



CABINET

Monday, 8th February, 2016

7.00 pm

Town Hall Watford

Publication date: 29 January 2016

CONTACT

If you require further information or you would like a copy of this agenda in another format, e.g. large print, please contact Caroline Harris Democratic Services Manager on 01923 278372 or by email – legalanddemocratic@watford.gov.uk .

Welcome to this meeting. We hope you find these notes useful.

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CABINET MEMBERSHIP

Mayor	D Thornhill	(Chair)
Councillor	D Scudder	(Deputy Mayor)
Councillors	S Johnson, I Sharpe, P Taylor and M Watkin	

AGENDA

PART A - OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

1. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

2. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST (IF ANY)

3. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2016 to be submitted and signed.

Copies of the minutes of this meeting are usually available seven working days following the meeting.

(All minutes are available on the Council's [website](#).)

4. CONDUCT OF MEETING

The Cabinet may wish to consider whether there are any items on which there is general agreement which could be considered now, to enable discussion to focus on those items where the Cabinet sees a need for further debate.

5. SKILLMAKERS (Pages 5 - 22)

Report of Head of Regeneration and Development

6. PROGRESS ON DELIVERING A GREEN SPACES STRATEGY FOR WATFORD FOR 2013-2023 (Pages 23 - 38)

Report of Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)

7. A CEMETERY STRATEGY FOR WATFORD 2016-2026 (Pages 39 - 94)

Report of Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)

8. PROCUREMENT OF THE E-PROCUREMENT PORTAL - EXEMPTION TO CONTRACT PROCEDURE RULES. (Pages 95 - 102)

Report of Head of Democracy and Governance

PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 8th February 2016
Report of: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development
Title: Skillmakers

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 Skillmakers is a business and community led initiative intended to bring businesses and education closer together, to support future economic sustainability and improve employment opportunities for local people. It intends to become a self sustaining Community Interest Company with impact across Watford and South West Herts.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Council agrees to being a board member of Skillmakers and that the Managing Director be the Council's nominated representative.
- 2.2 That the Council offers the company a £11,500 loan to be repaid by the end of 3 years on similar commercial terms to that of the LEP loan to go towards the start up costs of Skillmakers.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Cherie Norris, Economic Development Officer, 01923 278029 cherie.norris@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Jane Custance, Head of Regeneration and Development

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL - Skillmakers

- 3.1 The Skillmakers initiative supports the Council's objectives in several ways, as detailed in the Skillmakers Project Initiation Document: Sections 1 Introduction and 2 Business Case, appended.
- 3.2 The detailed proposal for Skillmakers is outlined in the Project Initiation Document and the Skillmakers' Business Plan, both appended.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

4.1.1 **Skillmaker Funding**

The investment required to support Year 1 staffing is £115k. Other projected costs and income are detailed in the Skillmakers business plan.

A loan is being sought from Herts LEP to fund 80% of this £115k. West Herts College are leading this bid, not the Council. The remaining 20% will be funded on a loan basis 50/50 between WHC and WBC.

Therefore the Council would offer a loan of £11.5k from April 1st 2016, repayable at the end of Year 3 2018/2019 with interest applied.

The Skillmakers' loan will need to go onto the Council's risk register in case, for any reason, the service is not successful and the £11.5k cannot be repaid.

The LEP is discussing Skillmakers at their board meeting on 21st January. If for any reason the 80% loan is not secured the funding proposal will need to be reviewed. However, there is already strong support for this service within the LEP and it is expected to be approved.

4.1.2 **Skillmaker Membership**

The cost of the Council's membership of the Skillmakers service is £985 per annum.

4.1.3 It is recommended that the LABGI reserve be used to fund Skillmakers. It may be that membership can be offset against the Employer Levy when it comes in from April 2017, however colleagues on the Skillmakers board advise that much of the detail is still to be confirmed, and it is not yet clear what costs could be offset against the Levy.

4.1.4 The Shared Director of Finance comments that the financial implications are contained within the report.

4.2 **Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)**

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that In order to avoid issues of State Aid the loan to the company needs to be on commercial terms. The Managing Director as the Council's nominated representative would owe specific obligations as a director of the company to the company.

4.3 **Equalities**

4.3.1 In order to fulfil our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and the Council's commitment to equality and diversity, where a report relates to a new policy it will be necessary to indicate that the appropriate equality impact assessments are taking place. This paragraph must indicate what consultation and/or assessments have taken place and their outcome. It is not necessary to attach the full assessment.

4.3.2 Skillmakers will seek to help people access new learning and employment opportunities across the community, regardless of age, gender, disability or any other factor. Skillmakers intends to help maximise the economic potential of all of the local

working age population, enhancing career and job opportunities for residents across all groups.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Forward funding is not secured (LEP, WBC, WHC)	1	4	4
Skillmakers initiative is not successful and the Councils loan cannot be repaid	1	4	4
Not enough members recruited to support year on year financial model	1	4	4
Members are not retained after Year 1	1	3	3
Activity becomes too focused on a single or small number of groups	1	2	2
Priorities are not seen as relevant to a broad enough spectrum of employees and partners	1	2	2
Activity is too broad to achieve impact	1	2	2
Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.			

4.5 Staffing

4.5.1 None

4.6 Accommodation

4.6.1 None

4.7 Community Safety

4.7.1 None

4.8 Sustainability

4.8.1 Would assist in providing a sustainable workforce within the town and deliver some of the aims of the Economic Development Strategy.

Appendices

Appendix A: Skillmakers Business Plan Final January 2015

Background Papers

The following background papers were used in the preparation of this report. If you wish to inspect or take copies of the background papers, please contact the officer named on the front page of the report.

- The Skills Challenge May 2015

File Reference

- None



Skillmakers

Together We Can

Business Plan – Final January 2015

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Vision

Bringing education and employment closer together
to boost life chances and business productivity

Purpose and Objective

Skillmakers is a membership organisation led by local businesses, community groups and education providers, supported by Hertfordshire LEP and Watford Borough Council. The group has formed in response to the skills gaps reported by businesses locally, reflecting regional and national issues, and also in light of the significant job growth projected for Watford and the South West Herts area over coming years. Skillmakers aims to help businesses develop their own pipelines of talent to support future productivity, and to give local people better access to new employment opportunities. It is not intended to replace or replicate existing services, instead to identify what is working well and help achieve more scale, joining the dots and bringing greater impact through collaboration.

Proposition

The Skillmakers network brings employment, education and training closer together, better connecting businesses leaders with the skills they need, and helping local people gain the relevant skills to succeed in the workplace and develop sustainable long term career paths.

Priority Focus Areas

1. **Employer levy and skills funding** - Skillmakers will provide businesses with information and support to help understand and make the most of the Employer Levy, and also to understand skills funding streams available
2. **Bespoke and generic skills offerings** – Skillmakers will facilitate work groups and provide a matching service with their partner community to help employers achieve their workforce development goals and collectively address any industry skills gaps
3. **CSR and commitment to skills agenda** – Skillmakers will help employers share best practice and match resource to opportunity to ensure valued outcomes

A study has been commissioned to assess local labour market dynamics and how well education provision is tailored to meet future employer demand. This will create an evidence base to support Skillmakers strategy and decision making. It will highlight any particularly sectors that require specific focus and will help shape local skills provision. The report is due mid December 2015.

Priorities will be reviewed by the Skillmakers board on an annual basis.

Delivery There are three streams for delivery:

- **Skillmaker Ambassadors:** Inspiring the next generation with insights from the working world. Ambassadors are a network of business leaders who volunteer their time to visit schools, colleges and community groups, promoting the range of learning options available to young people, and expand their view of career opportunities open to them.
- **Skillmaker Champions:** Employers committed to using training, apprenticeships, staff development and CSR to develop and retain their own future workforce. Skillmakers will provide employers with access to information, advice and guidance about how to incorporate this approach into their business and achieve maximum benefit. This will be delivered through personal matching service, secure portals and knowledge hubs and online networks.
- **Skillmaker Partners:** Partners are either working with local communities, or are providers of education and training. Partners range across schools, colleges and universities, charity and pre employment skills providers, community groups and other organisations delivering support for local people entering the workplace. They will work together to tailor skills provision to better meet employer need and engage communities with employment opportunities, improving outcomes for all.

Quality Skillmakers Code of Conduct requires that a high level of quality is embedded in all activity undertaken by Skillmakers members. This runs through the three streams, ensuring work placements, learning programmes and visits are delivered in a way that brings clear value to both employers and candidates.

Reach Skillmakers is seeking to deliver impact across the South West Herts sub-region, which is aligned directly with Herts LEPs M1/M25 Growth Area.

Skillmakers Value

In order for Skillmakers to be sustainable and deliver against its objectives, funding is needed. A membership structure is proposed to generate the required funding on the basis of an annual fee for Skillmaker Champions and Skillmaker Partners. Clear value has to be delivered to employers and partners to justify investment in membership of the Skillmakers network.

The forecast costs and income streams are detailed later in this document and further detail related to the membership fees is in Appendix 1. The fee structure is defined by organisation size:

Corporate 250+ staff	£985 annual membership fee
Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475 annual membership fee
Small <50 staff	£185 annual membership fee

There will also be a 500+ staff category with a £2.5k fee, for those few larger organisations that have a strong affiliation to the Skillmakers objectives and brand principles, and want to actively support the success of this service. These members will be recruited through the professional networks of the Skillmakers board members.

Skillmaker Employer Champions Benefits

Skillmakers will help employers to achieve benefit from using good quality training and apprenticeship schemes to build a strong future workforce, and to retain that workforce through staff development. It will help employers nurture and grow the skills they need, with the help of great quality and highly relevant learning provision, giving the businesses a clear return on the investments made.

1. **Reduced costs** - achieved by creating a pipeline of local talent and managing retention
 - Reduce recruitment costs which average £6.75k per new hire, although this can be much higher
 - Reduce costs related to staff retention. Costs to replace staff including covering gaps, the post, on-boarding and training average £7.5k - £20k
2. **Increased productivity** (achieved by quality training matches needs of your business) Estimates show that a 1 per cent increase in training days leads to a 3 per cent increase in productivity, and that the share of overall productivity growth attributable to training is around 16 per cent (CEDEFOP, 2007).

Improved work-readiness

- Overcoming issues around 'employability' means recruits contribute to business productivity more quickly, and require less management support to become effective

Labour saving

- Higher levels of skill leading to faster work
- Reduced duplication of effort and less time fixing mistakes
- Faster access to information

Employee engagement and motivation

- Employees motivated and more productive
- Employees stay longer, reducing the costs and disruption of recruitment and retraining
- Referrals of staff, business opportunities, customer experience and general improvements

3. **Measured value CSR activities** (supports achievement of first two priorities and can make your business more competitive)
 - Good reputation makes it easier to recruit employees
 - Volunteering, charity and other involvement with the local community are ideal opportunities to generate positive PR
 - Good relationships with local authorities and supply chain, makes doing local business easier

Skillmakers Partners Benefits

Skillmakers will give community partners and the people they work with better access to new employment and learning opportunities, to boost their life chances and maximise their potential within the workplace. It will help skills provider partners tailor learning to better meet future demand, and broader engagement with employers and candidates.

Commitment:

- Share best practice and thought leadership
- Collaborate with other partners to achieve greater outcomes
- Tailor programmes to better meet demand and skills gaps
- Skills planning with employers, developers and business groups
- Ongoing support for candidates, helping businesses not only recruit but also retain good skills
- Have a focus on vulnerable communities and candidates

Benefits:

- Access to Skillmaker evidence base
- Extend employer engagement across a wider catchment of businesses
- Delivering stronger outcomes and improved destinations through better targeting of programmes
- Scale impact through working together on local events and activities
- Collaborate to seek solutions to common challenges
- Access to the Skillmakers portal and online networks where members will share experience, best practice and contacts
- Supports OFSTED requirements where relevant

Skillmakers Ambassadors

Skillmaker Ambassadors volunteer their time to help inspire others. They are members of the Skillmakers network, working within the Skillmakers Code of Conduct, but will not be required to pay a membership fee.

Measures of Success

Measures used to assess the success of Skillmakers include:

1. Increase the number of South West Hertfordshire Apprenticeships by 30% in 2017

	Apprenticeship Starts 2014	Apprenticeship Starts 2017	Increase by
Increase number of South West Hertfordshire residents starting an Apprenticeship/Traineeship	950	1250	30%

(Government statistics 2015)

2. Increase the number of Traineeships delivered in South West Hertfordshire by 150% in 2017

	Number Starts 2015	Number Starts 2017	Increase by
Increase number of Traineeships delivered in South West Hertfordshire	40	100	150%

3. Increase in pre-employment training and sector based work academies – baseline needed
4. Year on Year Skillmaker member retention targeted at 80%

Annual Member Survey

Skillmakers will carry out an annual member survey to capture changes in employer and partner experience resulting from being engaged with Skillmakers. For example:

Employers

- % increase in placements offered (work experience, training, apprenticeships)
- % costs savings related to recruitment and retention
- % CSR activity increase

Partners

- % increase in employer engagement
- % increase in candidates placed
- % increase in candidates remaining in the placement over 6 months

This will also include a section for community partners to capture the positive impact Skillmakers has had on the communities that they work with.

Soft measures

- Coherent network of partners working to better meet employer demand
- Employers reporting improvements in employability / work-readiness, skills gaps, recruitment and retention
- Evidence of local people accessing the employment opportunities resulting from development projects

Annual Report - Skillmakers will produce an annual report communicating progress against measures along with key activities and successes.

Governance

Skillmakers intends to evolve into a Community Interest Company to provide a robust governance structure to underpin its operations. Guidance will be sought from a local business to support this, as their in-kind contribution to Skillmakers.

Resource Plan

Interim resource Jan-March 2016

- Part time support to assist with preparing Skillmakers for launch. Nadine Standish from Business In The Community may offer this.

Permanent staffing

- Skillmakers Manager: Full time post
Experienced individual to direct strategy, communications and activity streams. £50k salary
- Skillmakers Coordinator: Administrative position, £25k salary
- Skillmakers Coordinator: Apprenticeship position, £15k salary

Employment 'on-costs' are assumed to be 25%, therefore employment costs are approximately £115k per annum.

At the board meeting 3rd December 2015 West Herts College offered to act as employer for the Skillmakers staff.

