

7 Work being undertaken/planned/or required within the cemetery

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Committee: MERTON AND SUTTON JOINT CEMETERY BOARD

Date: 19TH February 2008

Agenda item:

Wards: Borough Wide Merton and Sutton

Subject: Work being undertaken/planned/or required within the cemetery

Recommendations:

- A. The Boards approval and consideration is required for:
- Repairing the cemetery railings on Garth Road and Green lane
 - Un-consecrating section 'U' for Muslim burials
 - Cemetery Extension plans Area 'D'
 - Purchase of a cemetery database and data capture
 - Removal of a shed at the cemetery entrance
 - Replacing the concrete beams on block 'T'
 - Purchase or lease of a van for the cemetery

Full details are in section 2 of this report

- 1. Purpose of report and executive summary**
 - 1.1 Report on work being undertaken/planned/pr required within the cemetery
- 2. Details**
 - 2.1. Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management: Charter for the Bereaved
 - 2.2. Training: ICCM Cemetery Operatives Training Schemes
 - 2.3. Repairing the railings
 - 2.4. 'U' section being un-consecrated for use for Muslim burials
 - 2.6. Cemetery Extension plans Area 'D'
 - 2.7. Recycling Building
 - 2.8. Cemetery Database and data capture
 - 2.9. Shed at cemetery entrance
 - 2.10. Cemetery Sign update
 - 2.11. Replacing Concrete beams on block 'T'
 - 2.12. Transport/Van Required

2.1. Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management: Charter for the Bereaved

The team have successfully achieved the Charter for the Bereaved standard. This helps members of the public to be assured that Merton is committed to providing excellent service designed to meet their needs.

A questionnaire is completed once a year. There is a national ranking table for organisations providing burial services. London Borough Merton achieved 98th out of 115. London Borough of Sutton achieved 62nd. In the South East table Merton achieved 29th out of 33 and Sutton achieved 20th.

2.2 Training: ICCM Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme

A member of the cemetery team, Diane Ashley, undertook this course. It ensures the candidates are proficient in meeting the ICCM Health and Safety standard covering all components of the burial process. Two more courses are arranged for March for the Cemetery staff.

2.3 Repairing the railings

One quote has been received for the repair and decorating of the iron railing around the cemetery, along Garth Road, the entrance including the gates and along Green Lane. Two more quotes are due to be received.

The work involved is very extensive since they have not been regularly maintained. The wall is in a very poor state of repair. The railings are fitted in to the wall. There has been movement over the years due to subsidence, shrubs and trees growing too close to the wall and through the railing.

For example quote One: Just Metal Ltd. This shows how extensive the amount of work required if:

“The wall is beyond repair and also not cost effective to repair. 30% of the coping stones have cracked or broken due to movement. With the railings moving this has led to the deterioration of the pointing on the wall below causing them to collapse with the weight of the railings.”

Quote:

One estimate is that the job would take 8-9 months. It suggested to build a new wall with coping stones, remove fencing, shot blast, repair fencing and posts, paint red oxide, fit repaired fence panels, painting with two coats of black smoothrite and clear all rubbish from the site:
£446,422.80+VAT.

Or

Cost to repair wall which would include re-pointing where needed, replace damaged coping stone and repairing slightly damaged stones and re bedding lifted stone, wire brushing fencing panels cutting out corroded areas and replacing with new materials, painting one red coat red oxide and toe coats black smoothrite and clearing rubbish from site: £449,262.98+VAT.

One option is to budget a certain figure for the repairs undertaking section each year.

2.4 U' section being un-consecrated for use for Muslim burials

The 'general' Muslim section 'MU' is about to run out of space for burials. The new extension will not be ready in sufficient time. There is an unused section 'U' next to 'MU'. It would be beneficial to make this 'U' available for the general Muslim faith; this will enable families to be buried near their deceased relatives in 'M' and 'MU'. There is still sufficient space in the cemetery for faiths wishing to be buried into consecrated ground, see plan below:

