



**REPORT of
DIRECTOR OF CUSTOMERS AND COMMUNITY**

to
**COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE
22 MAY 2018**

CEMETERY CHAPEL REPAIRS

1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To seek Members views on whether the project to repair the Heybridge cemetery chapel roof should continue and whether alternative uses for the building should be considered.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- (i) Members note that the project to repair the Heybridge cemetery roof, following a wildlife habitat survey, would be implemented as planned;
- (ii) that the Director of Customers and Community, in consultation with the Chairman of the Committee, be authorised to invite proposals for the alternative usage of the chapel buildings at Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch cemeteries;
- (iii) that Officers report on the proposals for the use of the Heybridge Chapel at a future meeting of this committee.

3. SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 The Council owns and maintains three cemeteries at Maldon, Heybridge and Burnham on Crouch. Last financial year the Council approved a project and budget to carry out repairs to the chapel roof at Heybridge Cemetery.
- 3.1.2 The project was delayed whilst a survey was undertaken to establish whether the chapel had become a roosting place for bats. All species of bat found in the UK are protected by law and the survey would help identify any potential mitigation work that may be required. The survey has now been completed and no significant evidence has been found relating to bat activity. This project could now progress.
- 3.1.3 The chapel building at Burnham-on-Crouch has been closed for a number of years and is in quite poor internal condition. There are currently no plans to repair or restore the building.

3.2 Area for decision

3.2.1 The Heybridge chapel building is generally very lightly used. During 2016 and 2017 it was not used at all.

3.2.2 The Council's Conservation Officer has provided the following advice on the chapel.

'This is a handsome gothic-style chapel, built in 1887 and has been identified as a candidate for addition to Maldon District Council's Local List of Heritage Assets. Allowing the building to fall into disrepair would conflict with the Council's commitment to "ensure that heritage assets continue to contribute to our cultural, social and economic life as a beneficial and sustainable resource" (Policy D3 of the Maldon District Local Development Plan).'

3.2.3 Given the sensitive location and views expressed by the Conservation Officer, it is recommended that the repairs are undertaken as planned. However Members may wish to consider the principle of allowing these assets to be used for alternative functions. For example at Maldon cemetery the old mortuary building is currently host to the Men's shed project which successfully reuses this facility.

3.3 Alternative uses

3.3.1 Assuming that Members wish to repair the chapel as originally planned, it might be possible to find a suitable alternative use. Any potential alternative usage would need to be carefully considered to ensure that it complements the sensitive location within the cemetery grounds. It is feasible that the reuse could provide an income to contribute to the future maintenance costs of the building.

3.3.2 The same approach could also be applied to the chapel at Burnham-on-Crouch cemetery although there will be a significant cost to bring the building back to a reasonable condition.

3.3.3 Members are asked to consider the principle of establishing alternative uses for cemetery chapel buildings at both Heybridge and Burnham-on-Crouch cemeteries. If Members agree then these facilities could be advertised on the Council's website to establish whether there is interest within the local community.

4 CONCLUSIONS

4.1 Each of the District Council managed cemeteries has a chapel building. These buildings are very lightly used and all are in need of regular maintenance or improvement.

4.2 Members have previously approved a project to carry out repairs to the Heybridge cemetery chapel roof.

4.3 It is suggested that alternative uses might be worth considering for chapels that are infrequently used. Any alternative use would need to be carefully considered to ensure that it was appropriate for the location but could potentially make use of an

otherwise empty building. It is possible that a small income could be generated that could be used to help maintain the building.

5 IMPACT ON CORPORATE GOALS

- 5.1 This report links directly to the Council's goal of providing services that are efficient and effective.

6 IMPLICATIONS

- (i) **Impact on Customers** – The Council asset could be used for alternative purposes which will be of community benefit.
- (ii) **Impact on Equalities** – None identified.
- (iii) **Impact on Risk** – There are no corporate risks associated with this report.
- (iv) **Impact on Resources (financial)** – A budget sum is included within the 2018/19 estimates to fund the repairs to the roof.
- (v) **Impact on Resources (human)** – None.
- (vi) **Impact on the Environment** – None identified.

Background Papers: None.

Enquiries to:

Ben Brown, Group Manager - Leisure, Countryside and Tourism, (Tel: 01621 876210).