

Corporate Scrutiny Committee

7th October 2021

Report of the Assistant Director, Operations and Leisure

Member's proposal to consider a memorial / reflection area within the Borough to include benches, trees planted areas and appropriate memorials

Exempt Information

None

Background

Following a review of parts of the Cemetery Regulations by the Corporate Scrutiny Committee in 2020/21, officers were requested to explore the potential of a new memorial area for Tamworth residents to pay their respects to their departed loved ones.

Recommendations

That Scrutiny members:

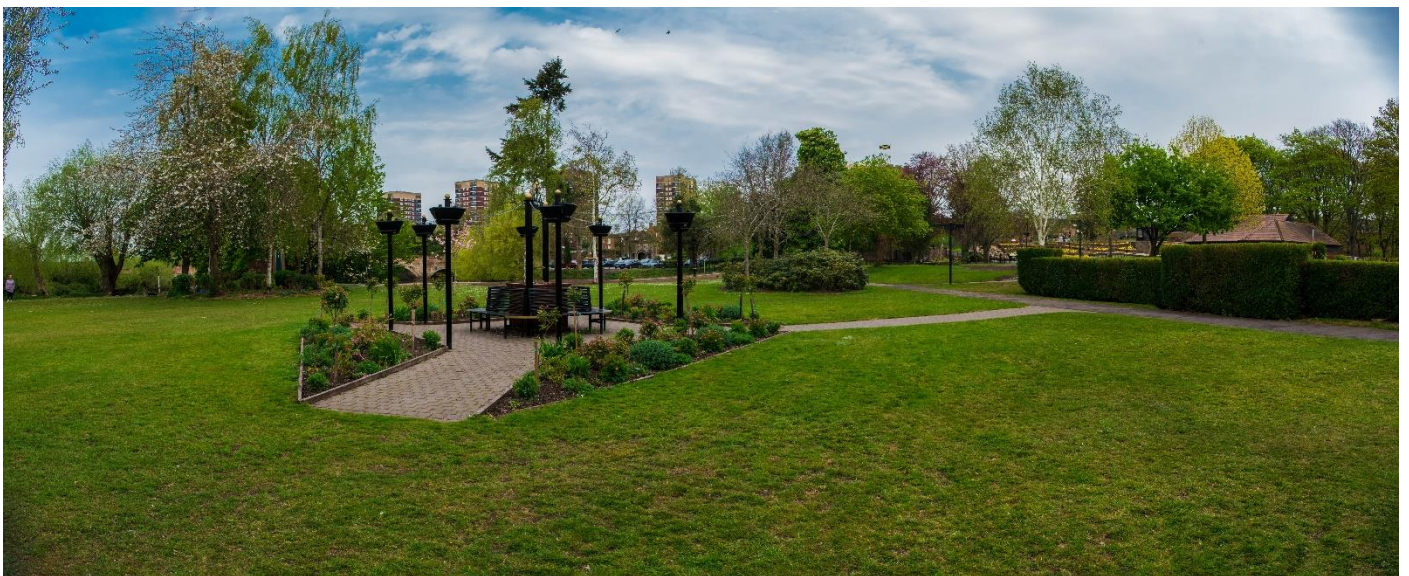
1. Consider the options as detailed within the report
2. Give consideration to a formal consultation process associated with members preferred option, and if necessary Members make subsequent recommendation(s) to Cabinet for further consideration and approval

Current Status and Issues Influencing the Recommendations

- The Council currently operates a Memorial Scheme which offers memorial bench locations within Wigginton Cemetery as well as in the towns other cemeteries in Glascote, Wilnecote and Amington. These designated areas offer space where people can request and pay for a memorial plaque which is fixed to a granite bench. Since the Memorial Scheme was established in 2010 there has been very little take up of it in Wigginton or the other cemeteries that offer the same option.
- The issues surrounding the personalisation area is that people's grief, and loss, is an extremely personal and emotive matter.
- There are no other Council owned recognised and/or dedicated gardens/areas of remembrance within the Borough.
- TBC's Cemetery Regulations do not permit memorial benches tree or plaques on any Council site within the Borough due to the space required to site them, the potential for vandalism and the areas available for such items not being in the direct location of a loved ones grave.
- The Council's public open spaces are heavily used and therefore increases greatly the opportunities for vandalism (dedicated trees benches and plaques can be quite a sensitive issue when damage occurs).