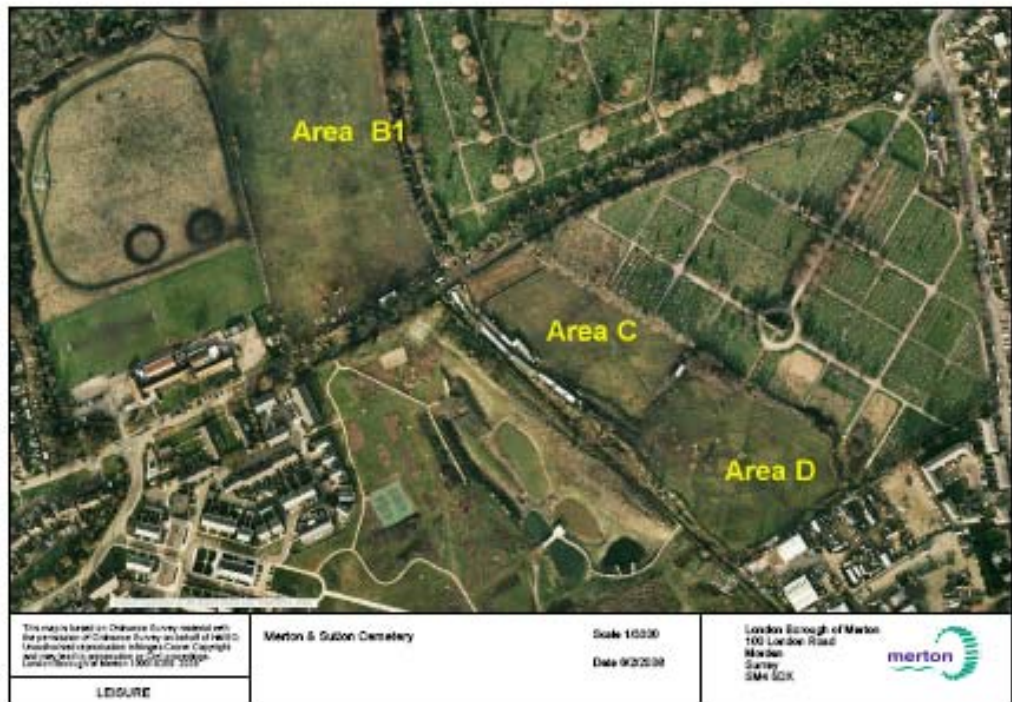


Section 'U' is consecrated. To allow the Muslim faith to use this section it will be need to be un-consecrated.

The process has started with an initial meeting with the Archdeacon of Lambeth Christopher Skilton on 18th February 2008. The Archdeacon is required to visit the site before starting proceedings and there is a formal process whereby forms are filled in and given to the Bishop of Southwark for approval. The Boards approval to progress is required.

2.5 Cemetery Extension Area 'D'

An investigation is underway to see whether it is possible to grade Area D, and the type of drainage required. Grading the land is a more viable option; excess soil does not require removal from site, which will help to reduce costs. See plan below



Due to the topography of the land it will be necessary when grading to use some of the land (Area C) leased to Mrs Goodson. The required part of Area 'C' used for the grading will be returned to Mrs Goodson when the ground has stabilised (this could take two years).



A meeting has taken place with Mrs Goodson and she is happy for this to be investigated. If this option is agreed Mrs Goodson will require her shelter being moved from Area 'C' and new fencing installed in Area B1. The horses she has in Area 'C' have to be kept separate from the other horses, hence the new fencing required.

The drainage might involve upgrading the existing main drainage system running through the cemetery, this is being investigated.

There is a problem with the drainage on Area 'C' affecting Mrs Goodson business. In the long term grading the land and installing drainage in Area 'D' will benefit Mrs Goodson. It will also benefit future extensions, the ground will require less extensive work and fewer disturbances for the bereaved families.

When the grading is finished roads and pathways will need to be installed.

A further report will be provided to the next meeting with a detailed proposal.

2.6 Recycling Building

The area has been cleared which can be seen on the below photos. Dave Lofthouse Merton's Arboriculture Manager is in the process of providing detailed planting plans and costs. Work is planned for completion for the end of March 2008.



Trees: These will be planted in the areas between the existing trees where sufficient light permits:

3 x *Castanea sativa*

3 x *Quercus robur*

3 x *Amelanchier lamarckii* multi-stem

A mixed native hedge will be planted along the fence line, containing:

50 x Hawthorn

50 x Blackthorn
50 x Hazel
25 x Viburnum opulus
25 x Rowan

2.7 Cemetery Database and data capture

Cemetery Database and data capture has been looked into and this will involve a Cemetery administrative database system, the scanning of all the records, the indexing of the scanned images and the digitisation of the Cemetery plans.

Having scanned copies of the all the burial records will work towards Merton's Business Continuity.