Financial Forecasts - Costs

Year 0 - Investment costs to March 31 2016

Activity	Cost	Skillmakers Investment	Cash or 'In Kind' donation
Labour market research and employer survey	£30k		WHC, OC, LEP
Branding: Skillmakers concept and comms materials	£5k?		WHC
Resource to work up Skillmakers plan	TBC		WHC, WBC, Freedom, LEP
Venue for launch event	£2.5k?		Watford Football Club
Invitations and materials for launch	£2k?		WHC
Catering for launch event	£500		TBC
Interim resource January - March	£10k		Business In The Community
Total Year 0	£50k	£0	£50k

Year 1 April 2016-2017

Activity	Cost	Skillmakers Investment	'In Kind' donation from Strategic Community
Permanent Staffing	£115k	£115k	
Establish governance structures	£5k		Seeking donation
Banking	£2k		Seeking donation
Website development	£15k		Seeking donation
Marketing and communications	£10k		Seeking donation
End of year event	£10k		Seeking donation
Total Year 1	£157k	£115k	£42k

Year 2 April 17/18

Activity	Cost	Skillmakers Investment	'In Kind' donation from Strategic Community
Permanent staffing	£115k	£115k	
Accounting	£2k		Seeking donation
Banking	£1k		Seeking donation
Website management	£5k		Seeking donation
Marketing and communications	£10k		Seeking donation
End of year event	£10k		Seeking donation
Total Year 2	£143k	£115k	£28k

Year 3 April 18/19

Activity	Cost	Skillmakers Investment	'In Kind' donation
Permanent staffing	£90k	£115k	
Accounting	£2k	£2k	
Banking	£1k	£1k	
Website management	£5k	£5k	
Marketing and communications	£10k	£10k	
End of year event	£10k	£10k	
Total Year 3	£143k	£143k	£0

Financial Forecasts – Income

Year 1 April 2016-2017

Source	Income	Skillmakers Investment	Gap
Membership – Employer Champions	£47,900		
Membership – Partners	£12,450		
Total Fees	£60,350		
Skillmakers Investment Costs		£115,000	
			-£54,650

Year 2 April 17/18

Source	Income	Skillmakers Investment	Gap
Membership – Employer Champions	£81,375		
Membership – Partners	£19,050		
Total Fees	£100,425		
Skillmakers Investment Costs		£115,000	
			-£14,575

Year 3 April 18/19

Source	Income	Skillmakers Investment	Gap
Membership – Employer Champions	£148,275		
Membership – Partners	£29,425		
Total Fees	£177,700		
Skillmakers Investment Costs		£143,000	
			+£34,700

Once established, Skillmakers will be in a stronger position to bid for funding from other sources to balance the reliance on membership fee income. Such funding cannot be forecast at this point, and should be seen as 'up-side' on the income position.

In Years 1 and 2, additional support will be required from the Strategic Community to support the costs of banking, accountancy, website development and management, marketing and communications, and end of year event. Skillmakers will seek in-kind donations from Strategic Members.

The costs of staffing will be supported by Skillmakers. The intention is for Skillmakers to become self-sufficient by Year 3.

Financial Forecasts – Investment Proposal

There is significant risk associated with launching Skillmakers in March 2016 without having the required resources (people and technology) in place to deliver the service. Membership recruitment needs to actively begin and value must be delivered from the outset in order to build the reputational referencing that will support further membership subscription, and also to secure membership retention post Year 1.

There is a £54k gap in Year 1 cash flow, and there will be a natural lag in member uptake. Relying solely on Year 1 membership fee income to support staff costs will leave Skillmakers unviable. The proposal is for the Skillmakers board to seek loan funding to support Year 1 staff costs, with reimbursement to investors over Years 2-4 as Skillmakers becomes self-sustaining.

This model detailed below is purely indicative to promote discussion amongst Skillmakers board members. It does not account for interest on any investment.

Year	Skillmakers Investment	Income / Funding	Surplus	Source / Destination
Year 1	£115k	£115,000	£0	LEP funding / loan, WBC & WHC funding / loan
Year 2	£115k	£60,350	£45,775	Year 1 membership fee income
		£100,425		Year 2 membership fee income
		Total £160,775		
				Loan repayment
Year 3	£143k	£177,700	£34,700	Year 3 membership fee
				Loan repayment
Year 4	£143k	£177,700	£34,700	Year 3 membership fee
				Loan repayment
			£115,175	Loan repayment

Timeline

December 2015

- Business Plan approved
- Interim resource in place - Nadine Standish, Business In The Community

January 2016

- Staff recruitment begins
- Strategic Community Members aligned to deliver in-kind donations to support Skillmakers start-up

February 2016

- Strategic Community meeting, convening 30+ organisations with strategic relevance to Skillmakers and its objectives
- Bank accounts set up
- Governance structures in place
- LinkedIn networking commences

March 2016

- Launch event and membership recruitment begins

Spring 2016

- Membership recruitment
- Early delivery of actions plans
- Permanent resource in place

Risks

Risk	Impact	Mitigation
Forward funding is not secured	High	Support Skillmakers board to seek early stage funding or financing
Not enough members recruited to support year on year financial model	High	Strong ROI for businesses and partners, extend reach across SW Herts
Members are not retained after year 1	Medium	Regular reporting around impact and outcomes, monitoring of proactive engagement of members in activities
Activity becomes too focused on a single or small number of groups	Low	Regular review across all work streams
Priorities are not seen as relevant to a broad enough spectrum of employers and partners	Low	Clear definition of priorities, linkage to evidence base, Channels to engage all members
Activity is too broad to achieve impact	Low	Keep focused on priorities, But priorities are reviewed to ensure relevance

Appendix 1

Membership Recruitment Forecasts

The annual fee is the minimum financial contribution required to become a member of Skillmakers. Corporate members particularly are encouraged to donate 'In Kind' support alongside their annual fee to support the financial viability of Skillmakers. The 500+ staff memberships are not forecast, these are considered 'up-side' on the projections below.

Members will have the option to pay the fee on a monthly basis at a slightly higher annual level, equating to approximately a 10% premium.

Corporate: monthly £91 equates to £1,092 p/a
 Mid-Sized: monthly £44 equates to £528 p/a
 Small: monthly £18 equates to £216 p/a

Year 1 April 2016-2017

Skillmakers Members – Employer Champions

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
15	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£14,775
60	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£28,500
25	Small <50 staff	£185	£4,625
100	Total Membership Fee Income		£47,900

Skillmakers Members – Partners

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
5	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£4,925
10	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£4,750
15	Small <50 staff	£185	£2,775
30	Total Membership Fee Income		£12,450

Year 2 April 17/18

Skillmakers Members – Employer Champions

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
25	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£24,625
100	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£47,500
50	Small <50 staff	£185	£9,250
175	Total Membership Fee Income		£81,375

Skillmakers Members – Partners

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
5	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£4,925
20	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£9,500
25	Small <50 staff	£185	£4,625
50	Total Membership Fee Income		£19,050

Year 3 April 18/19

Skillmakers Members – Employer Champions

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
40	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£39,400
200	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£95,000
75	Small <50 staff	£185	£13,875
315	Total Membership Fee Income		£148,275

Skillmakers Members – Partners

No. of members	Band of membership by organisation size	Annual Fee	Income
5	Corporate 250+ staff	£985	£4,925
40	Mid-Size 50-249 staff	£475	£19,000
30	Small <50 staff	£185	£5,500
75	Total Membership Fee Income		£29,425

Other Membership Definitions:

Strategic Member: Part of the Strategic Community group helping shape Skillmakers strategy, objectives and delivery plan.

Strategic Partner: Organisations that are wholly aligned to the principles of Skillmakers, are actively engage in supporting delivery of Skillmakers objectives, however their own funding structures preclude them for making a financial donation. Strategic Partners are expected to contribute 'In Kind' to the funding of Skillmakers.

Membership Retention and Growth

From Years 2 onwards retention of existing members is a key activity, as well as recruiting new members. Target membership retention is 80% per annum.

Whilst Year 1 membership is likely to predominantly within the Watford area, from Year 2 Skillmakers will actively extend activity further across SW Herts targeting a wider catchment of potential members.

Year	Retained employer membership	Growth employer membership	Total employer	Retained partner membership	Growth partner membership	Total partner	Total
1		100	100		30	30	130
2	80	95	175	24	26	50	225
3	140	175	315	40	35	75	390

Appendix 2

Related Documents

- Skillmakers Evidence Base
- Action Plan for Ambassadors, Champions, Partners (the Action Plans detail the activities Skillmakers will undertake to deliver the proposition)
- PowerPoint presentations communicating value for three work streams
- Job Descriptions for Skillmakers team
- Case study pack

PART A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 8th February 2016

Report of: Environmental Services Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)

Title: Progress on delivering a Green Spaces Strategy for Watford for 2013-2023

1.0 SUMMARY

1.1 In November 2013, a new 10 year Green Spaces Strategy was adopted by Cabinet as a blueprint for improving green spaces across the borough.

1.2 It was based on qualitative and value assessments carried out as well as incorporating the Council's new Corporate Priorities and Green Infrastructure principles. It also recognised the significant current reductions in core funding the Council continues to face, and the outsourcing of the parks and open spaces service to Veolia in July 2013.

1.3 Since the strategy was adopted, there has been significant progress over the first 2 years of the strategy. This is summarised in Appendix 1. Progress on the HLF / BIG Parks for People Project is also summarised below.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1 Note the progress with the Green Spaces Strategy Action Plan as appended in Appendix 1

2.2 Note the progress on the Cassiobury Park project

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Paul Rabbitts,
Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)
Telephone extension: 8250 Email: paul.rabbitts@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

3.0 **UPDATE**

3.1 Please see Appendix 1 for details. However, highlights are as follows (with associated short powerpoint slides):-

- Completion of the Parks Improvement Programme in December 2013 with £1.5 million improvements to Oxhey Park, Callowland Rec, King George V Playing Fields, Waterfields Rec;
- Significant improvements to the town's play areas including Riverside Rec, East Drive, Berry Avenue, Fern Way, Waterfields Rec, Knutsford Playing Fields, Harebreaks Rec, Harwoods Rec, Meriden Park;
- 11 Adult gyms introduced;
- Increase in Green Flags from 3 to 6;
- HLF bid successful for Cassiobury Park and new posts appointed;
- £800,000 invested in improving allotments;
- Sports Facilities Strategy adopted;
- Volunteering opportunities increased in Cassiobury Park; and
- New Sports Legacy Zone at the Meriden.

3.2 In particular, the success of Cassiobury Park HLF / BIG Parks for People Project is very significant for the town , with the maximum grant being attracted and a £6.6 million project to be commenced on site in February 2016 to April 2017. This will see Cassiobury Park transformed yet preserved for the enjoyment of future generations. Key elements of the project are:-

- New Park Hub building with café facility, education and exhibition space, changing rooms and staff office;
- Pools revamped;
- Bandstand relocated from town centre to the park;
- Entrance improvements including interpretation of the former gates entrance;
- Ongoing events, volunteer and education opportunities;
- Landscape improvements throughout; and
- Enhancement of the Cha surrounds and toilet facilities improved.

Changes were made after tenders were returned due to budget constraints and resulted in the omission of the Cha extension and new croquet pavilion to bring back into budget. Further updates will follow on progress of this landmark project.

3.3 Conclusions

3.3.1 The Green Spaces Strategy recognises the difficulties faced by the Council as well as the importance of green spaces to local people and communities. This strategy is ambitious yet seeks to build on the continued successes in Watford in managing, maintaining and developing its green spaces. To date, much has been achieved in partnership with the Council's partner, Veolia, and there is still much to achieve. Further priorities are:

- Green Flag applications for North Watford Cemetery and Garston Park;
- Improvements to sports facilities across the borough in line with the Sports Facilities Strategy;
- Improvements to both cemeteries in line with the draft cemetery strategy, including a potential HLF Parks for People bid for Vicarage Road Cemetery;
- BMX / Cycle Hub / Skate park project delivery; and
- Improvements to Garston Park up to Green Flag standard.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

4.1.2 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that a considerable financial investment has been made over the past few years in upgrading our green spaces offer. This ability to invest in the future health and well being of our community will be further constrained as available local authority funding continues to reduce from 2016 onwards.

This detailed Action Plan requires a financial commitment, but with the reductions in funding, the Action Plan for 2016 onwards will need to recognise a longer delivery period for some projects. Alternative funding mechanisms such as government funding and partnerships will need to be further developed in order to make some elements of the Action Plan a reality.

Traditional funding through Section 106 capital receipts and the community infrastructure levy will be used wherever possible and this Green Spaces Strategy will continue to provide the evidence base to justify such investment.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that there are no legal implications in this report.

4.3 Equalities

4.3.1 N/A

4.4 Risk

4.4.1

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Unable to secure capital funding	2	4	8
Changes in policy	1	2	2

locally and nationally			
Staff pressures and lack of resources to deliver	2	4	8

4.5 **Staffing**

- 4.5.1 The delivery of the Strategy will continue to be monitored in partnership with Veolia by the Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces and Projects).

4.6 **Accommodation**

- 4.6.1 Not applicable

4.7 **Community Safety**

- 4.7.1 Not applicable

4.8 **Sustainability**

- 4.8.1 Not applicable

Appendices

Appendix 1: Green Spaces Strategy Monitoring Update

Background Papers:

Green Spaces Strategy 2013-2023

File Reference: None

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STEWARDSHIP

ACTION	7.1.1 The Council and Partners will continue to enhance its green spaces based on an agreed investment strategy linked to the qualitative and value assessments, taking into account accessibility and local needs and further develop the strategic and local green space network
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Parks Improvement Programme – Oxhey Park, Callowland Rec, Waterfields Rec, KGV Playing Fields completed Dec 2013. £1.5 million</p> <p>Riverside Rec – Completed Dec 2015 - £250,000</p> <p>Watford Heath – Completed December 2015 - £100,000</p> <p>Play Area improvements Phase 3 – completed October 2015 – Berry Avenue, Fern Way, East Drive, Garston Park</p> <p>St Mary's Churchyard – Planting areas improved in Spring 2015</p> <p>Q/V Audits – Improvements to those spaces invested in eg Oxhey Park now high quality / high value.</p> <p>Cassiobury Park HLF project – contractor appointed December 2015</p>
ACTION	7.1.2 The Council and partners will continue to enhance green spaces for the benefit of local biodiversity and enhancement of its green infrastructure and support the Hertfordshire Local Nature Partnership
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Oxhey Park – capital improvements to the park with wildflower planting and ongoing improvements to the Dell;</p> <p>Callowland Rec – capital improvements to the park with wildflower planting;</p> <p>NWPF – significant improvements to the Dell with management of this area undertaken after capital improvements;</p> <p>Colne River Park – landscape improvements to the landscape corridor including riverside viewing area, accessibility improvements, conservation areas created;</p> <p>Waterfields Rec – football pitch removed and large area of wildlife conservation meadow area created with tree planting.</p> <p>Cassiobury Park – continued enhancements to the LNR and</p> <p>Whippendell Wood/Cassiobury Park - New areas being created as part of the Parks for People project – eg Orchard Garden;</p> <p>Meriden Park – new wildlife conservation meadow created with tree planting as part of wider improvements;</p> <p>Lairage LNR – translocation of invertebrates to Lairage LNR as part of WHC project mitigation;</p>
ACTION	7.1.3 The Council and partners will seek to tackle issues related to anti-social behaviour in green spaces in accordance with CAGE Space guidance.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Regular attendance at ASBAG by the Park Rangers.</p> <p>Continued liaison with WBC ASB Officer.</p>

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	Monitoring of ASB hotspots and passed to VES to react to.
ACTION	7.1.4 The Council will review maintenance regimes, looking at standards, levels of specification in relation to typology of space and need for development of Management Plans for Community Parks.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Management plans produced for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassiobury Park (Regional) – will be updated as part of HLF • Woodside PF (Regional) – to be updated in 2014/15 • Cheslyn Gardens (Regional) – to be updated in 2014/15 • Oxhey Park (Community) – produced in 2014. • St Mary's Churchyard (Community) –produced in 2015 • Callowland Rec (Community) –produced in 2015 • NWPF (Local) – to be produced in Jan 2016 • Waterfields Rec (Local) – produced in Dec 2015)

