

Committee: Merton and Sutton Joint Cemetery Board

Date: 22nd June 2021, 2pm

Wards: ALL

Subject: M&SJC Client Report - Programme of Works 2021/2022

Lead officer: John Bosley, Assistant Director of Public Space

Contact officer: Jeremy Gibson, Neighbourhood Client Officer

Recommendations:

- A. That the Committee note the positive work undertaken by both the service provider's (idverde) cemeteries management team and the client officer team for the continued delivery of sustained services throughout the current pandemic recovery period.
 - B. That the Committee note and feedback on the proposed programme of works for 2021/2022.
 - C. For the Committee to note the separate programme of works to remedy the headstones made safe by being laid down in Section M.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. The Cemeteries Service experienced a challenging year in 2020. The pandemic had a significant impact on the service. The first quarter of 2021 has been equally challenging with the UK needing to lockdown in order to control the pandemic. The service has responded well to the pandemic challenges through strategic forward planning.
- 1.2. The Public Space division, Facilities Management and Idverde have proposed the programme of improvement works for the 2021/2022 period. The prioritisation of the proposed programme has been informed and developed following the Committee meeting on the 10th February 2021. The finance apportioned for the programmed works is included in Table 1. This proposed allocation has been factored into what the programme can aim to achieve in this financial year. Works included will take place in sections BX, KX, X and B. Additionally; there will be roadway and footway improvements to areas of identified need through site surveying.
- 1.3. The Memorial Safety Testing Programme (MSTP) remains in review due to the current pandemic recovery phase. This is to enable the service's full resource can focus on the management of frontline services. It is projected that following the formal transition out of wider Government restrictions the MSTP will resume and be a key priority deliverable for the service in the forthcoming months.
- 1.4. The service will deploy a new independent restoration approach in order to rectify the small headstones laid down in Section M. This will entail headstones being secured on a newly installed base foundation. The failed headstones in this section will no longer be dependent on the failed bearer beam.

2 DETAILS

2.1. Continued Management of the Service during the Pandemic

- 2.1.1 In order to maintain services through the Government roadmap out of restrictions, the Business Continuity Plans remains in operation.
- 2.1.2 The governance of the service continues to be supported through regular meetings and weekly burial capacity updates issued by the service provider, which comprises an element of the key metrics reported to CMT as part of the wider mortality management process.
- 2.1.3 Additional resources have been made available to the Cemeteries Service to ensure that demand could and can be managed throughout peak periods of the challenges brought by the pandemic (first quarter of 2021).
- 2.1.4 Government restrictions have continued to be managed accordingly. The service has ensured that social distancing is paramount. Additionally, the service has maintained the capacity allowances for funerals as guided by Government regulations to maintain social distancing requirements.

2.2. Proposed Programme of Works 2021/2022

- 2.2.1 The expertise of our cemeteries service provider (Idverde) and LBM Facilities Management Team have established the proposed programme of works for 2021/2022. The initial scope of the proposed works to be undertaken were highlighted and noted at the February 2021 meeting.
- 2.2.2 The map in appendix 1 provides a layout plan of the sections within M&SJC and is to aid with referencing the locations of the programme of works.
- 2.2.3 Table 1, below, is the proposed programme of works for 2021/2022.

Table 1. Proposed Programme of Works 2021/2022

Description 2021/2022	Original Budget 2021/22 (£)	Virement (£)	Revised Budget 2021/22 (£)	Section(s) in Programme
New Bearer Beams	25,000	20,000	45,000	BX KX
Replacement Bearer Beams	65,000	75,000	140,000	X (F)
Demolition of Greenhouse	10,000		10,000	
Restructuring	0		0	
Memorials	30,000		30,000	B
Roads and Footpaths	20,000		20,000	
Total Special Projects	150,000	95,000	245,000	

- 2.2.4 The programme of works for section BX and KX (Muslim Section) will comprise new bearer beam installation to increase capacity within these sections of the cemetery.
- 2.2.5 Section X (Roman Catholic Section) programmed works will deliver new bearer beams to replace those that have failed due to age.
- 2.2.6 Section B (Church of England) will resolve the failed doweling issue of memorials that failed safety testing in 2019.
- 2.2.7 There will be renewal of aging roads and footways in and around the cemetery sections where required following surveying of the site.
- 2.2.8 Works in Section F remain to be resolved (previous programme of works). Corporate Facilities are in the process of appointing a new contractor to remedy the previous works that were terminated in 2020. This will comprise the reconstruction of two new bearer beams and the rectification of three existing bearer beams where it has been determined that works were not delivered to the specified standard.
- 2.2.9 Table 2 is a Gantt chart to illustrate the indicative commencement schedule of the M&SJC programme of works for 2021/2022.