Potential options within the Borough or local area to either enhance or create memorial / remembrance areas

Option 1 .- Jubilee Garden- Kendricks Lawn Castle Grounds



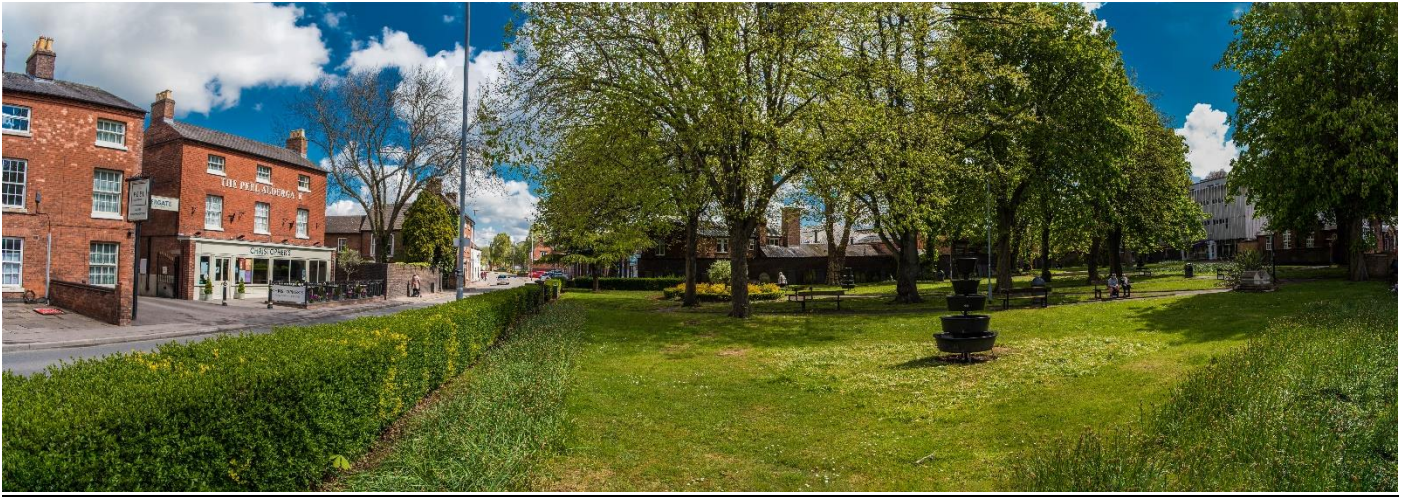


- **Pros for memorial garden / reflection area to be located in the Castle Grounds**
 1. Good central location
 2. Easily accessible
 3. Lovely views of the river and Castle
 4. Well known location
 5. Heavily visited and regularly used

- **Cons for memorial garden / reflection area to be located in the Castle Grounds**
 1. Very high footfall
 2. Not a peaceful / tranquil environment for people to reflect and remember loved ones
 3. High probability of vandalism and anti-social behaviour
 4. The main focus on this area is currently for play and outdoor activities

Option 2 - Area at Corporation Street Town Centre

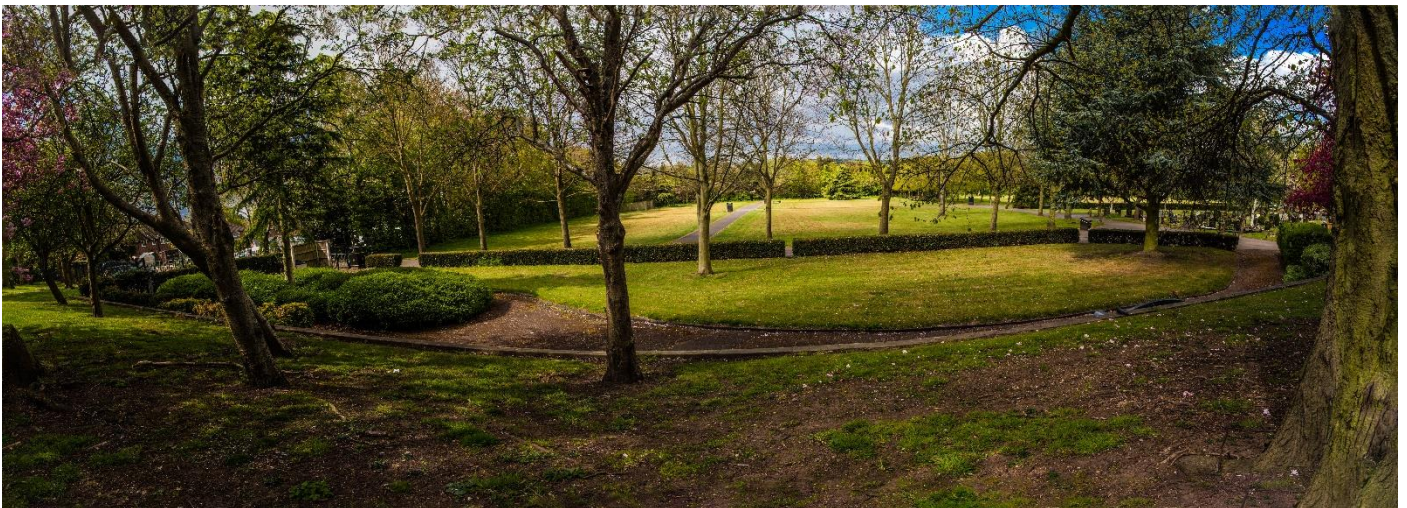




- **Pros for memorial garden / reflection area to be located at Corporation Street Town Centre**
 1. Easily accessible
 2. Good central location
 3. The area is in within TBC's ownership
 4. Situated on one of the main entrances to the town