MANAGEMENT

ACTION	7.2.1 The Council and partners will develop Management Plans for all existing Regional and Community parks based on a new three tier parks hierarchy and will involve local people, stakeholders as part of the process.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Management plans produced for:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassiobury Park (Regional) – will be updated as part of HLF • Woodside PF (Regional) – to be updated in 2014/15 • Cheslyn Gardens (Regional) – to be updated in 2014/15 • Oxhey Park (Community) – produced in 2014. • St Mary's Churchyard (Community) –produced in 2015 • Callowland Rec (Community) –produced in 2015 • NWPF (Local) – to be produced in Jan 2016 • Waterfields Rec (Local) – produced in Dec 2015 <p>Linked to Green Flag applications for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Callowland Rec (2015) – successful • NWPF (2016 application – to be developed by VES • St Mary's Churchyard (2015) – successful • Waterfields Rec (2016 application – to be developed by WBC)
ACTION	7.2.2 The Council and partners will apply the principles of Green Flag for all Regional and Community parks and gardens/green spaces and apply for Green Flag for the

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	<p>spaces listed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Oxhey Park ❑ Garston Park ❑ Waterfields Rec ❑ Callowland Rec ❑ North Watford Cemetery ❑ North Watford Playing Fields ❑ St. Mary's Churchyard <p>and Green Heritage for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Cassiobury Park and Whippendell Wood
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Continued applications for:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cassiobury Park – new application for Green Heritage a requirement for Parks for People grant; • Woodside Playing Fields • Cheslyn Gardens <p>ALL STILL GREEN FLAG HOLDERS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New application for Oxhey Park in 2013/14 was successful and retained in 2015 <p>Applications for 2014/15</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Callowland Rec – successful in 2015 • St Mary's Churchyard – successful in 2015 <p>Applications for 2015/16</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NWPF • Waterfields Rec <p>Applications for 2016/17</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North Watford Cemetery • Garston Park
ACTION	<p>7.2.3 The Council and partners will encourage more positive use and more activity in parks and gardens by encouraging local people to use them through programmes of activity, in particular in Cassiobury Park linked to the ongoing HLF restoration project.</p>
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Community Park Ranger post in place confirmed 5 years from August 2014.</p> <p>Education Officer in post from March 2015.</p> <p>Extensive programme in 2015 very successful. 2016 events being planned.</p> <p>Events booking and management elsewhere managed by Veolia. All events and activity are primarily managed by external resources. Cassiobury continues to be the focus of activity.</p>

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ACTION	7.2.4 Complete and update the spatial GIS mapping of parks and open spaces and highway verges across Watford, capturing all grounds maintenance activities accurately and update regularly
PROGRESS JAN 2016	All parks and open spaces were captured onto GIS in 2012/13 including all categories including trees, shrubs, mowing regimes, structures etc. This is fully up to date. Trees are currently being captured by Veolia on EzyTreev. GIS plans to be updated with recent parks improvements.
ACTION	7.2.5 The Council with partners will seek to develop and update sustainable management plans for all strategic natural and semi-natural green space sites, seeking to enhance their biodiversity value in terms of site size, links, habitats and management.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	None
ACTION	7.2.6 The Council with its partners will develop a policy and strategy for trees in parks and streets as well as woodlands, linked to programmed management and mapping of trees in the town, mapped on an approved GIS / Tree management software.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Trees are currently being mapped with EzyTreev purchased by WBC and being managed by Veolia.
ACTION	7.2.7 The Council and partners will support the integration of natural and semi-natural green spaces into other forms of green space wherever possible.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Improvements already made in some green spaces:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garston Park – woodland planting to the LNR • Waterfields Rec – woodland planting with conservation cut area incorporated • Radlett Road Playing Fields – tree planting • Meriden Park – woodland planting with conservation cut area incorporated • Oxhey Park - wildflower areas developed and Dell improved • NWPF – improvements to the Dell • Riverside Rec former skate park removed and now wildflower area.
ACTION	7.2.8 The Council and local communities will continue to manage and maintain closed churchyards and cemeteries under its ownership / management for the benefit of local people and wildlife.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Ongoing maintenance of St Mary's Green Flag application successful in 2015.

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	Recent adoption of All Saints Churchyard at Woodside. HLF bid for 2016 to restore churchyard
ACTION	7.2.9 The Council will establish an annual capital programme for improvements to its Regional, Community and local parks and gardens as well as major semi-natural green space sites, to include play facilities, reviewed on a five yearly basis, based on the new strategic network.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>The £4.5 million S106 capital investment programme for improving parks has seen significant improvements since 2013 and is ongoing. Major improvements have included:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxhey Park • Callowland Rec • Waterfields Rec • KGV Playing Fields • Colne River Park • Riverside Rec • Watford Heath • 26 Play Areas • North Watford Cemetery • Vicarage Road Cemetery • Leavesden Green MUGA • 11 Outdoor gyms <p>The initial capital investment was completed in 2014/15 and a new capital programme was approved until 2016/17</p>
ACTION	<p>7.2.10 The Council with partners, will maximise every opportunity in relation to grant funding to include the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Heritage Lottery Fund; ❑ Landfill Tax Credit Scheme; ❑ BIG; ❑ Sport England; ❑ Arts Council; ❑ Groundwork UK; ❑ Watford Community Housing Trust
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Successful application to the HLF / BIG for Cassiobury Park Restoration £5 million; Grants awarded from WCHT for outdoor gyms - £50,000 and £40,000 for Meriden play area; Grants of £50,000 for Waterfields Rec from HCC and £100,000 towards Callowland MUGA. £10,000 from Lafarge for Callowland MUGA £5,000 from Groundwork towards NWPF £2,000 Community Orchard Cassiobury Park Small Grants</p>

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	Fund
ACTION	7.2.11 The Council will seek developer contributions (S106/CIL) based on a Development Control Model based on information available from the 'PPG17' audit, provision and quality standards for off-site contributions for all types of green space.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	S106 programme currently being re-assessed with unallocated funds to be allocated in early 2016.

USE

ACTION	7.3.1 The Council and other green space stakeholders will develop a 'Community Involvement Action Plan' to engage and involve local communities through development of Friend's Groups in particular.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	WBC and Veolia will be actively looking to create a Friends of North Watford Playing Fields in the first quarter of 2016
ACTION	7.3.2 The Council will develop, in partnership a system to develop volunteering opportunities on council managed green space, particularly in Cassiobury Park and natural green space corridors.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Been developed and delivered as part of the Activity Plan for the Parks for People Project for Cassiobury Park. 5 year delivery programme in Cassiobury including the extension of the Green Gym Project which was initially established at Knutsford Playing Fields.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 Young Rangers established in Cassiobury Park in 2015 • Community Payback, FoCP, HMWT, Green Gym, several corporate organisations, West Herts College Learning Disabilities, Watford Interfaith Group. • Several schools <p>Will be developed further in 2016 with Community Park Ranger and Education Officer.</p>
ACTION	7.3.3 The Council will work with health partners to investigate, assess and promote new ways of using green spaces to improve health and wellbeing, particularly Cassiobury Park. This will include investigating any possible funding opportunities.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Green Gym operates in Knutsford Playing Fields (self managing) as well as a new Green Gym in Cassiobury Park. 11 Adult gyms installed throughout parks in Watford. Funding secured through Activators Programme with Sports Development for summer managed sessions in 2015.

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ACTION	7.3.4 The Council will develop publicity material to publicise both strategic green space sites to all sectors of the community who need improved access to information on their local green spaces.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Draft Parks and Open Spaces booklet and guide produced for publishing in 2016.
ACTION	7.3.5 The Council will consult and involve local communities on green space issues and developments to include the following in line with the Council's Strategy for Community Engagement and Consultation. These will include : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Children; ❑ Older People; ❑ People with Disabilities; ❑ Carers; ❑ People with Learning Difficulties; ❑ Black and Minority Ethnic groups; and ❑ Other excluded groups.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Requires to be included in the Community Engagement Plan as developed by Veolia.</p> <p>Consultation is ongoing with all development projects and is included as part of the process. This includes significant projects such as Cassiobury Park, the Sports Facilities Strategy development and the relocation of the Gaelic Football Club – to the re-design of small play areas.</p>
ACTION	7.3.6 The Council will make “access for all” an integral part of all policy, strategy and activity in the planning development and management of Watford's green spaces in line with the ‘BT Countryside for All’ standards and their accompanying approach as an integral part of any physical access policy.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Recent improvements to parks have ensured “access for all” is integrated into the re-design of open spaces.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Oxhey Park – new footpaths, steps, seating • Waterfield Rec – new footpaths, steps, seating • Cemetery works – improvements to chapel surrounds • Meriden Play Area – play equipment dedicated to children with more severe disabilities • Play area improvements – improved access, surfacing, seating • Adult gyms – older users catered for including Garston Park, Lea Farm Rec, Leavesden Rec
ACTION	7.3.7 The Council with partners will improve the network of green corridors within Watford based on Green Infrastructure principles and continue to improve the links and access to other green spaces in developing the strategic network through working in partnership.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Progress has been considerable with ongoing improvements to a number of green corridors highlighted in the GI Strategy

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colne River Park improvements – access / open space improvements to Knutsford Playing Fields / Radlett Road Playing Fields and Waterfield Rec – ongoing Cassiobury Park / Whippendell Wood – as part of the Parks for People Project funded by HLF / BIG
ACTION	7.3.8 The Council will seek to ensure that all regional and community parks will have at least a destination play facility and, if appropriate, a youth facility, all retained as high quality and of high value to the local community.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Some progress as a number of play areas have been improved along with MUGAs introduced at Callowland Rec and Radlett Road Playing Fields.
ACTION	7.3.9 The Council, with key partners will improve its network of play areas and play spaces in particular developing a more strategic overview of sites, with less emphasis on smaller equipped Local Areas of Play (LAP) and a greater focus on neighbourhood facilities offering greater play value.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	26 play areas improved over last 5 years Need to revisit quality and value audit in 2016.
ACTION	7.3.10 The Council will seek funding and support the long term plans for the development of sports provision and facilities throughout the town based on a new Sports Facilities Strategy to be based on recommendations from the Sports Facilities Study carried out in 2012. This will include recommendations for developing strategic multi activity sports hubs.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Draft Sports Facilities Strategy presented to Cabinet (1/9/14) seeking approval to consult widely with local and wider community. Consultation began in September with final strategy adopted in December 2014. Projects being developed that include:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Oxhey Park North Woodside Playing Fields Relocation of the Gaelic Football Club Improvements to Pitch No2 at WRFC
ACTION	7.3.11 The Council will implement a system of sampling user numbers in key locations and times, in particular at Cassiobury Park, Woodside Playing Fields and Cheslyn House and Gardens.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	People counters were installed in Cassiobury Park in May 2013 as part of the requirement to assess numbers entering and using the park. The outcome was an accurate picture of

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	numbers to the park per year – 2.15 million visits per year.
ACTION	7.3.12 The Council will continue to measure and report customer satisfaction levels in parks and open spaces.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Carried out every year
ACTION	7.3.13 The Council will identify further partnerships to assist in delivery of parks management, maintenance and development including frameworks for landscape contractors, play providers and landscape / green space consultants.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	None
ACTION	7.3.14 The Council will work with allotment tenants in developing and improving allotment sites across the town, seeking external funding if possible and seeking to develop self management opportunities with Veolia as well as to establish models of best practice used elsewhere as outlined in the Action Plans in the 2013 - 2018 Allotment Strategy.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>The Allotment investment programme commenced in July 2014 and was completed in December 2014. The £810,000 investment has ensured that 10 sites out of 13 were improved with new fences, water provision, toilets, signboards etc.</p> <p>Self management has been agreed by Callowland allotments and the site should be self managed in 2016.</p> <p>Oxhey Grange as well as Paddock Road allotments both voted against self management.</p> <p>The allotments Stakeholder panel is now well established. Terms and Conditions have now been revised with the Tenancy agreement to be updated in early 2016.</p> <p>Veolia will be giving a self management presentation and votes for Garston Manor, Timberlake, Brightwell and Holywell in 2016</p>
ACTION	7.3.15 The Council will work in partnership with allotment tenants to promote allotment gardening across Watford as outlined in the Action Plans in the 2013 - 2018 Allotment Strategy.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>Significant promotion has been carried out with a publicity campaign in 2015 with posters and advertisements.</p> <p>Occupancy rates reached a high of 94%.</p>
ACTION	7.3.16 The Council with local stakeholders, will aim to work with local schools and colleges more closely to achieve

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	shared community goals and maximise the community use of school facilities where appropriate.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	None
ACTION	7.3.17 The Council will form a project team and commission a feasibility study for the long term development of Woodside Playing Fields, including Watford Town Cricket Club and Stadium, based on the outcome of the Sports Facilities Study carried out in 2012.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Project Team formed and consultation and engagement carried out in 2015. Consultant engaged to draft a concept plan for early 2016 to stimulate further discussions. Meeting held with Sport England who are very supportive.
ACTION	7.3.18 The Council will deliver a Round 2 HLF Parks for People application for Cassiobury Park and on success, deliver and implement the £6.5 million restoration project.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>A Round 2 application was successful in July 2014 and the delivery stage has now been commenced for start on site in Feb 2016 with completion by Summer 2017. This involves significant capital works as well as the delivery of an Activity Plan.</p> <p>Managed by Matt Hill – Project Officer. Community Park Ranger – Debbie Brady Education officer – Tabitha McLaughlin Principal Consultant – LUC</p> <p>Tenders for the capital works were received in August 2015 and were unfortunately over available budget. A process of value engineering and omission of project elements was undertaken and final tender accepted from Borrás Construction in December 2015. Start on site in Feb 2016.</p>
ACTION	7.3.19 The Council will continue its promotion of parks and open spaces through signage improvement programme, noticeboards, leaflets, way-marked walks and interpretation boards. Update existing website for parks and open spaces.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	<p>New signage to all parks from Regional, Community and Local Parks. These are based on an agreed format depending on the hierarchy of space.</p> <p>Interpretation boards have been erected in:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Garston Park • Knutsford Playing Fields • Cassiobury Park • Harebreaks Rec / LNR • Buryfield Nature Garden

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	Proposals are in place for:- Guided walk leaflets for Cassiobury Park; Booklet on parks in Watford – due in summer 2016
ACTION	7.3.20 The Council develop fitness trails and outdoor gyms at specific sites throughout Watford.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Outdoor gyms successfully installed at the following locations:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Woodside Playing Fields • Lea Farm Rec • Leavesden Green Rec • Garston Park • Harebreaks Rec • Harwoods Rec • Callowland Rec • Oxhey Park • Knutsford Playing Fields • KGV Playing Fields • Riverside Rec
ACTION	7.3.21 The Council will continue to develop the Colne River Project and to extend the boundaries to the upper areas of the River Colne and seek funding to deliver further improvements
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Significant progress to date including:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscape improvements to Knutsford Playing Fields • Landscape improvements to Waterfield Rec • Landscape improvements to Radlett Road Playing Fields <p>Japanese Knotweed eradication to be commenced in 2016.</p>
ACTION	7.3.22 The Council will develop a consistent and agreed policy on fees and charges for events and commercial ventures in parks and open spaces
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Increased annually
ACTION	7.3.23 The Council will update and amend all parks and open spaces byelaws to ensure they are suitable for current and existing park usage.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	None
ACTION	7.3.24 The Council will consider and explore opportunities for extreme sports facilities in Watford, in particular introduce a BMX facility in an agreed location.

