

Full Council Meeting 30 Nov 2022 CEC Cemetery Consultation

From:

Sent: 29 November 2022 20:13

To: <chiefofficer@sandbach.gov.uk>

Cc:

Subject: STC Meeting on Wednesday

Agenda item 12.1B Draft response regarding the CEC Cemetery Consultation - please see the draft below, I would be happy for this to be circulated to members as a supplementary document prior to the meeting.

Regards

CEC Cemeteries Strategy 2022

(A) Two key points

- 1) From the CEC website *“ the main change we are proposing in the update of the Cemeteries Strategy is to make future burial provision available at all existing council cemeteries, by extending them where possible to provide more local provision, rather than focusing provision only in 2 principal burial facilities in Crewe and Macclesfield, as the existing strategy sets out.”*
- 2) This isn't a consultation on a revised or draft cemetery strategy, it is an exercise to obtain views prior to generating a draft strategy.

(B) Further points

- 1) The current strategy has data up to 2017, this needs updating to show what capacity remains at each of the CEC cemeteries. I would hope that the figures for Sandbach Cemetery reflect the availability of adjacent council-owned land that has previously been designated for cemetery expansion.
- 2) The online consultation is confusing in presenting the existing strategy as having combined burial and cremation facilities at both Crewe and Macclesfield - in reality, burials in Crewe take place at Meadow Brook (next to the former council refuse tip) and cremations take place at the refurbished Badger Avenue crematorium, quite a distance apart.
- 3) Support for the retention of local cemetery provision within Cheshire East.

(C) I think it is worth reiterating comments made about the 2018 strategy

- 1) Drive time to cemeteries should not be the prime consideration in selecting burial destination - the suitability of the location should also be a factor, the new cemetery based in Crewe at Meadow Brook is located close to the former Crewe Council tip and depot, a very insensitive neighbouring land use.

- 2) Consideration should be taken of accessibility for relatives wishing to visit both at the time of a funeral and subsequent memorial visits, need to be aware of limited public transport within most of Cheshire East to the cemeteries in the two principal towns.
- 3) Demographics - need to assess the impact of the population increase in Sandbach resulting from the 30% plus increase in houses during the 2030 Local Plan. 2021 census data should also be considered.
- 4) Vision - Should CEC consider the availability of extending existing cemeteries other than Weston and Alderley Edge? E.g. Sandbach has adjacent land allocated for use as a cemetery extension, why is this not included in the analysis and report?

“8.3 The key policy is for Cheshire East Council to focus its long-term burial provision in two principal cemeteries in Crewe and Macclesfield, whilst continuing to operate and maintain the other cemeteries. The future management of the seven cemeteries outside of these two main conurbations, and the development of additional provision, could better meet local needs by being the responsibility of town and parish councils. “

It is not clear how all the vision, policies and objectives are derived and supported by the earlier sections of the report. Whilst I feel many of the statements can be supported I have major concerns with 8.3. There are concerns with both sentences within 8.3, as they contradict each other.

- a. The proposal to concentrate burial provision at two principal cemeteries seems to be based purely on travel time to funerals, it does not take into account the physical suitability of the Crewe site, located next to a former rubbish dump, poor level of accessibility for post funeral family visits.
- b. The first sentence states that Cheshire East would continue to operate and maintain the other cemeteries, whilst the second sentence proposes that they would be better devolved to town and parish councils. [So do they propose devolution or not?]

I disagree with Vision 8.3, in restricting CEC responsibility to two principal cemeteries, it is not appropriate, CEC should also continue to operate and extend the Sandbach cemetery using the designated adjoining council-owned land.

Appendix

The response from Sandbach Town Council in 2018.

Sandbach Town Council has reviewed the Draft Cheshire East Cemeteries Strategy.

Whilst it is able to support Section 9 - Cemetery Strategy Short Term, making more efficient use of the existing cemeteries, there are issues with the proposals in sections 10 and 11.

Sandbach Town Council requests that the useful life of the award-winning Sandbach Cemetery is extended by incorporating the adjoining council-owned land to the south of the existing cemetery currently used as a football pitch. Local residents have understood that the playing field had been allocated to cemetery expansion. This would provide an additional principal Cheshire East cemetery close to the geographic centre of the borough, it would improve provision in a town that expects a 40% increase in population during the period of the Local Plan, and could optimise travel times for both funerals and family visits when compared to the two principal cemetery proposal.

Sandbach Town Council proposes the inclusion of a fourth point under 10 Cemetery Strategy Medium Term "Progress the development of the extension of Sandbach Cemetery."

Point 10.3 is not derived from the main body of the report, if it is to be included as a recommendation then much greater detail should be included in the strategy report.

However, Sandbach Town Council has a major concern with the long-term strategy of CEC maintaining only two open cemeteries in the borough, i.e. Crewe and Macclesfield.

It is important to keep the Sandbach Cemetery open

- Central location within Cheshire East, with good road access.
- CEC already own adjoining land that is designated for cemetery expansion
- The Sandbach Cemetery operates to a high, award winning standard.
- Sandbach expects its population to increase by 40% by 2030.

Richard G Hovey

September 2018.