- **Cons for memorial garden / reflection area to be located at Corporation Street Town Centre**
 1. Very high footfall
 2. May have to exhume existing bodies in order to facilitate
 3. Uncertainty with regards to future town centre development
 4. Not a peaceful / tranquil environment for people to reflect and remember loved one
 5. High risk of theft and vandalism

Option 3 - Garden area within Wigginton Cemetery





- **Pros for memorial garden / reflection area to be located within Wigginton cemetery**
 1. Peaceful and tranquil environment
 2. The area is consecrated ground
 3. The area is within an existing cemetery therefore covered by all the existing cemeteries regulations and legislation.
 4. The area has room for expansion and development
 5. Easy access
 6. Limited parking available

- **Cons for memorial garden / reflection area to be located within Wigginton cemetery**
 1. There may not be the uptake from families to remember a loved one in an area away from where their loved one is buried.
 2. Non-central location, and away from other cemeteries

Option 4 - National Memorial Arboretum (NMA)

An alternative solution to siting a memorial area could be to direct members of the public to the National Memorial Arboretum. The Arboretum offers many different types of memorial/reflection areas for families and is currently developing a new memorial woodland.

The 25-acre extension to the 150-acre woodland has been launched to coincide with the 20th anniversary of the centre of remembrance.



Groundworks for the new memorial woodland are planned to begin in early 2022, ahead of a habitat creation and tree planting effort supported by the National Forest Company. It is hoped that public access to the woodland will begin in 2023.

- **Pros for memorial garden / reflection area to be located at the NMA**
 - 1 Peaceful and tranquil environment
 - 2 Bespoke grounds with a proven track record in this field
 - 3 Longevity assured
 - 4 The area has room for expansion and development
 - 5 Plenty of parking
 - 6 Secure site
 - 7 No entrance fee
- **Cons for memorial garden / reflection area to be located at the NMA**
 1. There may not be the uptake from families to remember a loved one in an area away from where their loved one is buried.
 2. Out of the borough location and away from other cemeteries
 3. May be considered impersonal
 4. Car parking charges apply

Risk Implications

The public desire for a memorial area or garden of remembrance is currently unknown, and to date, there has been no public consultation on the matter. The current uptake of the Memorial Plaque Scheme is little or non-existent which leads officers to believe that there is a significant risk in pursuing any new memorial area within Tamworth further without public consultation.

Should member wish to pursue the Wigginton option (Option number 3) then, the increased footfall from visitors may require additional car parking. The current car park is small, has limited capacity and is accessed through a housing area. Expansion is not possible in the vicinity of the current car park which serves both the cemetery and the local allotments. The car park is already subject to excessive daily use in term-time from parents collecting their children from the school, resulting in many parents frequently parking within the cemetery at peak times. For options 1 or 2 the Councils current town centre car parking facilities would need to be used.

Financial Implications

There are associated financial implications for options 1, 2 and 3 as detailed below. However with regard to option 4 there are no financial implications to the borough council.

The delivery of the memorial / reflection area's detailed as options 1, 2 or 3 within the Borough will require capital investment and this would need to be identified prior to commencement of the project as there is currently no revenue funding available within the service area to deliver this.

All of the memorial areas if sited within the borough would also require an ongoing revenue budget to ensure it is maintained both safely and to public expectation.

The costs below do not include any expansion to Wigginton Road cemetery car park, which could only be undertaken with the loss of cemetery land.

Options 1,2 and 3	Estimated Cost
Design	£2,500
Construction	£4,000
Landscaping and materials	£19,500
Project management	£5,400
CCTV*	£50,000*
Ongoing maintenance pa	£2,500

TOTAL £83,900

Option 4 has none of the above associated costs.

Project management resource for either option 1,2 or 3 could be met from existing officers however, this would impact on other areas of work not being completed. External project management would negate this. Planning permission would be required for all internal options and it is anticipated the project would take one month to complete subject to all materials being available and weather conditions being favourable.

Currently, the area within options 1 and 2 have limited CCTV coverage, whilst the area in option 3 has no CCTV; therefore to protect these potential memorial areas further, consideration to the installation of CCTV would be required through further capital investment to improve community safety and reduce vandalism and nuisance issue in the area.

*In addition consideration will need to be given to installing CCTV to all cemeteries should this go ahead in ensure consistency and transparency across similar sites. The cost for this would be in addition to the figure above at approx. £50k per site.

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