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PROGRESS JAN 2016	Draft proposals for a new BMX / Skate park / Cycle Hub in Watford. Engagement with skaters and Cycle hub. Draft plan produced. Major consultation planned in Feb / March 2016 for possible project completion by 2017.
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ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

ACTION	7.4.1 The Council will continue to seek developer contributions through Section 106 / CIL agreements to improve green spaces within Watford
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Ongoing
ACTION	7.4.3 The Council will review those spaces classed as being of genuinely low quality and low value in the light of wider planning policies, but taking account of accessibility, quality and value of alternative provision in the area and the resources available to the Council.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	None
ACTION	7.4.4 The Council will adopt more sustainable planting and maintenance practices, to inc. minimising inputs of non-renewable resources, pesticides and herbicides and to develop a programme for controlling invasive species.
PROGRESS JAN 2016	Japanese Knotweed eradication planned for 2016. Reduction in weed killer applications occurred in 2015 without any noticeable increase.

Paul Rabbitts
 Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)
 X8250
 4th January 2016

*PART A

Report to: Cabinet

Date of meeting: 8 February 2016

Report of: Environmental Services Client Manager (Parks, Open Spaces & Projects)

Title: A Cemetery Strategy for Watford 2016-2026

1.0 **SUMMARY**

1.1 This report sets out the final findings of a review of Watford's cemetery service and presents recommendations for taking these forward through a 10 year Cemetery Strategy. It also presents an update on the establishment of a weekend and bank holiday service for the borough's Muslim community, where religious and cultural requirements have identified a need for additional provision.

1.2 The review was initially established to build a detailed understanding of the present service, to highlight current challenges and issues and to provide direction on potential changes that would deliver an improved service for Watford residents. Engagement was undertaken with a range of stakeholders during the review to provide an opportunity for the community to provide feedback on the current service and to share their views on future provision.

1.3 The broad scope of the review and the complexity of the range of issues identified meant that, following an interim report to Cabinet in September 2015, further work was required to develop a comprehensive Cemetery Strategy with action plan that would address all areas identified. Therefore, this report now presents a 10 year strategy for approval by Cabinet.

2.0 **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Cabinet is recommended to:

2.1 Note the contents of the Cemetery Strategy and Action Plan and approve for adoption with any subsequent amendments to be delegated to the Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services.

2.2 Receive regular updates to Cabinet on progress made.

2.3 Note the progress in relation to establishing a weekend and bank holiday burial service in partnership with the Gardens of Peace charity.

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact:

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Report approved by: Lesley Palumbo, Head of Corporate Strategy and Client Services

3.0 **Background**

Watford Borough Council currently manages and maintains four cemeteries in the borough on behalf of local residents. These are:

- North Watford Cemetery
- Vicarage Road Cemetery and
- 2 closed cemeteries (All Saint's Cemetery and St Mary's Church Grounds – grounds maintenance only).

North Watford Cemetery is the only site with space available for new graves, although this availability is estimated to be limited to around 7-9 years, depending on future demand.

The day to day management of the service (bookings, liaison with Funeral Directors, records maintenance, community engagement) is managed by an on-site Cemetery Manager who also lives on site at North Watford Cemetery. The grounds maintenance and cemetery operations element (such as grave preparation) has been managed by the council's strategic partner, Veolia, since it was outsourced in 2013.

Whilst the service has long been an integral part of the town, it is an area of the council's work where we have had limited knowledge in terms of customer perceptions, including the bereaved, funeral directors, cemetery visitors. Additionally, there was clearly a need to explore further a range of emerging issues and to better understand current and future requirements to ensure that the council was well placed to deliver an effective and efficient service that meets the needs of local people and the Watford community.

3.1 **Establishing a review of Watford's cemetery service – developing the strategy**

- 3.1.1 A comprehensive review of the council's cemetery service was agreed as a priority for the council's work programme for 2015 (spanning the end of the 2014/15 financial year, with interim reporting of findings in autumn 2015 and final reporting in early 2016).
- 3.1.2 In February 2015, the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) was appointed to support the review of the council's service.
- 3.1.3 The parameters for the review were agreed and the ICCM delivered an initial draft report in August 2015. It was an extensive exploration of the current cemetery service and identified a number of key issues that needed to be

developed into short, medium and long term actions. It was, therefore, recommended that, as the next stage of the review, these were taken forward through a detailed Cemetery Strategy and action plan – now attached as appendix 1.

3.2 Engagement on the cemetery review

3.2.1 The review was supported by engagement with a range of stakeholders and included:

- Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons
- The Muslim community
- The Gypsy and Traveller community
- Watford Borough Council members
- The Gardens of Peace charity

This engagement confirmed a number of the issues / concerns / proposals for improvement identified in the initial ICCM review and now form part of this new strategy.

3.3 Key Priority areas for action within the strategy

3.3.1 A number of key priority areas have been identified within the strategy. These are listed below, with the detail within the strategy itself. These include:-

- Introduction of a weekend and bank holiday burial service for the Muslim community where a religious and cultural requirement was identified for burial to take place as soon as possible
- Preserving burial space in Watford and managing demand
- Memorial regulations and a review of the rules and regulations, governing the cemetery service
- Staff cover and office hours
- Audit of existing space to implementation of policy and studies relating to the identification of future burial capacity;
- Income generation opportunities

3.4 Discussions with the Gardens of Peace Charity

3.4.1 Following the interim report to Cabinet in September 2015, discussions have been held with the Gardens of Peace charity in relation to providing a weekend and bank holiday burial service for the Muslim Community.

In December, officers from the council met with representatives from Veolia and the Gardens of Peace to progress establishing the service. These did not identify any significant issues in progressing the proposed extension of the service although there are a number of technical issues that will be investigated over the next two months (shoring/soil availability/stock graves availability) in advance of launching the service, prior to agreeing the service detail. A site visit is planned to St Albans to assess their current processes with a view to adopting a similar provision in Watford from April 2016.

4.0 **IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 **Financial**

- 4.1.2 The Head of Strategic Finance comments that there is a proposal being put forward as part of the council's medium term financial strategy 2016-2019 to support the delivery of the review and implementation. Income generation is also a key element within the strategy and action plan. The fees and charges annual review and increases are intended to generate additional revenue to support the staffing and funding resources required to initiate the workstreams identified within the strategy and to then become self financing where possible.

4.2 **Legal Issues** (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy and Governance comments that the operation of the cemeteries is governed by detailed Regulations which are set out in the strategy. The Council will also have to have regard to its duties under the Equalities Act in relation to how it intends to deliver the service in the future.

4.3 **Equalities**

- 4.3.1 An equality impact analysis (EIA) was developed alongside the review to address the issues raised. As individual elements are progressed an EIA will be developed to ascertain the equalities implications of proposals and to ensure the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010 are considered and equality impacts identified.

4.4 **Risk**

- 4.4.1 The Environmental Services Client team will develop a detailed risk register for the attached Cemeteries Strategy and action plan which will set out all the current risks and identify the mitigating actions needed to manage the risks. This will continue to be monitored and updated throughout the life of this new Strategy.

4.5 **Staffing**

- 4.5.1 The Cemetery Strategy highlights a number of issues related to staffing, ranging from cover, developmental and strategic work, ICT, data collection, records management. Staff will be consulted on any detailed changes required to ways of working prior to implementation. Additional staff resource requirements have been identified.

4.6 **Accommodation**

- 4.6.1 The office accommodation / storage / income generation options are highlighted as part of the Cemetery Strategy action plan.

4.7 **Community Safety**

- 4.7.1 Issues of security have been considered as part of this review.

Appendix 1: A Cemetery Strategy for Watford 2016-2026

IN
LOVING MEMORY OF
MY DEAR HUSBAND
WILLIAM GASKIN
WHO PASSED AWAY MARCH 19th 1952
AGED 56 YEARS.

"GOD'S FINGER TOUCHED HIM AND HE SLEPT"

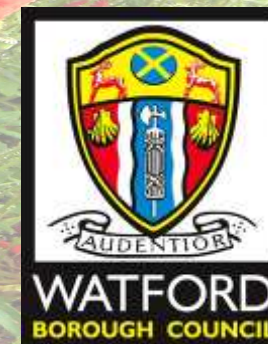
LOVING AND KIND IN ALL HIS WAYS,
UPRIGHT AND JUST IN HIS
SINCERE AND TRUE HE WAS
A BEAUTIFUL MEMORY LEFT BEHIND

AND HIS DEVOTED WIFE
MARY GASKIN
DIED DEC. 12. 1924
AGED 74 YEARS.

"GONE FROM OUR HOME
BUT NOT FROM OUR HEARTS"

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford

2016 – 2026



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Executive Summary

Watford Borough Council recently commissioned a review of its cemetery service by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM). The feedback forms the basis of this new 10-year cemetery strategy. It summarised that the service provided by Watford Borough Council in our cemeteries service is generally very good. There are dedicated, experienced and well trained staff in post who clearly care about the level of service they provide and who are committed to not only providing the highest level of service they can but also in working towards improvements to the service in the future. The core activities of the service are well provided such as grounds maintenance and grave digging. However, it also concluded that the service needed to consider modernising its service in some areas and to improve on its accessibility to the public and overall customer experience.

A number of income generating opportunities were also identified which could not only help move the service into a more financially favourable position but would also provide additional services and benefits to the bereaved. At the same time, there is the significant issue related to the provision of cemetery space and the need to provide further space as burial capacity is “running out”. Vicarage Road Cemetery is already full and the capacity at North Watford Cemetery is now limited with a finite number of years remaining. This issue is identified within this strategy.

The ICCM review also examined some key issues affecting the cemetery service in Watford. This included consideration around an enhanced weekend and bank holiday burial service to meet the needs of the Muslim Community and the need to update to the current cemetery regulations. These issues together with many others have been addressed within this 10 year strategy and will provide a transparent and unbiased way forward in improving the services for the bereaved in Watford, not only based on experience but also current best industry practice.

In particular, the review identified a number of issues and recommendations that would enhance the already good service currently provided at Watford. Whilst there is much to consider it was strongly recommended that the review and the subsequent recommendations contained within it formed the basis for a bespoke **Watford Cemeteries Strategy** which would provide a clear direction of travel for the service and enable delivery of a number of actions over the next 10 years and furthermore ensure the service is positioned to continually improve. As a consequence, this strategy has been structured over the long term (10 years) with short, medium and long term objectives included that will be reviewed annually and now form part of the Councils key aims to ensure that it can provide the highest standard of what is a very sensitive service that is utilised by many of the local population every year.

Background & Introduction

In March 2015 Watford Borough Council requested that the ICCM undertake a review of its cemetery service and provide a detailed report and recommendations to further improve and modernise this important service.

This subsequent Cemetery Strategy covers all of the issues identified and provides specific recommendations and a detailed Action Plan for the council to look at delivering. Our view is that:-

‘The service is one of the most important aspects of service provision that we provide, yet it is an area we currently knew little about in relation to what the customer perceived of it, including “the bereaved”, funeral directors, cemetery visitors. The Council has therefore carried out a full review of this important area that is now being used to shape the service taking into account current and future needs’.

This strategy will cover the following areas:-

Part 1: Management

- Staffing and Cover issues;
- Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC);
- Hours of opening;
- The visitor experience;
- ICT and Records Management;
- Lone working policy;
- Income opportunities;
- Updating of Regulations for Management of Cemeteries; and
- Muslim Burials (out of hours burials only).

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

Part 2: Customer Perception

- Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands;
- Benchmarking; and
- Marketing of Cemeteries.

Part 3: Infrastructure and Environment

- Quality of the grounds and cemetery as a green space;
- Green Flag awards;
- Building infrastructure; and
- Growth and expansion opportunities

Watford Borough Council currently provides a burial service through its two main cemeteries located at Vicarage Road and North Watford and also maintains and manages 2 closed sites at All Saints Cemetery and St Mary's Church Grounds.

The grounds maintenance at the sites is of a very good standard. Both North Watford and Vicarage Road sites are extremely well presented and welcoming and are kept well maintained by the Council's partner, Veolia.

Veolia currently hold the contract with Watford Borough Council to provide Grounds Maintenance across the Borough after it was outsourced in July 2013. This extends to both the grounds maintenance at the cemeteries and the grave digging functions provided.

The day to day management of the service is provided by an onsite cemetery manager based at North Watford Cemetery who is responsible for all of the key elements of the service including bookings for funerals, dealing with the public, maintaining statutory cemetery records, marking and identifying graves for excavation, liaising directly with the grounds staff and monitoring of the contract with Veolia.

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

Key Statistical Information

Watford currently has a number of burial sites:

- (1) North Watford Cemetery;
- (2) Vicarage Road Cemetery;
- (3) All Saints Cemetery;(Grounds Maintenance only); and
- (4) St Mary's Church Grounds (Grounds Maintenance Only).

Average No of Burials Per Year:

182 Full Burials

74 Cremated Remains

Services Offered:

Full Burials;

Cremated Remains Burials

Population: 95,500

No of Registered Deaths in Watford 2013: 715



Part 1 Management

Staff and Cover Issues

At present, the Cemetery Manager is responsible for all aspects of cemetery management and works a 37 hour week as well as some occasional Saturday working. However, when on leave, attending training or is unexpectedly ill, cover is provided by a former colleague who is undergoing training via the ICCM but is now employed by Veolia. This cover has generally been effective but comes at a cost and does not provide cover when the Manager is on site attending to funerals and also relies on the Veolia colleague being available at short, medium and long term notice. Cover has also recently been provided by West Herts Crematorium as part of a Service Level Agreement but again cannot always be guaranteed.

***Strategy Aim** – to look at current cover arrangements and assess staffing needs as part of ensuring a more comprehensive service is provided for the bereaved, funeral directors, members of the public and cemetery visitors.*

Existing arrangements currently hamper the provision of a better service for the bereaved and key service users of Watford's cemeteries.

As a lone worker the Manager is required to close and lock the office at various times throughout the day to either attend burials, meet with visitors or deal with any other issue outside of the office which also includes visiting and attending other sites.

In this modern age the current arrangements can seem antiquated and not those expected by residents of a busy and progressive Borough. While the office is closed visitors with enquires currently wait outside until the manager returns, and if the telephone is not answered (NB an answer phone service is in place), this can lead to a direct impact on the bereaved if a funeral director is trying to book or confirm a burial time on their behalf leading to frustration and increased anxiety for the bereaved.

Covering the service during periods of sickness and leave can also be an issue. Whilst arrangements are in place to cover leave in some instances this can be problematic.

It would appear that neither of the 2 options above are 'guaranteed' in any way. It is clear that alternative arrangements should be considered to ensure that during periods of absence from the office by the manager (either short or long term) a degree of continuity in the service can be maintained and a full time and professional service offered.

