

<b>Committee(s):</b>	<b>Date(s):</b>
Port Health and Environmental services Committee	30 <sup>th</sup> April 2013
<b>Subject:</b> Vehicle Access and Public Consultation Report	<b>Public</b>
<b>Report of:</b> Director of Open Spaces	<b>For Decision</b>
<p><b>Summary</b></p> <p>Vehicle access into the cemetery is recognised as a significant risk, due to vehicle speeds and shared access between drivers and pedestrians and has been managed by the operation of a free vehicle access permit scheme since 2006.</p> <p>Last year your committee agreed to the appointment of a marketing consultant to undertake research and identify public perceptions towards the introduction of a charge for vehicle permits. The research was also used to measure public perceptions of the current service provision, staff and management, fees and charges and the level of interest in the development of a friends group and /or volunteering within the site.</p> <p>The results of this consultation have demonstrated the high regard in which the service is held by those who use it and the strength of opinion against a charge being levied for vehicle access. There is also interest in the development of volunteering and the creation of a friends group, to focus on the potential educational resource that exists at the cemetery and how this may be further utilised.</p> <p><b>Recommendations</b></p> <p>That your committee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Approves the continuation of the vehicle access permit scheme at no charge to cemetery users.</li> <li>• Notes the information provided by Marketing Assistance regarding public perceptions towards the services that cemetery and crematorium provides.</li> <li>• Receives a future report regarding the development of a friends group and volunteering within the cemetery.</li> </ul>	

## **Main Report**

### **Background**

1. The City of London Cemetery and Crematorium is the largest municipal cemetery in the country and covers 200 acres. The site has seven miles of roadways and extends to over two miles around the perimeter.
2. The high number and speed of vehicles entering the grounds in conjunction with the shared access between drivers and pedestrians is a recognised risk to the health and safety of visitors and this fact was first reported to your Committee in March 2005.

3. Since January 2006, a free vehicle access permit scheme has been in operation to help educate drivers and mitigate the above risks. The operation of this scheme has been reviewed by your committee in 2007 and again in July 2012.
4. In July last year, your Committee agreed that the cemetery management should appoint Marketing Assistance Ltd to undertake public consultation and research to identify public perceptions towards the possible introduction of a charge for permits. The research was also to be used to consider other opportunities to generate income and support the future management of the cemetery. The full remit of the public consultation included;
  - establishment of a Friends Organisation
  - development of Guided Tours
  - further development of the Newsletter
  - public perception on current fees and charges
  - charging for Vehicle Access
  - enhancement of current facilities
  - establishment of new facilities
5. Your Committee also agreed to receive a further report detailing the outcome of the consultation and research undertaken by Marketing Assistance Ltd, including the matter of charging for vehicle access into the cemetery grounds.
6. The consultation and research project commenced in July 2012 and took the form of a three staged programme. The first stage required 12 in-depth telephone interviews with main stakeholders including funeral directors and ministers. Meetings with two focus groups of existing cemetery visitors formed the second stage and this was completed in September and October. The final stage of the programme was a quantitative survey of 400 cemetery visitors and this was carried out in December 2012.

### **Current Position**

7. The findings from all stages of the research demonstrate the high regard in which the cemetery and crematorium service is held by all those who use the service; with visitors rating the facilities, management and staff at very good and professional users (funeral directors and ministers) remarking positively about the cemetery administration, professionalism and leadership.
8. Evidence produced by the consultation also demonstrates that there is very little support for any charge to be levied for vehicle access permits and it was felt that even a modest charge would have a major detrimental impact on perceptions of the City of London. Current arrangements allowing vehicle access were viewed as essential and a positive point in favour of the cemetery, as it overcomes the lack of parking and allows easy access to graves.
9. The other findings produced by Marketing Assistance Ltd have been summarised below and are shown as an appendix, a full copy of the report is available on request.
10. **Friends/ Volunteers** – establishing a friends of the Cemetery organisation was highlighted as a popular idea with both stakeholders and families. It was felt that such a group should focus on the heritage and educational aspects of the cemetery rather than become involved in operational issues. As part of the market research a list of possible Friends/Volunteers, with contact details was generated.
11. **Education** – this is an area that could be developed, possibly using ‘friends or volunteers’ to help prepare and deliver an educational programme for schools and

other interested parties. The cemetery already works with four local schools, two universities and several industry groups but this could be more focused and may even be something that could be marketed by friends or volunteers.