Table 2. Gantt Chart of Schedule of Bearer Beam Works 2021/2022

Task	July	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
Production of Tender Documents									
Tender Period									
Tender Analysis and Production of Tender Report									
Award of Contract(s)									
Mobilisation Period for Contractor									
Works Undertaken Within Contract									
Contingency Months (weather, pandemic)									

2.3. Memorial Safety Testing Programme

- 2.3.1 The below is a summary of the testing programme as undertaken to date.
- 2.3.2 Local Authorities have a duty, both to members of the public and their own workers, to make sure those cemeteries and graveyards for which they are responsible are safe. Memorials can become unstable over time and cause accidents to people.

- 2.3.3 To prevent this and reduce risk, the service provider (idverde) tests the safety of memorials at prescribed intervals. Memorials identified as unsafe are made safe in the interim. The make safe method applied is dependent on the nature of the risk. The process of testing memorials and mitigating any risk identified is called the Memorial Safety Testing Programme (MSTP).
- 2.3.4 The London Borough of Merton’s rolling MSTP commenced in August 2019. The programme was suspended in October 2019 due to concerns over the initial ‘make safe’ approach (lying down of smaller headstones) to memorials that failed the safety test.
- 2.3.5 Between August 2019 and the suspension of the programme in October 2019: 7 memorial sites with a total number of 4,545 graves were inspected. In this time, 240 memorials were made safe due to failing the inspection. Details of the sections of the Cemetery that were tested are in Table 3.

Table 3. LBM Memorial Testing Programme: Progress to date

SECTION (In attendance Order)	Total Graves in Section¹	Headstones Made Safe
B (Church of England)	1,084	25
T (Roman Catholic)	406	2
FCR (Cremated Remains)	1,134	20
M (Muslim)	521	115
MU (Muslim)	424	65
U (Muslim)	407	4
V (Ahmadiyya Muslim)	569	9

- 2.3.6 During the initial application of the MSTP, a high proportion of memorials failed the safety test in Section **M**. Further investigation had shown that the issue emanated from an eroded bearer beam. While the responsibility for maintaining individual memorials generally remains with the grave owner, in this case and due to the nature of the failure in this section of the Cemetery, the Cemeteries Service has investigated a new practical solution to make the memorials safe (2.4).

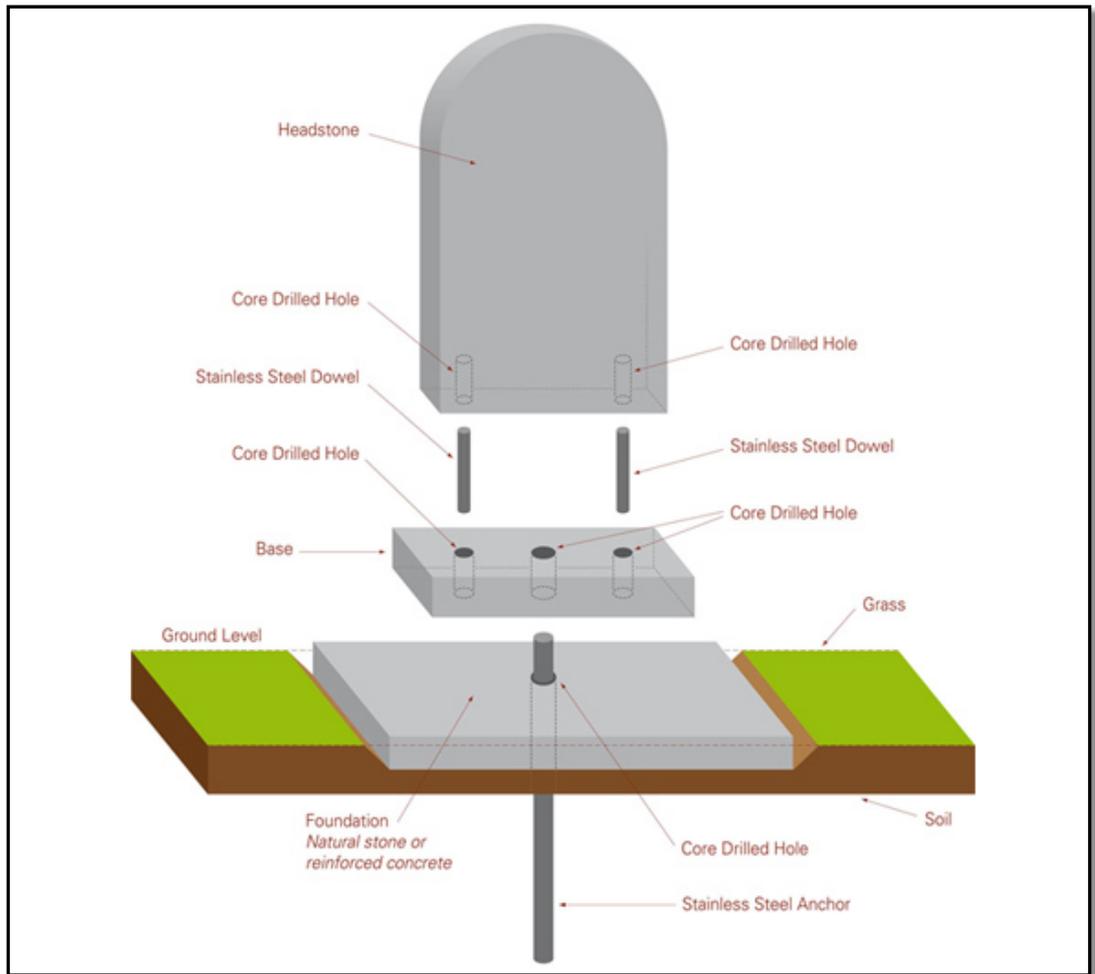
2.4. Rectification of Headstones in Section M (Failed Beams)