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

However, whilst there is clearly a case to increase the staff within the service, there requires a justification for a full time post given the number of burials. Additional staff resources could also assist in addressing some of the other current issues within the service such as back-feeding of historical records and implementing income regenerating initiatives. The costs of the additional post could be offset by savings in relation to current cover arrangements and income generation and capacity development.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review current staffing arrangements with a view to create an additional post to support the Cemetery Manager. Review the existing SLA with West Herts Crematorium

Relationship with West Herts Crematorium (WHC)

The Council currently has a Service Level Agreement with WHC. Considerable technical expertise is available locally within WHC and there are opportunities that have been identified for closer working relationships with them to assist and support the Council in relation to the day to day management of the Cemetery Service.

Strategy Aim – *to look at how closer working relationships can be developed with WHC as well as wider management opportunities for a more comprehensive service at the Council run facilities.*

A good and healthy working relationship exists between West Herts Crematorium and the Watford cemeteries service. However, both areas are distinctly different with skills and background in cremation and burial services respectively.

At present, the manager at West Herts Crematorium is regularly available to offer help and support to the Council's cemeteries manager when asked. There is an extensive knowledge of dealing with the bereaved between both areas.

However, the service level agreement currently in place to provide cover when required by WHC to Watford Cemeteries is neither robust nor ideal in its current format.

The manager at WHC provides the cover when requested and if available, unfortunately this is not always convenient, particularly when looking to cover short notice sickness, and it has been required to alter working arrangements at WHC in order to accommodate Watford cemeteries requests.

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When the manager is absent from WHC there is a need to ensure adequate cover in place at the crematorium and often this can only cover part days for Watford. Whilst the WHC manager has more than adequate skills to deal with the bereaved on a day to day basis the current operational knowledge of cemeteries is limited, this is further compounded by not being regularly placed at NWC in order to gain more knowledge and experience about the service.

The current situation is unacceptable from both a customer service perspective and a business perspective for West Herts Crematorium and a more robust solution needs to be considered. As identified above an additional member of staff to work alongside the manager at NWC would help alleviate this issue with the current service level agreement remaining in place to provide cover in extreme circumstances.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review current staffing arrangements with a view to create an additional post to support the Cemetery Manager. Review the existing SLA with West Herts Crematorium



Improving Services for the Bereaved in Watford

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Hours of Opening

Current opening hours for the cemetery are:-

<i>Month</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Close</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>Open</i>	<i>Close</i>
<i>January</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>	<i>July</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>
<i>February</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>	<i>August</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>
<i>March</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>6pm</i>	<i>September</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>
<i>April</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>	<i>October</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>6pm</i>
<i>May</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>7pm</i>	<i>November</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>
<i>June</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>8pm</i>	<i>December</i>	<i>9am</i>	<i>4pm</i>

Cemetery office opening times are currently between 9.30am to 2.30pm from Monday to Friday. However, office opening hours do not reflect cemetery opening hours and the Cemetery manager as a lone worker often has to balance administration work, taking bookings, attending funerals as well as the needs and availability to members of the public and funeral directors. Informal feedback has indicated that the office opening hours are not long enough and need to be reassessed. The manager is in the office from 7.30 – 3.00 daily and often sees customers outside office opening times. Calls can also come into the office out of office opening times. Cemetery staff from Veolia are on site from 7.30 am and the manager uses that time to ensure graves are picked and ready for digging before the first burial which can be at 10.00am.

Strategy Aim – to assess current opening hours against the needs of cemetery users and propose hours of opening based on local benchmarking, best practice and feedback from the local community.

It is not unusual for cemetery grounds opening times to vary from the cemetery office opening times around the UK. It is generally accepted that during the summer and lighter evenings cemeteries should remain open for longer hours for the benefit of visitors, it is not however necessarily cost effective or essential that the administration and enquiries office remains open for the same hours.

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In Watford there is only one office available which is located at North Watford Cemetery. There was an additional office located at Vicarage Road Cemetery however this was closed and converted back to living accommodation some years ago as a result of the cemetery now being full.

The office at North Watford Cemetery opens to the public between the hours of 9:30 am until 2:30 pm Monday to Friday. In addition to this due to the lone worker issue at this site the office can be closed for other periods of time during these hours.

The opening hours are acceptable however not ideal. It could be very frustrating for visitors who have travelled from far away to visit to find the enquiries office closed when they arrive. In addition to this, local funeral directors are restricted as to when they can ring to book funerals.

The manager works between the hours of 7:30 am and 3:00 pm Monday to Friday and often deals with phone calls and visitors after these hours. This would indicate a need for longer opening times. Consultation with key service users such as funeral directors, religious groups, visitors and memorial masons have indicated more appropriate opening hours would be preferred.

A viable option is to extend the office opening hours to something more traditional such as 9:00 am – 5:00 pm Monday to Friday and amend working arrangements or incorporate additional staffing resources to cover the period.

It should be further reviewed if there is a need for the manager to start at 7:30 a.m. Whilst time is required to undertake administrative work and liaise with grave digging staff this could be done at a later time in the day providing that the office is manned for public enquires and to receive telephone calls.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review current staffing arrangements with a view to create an additional post to support the Cemetery Manager. Review the existing SLA with West Herts Crematorium; and
- ❖ Restructure the existing service and review opening times. Consult and identify needs of service users.

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The Visitor Experience

The perception of the cemetery to visitors on arrival is very important. First impressions do count. When visitors arrive at North Watford Cemetery, they park in a small car park by the Cemetery Lodge / Office. The Cemetery office is based in the main Cemetery Lodge where the Cemetery Manager lives. The office is however perceived to be dated and old-fashioned. It does not appear especially welcoming and as a reception, does not function well.

Strategy Aim – *to review the current office environment / reception area and make recommendations for improvements to enable a more welcoming environment for customers and clients.*

The current entrance to North Watford Cemetery is very welcoming and signage at the entrance is of a high quality and clear to read. Toilets are available to the left, with the office to the right and car parking is clearly signed. The entrance is nicely landscaped and the high quality of maintenance apparent throughout the site starts here. On entering the office, it is clear that the reception takes the form of a previous room of the cemetery lodge. Again this is not uncommon around the country and whilst it does not offer perhaps the best perception of a site, it does serve its purpose as being a point of contact for the public and is better than no office on site at all.

The office is of a good size but there is limited space for people to wait to be seen or any sort of private area which may be required to deal with some more emotional visitors. Most of the records pertaining to the service are stored within this office against the walls in fire proof safes; however, it would appear some other non-statutory records are stored elsewhere.

It is essential to stress that Cemetery Records are covered under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 Article 9 which states:

(1) *A burial authority shall maintain a plan showing and allocating distinctive numbers to—*

(a) all graves or vaults in which burials are made after the coming into operation of this order or are known to have been made before that event; and

(b) the grave spaces subject to the specified rights.

(2) *A burial authority shall also maintain records, by reference to the numbers in the plan, of—*

(a) the burials made after the coming into operation of this order in any graves or vaults; and

(b) the specified rights existing in any graves or vaults, or grave spaces, and the names of the grantees thereof as recorded in the register maintained under Part II of Schedule 2 or in the registers described in paragraph 2(b) of that Part.

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The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 is also clear as to how records should be stored under article 12 which reads:

The following, namely—

- *the plan maintained under article 9(1);*
- *the records maintained under article 9(2);*
- *the register of burials maintained under article 11(1);*
- *any register of burials in the cemetery maintained before the coming into operation of this order;*
- *the record of disinterments maintained under article 11(5);*
- *the register maintained under Part II of Schedule 2;*
- *the registers described in paragraph 2(b) of the said Part II; and*
- *the records of memorials made and kept under paragraph 16 of Schedule 3, shall be stored so as to preserve them from loss or damage and be in the charge of the officer of the burial authority appointed for that purpose.*

The storage of the records in the fire proof safe is good and compliant, however site plans are not protected in the same way and consideration should be given to this issue urgently.

The reception area is not as welcoming as would perhaps be wanted by the service. There are only two real options to improve the current office and reception area.

Option ONE – Refurbish to a modern standard and ensure that adequate storage is provided for all required items and avoid keeping boxes etc on top of safes and cupboards. Whilst refurbishment would make the area more welcoming, space is clearly the issue and therefore option two below should be seriously considered.

Option TWO – Extend the current office area to the left hand side into the garden of the tied accommodation. This could provide an ample storage area for all of the records, plans and other necessary office supplies. This would free up the existing office to be refurbished as a much more attractive reception area, which would have enough space to provide a small seating/waiting area for families and or a private interview area.

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There is no available waiting area for families congregating before a funeral service, whilst the office is not currently suitable to offer this, a mourners' shelter could be considered to be placed in the corner of the car park close to the office and main entrance as a designated waiting area for those attending funerals. A covered wooden structure would suffice with bench type seating underneath larger enough to provide a waiting area for up to 20 mourners. This would be relatively inexpensive to provide and provides an enhanced service for visitors.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review office layout and consider extending the building to provide a more adequate storage space for records;
- ❖ Undertake a Risk Assessment of the office space and design a more inviting area that also protects the staff from any potential health and safety issues and disregard the use of the door to the manager's accommodation for this purpose; and
- ❖ Redecorate and modernise the office and reception area.

ICT, Records Management & Administration

At present, the Cemetery Manager uses the Gower Cemetery Management Software which is backed up locally at North Watford Cemetery by the Cemetery Manager. The current system is not linked into the Council's main frame data storage system. Many records are also stored at the cemetery as old paper records and require digitising. They are currently stored in a nearby building.

Strategy Aim – *To assess current ICT provision and make recommendations for upgrading the system, backing up and records management.*

North Watford Cemetery has the Epilog system provided by Gower as its electronic administration system. The Gower system is used for the storage of records and recording of bookings, however a manual diary is also used and the information transferred across. All records dating back to the late 1990's are held on the computer system and the index data which consists of the name and date of death of the deceased for all other graves has been back fed into the system. However, it is not known if all of this data is accurate. The system also holds details of the graves at Vicarage Road Cemetery including the basic indexing data.

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Not all of the historical records have been completely back-fed into the computerised system. This is work that should be considered which would not only provide a more robust record keeping system but could also in time allow for income generation through making the records available online whereby charges could be made for accessing the information either directly or in partnership with a commercial company who deal with family history and death records.

It is of concern that the Gower system is only backed up locally. Whilst it is not essential that the Gower system link to the Councils mainframe it would provide a much better failsafe if the records held on the system were backed up remotely and centrally at an alternative location. Connectivity may be an issue and options need to be discussed with the Councils own ICT team and Gower around the best options available.

Options such as remote bookings available out of hours could be considered to provide a better service to local funeral directors and families. At present if a death occurs on a Friday after 3:00 pm no time can be arranged for a burial until 9:30 am at the earliest on the following Monday. An online system would help but needs to be well managed by the staff.

Digitising of plans also needs to be considered. Gower do provide a mapping option to their Epilog system (Epic) and enquiries should be made as to this being integrated with the current operating system. This would not only provide a robust back up of the cemetery plans but also provides additional data that can be utilised by both staff and visitors much easier than photocopying existing section plans.

The Gower system is not used as the only diary for the booking of funerals and a manual diary is utilised. This does offer the manager flexibility to offer times suited to the funeral director however a more structured diary with set times for burials would allow increased booking provision.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Discuss the current computerised administration package with the supplier and explore all options available (including market testing of new products) for improving its functionality and usage;
- ❖ Assess and carry out an audit of financial processes carried out at the cemetery, evaluating current processes and highlighting efficiencies or alternatives in relation to administration; and
- ❖ Digitising records and exploring income generation opportunities.

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Lone Working Policy

The Cemetery Manager currently works at the cemetery primarily as a lone worker. Although the office is based within the manager's residence and Grounds Maintenance operatives are on site daily, the lone working policy for this staff member needs to be reviewed.

Strategy Aim – *To assess the requirements for a lone working policy but also take into account public accessibility, design of the reception and staffing / cover issues as highlighted previously.*

As a lone worker the manager is in a vulnerable position in the office should they have to deal with an irate or upset member of the public which can occur when they are affected by grief.

No significant incidents have occurred to date. The manager has access through a door directly back into their home which is kept open whilst alone in the office. This could be utilised in the event of an unpleasant situation arising. The manager is also partly protected by a long desk however this has no screen and would be relatively easy to move.

In terms of access out of the office should the main door be blocked the only option is through the exit into the house to the left. An issue does arise however should the manager be on leave or sickness as this door would then be unavailable and whoever is in the office to provide cover is effectively trapped from exiting the office should the need arise.

There also appears to be no sort of personal alarm system in place to alert anyone else of a problem. There are grounds staff on site employed by Veolia however they are not based in the office but do call in throughout the day.

A review of the layout of the office needs to be completed and should the decision be taken to refurbish and/or extend the final design should consider the health and safety of the staff and in particular acknowledge that staff do have to work alone at this site.

Action Plan

- ❖ Undertake a Risk Assessment of the office space and design a more inviting area that also protects the staff from any potential health and safety issues and disregard the use of the door to the manager's accommodation for this purpose; and
- ❖ Implement an Action Plan derived from the analysis of the risk assessment.

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Income Opportunities

The Council derives income from the cemetery service in relation to a range of burial services but with more people turning to cremation, this income stream is under pressure. Charges were recently significantly increased in 2011 but are now in line with average costs elsewhere in Hertfordshire and including local cemeteries at Carpenders Park run for Harrow and Brent. Charges are however still significantly cheaper than most of the London Boroughs.

***Strategy Aim** – to assess all current income opportunities, pricing structures and any further opportunities for deriving income e.g. family history searches are currently not charged for and provided by the cemetery manager free of charge but take up some time.*

The main sources of income for the service are derived from the sale of Exclusive Rights of Burials and Interment Fees. Other income is received in the form of permit fees for the permission to erect memorials on grave spaces.

North Watford Cemetery is an attractively and well laid out site and does have the opportunity to provide additional services which could attract a charge. Vicarage Road Cemetery has more limited options given the lack of space within the site but there are still options to consider.

There are no other options for cremated remains except burial or scattering on a grave. Consideration should be given to the provision of **above ground niches** for cremated remains, there are various suitable locations around the site and also at Vicarage Road Cemetery that could be utilised. Modern niches can accommodate a large number of remains within a very small area and further research should be undertaken and invite suppliers to look at the site and provide ideas and costs. Clearly a large number of residents choose cremation and would utilise the services of West Herts Crematorium, however they also only have a limited number of memorial options and it would appear that there is a relevant market in the area for alternative options.

There is a large grassed area at the far end of the car park which could potentially be landscaped into a formal garden of remembrance providing a range of memorial options.

Benches could also be provided with **dedicated memorial plaques** on 10 year leases to provide a sustainable income stream. There are some beautiful areas within North Watford Cemetery which would be ideal to place dedicated seating areas which could attract a charge.

Tree dedication schemes could also easily be introduced by using current tree stock and planting new trees in designated areas. A plaque on a post in front of the tree could be provided again on a lease basis for a fixed fee.

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It is essential to consider however that the above ideas will only succeed if they are effectively marketed to both the public and funeral directors. It should also be noted that at present a number of the options above including that of Columbaria Niches for the housing of cremated remains is not offered at West Herts Crematorium.

