

One Corby Policy Committee 1st December 2020 - Minute Extract

20. Shire Lodge Cemetery Extension

The Committee were being requested to agree to the drawdown of reserves to fund the additional cost of extending Shire Lodge Cemetery.

Corby Borough Council's Shire Lodge Cemetery was approaching capacity and current projections suggested that it had between 18 months and 2 years of spare burial capacity.

APSE Solutions undertook a feasibility report in Feb 2019 to look at CBC's bereavement services and following an in-depth site search, case study and key stakeholder engagement identified an extension to the Shire Lodge Cemetery as the most appropriate location to offer new burial space. An indicative cost analysis was provided for an extension and chapel of £1.74million.

Planning permission had been granted to extend the existing cemetery into playing fields to the West of the existing cemetery and layout the new cemetery as a lawned cemetery. In addition to the cemetery extension it was proposed that a new welfare building was provided with a link to the Rockingham Triangle car park and refurbishment of existing public facilities at the site entrance. There was a long-term aspiration to construct a chapel of rest. The plans were sympathetic to this aim and allowed for a new car park extension to the east of the existing cemetery.

As a result of the encroachment onto playing fields, additional pitches had been brought into use across the Borough and an enhanced wildlife corridor was planned between the cemetery and existing houses to the south.

New rules and regulations would also be drafted and enforced to ensure that the new extension remained as a lawn cemetery.

The proposals provided for circa 25 to 30 years of additional capacity.

Capital funding of £750,000 for 2019/20 was approved for the cemetery extension with no provision for a chapel.

In securing planning permission, in addition to the expected design and feasibility fees, additional fees were incurred to address concerns over restrictive covenants on the land, service diversion and opposition from Sport England on the loss of playing fields. Spend to date was £99,500, with committed planned support costs of £120,000, for contract administration, service diversions and project management, providing a construction budget of circa £530,000.

A tender process for delivering the works was undertaken and despite sign posting to local contractors the Council received just 4 valid bids. They were as follows:

1. Tender One - £1,684,000
2. Tender Two - £1,764,000
3. Tender Three - £2,312,000
4. Tender Four - £2,495,000

Appendix 5

This therefore left a large shortfall of £1,154,000 against Tender 1. Officers had considered various options for revising the scope of works for the project and based on the tender prices received, estimated the project value of each, as below: -

Option One – Review scope of works against available budget of £530,000 and re-tender. Based on lowest tender bids it was likely to result in a scheme that simply provided an extension into the playing fields involving a new perimeter fence, some access roads and paths and limited planting both within cemetery and wildlife corridor. As the cemetery extended overtime costs would need to be budgeted to extend the roads and paths as the cemetery fills up.

Option Two (officer's preferred option) – Approve the additional funding of £570,000 from general reserves to deliver the core requirements of the scheme and re-tender. Based on lowest tender bids this would involve delivering most of the planned works (as detailed in Appendix 1), except for the car park extension to the East of the existing cemetery.

This was officers preferred option as it delivered the additional burial space and site facilities but removed the car park extension which was primarily to service a possible new chapel. Additional parking had been provided on-site by retaining the access link from Rockingham Triangle additional overflow car parking was provided. In addition, further value engineering of works would be undertaken to lower the specification for hard and soft landscaping for the cemetery extension and consider alternative procurement methods for soft landscaping.

Option Three – Approve the additional funding of £870,000 from general reserves to deliver the core requirements as per Option Two above but would continue to provide the car park extension to the east of the existing cemetery and re-tender. Based on lowest tender bids this would also involve value engineering the solutions with the aim of delivering most of the planned works in Appendix 1.

Option Four - Approve the additional funding of £1,235,000 from general reserves to deliver the current scope of works and specification and re-tender. There would be some simple value engineering of the requirements, such as rationalisation of landscaping provided but in the main this will see delivery of the scheme and specification as originally tendered.

The Committee was being requested to consider approving the additional funding of £570,000 from reserves to add to £750,000 of original budget to provide a working capital budget of £1,320,000.

Subject to the Committee's determination of this report, the report would be referred to the Shadow Executive Committee of the North Northamptonshire Shadow Authority under the agreed notification protocol. It was for the sovereign council to determine this matter, however given the amount of the proposed budget increase, and this increase being in addition to the agreed Capital Programme, a notification referral would be required.

Councillor Pengelly felt that the Council needed to invest additional money to ensure appropriate facilities and capacity was in place. Councillor Pengelly noted the original proposals had already been scaled down and would prefer to see Option Three supported and an additional £870,000 funding proved.

Councillor McGhee fully supported Option Three and expressed a preference for the additional car parking to be retained. Councillor McGhee also expressed hope that smaller local companies would be prepared to engage in any re-tender exercise.

Appendix 5

The Chief Finance Officer confirmed that the Committee had the ability to agree Option Three and draw down £870,000 from Reserves.

Officers confirmed that local companies had been made aware of the original procurement exercise, however only larger national companies had submitted tenders.

Councillor Sims noted that the report indicated that currently there was 18-24 months additional capacity at the cemetery; was this still the case. Officers confirmed that there was still at least 18 months capacity.

Councillor Sims also queried whether there was still any covenant or legal obstacles in the project commencing. Officers confirmed that any covenant issues had been resolved regarding the site, and planning consent obtained for the project.

Councillor Sims also wondered whether by engaging local firms the procurement process would be lengthened. Officers confirmed it would not. Local firms had been made aware of the original procurement exercise; any re-tender exercise would also be brought to their attention. There would be no change to the proposed timetable of the project if Members preferred approving Option Three.

Councillor Addison asked whether the proposed extension made allowance for the diverse population in Corby. Officers confirmed it did, and local community groups had been engaged in discussions.

In conclusion, whilst the officer recommendation was to approve Option Two, it was MOVED by Councillor McGhee and SECONDED by Councillor Pengelly that Option Three be approved.

RESOLVED that: -

- (i) The funding of £870,000 from Council Reserves be approved to allow officers to re-tender works to extend the Cemetery, based on Option Three being the preferred way forward.