- 2.4.1 Section M consists of 19 bearer beams upon which memorials have been historically installed. Due to ground upheaval (settlement) and weakening of the aged concrete structure, the integrity of some of these beams has been compromised, which has contributed to the loosing and subsequent failure of attached memorials.
- 2.4.2 Loose headstones in Section M have been made safe (also referenced in 2.3.5). In total, 115 headstones have been laid down to mitigate the risk of them falling over.
- 2.4.3 Due to the nature of the headstones failing the MSTP, it was determined that the service would be responsible for the reinstatement of laid down memorials.
- 2.4.4 The Cemeteries service have established a robust method that will rectify the issues caused by the failed bearer beams. The new approach to rectify

the laid down headstones in Section M is a long-term solution and not a temporary fix.

- 2.4.5 The independent restoration approach will reinstate the headstones in an upright and safe position with the use of concrete landing stones as illustrated in Figure 3. Each structure will be independent of the bearer beam and will effectively move with the soil and require little maintenance in the future.

Figure 3 - Proposed Reinstatement Method of Laid Down Memorials



- 2.4.6 Detailed investigation into the failed bearer beam issue by the service provider (Idverde) established that this is the most effective, expedient and least destructive way to rectify the laid down headstones. The innovation provides a best value solution that addresses the need for ensuring the safety of users, securing the memorial in a timely manner and avoiding large costs and amenity disruption associated with larger scale bearer beam rectification.
- 2.4.7 The newly reinstated memorials will be installed in a safe acceptable manner in line with industry (NAMM) guidelines.
- 2.4.8 Our service provider have provided a timeline for the implementation of the reinstatement of the 115 laid down headstones in section M. This will be a

six-week programme that will commence on the 28th of June 2021. The estimated cost of the reinstatement programme is £15,000.

- 2.4.9 Communication will be important to ensure that the six-week programme is supported by stakeholders. The Cemeteries service will ensure that information is visible around Section M to provide reassurance as to why there are works taking place with headstones.

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. The timetable of the M&SJC 2021/2022 programme of works is in Table 2.
- 5.2. The works outstanding from a previous programme (Section F) will take place parallel to the 2021/2022 programme of works at M&SJC.
- 5.3. The recommencement of the MTSP has been delayed due to Covid-19 priorities. Discussions around the recommencement of the programme following the lifting of restrictions are in progress.
- 5.4. The rectification of the headstones laid down in Section M will commence on the 28th of June 2021 and will take approximately six weeks to complete.

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. The estimated budget for the **M&SJC Programme of works 2021/2022** is detailed in section 2.2.3, this will be approved as part of the Abstract of Accounts report elsewhere on this agenda.
- 6.2. The cost for the completion of the M&SJC Programme of works not completed in **Section F** from 2020/2021 is estimated to cost no more than £80,000.
- 6.3. The estimated cost for the rectification of laid down headstones in **Section M** is £15,000.

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. Councils have a duty under Health & Safety legislation and under the principles of occupier's liability, both to members of the public and their own workers, to make sure that cemeteries and graveyards for which they are responsible are safe. Memorials can become unstable since erection and cause accidents to people.
- 10.2. The Memorial Safety programme process across the Partnership is based on *Ministry of Justice Memorial Safety Guidance (2009)*.
- 10.3. Staff undertaking the testing (MSTP) are suitably trained. All inspectors are trained to meet the standards specified in the Ministry of Justice guidance entitled "Managing the Safety of Burial Ground Memorials". Training is refreshed as required.
- 10.4. When memorial testing is being undertaken, staff wear appropriate PPE. This includes gloves, steel toe-cap boots and high-vis jackets.

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

- 11.1. None

12 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 12.1. None

APPENDIX 1. SITE LAYOUT PLAN