12. **Catering** – The catering facilities offered at the cemetery and crematorium were highly regarded and seen as part of the high quality service offered at the site by those using them. There was mixed feedback from funeral directors, as some said that they were not aware of the catering facility, whilst those that had used it were very impressed.
13. **Fees** – The qualitative stages of the consultation highlighted that the cemetery and crematorium is highly respected and appreciated and as such, it has the ability to lead in areas such as pricing, so long as service quality and maintenance remains high. However, this was not reflected in the quantitative stages, where it was felt that significant increases should be avoided due to the already high cost of burial and cremation and the current financial climate.
14. **Newsletter** – the cemetery newsletter was highly regarded and it was felt that this is not an appropriate medium for advertising by funeral companies (there is currently no such advertising in the newsletter). It was also highlighted that there is an opportunity for this to be developed to become a source of information about a future friends group. The newsletter is currently offered in hard copy and whilst this is generally the preferred medium, there is growing acceptance of receiving this as an electronic document.
15. The primary reason for the market research exercise was to assess public feeling towards charging for vehicle to enter the cemetery grounds and as described in paragraph nine, this was not recommended due to the risk of adverse criticism and the detrimental impact on perceptions of the City. .

## **Options**

16. Make a charge for Vehicle Permits - The City could ignore the recent and past consultations and make a charge for vehicle access permits but this course of action, although legally permissible, would risk a negative impact on income and a high risk of negative publicity for the cemetery and the City of London.

### **NOT RECOMMENDED**

17. Continue to provide vehicle access permits free of charge – the vehicle access permit scheme has been used since 2006 and provides a mechanism for managing vehicle access into the site. All applicants for new permits are required to sign agreeing to respect the cemetery and crematorium speed restrictions and regulations. The scheme has a small operational cost and also provides the service with a database of names and addresses for newsletters etc. Continuing to operate this service will have a small cost implication which will be absorbed by the service, and continue to ensure that drivers are aware of the rules and regulations.

### **RECOMMENDED**

18. Abandon the vehicle access permit scheme and allow unchecked vehicle access – The current scheme serves the purpose of highlighting the issues of shared access and the necessary speed limit to families wishing to drive within the site and also can be confiscated as a control mechanism should drivers be found repeatedly driving dangerously within the grounds. Abandoning the current scheme would remove this method of education and control possibly increasing the risk of vehicle accidents and incidents within the cemetery.

### **NOT RECOMMENDED**

## **Proposals**

19. It is therefore proposed that the cemetery and crematorium service continue to operate a vehicle access permit scheme and that there continues to be no charge for the provision of permits to enter the site by car.
20. It is also proposed that the cemetery develop the areas highlighted by the research, such as the forming of a friends group and develop volunteering in order to improve education and communication, linked to the cemetery newsletter.
21. The comments made regarding fees and charges should be noted and will form part of the service Fees and Charges Report in January 2014.

## **Legal Implications**

22. There are no legal implications associated with this report.

## **Property Implications**

23. There are no property related implications associated with this report.

## **HR Implications**

24. There are no HR implications associated with this report.

## **Corporate & Strategic Implications**

25. The effective and efficient management of the City of London Cemetery and Crematorium supports the local community and protects, promotes and enhances the local environment in accordance with the City of London Corporation's Community Strategy.
26. The Town Clerk and Chamberlain have been consulted in the preparation of this report.

## **Conclusion**

27. In conclusion, the services of Marketing Assistance Ltd have proved to be extremely useful as they have highlighted not only the risks of enforcing a charge for vehicle access permits but have provided a clear way forward for the creation of a friends group and for developing volunteering within the cemetery and crematorium. The research has also highlighted how the service is perceived by its stakeholders and users.
28. The research carried out makes it clear that introducing a charge for vehicle access would be extremely unpopular and is an un-necessary risk to the reputation of the cemetery and the City of London Corporation and it is therefore recommended that no charge is made in this respect.

## **Appendices**

- Appendix 1 – Marketing Assistance Findings

**Background Papers:**

*Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – Vehicle Access into the City of London Cemetery 17<sup>th</sup> November 2004*

*Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – Vehicle Access: Interim Report on Pilot Scheme 24<sup>th</sup> January 2006*

*Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – Public Vehicle Access into the City of London Cemetery 24<sup>th</sup> April 2007*

*Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – Cemetery and Crematorium Budget Reductions for 2012/13 8<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

*Port Health and Environmental Services Committee – Interim Position on Vehicle Access Permit Charges 4<sup>th</sup> July 2012*

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