

Committee: Merton and Sutton Joint Cemetery Board

Date: 22nd June 2021, 2pm

Wards: ALL

Subject: M&SJC Contractor Report – Cemetery Management

Lead officer: John Bosley, Assistant Director of Public Space

Contact officer: Mark Robinson (*idverde*), Cemeteries Manager

Recommendations:

A. That the Committee review the information and note the content of the report.

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report to the Board reviews the activity from January 2021 to June 2021 and details the work activity for this period. It is intended that a report is presented to each meeting of the Board covering key areas of activity.
- 1.2. The report will cover the following areas.
 - Key performance activity
 - Complaints and compliments
 - Income

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. ***Grounds Maintenance***
- 2.2. Scheduled works continued during the period with a focus on critical tasks such as burials, grass cutting, topping up graves and maintaining the planting and upkeep service. Revised contract ground maintenance resource allocation has facilitated the provision of two ground support staff to assist in site cleansing and grass cutting.
- 2.3. In addition, new cutting equipment has been provided to the static team to increase output and ensure continuity of service.
- 2.4. The team has been briefed regarding the visual enhancement of the site through the maintenance of robust sweeping, vegetation strimming and cleansing protocols.
- 2.5. Customer care remains a key focus for all customer facing static staff who aspire to provide a value added, empathetic service. This principle is reflected by the number of compliments received as per 2.24.
- 2.6. ***COVID 19 - Modifications to working practices***

- 2.7. Following government guidance, there are now no restrictions to the number of mourners at grave side if the funeral is the primary event. The seating in the chapel has been positioned to allow family and support bubbles, thus increasing the safe capacity for the building.
- 2.8. Hand sanitiser stations are in place at the entrance with the appropriate signage and all restrictions are under constant review, dependent upon central government guidelines. It is forecasted that there will be the need to reassess working practices following the Governments review of restrictions in late June.
- 2.9. **Cemetery Bins**
- 2.10. It is requested that consideration be given to the sensitive siting of black metal 1100 litre wheelie bins away from public thoroughfares. These would be used to act as a buffer and facilitate the regular and timely emptying of the smaller static cemetery bins and removal of detritus left by these. The latter is a common occurrence due to the size of the aperture in the static bins.
- 2.11. **Health and Safety Audit of Headstone Testing**
- 2.12. idverde staff initiated, in liaison with LBM officers, a memorial testing programme in August 2019. The programme was suspended in October 2019 due to concerns over the initial 'make safe' approach to memorials that failed the safety test.
- 2.13. It was recognised that within the cemetery there were localised areas of higher failure rate. In some cases, memorial failure in these areas was a consequence of comprised bearer beams or inappropriate memorial installation. A proactive remedial reinstallation programme has been agreed to address this issue in Section M and is detailed in the Client report to the Committee.
- 2.14. Meetings are now scheduled between idverde staff and LBM Officers to agree the process for the correct 'make safe' method when testing recommences. This has been captured in a modified business process. In addition, the duration for which any temporary make safe measure may remain in place is to be agreed and the permanent actions to be taken after this duration formalised. Testing is planned to recommence when the Government Roadmap out of all lockdown is realised and normalised services resume.
- 2.15. **New & Replacement Bearer Beams**
- 2.16. LBM officers are to implement a robust beam replacement programme. This will be supported by the proposals within Section M, negating the replacement of the comprised beams within that section.
- 2.17. idverde cemeteries management team have inputted into the programmed works, with specific reference to the areas of prioritisation within the programme.
- 2.18. **Roads and footpaths**
- 2.19. LBM officers are currently assessing the scope of the required works with a view to implementing a proactive programme to address the areas requires resurfacing and repair.
- 2.20. **Burial numbers**
- 2.21. Please see Appendix 1 for interments numbers.
- 2.22. **Complaints and Compliments for the Service**
- 2.23. During the reporting period, no complaints have been received.

