

Report on	Cemetery Improvement Works
Date of Meeting	4 th July 2022
Reporting Officer	Mark McAdoo, Assistant Director, Environmental Services
Contact Officer	Eunan Murray, Grounds & Cemeteries Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business? If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	Yes	
	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek approval to undertake cemetery capital improvement works.
2.0	Background
2.1	Council has five operational cemeteries across the district, namely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Polepatrick, Magherafelt • Forthill, Cookstown • Cottagequinn, Dungannon • Drumcoo, Dungannon • Coolhill, Dungannon
2.2	Significant enhancements works have recently been completed at Forthill and Polepatrick cemeteries in order to increase burial capacity and improve access.
2.3	Further essential capital improvement works are now required at Coolhill Cemetery in order to address maintenance and health & safety concerns.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	Coolhill Cemetery is the Council's second busiest burial ground in Dungannon. During the period the site has been open the trees along the boundary of the site (110 No.) have grown to such an extent that there is now no grass growth in the vicinity of the nearby plots (270 No.) and the birds nesting in same cause a very significant nuisance/mess to the adjacent headstones (see photos at appendix 1)
3.2	In addition to the aesthetic drawback of not having grass on some of the graves the issue with continual/excessive bird droppings on headstones is causing distress to the families concerned.
3.3	There are also health and safety issues with the trees, highlighted in a previous inspection/audit, with storm damage causing branches to fall on nearby plots.

3.4	Last year the trees on the western boundary were cut and thinned to allow company lorries to access the adjacent factory site safely. However this has resulted in the weight of the trees leaning to the cemetery side thus increasing the risk of falling trees/branches (see photos at appendix 2).
3.5	The landscape of the site is very uneven resulting in undulations to over 400 plots in the cemetery (see photos at appendix 3). As well as complaints from families, maintenance teams also regularly report difficulty in maintaining these plots to a consistent standard. Making the rows more even would enhance all the affected plots and improve maintenance efficiency for the Grounds team/staff.
3.6	The shrubbery beds have also become outdated and overgrown over time (see photos at appendix 4) and require an enhancement in line with the rest of the site/works to make it a more welcoming and aesthetically pleasing environment.
3.7	<p>The proposals below estimate the investment required to address these issues</p> <p>Proposal 1 Maintenance works in respect of health and safety issues to remove the perimeter trees from the site and replace with a fence Estimated Cost £100,000</p> <p>Proposal 2 Addressing the plots where no grass is growing as a result of the trees and repairing the undulations</p> <p>Option 1 – Repair and reseed the affected areas Estimated Cost £19,000</p> <p>Option 2 (preferred) – Repair, supply and lay roll out turf to the affected areas to give immediate impact/results Estimated Cost £47,000</p> <p>Proposal 3 Remove existing shrubbery beds and replace with a Portuguese Laurel Hedging at the front to maintain privacy and enhance the bed at the side trees. Estimated Cost £12,000</p>
3.8	On the separate issue of anti-social behavior whilst there have been very few recorded instances of theft or damage to graves across the cemeteries, it is something that is regrettably on the rise. Due to its rural location Cottagequinn is a site where reports of rallying has taken place at night and weekends, which resulted in the gates having to be opened and closed daily for a period of time.
3.8	Investigations have been undertaken by a CCTV specialist at the cemeteries in relation to the installation of cameras. During the visits it was highlighted that covering entire sites with wired surveillance would prove very difficult due to the amount of open space, trees, headstones etc. as fibre and power cables would need to be installed.
3.9	Furthermore even if this proved possible the quality of the images captured may not be of a high enough standard to identify individuals particularly as there is minimal lighting at the sites at night when incidents are more likely to occur.

3.10	<p>A comparison of the estimated costs of providing cameras to cover the entire sites as opposed to the alternative of only erecting cameras to cover the main entrances/car park areas is shown below:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="287 358 1292 593"> <thead> <tr> <th>Costs</th> <th>To cover entrance/car park only</th> <th>Entire Site</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>1. Forthill</td> <td>£6,000</td> <td>£15,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2. Polepatrick</td> <td>£6,000</td> <td>£12,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3. Cottagequinn</td> <td>£2,000</td> <td>£ 8,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>4. Coolhill</td> <td>£5,000</td> <td>£10,000</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5. Drumcoo</td> <td>£2,000</td> <td>£ 5,000</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>3.11 However in addition to the cost implications consideration needs to be given to the impact on families/visitors. The vast amount of cameras required to fully cover a cemetery the size of Polepatrick or Forthill could be viewed as intrusive by visitors to what are obviously deemed sensitive areas for private reflection.</p> <p>3.12 Taking all of the above into consideration it is proposed that cameras should only be installed at the entrance of Cottagequinn (see photos at appendix 5) in order to help deter anti-social behaviour and allow the site to remain accessible 24/7. However CCTV at the other sites would not be considered appropriate.</p>	Costs	To cover entrance/car park only	Entire Site	1. Forthill	£6,000	£15,000	2. Polepatrick	£6,000	£12,000	3. Cottagequinn	£2,000	£ 8,000	4. Coolhill	£5,000	£10,000	5. Drumcoo	£2,000	£ 5,000
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4.0	Other Considerations																		
4.1	<p>Financial, Human Resources & Risk Implications</p> <p>Financial:</p> <p>Provision of £275,000 has been made for Cemetery works in 2022/23 in the Council Capital Programme from which these proposed works can be funded.</p> <p>Human:</p> <p>Staff resources to procure, deliver and supervise works as detailed, time to manage and coordinate the work, and minimise inconvenience to front line Cemetery operations. Engagement with Council's Communications team regarding advance communications to cemetery users, deed holders and Funeral Directors to minimise any inconvenience as a result of the work.</p> <p>Risk Management:</p> <p>As the burial authority in control of municipal cemeteries bound by the conditions of the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 Part III; Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 Part II No. 5; to ensure its burial grounds are safe places to work and visit. Risks associated with the improvement works will be managed by both the Cemetery and Grounds Maintenance Officers to ensure all works are carried out safely and respectfully and that all efforts are made to inform the relevant deed holders in advance of the works and that all environmental issues are considered when removing the trees.</p>																		

4.2	Screening & Impact Assessments
	Equality & Good Relations Implications: N/A
	Rural Needs Implications: N/A
5.0	Recommendation(s)
5.1	Members are requested to approve the completion of the works as outlined at a total estimated cost of £177k exc. VAT (including 10% contingency) subject to a procurement process; funded from the Council Capital Programme for 2022/23.
6.0	Documents Attached & References
6.1	Appendix 1 – Photos of perimeter trees and the effects on nearby plots
6.2	Appendix 2 – Photos of the tree works in 2021 on the western boundary
6.3	Appendix 3 – Photos of the undulations across the plots
6.4	Appendix 4 – Photos of front and side shrubbery beds
6.5	Appendix 5 – Photos of Cottagequinn entrance for CCTV coverage