The current price list details a charge for **searching records** and providing an extract which is £35.00. Not everyone will require an extract and some family history firms may be profiting from NWC records by undertaking research on behalf of paying clients.

A reasonable charge could be introduced for the searching of records and provision of information as several hundred searches are carried out each year by the manager. In the main this information is provided by either email or post, however a charge should be decided on based on the amount of time on average the manager spends undertaking this task.

Grave maintenance schemes could be introduced however this would be dependent on available staff resources from Veolia to carry out additional works to individual graves. This could include a range of chargeable services perhaps grouped into Bronze, Silver and Gold services and would range from the basic of a monthly wash down of the memorial, removal of weeds through to additional mowing/weeding, placing fresh flowers on a grave space on specific dates and a photograph sent to the grave owner.

At the entrance to North Watford Cemetery on the left hand side there are public toilets and a small office/mess room currently utilised by staff of Veolia (Park Rangers) however these staff are not connected to the Cemetery Service. This building is in a prime location to offer ancillary services to the bereaved such as a **florist**. Exploratory work should be undertaken with local businesses to gauge interest in opening a florist at this site.

The Authority sells the exclusive Right of Burial for new graves for a fixed period of time. An option to consider is to use these existing sales to look to both generate income and keep in touch with grave owners (which is particularly useful when dealing with memorial safety issues). A simple exercise of sending out a standard letter to grave owners after a period of 5 years offering to **extend the lease period** for a further 5 years for a fixed fee could be considered. This letter could also be used to inform service users of any changes or events connected to the cemetery and assist with longer term marketing and build on improving customer relationships.

There are clearly a number of options to be considered that could generate additional income for the service but they will require effective marketing and initial investment for them to be a success.

With the increase in cremation as a choice for the bereaved Watford Borough Council will look at how it can generate income from these families by offering high quality final resting places for cremated remains in local cemeteries.

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Meet with industry suppliers to discuss the provision of new memorialisation in particular columbaria niches at both sites and consider development of a formal memorial garden near to the car park and entrance of the site at North Watford Cemetery;
- ❖ Review current memorials and seek to generate income from existing infrastructure through items such as benches and trees;
- ❖ Market the building opposite the main entrance to North Watford Cemetery as a potential business premises; and
- ❖ Maintain regular reviews and benchmarking of other council charges and establish fees & charges that assist in managing the demand from non-residents and recover costs of the service.

Updating of Regulations for the Management of Cemeteries

A number of regulations exist for the management of cemeteries in Watford that were adopted many years ago. An example would be the acceptable height of memorial stones which is no longer in line with national ICCM guidance. The adoption of these regulations was some years previously but with no apparent date as to when they became policy. They require a complete review and new policy guidelines re-written in line with current national policy.

Strategy Aim – *to assess current Regulations and update in accordance with ICCM guidelines.*

It is not clear when the current regulations for Watford Cemeteries were published however it is recommended that a complete re-draft be considered to ensure they are fully up to date.

The inclusion of any regulation should be justified and its purpose clearly stated within the regulations. Best practice is also to undertake a thorough review of cemetery regulations every 3 years to ensure that they remain current and fit for purpose.

The current regulations are in need of a review as in some instances could be seen to be unenforceable or overly restrictive with no justification. They also do not take into account current needs of the bereaved or any modern practices, it is therefore recommended that new regulations are prepared and introduced for the effective management of the service.

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Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review the current regulations and review in line with those drafted and contained as Appendix 1 of the ICCM report. Consult on revised regulations.

Memorial Safety

The issue around safety of memorials has been ongoing since the 1990's when it was discovered that in many cemeteries throughout the UK fixing methods were inconsistent and in some cases very poor which led to memorials becoming dangerous.

Unfortunately, there are many reported cases of accidents due to unsafe memorials resulting in injuries but more concerning is that a number of deaths have occurred in cemeteries around the UK due to dangerous memorials falling on children and adults, most recently a death of an 8 year old boy occurred in a Glasgow cemetery in May 2015.

The Council and Veolia need to ensure the management of our memorials safely and in line with current best practice. The ICCM policy document on the Management of Memorials will be adopted by the Council and a regular memorial inspection scheme implemented to ensure every memorial is inspected once every 5 years. To compliment this policy, the ICCM do provide training to cemetery staff around memorial safety and how to undertake testing and recording under current best practice. This will provide an ideal opportunity for relevant staff to make progress with their memorial safety programme and the workshop will ensure that all the staff involved will be suitably trained and competent in the work they are asked to carry out.

In addition to the above and should new regulations be introduced the Council will consider a suitable registration scheme for memorial masons or adopt the national register provided by the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) to ensure future compliance with industry best practice in the fixing of new memorials in the future.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review the current regulations and review in line with those drafted and contained as Appendix 1 of the ICCM report. Consult on revised regulations; and

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- ❖ Ensure all topple testing is up to date and carried out on a regular basis.

Addressing Historic Non-Compliance of Regulations

Enforcing regulations in cemeteries is never an easy task due to the sensitivity and emotion attached to such matters. The Council must therefore ensure that any new regulations are clear to understand by both the public and Elected Members.

In order to be fair and reasonable it is recommended that we agree a policy on how to deal with any unauthorised items such as memorials that are currently within the sites from this point forward and once the new regulations are implemented.

A sensitive approach is recommended and this would be to '**draw a line in the sand**' and enforce the new regulations from the date of implementation only. There are of course potential issues with this approach with some users feeling they are being treated unfairly as they may not be permitted options that others using the service are already afforded. In order to counter this the new regulations will include a policy on how to deal with historical issues. An effective policy to consider is to leave any unauthorised items in situ and only deal with them when they become neglected after which time the Authority will photograph the grave, remove all unauthorised items and reinstate the grave back to the standard of the new regulations which would then be subject to those controls in the future. This action will be publicised before implementation to ensure that all cemetery users are aware of the Council's stance.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review the current regulations and review in line with those drafted and contained as Appendix 1 of the ICCM report. Consult on revised regulations; and
- ❖ Devise and implement a policy on non-compliance.

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Muslim and other Faith Burials (Weekend and Bank Holiday Burials)

There are two issues that require considering. **1)** the lack of burial space at North Watford Cemetery as described above and **2)** the current lack of burials at weekends and bank holidays. An assessment was made in 2013 for out of hours burials and associated issues in relation to cover, demand, costs and opportunities. As the demand was so low and costs prohibitive, this was not pursued. The local Muslim community have once again asked the Council to consider opportunities for out of hours burials and how this could well be provided in Watford.

***Strategy Aim** - to assess what opportunities there may be for providing such a service, cost and logistical issues, and local demand. The demand is currently very low and there are alternatives locally but this needs reviewing in line with the increased population growth of other sectors.*

It is essential to remember that the bereaved will have various religious and cultural differences and it is the duty of the Local Authority to take all reasonable steps to accommodate those needs in the provision of its service.

At present a burial can usually be accommodated at North Watford cemetery within 24 hours Monday to Friday however only limited provision is offered for Saturday mornings providing the booking is made before noon the previous day and Veolia / WBC staff are available.

There are a number of issues that will be considered to provide an enhanced burial service outside of the current usual working hours to include weekends and bank holidays. Consultation will be essential in developing this option.

Standard Requirements for an Enhanced Out of Hours Burial Service

In order for a burial to take place the death must first be registered with the Registrars of Births Deaths and Marriages in the District where the death occurred. This is a legal requirement under Section 15 of the Births and Deaths Registration Act 1953.

As this process must be completed before burial the Registration Service must be available at weekends and Bank Holidays to carry out the statutory registration process. In addition to this it is usual at Watford for 2 gravediggers and the Cemetery Manager to attend all funerals.

In order to provide an out of hours service Watford Borough Council would need to implement a standby system every weekend and for bank holidays. It is arguable however whether religious holidays such as Christmas Day, Good Friday and Easter Sunday should be included in any agreement.

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Standby costs alone would be **significant**, and in addition to this overtime costs would be incurred when staff are called out.

The Registration service must also be included in future consultation to ensure they are available to provide the required paperwork outside of normal office hours.

Cemetery users should also be consulted on the provision of extended burial times covering weekends. It should be remembered that for many Sundays are a traditional day to visit loved ones' graves and other cemetery users may raise concerns about any changes to the current permitted burial times.

Service Demand

Burial Figures for North Watford Cemetery are detailed below which shows around a fifth of all burials taking place at the site are for the Muslim community. It is known that there are a number of Muslim sects who use the facility, however for the purposes of this report total Muslim numbers have been used including the burial of children to ensure a complete picture is shown.

Year	No. of Full Burials	No. of Muslim Burials	% of Muslim Burials
2010	175	38	21%
2011	144	28	19%
2012	152	26	17%
2013	169	39	23%
2014	166	41	24%

5 Year Average	160 per year	34 per year (22 Adults 12 Children)	20%
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The above table shows demand for the service to be around 20% of all burials carried out at North Watford Cemetery to be for the Muslim Community, however of those only 9 have been arranged for a Saturday over the last 5 years. The trend however is increasing and in 2014 almost a quarter of all funerals were for the Muslim community.

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Whilst there is a clear demand to provide a service for the Muslim Community the number of burials undertaken at weekends as a percentage of total Muslim burials is only 5% of all deaths. It is not clear from the data available whether any requests for weekend burials over the last 5 years have been declined due to operational reasons or regulations.

The average number of Muslim burials is currently 34 per year, it is clearly impossible to state exactly how many funerals will be required at weekends throughout the course of a whole year. The formula to offer a best estimate would be $34 \text{ deaths} \div 12 \text{ months} = 3 \text{ funerals per month}$. It would therefore be a safe estimate to assume at least one of those 3 would require a weekend funeral.

Cost vs Demand

There are potentially significant costs issues associated with the Council providing an weekend and bank holiday service and of course operational and staff resources to also consider. Engagement with a number of neighbouring authorities has already taken place; the results show a varying range of service levels being provided and a range of costs. However it should be noted that it does not appear that there is a 'perfect solution' already in place that could be easily adopted by Watford Borough Council and the Council has reviewed the results of this exercise together with the projected costs, resource implications and demand for the service in relation to this 10 year strategy.

The Council has considered allowing the Muslim community to manage their own burials entirely, but only on the same basis as currently is carried out in St. Albans where the "Gardens of Peace" currently manages out of hours burials on behalf of the council. They are a Registered Charity which operates a cemetery for all sections of the Muslim community based in Ilford but manages the out of hours service in St. Albans in partnership with the Council. It is important to note that this option would require the community to ensure that they comply fully with all relevant burial legislation and the processes set out by the Gardens of Peace.

Spatial Demand

There is also a general pressure on suitable burial space for all denominations and groups throughout the Watford area so whilst this is a significant issue for the Council it forms the basis for an overall strategy to identify burial land in general but does not preclude the fact that some existing areas of land are running out faster than others and so sourcing a viable alternative for the Muslim community remains paramount and is a priority.

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Action Plan:-

- ❖ Deliver a weekend and bank holidays service for the Muslim community and to work in partnership with the Gardens of Peace to deliver the service based on recipients covering the cost of the service; and
- ❖ Incorporate demand for Muslim burial space into the audit of burial space availability to the planning of alternative site proposals for the future. .



Improving Services for the Bereaved in Watford

Part 2 – Perception

Consultation and Engagement – identifying service demands

Watford Borough Council has an excellent track record of local community engagement and consultation, yet there had been no recent consultation with cemetery users, clients, funeral directors or the bereaved in recent years. Informal feedback has been received over the years that the service is a good service but issues arise over lack of availability, opening hours, Muslim burials availability etc. In 2010/11 Policy Development Scrutiny Committee set up a Task Group to review the services for the deceased. The Task Group met and produced a final report in November 2010, which was then considered by Cabinet at its meeting in December 2010. An action plan was produced and Policy Development Scrutiny Committee reviewed the action plan and asked for a further update in a year. Since then, no further engagement had occurred especially with users, direct and indirect until the 2015 review.

Strategy Aim – to develop a consultation and engagement plan with users, partners, faith groups, cemetery visitors to ascertain issues and feedback in relation to the cemetery service.

At present, no formal stakeholder groups exist connected to the Cemeteries service. Whilst there are informal groups and clear good working relationships are in place between management and funeral directors and memorial masons these relationships should be formalised and regular (perhaps twice yearly) meetings should be arranged to both gauge views and opinions of stakeholders and discuss future plans, changes and new ideas for the service.

This form of customer engagement can be extremely useful and beneficial to the service and pave the way for much improved relationships with regular service users.

Customer feedback from the bereaved is also important and should be sought through questionnaires soon after the funeral has taken place. This will help identify any perceived shortfalls in the service and allow them to be addressed quickly and allow regular improvements to the service.

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Action Plan:-

- ❖ Restructure the existing service and review opening times. Consult and identify needs of service users; and
- ❖ Develop a consultation and engagement plan to include Funeral Directors as well as carry out regular user surveys.

Benchmarking

Watford has traditionally managed cemeteries as a standalone service without any formal benchmarking although more informal benchmarking is carried out locally in relation to pricing structures.

Strategy Aim – To look at local, regional and national benchmarking in relation to pricing, quality and overall provision of service, grounds maintenance and make recommendations.

At present it is not possible to benchmark the service against anything other than the Charter for the Bereaved of which Watford Borough Council is a member.

Watford offers a Bronze level service based on the national scoring of the Charter for the Bereaved which is completed annually by Charter Members. There are 3 levels based on the score achieved, these being bronze, silver and gold.

The Charter is a good benchmarking tool and does allow for continuous improvement to the service by introducing new ideas and services and simply turning a No into a Yes on the annual questionnaire. The service has increased its score of previous years by making regular changes, this should continue and the service should challenge itself to achieve a silver level within the next 2 years.

No other benchmarking is regularly undertaken with the exception of checking fees and charges with neighbouring Authorities. With the exception of the Charter for the Bereaved the only other national benchmarking tool which could help the service is the APSE benchmarking service for cemeteries and crematoria. Although the annual return is quite detailed to complete the information returned can be extremely valuable and also puts the service into a benchmarking group which would allow for the sharing of good practice and ideas. In addition to this staff should be encouraged to attend regular ICCM Branch Meetings and events such as the ICCM Learning Convention to network and learn about new trends and ideas.

The formation of a Local Benchmarking group should be considered initially involving the Bereavement Service/Cemetery Managers of the Authorities who form the management committee of West Herts Crematorium namely:

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- Dacorum Borough Council;
- Hertsmere Borough Council;
- St Albans City & District Council;
- Three Rivers District Council;
- Watford Borough Council; and
- West Herts Crematorium.

An agreed benchmarking template could be completed annually to compare service standards, costs and income and the group work together to look at ways to collectively improve. Quarterly meetings should be sufficient for the group to be effective and it may be surprising how useful the regular sharing of knowledge and experiences can be.

There are many benefits of establishing a local group in addition to sharing useful local data the benchmarking group can work effectively together to explore improved and efficient ways of working and look to identify collective opportunities that benefit all customers and service users. This may include items such as standardisation of application forms, memorial regulations, memorial safety policies and registration schemes.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Establish a local benchmarking group with neighbouring Authorities; and
- ❖ Aim to achieve Chartered for the Bereaved Silver standard by 2018

Marketing of Cemeteries

Although signage at both cemeteries is now excellent, no publicity or marketing material exists for the cemeteries covering what is on offer, service provided, who actually provides it, costs, contact details. This is in stark contrast with the nearby West Herts Crematorium.