An indexing system will then be produced to enable searches from within the new Cemetery administration database IT system and for the general public on line via Merton's web site generating income. The searches via the index will produce a scanned image of the original record

At present the system is purely paper based, there is a risk to the quality of the records, which are deteriorating, some records date back to 1860 and are at present stored in fireproof cabinets. If the civic centre were out of use in an emergency, records would not be able to be used for this period.

With the burial records bound in heavy registers having all the images on the IT system will reduce risk of injury (the registers will be used less).

All neighbouring boroughs have IT based cemeteries systems, there is a risk in satisfaction ratings falling as our search system is reliant upon 2 officers

Three companies have provided quotations providing cemetery databases, all provide the administrative system, scanning and indexing.

In consultation with IT representative the preferred company is Clear Skies Software Ltd using their 'BACAS NG' system for the following reason:

- The price is very competitive when compared to the other two systems
- The annual maintenance fee is lower and there is no charge for the first year
- They provide the system required.
- It is user friendly.
- They have an established customer base in the UK with 150 + Cemeteries.
- Positive feedback has been received from various customers, by visiting and speaking to other users.

- Four surrounding councils have the system: Richmond, Lambeth, Hounslow and Wandsworth, giving confidence that if there is a problem it can be discussed with them as well as Clear Skies.

Itemised price:

The IT database system	£16,585.00
Scanning	£19,995.00
Digitising of cemetery plans	£8,630.00
Indexing	£35,070.00
Total	£80,280.00

A Capital Bid has been submitted through Merton Council of £60,000.00 and it will be known in March 2008 if this has been successful.

Merton and Sutton have allocated £30,000 and this will be used for the database, the scanning of Merton and Sutton's records and indexing with the balance paid from the Capital Bid.

The Board's agreement to progress with the purchase of the IT system, the scanning, the digitising of the plans and the indexing is sought.

2.8 Shed at the Cemetery Entrance

The shed is rarely used and needs regular maintenance. It presently needs a significant amount of work and expense that does not justify its retention. The Board's approval for removal is sought.



2.9 Cemetery Sign update

The new entrance sign with the new artwork is now installed please see below:

A notice board has been ordered to sit next to the new sign. This will give the opportunity to put notices/information regarding the cemetery to keep the public informed.

A new 'Merton & Sutton Cemetery' sign has been installed on the height barrier at the entrance on Garth Road see below:



2.10 Replacing Concrete beams on block 'T'





Headstones are now loose and causing a danger, these are liable to topple over with a risk of injury due to the beams breaking up. It is the cemeteries responsibility to renew the beams as the cemetery installed them.

To replace the seven beams will involve removing all the headstones (also contacting the grave owners), removing the old beams and replacing with new concrete beams and then re-fixing the headstone.

Quote 1: EH Group

Record and remove existing headstone and bearers. Prepare and install 415 linear meter runs (7 in number) to service new headstone positioning.

Total for all listed works £56,670.00 plus V.A.T.

One further quotation is being obtained.

The Boards approval to progress the works is requested.

2.12 **Transport/Van Required**

Fuel now has to be collected and the Cemetery Supervisor no longer wishes to use his own vehicle because of health and safety and legal requirements.

It is therefore necessary for the board to consider the purchase of a van that can be utilised for various works including collection of rubbish, delivery of tools and equipment and collection of fuel.

The type of van required would be a Ford Transit or similar: with single crew cab, a caged rear, with tipping facilities and tail lift so heavy items can be safely lifted onto the van.

There were plans and a budget of £15,000 to convert the public waiting area into an office and with the Boards approval this could be allocated towards to purchase of a van. Or the van could be leased. The Boards agreement to progress with to purchase or lease agreement is sought.

3. **Contacts**

- Report author:
 - Name: Mark Robinson
 - Tel: 020 8545 3235
 - email: mark.robinson@merton.gov.uk
- Meeting arrangements - Democratic Services:
 - email: democratic.services@merton.gov.uk
 - Tel: 020 8545 3356/3357/3359/3361/3616
- All press contacts - Merton's Press office:
 - email: press@merton.gov.uk
 - Tel: 020 8545 3181
- London Borough of Merton:
 - Address: Civic Centre, London Road, Morden, SM4 5DX
 - Tel: 020 8274 4901

4. **Useful links**

- 4.1 Merton Council's Web site: <http://www.merton.gov.uk>
- 4.2 Readers should note the terms of the legal information (disclaimer) regarding information on Merton Council's and third party linked websites.
- 4.3 <http://www.merton.gov.uk/legal.htm>
- 4.4 This disclaimer also applies to any links provided here.