2.24. Summary of Compliments received:

Number	Reason
10	Various compliments from Funeral directors and families regarding helpful, supportive and empathetic customer care given by both cemetery and office-based staff.

2.25. **Income**

2.26. Please find the income figures during the period of January to April 2021 in Appendix 2.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

3.1. Not applicable for this report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

4.1. Not applicable for this report.

5 TIMETABLE

5.1. None for the purposes of this report.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

6.1. As per 2.26, the income received for the applicable period is detailed in Appendix 2.

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

7.1. None for the purposes of this report.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

8.1. We positively welcome and aim to support the growing diversity of the community we serve and the people we employ.

8.2. We aim to provide an inclusive service and will not discriminate (indirectly, directly or by association) on the grounds of race, sex, gender reassignment, marital or partnership status, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief, HIV status, or disability (e.g. sensory and physical disabilities, learning disabilities and mental health status).

- 8.3. Quality means equality in the services we plan and provide, and in the staff we employ to provide those services. The Cemeteries Service is culturally sensitive and is also respectful of faith and belief considerations.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1. Not applicable for this report

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. Service health & safety considered within the Client Report by Officers.
- 10.2. ***IT Risk – suspected cyber attack***
- 10.3. On Wednesday (18th May 2021) we noticed that our mail server was being inundated with phishing emails, which is a “normal” occurrence and usually captured by our security tools together with user awareness. However, on this occasion, an email did get through to a colleague’s mailbox and, unfortunately, it was opened.
- 10.4. We took a risk-based precautionary measure to immediately air-gap the server infrastructure by taking it off-line. This essentially meant that all mail services and access to file storage were taken down from use with immediate effect. By taking this approach we are confident, it prevented any data loss or the data being accessed by third parties, preserving the security and integrity of our data.
- 10.5. The emergency plans were invoked with a new server infrastructure built from the recovery of a clean scanned backup. All colleague users are now back on-line, with all devices fully scanned before being allowed to access mail and file servers.
- 10.6. The cemetery applications are restored and updated from the manual records for the period of the downtime.

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

- 11.1. Appendix 1 – Interments: MSJC burial numbers by month.
- 11.2. Appendix 2 – MSJC Income for January – April 2021.

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

APPENDIX 1.

Wards: Borough Wide Merton and Sutton

Subject: INTERMENTS

Lead officer: Mark Robinson

Details of interment statistics are provided below

1.1 MSJC Burials by month 2017 – 2021 YTD

Month/Year	2021	2020	2019	2018	2017
January	31	22	25	22	23
February	25	16	14	27	16
March	29	24	13	25	22
April	30	48	13	23	14
May	14	30	27	21	27
June	22 *	17	18	17	23
July		26	13	15	19
August		21	19	25	18
September		21	17	21	25
October		21	19	22	18
November		11	12	21	18
December		21	13	17	14
TOTAL	151	278	203	256	237

*(as at 09.06.)

The above table clearly highlights the impact of the Covid pandemic on the burial activity within the cemetery in both 2020 and 2021. The figures detailed are inclusive of coffin burials and ashes internments.

Current bookings indicate that activity levels are beginning to decline. The adherence to the current Business continuity plan will ensure that resource levels are revised to accommodate any substantial future uplift in burials should this occur.

APPENDIX 2.

Details of income:

2.1 MSJC Income January 2021 to April 2021 inclusive

Merton & Sutton Joint Cemetery Income January 2021 to April 2021 inclusive

It is important to note that due to a recent cyber-attack upon the idverde mainframe the only financial income data available at present is as follows.

Activity	January	February	March	April**	TOTAL
Burial fee	£131,830	£81,540	£112,703	£52,641	£378,714
Memorial Permit	£398	£2,951	£3,113	£2,579	£9,041
Planting and Upkeep	£52	£5,219	£9,385	£5,719	£20,375
Transfer	£314	£1,320	£692	£1,981	£4,307
TOTAL	£132,594	£91,030	£125,893	£62,920	£412,437

**Totals for April are also likely to increase once the May revenues have been reconciled.