Strategy Aim – *Assess opportunities for the marketing of the cemetery service in relation to the development of a brochure, social media, internet, advertising and other potential opportunities.*

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As detailed above in the section covering income opportunities marketing of the service and the services offered is key to raising its profile and generating additional income.

West Herts Crematorium is an excellent example of how to produce good marketing material with glossy brochures, neatly drawn maps, information and application forms and lots of good quality information all with a specific corporate brand and logo which is easily recognisable. Quality information like this promotes a quality service and is clearly the way Watford need to go in marketing its cemetery services.

A brochure (including a detailed and professionally drawn map) promoting the services offered must be considered and include contact and ownership details about the sites as well as information around the types of services and facilities available, this would be essential should the Council decide to expand its current provision of services and consider provision of new memorial options, green burials or columbaria. The internet should also be used and dependent on local IT policy consideration should be given to a dedicated web page for the service. This could provide extensive information about the service, memorial options, price lists, forms and maps and be regularly updated to inform service users of any changes or upcoming events.

As detailed earlier once all of the historical records are back-fed onto the computer system links through the cemetery website could be used to access records and generate income. The service will also consider marketing and promoting itself through holding regular events such as an annual Christmas Memorial service or an open air memorial service during the summer. These could be sponsored by a Local Funeral Director or Memorial Mason and a collection made to be given to a local charity. Involving the Mayor at such events will help raise the profile of the service significantly. Consideration should also be given to working more with the local community and the service should look to assist with the formation of a Friends group, this is likely to be particularly beneficial to Vicarage Road Cemetery given its age and amount of local history it contains. A properly constituted friends group can seek charitable donations and grant funding to carry out repairs and improvements to sites and preserve local history. In the current period of austerity within local government seeking additional income sources to assist with improvements and preservation is sensible as is generating local public interest in the sites.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Improved marketing of the service through a rebranding exercise and modernisation of all produced literature, application forms and information for the public. Explore option of a dedicated cemeteries web page;
- ❖ Develop income stream through using historical records to provide family history research information as well as accessing potential funding through Friends groups, community groups or similar.

Part 3 – Infrastructure and Environment

Quality of the grounds and cemetery as a Green space

The grounds of both cemeteries are maintained by Veolia having outsourced the service in July 2013. This covers all works related to grounds maintenance including grass cutting, shrub maintenance, weed control, tree management, litter management and clearance as well as grave digging / backfilling. The quality of the open space at North Watford Cemetery and Vicarage Road Cemetery is generally very good with recent improvements to the entrances, external works of both chapels, car parking and signage. However, there are no long term development plans for improving the grounds – they are simply maintained to an agreed standard. North Watford Cemetery has the potential for further improvements and could well satisfy Green Flag Award standards for entry to the award. Vicarage Road Cemetery may also have the potential for a future HLF Parks for People bid as it has considerable local historical interest.

Strategy Aim – *to review the quality of the spaces and grounds maintenance specification against current standards and as part of any potential masterplan development, highlight opportunities for improvements. To also review and challenge the current practices related to grave digging and backfilling and ensuring full compliance with agreed good practice.*

The grounds maintenance at both sites is extremely good and of a very high standard. Grass is well maintained throughout both sites and there was no evidence of overgrown areas, poorly managed shrubberies or litter problems.

The maintenance specification provided to Veolia (Document P&OS16 – Cemeteries) has already been reviewed. The document is concise and covers general requirements for grave digging, backfilling and exhumation all of which are well covered and clearly set out in the specification.

The management of the grounds maintenance does not appear to be an issue given the high standards already at the site.

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Green Flag Awards

Watford Borough Council already has a good track record in managing its parks and open spaces with Green Flag awards at 6 of its parks awarded in 2015. The cemeteries should be viewed as just as an important open space as the towns parks and achieving a green flag not only recognises the hard work and efforts of the staff working at the site but also raises the profile of the site and provides a mechanism to introduce a continuous method of improvement for the site.

All Green Flag sites are judged on 8 key criteria and a number of factors contribute to each of these headings as detailed below:



- **A Welcoming Place**
- **Healthy, Safe and Secure**
- **Clean and Well Maintained**
- **Sustainability (including recycling)**
- **Conservation and Heritage**
- **Community Involvement**
- **Marketing**
- **Management**



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Cemeteries are still a fairly recent addition to the Green Flag process and the number of sites appears to grow on an annual basis. There are a number of benefits to achieving this nationally recognised award most notably the fact that it recognises the hard work and dedication of staff at the site and also serves to raise the profile of the service.

In looking at the key criteria above it should be noted that Watford cemeteries are clearly already some way towards satisfying the criteria to achieve a further two Green Flags for its cemeteries in the future. Some work is required of course such as the preparation of a management plan or strategy, improved marketing and community involvement, however given that the Council has already achieved 6 awards there is clearly an in-house resource that should be utilised to assist the cemetery service achieve Green Flag status in the future.

This should form the basis of an improvement strategy for the cemetery service to not only seek Green Flag recognition but also to drive continuous improvement through the service over a longer period.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Look to generate interest with the local community with a view to establishing a Cemetery Friends Group;
- ❖ Hold and promote annual memorial services for all to attend. Suggest 1 summer and 1 winter event (Christmas);
- ❖ Explore options of additional income generating ideas through industry suppliers, Friends Groups and existing partners; and
- ❖ Review grounds and buildings maintenance specification to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the bereaved.

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Building Infrastructure

Both cemeteries have a number of buildings including occupied lodges, chapels, ancillary buildings and maintenance yards. Some have been improved whereas others require investment or possible alternative uses sought. The recent Property Review needs to be taken into consideration as part of the assessment of buildings at both cemeteries.

***Strategy Aim** – To assess all buildings in both cemeteries in relation to condition, usage and accessibility and take into account the wider recommendations of the Property Review and to make further recommendations based on the needs and operation of the cemetery service.*

Buildings at North Watford Cemetery

There are a total of 4 buildings at North Watford Cemetery all of which are in generally good condition externally. However, consideration should be given to improvements or alternative uses to some of these buildings.

- **Office & Living Accommodation (Main Entrance)**

It is not uncommon for cemetery lodges to continue to be occupied by operational staff and can be seen as a benefit to the service in terms of security whilst still generating an income through receiving an annual rent.

Information around the office has been covered in section 1 under the visitor experience and it is recommended that improvements are undertaken to make this more welcoming and consideration given to important areas such as records storage and security of staff working alone.

There is scope to extend the office to accommodate an improved store and would allow a complete remodelling of the main reception area. In addition to this consideration should be given to provide an external waiting area for mourners to gather under in advance of a funeral arriving.

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- **Toilets & Mess Room (Main Entrance)**

Opposite the main office at North Watford Cemetery is a building incorporating public toilets and a mess room utilised by staff from Veolia.

The toilets are currently adequate but consideration should be given to refurbishment in the near future and a review as to whether they satisfy current DDA requirements. The room between the toilets is currently utilised as a mess room and is used by Veolia staff however these staff are not connected to the cemetery service.

As stated previously, a better use of the building to be considered would be to offer a lease to an individual or a company to operate a cemetery related business from this building such as a florist or perhaps a memorial mason. Not only would this bring in a new income stream for the service from the lease but would further enhance the visitor experience at the site. Florists have successfully been opened at a number of sites around the UK generally by individuals looking to establish a new business. Not much space is required and the required infrastructure of water and electricity is already in place making this an excellent opportunity.

- **Mess Room & Operational Yard**

There is a small operational yard at North Watford Cemetery which is utilised by the staff contracted to Veolia. It provides adequate storage for plant and equipment and reasonable mess and toilet facilities for the staff. Security throughout the whole site is good given there is only a single entrance and the manager lives on site however the excavator whilst stored in the locked compound is not secured in a shed or container and a review of this should be considered if space allows.

- **Cemetery Chapel**

There is a burial chapel located in the centre of the site that is utilised for burial services. Externally it is attractive and well maintained and common of small burial chapels found in many cemeteries around the UK.

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Internally the building requires investment to bring it up to a more acceptable including a problem with the roof which appears to have water ingress and dated and ineffective electric heaters. There is a basic music system used to provide music at services however this is only a domestic CD player and consideration should be given to installing something more commercial.

Buildings at Vicarage Road Cemetery

- **Living Accommodation**

At the main entrance to the site there is a large well maintained property. This is utilised as a domestic property in the same way as that at North Watford Cemetery but does not have an enquiries office attached. The occupant is employed by Veolia and undertakes duties associated with the security of the site. No changes are planned here.

- **Toilets**

There are toilets located close to the main entrance of the site and are generally kept locked.

- **Cemetery Chapel**

The chapel located at Vicarage Road is similar in size and design to that at North Watford Cemetery. It is also well maintained and attractive and has recently been restored.

Internally it is basic with hard wooden seats in place and there does not appear to be music system. It is however clean and well lit from the large ornate Victorian windows. The only heating is the electric heaters placed at a high level (similar to those at North Watford Cemetery). Should areas of Vicarage Road cemetery be reused in the future then this chapel may become more frequently used, however at present it may be better suited to an alternative but cemetery related use.

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Action Plan:-

- ❖ Review grounds and buildings maintenance specification to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the bereaved.

Growth and Expansion Opportunities – The Need for Space and Green Burials

No new grave spaces are available at Vicarage Road Cemetery and there is now limited space left at North Watford Cemetery. Burial space is especially limited in relation to the Muslim section which has circa 2 years of space remaining. The Council has identified 1 potential site at Lower Paddock Road on the site of the former parks depot (under council ownership). There are also no current opportunities for Green Burials in Watford.

***Strategy Aim** – To assess the local need for Green Burials, assess the success elsewhere through localised benchmarking and review the proposed alternative sites and scope for cemetery extensions, green burials and possible capacity. There is also a need to review how many years left there are at NWC based on current demand.*

Burial Space is a major issue facing Burial Authorities throughout the UK and Watford is no different. We have recognised that space is running out and we need to identify options for sites in the future. As of 1st January 2011 records state that North Watford Cemetery had 4 hectares of land available for burials. 4 hectares = approximately 9.8 acres. However, examining the site shows that only approximately 1 acre would appear to be currently available for immediate use. A thorough site survey needs to be undertaken to establish an exact current position in relation to available land and mapped onto the GIS system to assess exact availability.

From the data supplied and based on there being 1 acre of land available it has been calculated that there is currently around 12 years' worth of burials remaining at North Watford Cemetery based on current death rates and land usage. Calculations state that the figure could be 12 years however it is known that certain areas are unsuitable for burial and cannot be utilised, therefore the area available will be closer to **7- 9 years of space remaining**. At present the service is undertaking an average of 160 full burials per year this is made up of around 75 new graves and 85 re-opened graves.

The common formula to identify available burial space is:

- number of acres available (1) ÷ average number of annual burials (75) x number of graves per acre (900) = number of years available (12)

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If new grave spaces are set out as 9' x 4' (36 square foot) most cemeteries can accommodate around 900 graves in an acre of land to include paths and minor landscaping. Based on this assumption North Watford Cemetery currently has 12 years of burial space left in total, however some of the land area is known to be unsuitable for burial reducing that capacity to an estimated 7-9 years and consideration has also to be given for provision of land for different faiths such as the Muslim community.

Whilst 7-9 years may seem a considerable life span for the cemetery it is essential to be aware that establishing a new burial ground can take a considerable amount of time (3-4 years) due to the needs associated to satisfying the Environment Agency and gaining planning consent. Therefore, work needs to commence as soon as possible in looking to identify new ground and ensure it is reserved for future use or alternatively/additionally to examine ways to increase the capacity of the land to lengthen the period of availability such as grave re-use or policy restrictions on who can be accepted for burial, and charging policies to deter non-residents.

Grave Re-Use

The ICCM have previously undertaken a study of Vicarage Road Cemetery and recommended that grave re-use could be considered at this site either through legislation under the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 to reclaim graves where the rights have expired and have never been exercised. An alternative option being undertaken by other Authorities at present is to apply for consent to the local church diocese to exhumate remains from consecrated areas of burial. These remains can then be re-buried at the end of the row of the same section freeing up new space for burials. Whilst this can be sensitive consideration will be given to this option at Vicarage Road cemetery. There are also a number of practical considerations to be assessed here including accessibility and for grave digging.

New Cemetery Options

There is often a perception among residents that “there is never enough green space”, but when Watford assessed the amount of green space over a range of open space typologies (Parks & Gardens; Amenity Green Space; Natural Green Space; Outdoor Sports Facilities; Children and Young People; Cemeteries), as a town, Watford is very well endowed, and many of the wards have excellent provision of green space over a range of typologies. Some deficiencies do occur, especially with regards to natural green space, but overall, Watford is well provided for. However, accessibility is an issue for many and the Watford Green Spaces Strategy advocates adopting green infrastructure principles and developing a strategic green space network for the town. By setting standards of provision Watford can concentrate on those sites that are most important which need to be protected at all costs as well as continually enhanced.

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But there are a number of sites that are not performing well and may be deemed low quality and/or low value. Several sites fall into this category at present. There is a clear policy on how these sites should be treated; either enhancing the quality of these green spaces as long as it is possible to improve and enhance the value of them or if this is not possible, consider the space surplus to requirements in terms of its current use and consider alternative uses (which could include potential provision as cemetery space). However, this must be considered in the light of wider planning policies (Local Plan Part 2) such as the need to determine **other typology deficiencies** in the area within distance thresholds, whether enhancement is realistic and determine community value by local consultation.

Woodland and Natural Burial

Woodland and Natural Burial grounds have been operational in the UK since 1993 when the first area was opened in Carlisle as part of its existing cemetery. Since then the concept of woodland burial and associated services such as natural burial and meadowland burial has grown steadily in the UK resulting in both the private and public sector venturing into this market.

The basic concept is that the deceased is laid to rest in an existing woodland area, or a woodland is created around new burials and the site managed as a natural woodland area. The Council will visit providers in the area to gain their views and also look at the service provided by private sector organisations.

With the exception of Woodcock Hill Cemetery and Carpenders Park there appears to be no other provider in the area of woodland or natural burials.

It is essential that the Council establish early what type of woodland burial area it intends to provide.

Action Plan:-

- ❖ Explore woodland and natural burial options as well as assess opportunities for new formal sites in the Borough in the light of wider planning policies (Local Plan 2); and
- ❖ Review the previous ICCM report on grave reuse at Vicarage Road cemetery and undertake consultation on this issue.

