

- Oldham- Oldham Edge. Additional suggestions to be discussed with Ward members in due course.
- Royton –No land identified
- Shaw & Crompton- Green Burials- Crompton cemetery, Celebration Woodland High Crompton Park
- Failsworth & Hollinwood- Failsworth Cemetery
- Saddleworth & Lees- No land identified.
- Chadderton- suggestions to be discussed with Ward members in due course.

- 2.2 Life for a Life Memorial Forests is a charity that sits outside the council, which undertakes memorial tree planting. A donation buys a standard tree in memory of a loved one and the trees are arranged within a formal plantation identified by small memorial plaques, cremated remains are buried at the tree. The charity began operating in Oldham during the 1990's on United Utilities land at Dovestones Reservoir. Further land has since been allocated to the charity at Strinesdale, Tandle Hill Country Park, Dr Kershaw's hospice, Salmon Fields, Sholver Millennium Green and an extension at Tandle Hill in 2014.

- 2.3 During 2009 a report was written for the Overview and Scrutiny Management Board which identified a number of potential sites suitable for Life for a Life tree planting although these sites would equally provide suitable locations for the celebration Woodland proposals that would be managed internally through Environmental Services.

2.3.1. Oldham edge- Oldham District.

Warwick Road Open Space- Failsworth & Hollinwood District

Chadderton Cemetery Extension - Chadderton District.

Failsworth Cemetery Extension, Failsworth & Hollinwood District

Thornlea Brook –Royton District.

Crompton Moor –Shaw & Crompton District.

Glodwick Lows –Oldham District.

- 2.4 **The Green Burial Scheme** is one of simplicity It replaces the traditional funeral in favour of a back-to-nature look. It prefers an unspoilt landscape to that of a regimented conventional cemetery.
Green Burials reject cremations, but opt for a burial site serving a conservation purpose and creates a site that is not visually definable as a burial site. It requires the coffin or shroud to be made from natural, sustainable materials and does not allow the demarcation or personalising of the grave with any permanent memorial.
- 2.4.1 The concept of Celebration Woodlands allows trees to develop naturally with minimal management intervention and that no plaques or tributes are placed around the trees. Donations are used toward the planting and management of the natural woodland area which then acts as a shared facility to all those who have contributed. Specific reference to individuals is usually done through a memorial book or tablet on the edge of the area. This type of memorial woodland can be managed through the resources and officers of Environment Services.
- 2.4.2 The Life for a Life concept differs fundamentally in that each tree is linked to an individual through personal plaques, permission is allowed to inter cremated remains and the tree becomes the personal property of that individual until maturity. The burial of cremated remains prevents the land being transferred back or developed in any other way in the future without exhumation license. Individual tree planting schemes in Oldham have been managed by Life for a Life as indicated in 2.1 above.
- 2.4.3 The sites that have been indicated in 2.1 only give an indication of some of the land that may be suitable. Further sites have and will continue to be considered by the District Executives including Crompton Cemetery.
- 2.4.4 It is proposed that initially a pilot scheme is developed and introduced at two sites in the Crompton/Shaw Wards.

3 Options/Alternatives

- 3.1 Approve the establishment of a pilot scheme to develop Celebration woodlands/green burial sites at High Crompton Park (appendix 1) and Crompton Cemetery (Appendix 2) respectively.
The sites would then be managed by Environmental Services.
- 3.2 Prior to commencement/advertising the chosen sites would be presented to the Asset team to determine if the sites are suitable and do not have a potentially more valuable option, such as residential development.
- 3.3 A marketing plan would be drawn up with the communications team including costs and to agree the methodology to recognise those that have contributed to

the Celebration Woodland/Green Burial sites. Any initial costs should be offset by the income generated.

- 3.4 Members choose not to support the planting of a green burial & Celebration tree schemes.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 The establishment of a pilot scheme to develop Celebration woodlands/green burial sites at High Crompton Park and Crompton Cemetery respectively will help to direct future thinking across other areas of Oldham & determine the scope of future opportunities.

5 Consultation

- 5.1 Each of the District Executives has been consulted and the sites indicated in section 2.1 have been put forward by the respective District Executive.

6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 The Streetscene & Parks Service are seeking approval to use council owned land to provide an alternative to the traditional cemeteries by using woodland to plant memorial trees or graves where only coffins made from natural and sustainable materials will be permitted. There will be a memorial book/plaque on site for families to leave a message, but the area around the grave/memorial tree will stay unspoilt.

Capital Implications

- 6.2 There are no capital implications.

Revenue Implications

- 6.3 The areas designated for use are all council owned so there will be no costs for land purchased. The area will need minimal maintenance which will be included in the service's general maintenance costs in cost centre 21904.
- 6.4 There will be an initial cost for marketing materials around £1000 to ensure the scheme is successful which can be met within the existing budgets in costs centre 21010.
- 6.5 The costs for digging the graves will be covered by the fees charged to the public at £815 per grave. The costs for the memorial book/plaque will also be covered by the fees charged to the public.
- 6.6 It has not been possible to estimate the income generation at this stage as it is difficult to determine levels of future uptake once the scheme is set up and running.
- 6.7 There will be no additional costs to the authority.

7 Legal Services Comments

7.1 None (Alan Evans)

8. Co-operative Agenda

8.1 None (Jenni Barker)

9 Human Resources Comments

9.1 There are no human resource implications. (Stewart Hindley)

10 Risk Assessments

10.1 N/A (Mark Stenson)

11 IT Implications

11.1 Not applicable

12 Property Implications

12.1 High Crompton Park

12.1.1 Whilst the subject land is not affected by restrictive covenants unlike the adjoining land immediately to the south, it is nevertheless considered that development potential is limited given the sites' allocation in the Local Plan and it also not abutting a highway maintained at public expense.

12.2 Crompton Cemetery

12.2.1 Records on Concerto indicate that the subject land may be affected by covenants. The site's allocation within the Local Plan would also suggest that the land has little if no development potential. In addition the site could possibly be consecrated ground and may be earmarked for burials.

12.2.2 In light of the above and the limited prospects to realise any capital value from the possible disposal of these sites in the short to medium term, Corporate Property has no objection to the preferred option.

(Cath Conroy)

13 Procurement Implications

13.1 Not applicable

14 Environmental and Health & Safety Implications

14.1 The introduction of the Green Burial & Celebration trees will improve the green environment and reduce emissions from the crematorium. All associated Risk assessments will be in place prior to any tasks being undertaken.

15 **Equality, community cohesion and crime implications**

15.1 None.

16 **Equality Impact Assessment Completed?**

16.1 No

17 **Key Decision**

17.1 No

18 **Key Decision Reference**

18.1 N/A

19 **Background Papers**

19.1 The following is a list of background papers on which this report is based in accordance with the requirements of Section 100(1) of the Local Government Act 1972. It does not include documents which would disclose exempt or confidential information as defined by the Act :

File Ref: CW/GD

Name of File: Celebration Woodlands/Green Burials

Records held in Alexandra Park, Kings Road, Oldham OL8 2BH

Officer Name: Glenn Dale

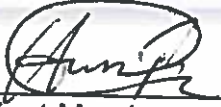

Contact No 0161 770 4065

20 **Appendices**

20.1 Appendix 1- High Crompton Park

20.2 Appendix 2- Crompton Cemetery

APPROVAL

<p>Decision maker Signed  Cllr F Hussain – Cabinet Member Environmental Services</p>	<p>Dated <u>04.06.17</u></p>
<p>In consultation with  Signed Helen Lockwood – Executive Director Economy, Skills & Neighbourhoods</p>	<p>Dated: 1 June 2017</p>