Action Plan & Key Recommendations

No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
1.0		Prepare a comprehensive Cemetery Strategy document for the Cemetery Service based on the ICCM Cemetery Review of 2015.	CT	S	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An agreed direction of travel for the service • Allows prioritisation over the short, medium and long terms • Provides Corporate buy in to the modernisation and improvements to the service • Ability to plan and budget for required changes
2.0		Review current staffing arrangements with a view to create an additional post to support the Cemetery Manager. Review the existing SLA with West Herts Crematorium	CT / CMT	S	Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures a more robust and customer friendly service can be provided • Provide a constant office presence • Provides a more structured arrangement for cover in the

A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
						event of leave and sickness
3.0		Restructure the existing service and review opening times. Consult and identify needs of service users	CT / CMT	S	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved service provision • Provide more traditional 9-5 Service • Staff always available to deal with bookings/queries/phone calls
4.0		Review office layout and consider extending the building to provide a more adequate storage space for records	CT / CMT B&P	S,M	Capital budget Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attractive and welcoming environment • Improved compliance with statutory legislation

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
5.0		Undertake a Risk Assessment of the office space and design a more inviting area that also protects the staff from any potential health and safety issues and disregard the use of the door to the managers accommodation for this purpose	CMT B&P	S	Existing staff resource Revenue and capital budgets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attractive and welcoming environment • Improved compliance with statutory legislation • Safer working environment for staff
6.0		Redecorate and modernise the office and reception area	B&P	S	Capital budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More attractive and welcoming environment • Improved facilities for the bereaved
7.0		Discuss the current computerised administration package with the supplier and explore all options available (including market testing of new products) for improving its functionality and usage. Assess opportunities for digitising records and exploring income generation opportunities.	ICT / CMT	S	Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved data storage • Improved records management • Improved booking service • Ensure daily offsite data back up

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
8.0		Assess and carry out an audit of financial processes carried out at the cemetery, evaluating current processes and highlighting efficiencies or alternatives in relation to administration. Implement an Action Plan derived from the analysis of the risk assessment.	CMT	S	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved Service Provision
9.0		Meet with industry suppliers to discuss the provision of new memorialisation in particular columbaria niches at both sites and consider development of a formal memorial garden near to the car park and entrance of the site at North Watford Cemetery.	CMT Veolia	S,M	Capital budget Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income Generation Improved Service Provision Practical use of existing assets Use of otherwise redundant spaces in both cemeteries
10.0		Review current memorials and seek to generate income from existing infrastructure through items such as benches and trees	CMT Veolia	S	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income Generation Improved Service Provision Practical use of existing assets (benches, trees etc)

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
11.0		Look to provide improved waiting facilities for the bereaved through a mourners shelter near to the entrance of the site to allow public to wait in advance of a funeral cortege arriving	CMT	M	Existing staff resource Capital budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved public facilities
12.0		Market the building opposite the main entrance to North Watford Cemetery as a potential business premises	CT Legal Veolia	S, M	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Income Generation Improved Service Provision Practical use of existing assets
13.0		Review the current regulations and review in line with those drafted and contained as Appendix 1 of the ICCM report. Consult on revised regulations. Devise and implement a policy on non-compliance.	CT Legal	S	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Modernised regulations Improved Service Provision Better meeting needs of the Bereaved Establish a way forward to deal with historic issues of non conformity

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
14.0		Deliver a weekend and bank holidays service for the Muslim community and to work in partnership with the Gardens of Peace to deliver the service based on recipients covering the cost of the service;	CT / CMT Legal Veolia	S	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will provide an enhanced service to those who require funeral services at weekends Provides a fully transparent and costed option Allows for the Authority to decide how the costs should be attributed
15.0		Establish a local benchmarking group with neighbouring Authorities including maintaining regular reviews and benchmarking of other council charges and establish fees & charges that assist in managing the demand from non-residents and recover costs of the service.	CMT	S, M	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Share good practice Improved local working relationships Establish annual benchmarking data sets
16.0		Look to generate interest with the local community with a view to establishing a Cemetery Friends Group.	CMT	M	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates public interest in sites Can lead to securing grant funding

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
						for infrastructure improvements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community benefit
17.0		Develop a consultation and engagement plan to include Funeral Directors as well as carry out regular user surveys.	CMT	S	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community benefit
18.0		Review grounds and buildings maintenance specification to ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the bereaved	CT Veolia	L	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures regular review of costs Can make changes to meet new or future demands
19.0		Explore options of additional income generating ideas through industry suppliers, Friends Groups and existing partners;	CMT	M, L	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consult on the implementation of new goods and services with key stakeholders Explore options utilising existing partners (Veolia)

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish new memorial schemes and ideas from current industry suppliers
20.0		Improved marketing of the service through a rebranding exercise and modernisation of all produced literature, application forms and information for the public. Explore option of a dedicated cemeteries web microsite	CMT	S, M, L	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved customer experience Better accessibility to information Improved income opportunities
21.0		Develop income stream through using historical records to provide family history research information as well as accessing potential funding through Friends groups, community groups or similar.	CMT	M, L	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generate additional income through using existing records Opportunities to partner with existing specialist companies

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
22.0		Hold and promote annual memorial services for all to attend. Suggest 1 summer and 1 winter event (Christmas).	CMT Veolia	M, L	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Generates interest in the service Good local PR Opportunity to generate funds for local charities
23.0		<p>Explore woodland and natural burial options (at Lower Paddock Road Depot only) as well as assess opportunities for new and alternative sites in the Borough in line with the current Green Spaces Strategy and in line with wider planning policies (Local Plan 2). This will include re-assessment of existing green spaces and whether other typologies of open spaces could be re-designated as cemetery usage.</p> <p>Incorporate demand for Muslim burial space into the audit of burial space availability to the planning of alternative site</p>	CT DC	S,M	<p>Existing staff resource</p> <p>Capital budget if land purchased or developed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New burial option New Income stream

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No.	Corporate Aim	Action	*Who	S,M,L Priority	Resource Requirements	Outcomes and Benefits
		proposals for the future.				
24.0		Review the previous ICCM report on grave reuse at Vicarage Road cemetery and undertake consultation on this issue	CT Veolia	M, L,	Existing staff resource Revenue budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Potential to re-use old burial space
25.0		Consider options related to provision of land outside the Borough if options within the borough boundary are not successful.	CT	L	Capital budget if land purchased or developed	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New burial option
26.0		Aim to achieve Chartered for the Bereaved Silver standard by 2018	CMT	M	Existing staff resource	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good local PR Improved customer experience

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DEFINITIONS

CT –Client Team

Com – Communications Team

CMT – Cemetery Management Team

B&P – Buildings and Projects Team

DC – Development Control (Planning)

S – up to 24 months

M – 2 years to 5 years

L – 5 years to 10 years



A Cemetery Strategy for Watford Borough Council 2016-2026

For further information, please contact

Environmental Services Client Team

Corporate Strategy and Client Services

Watford Borough Council

Town Hall

Hempstead Road

Watford

WD17 3EX



PART A

Report to: Cabinet
Date of meeting: 8 February 2016
Report of: Head of Democracy & Governance
Title: Procurement of the e-procurement portal – exemption to contract procedure rules.

1.0 SUMMARY

- 1.1 The Council has been using the Delta eSourcing e-procurement portal since 2011. It has performed exceptionally well and that contract is being extended for a further five years. It is also now a legal requirement, under the Public Procurement Regulations 2015, that tenders must be sought electronically and the portal provides that full functionality.
- 1.2 The procurement portal is well known and well used by the council's supply chain and well promoted at local business events. Approx 50 users, staff and a few of our Consultants, have access to our side of the system across Watford BC and Three Rivers DC. It is used for all tender exercises carried out for both councils.
- 1.3 The Delta eSourcing database contains a vast amount of information, including copies of all documentation and audit trail data for all those tender exercises and is a significant resource.
- 1.4 In line with the Procedures, the approval is being reported to Cabinet.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That Cabinet notes the Approved Exemption to the Council's Procurement Procedures in relation to the e-procurement portal

Contact Officer:

For further information on this report please contact: Howard Hughes,
Corporate Procurement Manager, Democracy & Governance.
Telephone extension 8370 email: howard.hughes@watford.gov.uk

Report approved by: Carol Chen, Head of Democracy & Governance

3.0 DETAILED PROPOSAL

- 3.1 The Council has been using the Delta eSourcing e-procurement portal since 2011. It has performed exceptionally well. The existing contract with Delta was coming to an end.
- 3.2 Herts CC on behalf of Supply Hertfordshire chose to re-tender the software and selected a different supplier, In-Tend. Having attended the In-Tend training courses, made trial use of the software, discussed it with colleagues in other Herts councils and received a copy of an HCC audit report on the In-Tend system, the Procurement manager is of the opinion that the In-Tend system does not have the same functional characteristics and is certainly not as user friendly for staff or suppliers as the Delta system.
- 3.3 The Procurement Manager considered that a change of system was likely to give rise to a significant disruption to the service. It would have a higher gross cost including staff time and not offer an improved service. He therefore requested an exemption to the contract procedure rules to allow the existing contract with Delta eSourcing to be extended for a further 5 years.

This was approved by the Head of Democracy and Governance and the Managing Director and is now being reported to Cabinet for noting in accordance with the rules.

4.0 IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Financial

- 4.1.1 The WBC share of the cost of maintaining the hosted e-procurement portal is £2,000 p.a. which can be met from the existing procurement budget.
- 4.1.2 The Director of Finance comments that there are no specific financial implications.

4.2 Legal Issues (Monitoring Officer)

- 4.2.1 The Head of Democracy & Governance comments that the Contract Procurement Rules allow for an exemption to be made in exceptional circumstances. In light of the fact that the Council already has a contract in place with BiP Solutions Ltd to provide the Delta e-procurement portal it was deemed to be the most appropriate course of action to extend the contract.

4.3 Equalities

- 4.3.1 Not applicable in relation to this item.

4.4 Potential Risks

Potential Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Overall score
Potential suppliers challenge the Councils decision not to procure the supply using a competitive tendering procedure.	1	2	2

Those risks scoring 9 or above are considered significant and will need specific attention in project management. They will also be added to the service's Risk Register.

4.5 **Staffing**

4.5.1 There are no staffing implications from this report.

4.6 **Accommodation**

4.6.1 There are no accommodation implications from this report.

4.7 **Community Safety**

4.7.1 There are no community safety implications from this report.

4.8 **Sustainability**

4.8.1 There are no sustainability implications from this report.

Appendices

Appendix A Exemption Record Form showing an approval dated 19th January 2016

Appendix B An extract from Watford Borough Council's Contract Procedure Rules in relation to Exemptions.

Background Papers

No background papers were used in the preparation of this report.

File Reference

None

Approved Exemption Record Form

	Details
<p>Exemption category</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unforeseeable emergency • Exceptional Circumstances • Limited market • Prior approval 	<p>Exceptional Circumstances</p>
<p>Details / Circumstances / Explanation of why an exemption was required:</p>	<p>WBC has been using the Delta eSourcing e-procurement portal since 2011 and it has performed exceptionally well.</p> <p>It is well known by our supply chain and well promoted at local business events. Approx 50 users, staff and a few of our Consultants, have access to our side of the system across WBC and TRDC. It is used for all tender exercises carried out for both councils.</p> <p>The Delta eSourcing database contains a vast amount of information, including copies of all documentation and audit trail data for all those tender exercises and is a significant resource.</p> <p>Herts CC on behalf of Supply Hertfordshire chose to re-tender the software and selected a different supplier, In-Tend. I have attended the In-Tend training course, made trial use of the software, discussed it with colleagues in other Herts councils and have a copy of an HCC audit report on the In-Tend system. I have also discussed the merits of various portals with bidders and have generally received a more favourable view of the Delta system.</p> <p>Unfortunately the In-Tend system does not have the same functional characteristics and is certainly not as user friendly for staff or suppliers. I get the impression that it is a newer product under development.</p> <p>A change of system would be very disruptive to me and impact on other staff and all our tendering exercises. It is far less likely that other staff would use the In Tend system as it is not as intuitive as the Delta system.</p> <p>A lower price would apply by being a part of the Herts CC contract but the additional</p>

	<p>costs, including training, and disruptions to the service by changing would significantly exceed the option of remaining with Delta eSourcing.</p> <p>This has been discussed with TRDC (Phil King) who is fully supportive of the proposal to remain with Delta eSourcing.</p> <p>A change of system is likely to give rise to a significant disruption to the service. It would have a higher gross cost including staff time and not offer an improved service. An exemption is therefore requested to extend the existing contract with Delta eSourcing for a further 5 years.</p> <p>The In-Tend cost would £500 a year for each Council, WBC and TRDC, as the County pick up most of the cost and I assume they'd continue to do so.</p> <p>The £4,000 a year cost for Delta would be shared so £2,000 each.</p> <p>The WBC Procurement cost centre has sufficient provision to cover the WBC share without any variance.</p>
Approved by (Name and date):	C.Chen Head of Democracy and Governance 7.1.16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> MD HoS 	
Portfolio Holder informed (Name and Date):	
Date reported to Cabinet:	
Contract Title:	e-procurement Portal
Vendor / Contractor:	BiP Solutions / Delta eSourcing
Date Contract let:	Due now for period from April 2016
Term of Contract:	5 years
End date:	end March 2021
Total Value of Contract:	£4,000 per year shared 50 / 50 with TRDC for a 5 year contract.
WBC Contract Manager (Name and contact details):	Howard Hughes Corporate Procurement Manager
Comments / Other Information:	
Date entered onto Exemptions Register:	
Signed by Head of Service:	C.Chen

Approved Manny Lewis 19.1.16

Copies to: Contract File / Head of Service / Corporate Procurement Manager / Central Register of Exemptions

Central Register of Exemptions

The Audit Plan 2013/14 – “Procurement and Contract Management Baseline Assessment” Recommended: “We recommend that consideration should be given to maintaining a central record of waivers and exemptions that have been approved.”

The Council’s Contract Procedure Rules state:

Exemptions:

- Acquisition or disposal of Land:

These Rules do not apply to the acquisition or disposal of Land except where a lease or licence is granted as a part of a principal contract for other Works, Supplies or Services.

- Unforeseeable emergency:

Where exemption from these Rules is unavoidable due to an unforeseeable emergency involving immediate risk to persons or property or likely to give rise to major or serious disruption to the Council’s services, a Head of Service and the Managing Director may jointly approve an exemption. They must inform the relevant Portfolio Holder and make a report to the next Cabinet meeting on the action taken. Urgency caused by undue delay will not be a valid reason for an exemption.

- Exceptional Circumstances:

An exceptional exemption may be considered by the Managing Director in limited and unusual circumstances. This may, for example, apply where a key supplier has gone into Administration or Receivership. It applies where the event will involve significant risk to a key contract and is likely to give rise to a significant disruption to a Council service. In such an event a Head of Service and the Managing Director may jointly approve an exceptional exemption. This may, for example, be a single tender action or the use of a substitute contractor from the original tender responses to complete a contract or part of a contract. They must inform the relevant Portfolio Holder and make a report to the next Cabinet meeting on the action taken.

- Limited market:

A partial exemption may apply where a supply or service is only obtainable from a single or a very limited number of contractors. In such a case, evidence of the limited market must be provided, such as by public advertisement or detailed market research. A Head of Service and the Managing Director may jointly approve a partial exemption. They must inform the relevant Portfolio Holder and make a report to the next Cabinet meeting on the action taken.

- Prior approval:

Other than as specified above no exemption from these Rules shall be made unless prior approval has been granted at a Cabinet meeting.

Record of Exemptions – Heads of Service must ensure that full details of approved waivers and exemptions are recorded in a central register held by the Corporate Procurement Manager on behalf of the MD.

A record form must be completed and signed for each approved Exemption.

v1.0 Nov 2013

