

**Subject:** **Revised arrangements for locking of park and cemetery gates**

**Head of Service:** Head of Housing, Community Safety and Environmental Services

**Decision Issues:** Executive

**Decision type:** Non-key

**Classification:** This report is open to the public.

**CCC Ward(s):** **Westgate, Herne and Broomfield, Wincheap, Heron**

**Summary** *The Council has referred to the **Executive** for consideration*

- (i) the petitions by Mr Pascal and Councillor Linfield to the Council Meeting on 28 April urging the Council to continue locking the park and cemetery gates at night;*
- (ii) the following Notice of Motion proposed by Councillor Flanagan and seconded by Councillor Vye at the meeting of the Council on 28 April 2011.*

*“We call upon this council to abandon its ill considered proposal to leave park and cemetery gates throughout the whole district unlocked at night and then to rely on local residents to carry out this duty for them; further we ask this council not to defer this decision for any reason at all but to resolve the issue at the full council meeting on 28 April 2011.”*

*Officers have been asked to provide a further report for the Executive meeting..*

Details of Mr Pascal’s comments at the Council meeting when petition his petition are attached to this Agenda.

Details of the petitions by Mr P Pascal and Councillor Linfield to the Council meeting are upon request to Democratic Services.

**To Resolve:** **How to proceed with the agreed policy with regard to locking of gates in parks, gardens and cemeteries**

**Next stage in process** **To Implement changes**

## SUPPORTING INFORMATION

### 1. Introduction

As part of the budget setting process for 2011/12 a number of savings on grounds maintenance costs were proposed and accepted by council. One of these saving was based on revising the arrangements for parks and cemeteries whereby the gates would not be locked in the evenings.

This proposal made savings of £16,800 in 2011/12 and £32,300 in 2012/2103. This saving was as a result of reducing the contract payments to Serco.

It was agreed that the implementation of this decision would be delayed until the end of 2011 to enable officers to look at possible alternative to enable some of the gates to remain locked at night.

### 2. Detail

The council provide a gate locking service for a total of 12 gardens, parks and cemeteries.

It is proposed that we continue to lock the following parks, gardens and cemeteries within existing resources

**The areas identified were as follows:**

| Description              | Area       | Proposed arrangements from 1 <sup>st</sup> July 2011                       |
|--------------------------|------------|--|
| Butterfly Gardens        | Canterbury | Closed by Civil Enforcement Officers                                       |
| Canterbury Cemetery      | Canterbury | Closed by Serco cemeteries staff   |
| Greyfriars Gardens       | Canterbury | Closed by Civil Enforcement Officers                                       |
| Guildhall                | Canterbury | Closed by Serco toilet cleansing staff (paid for by Community Development) |
| Herne Bay Cemetery       | Herne Bay  | Closed by Serco cemeteries staff   |
| Norman Castle            | Canterbury | Closed by Serco toilet cleansing staff (paid for by Heritage)              |
| Sollys Orchard           | Canterbury | Closed by Civil Enforcement Officers                                       |
| St Margarets Church Yard | Canterbury | Permanently closed   |
| Three Cities Gardens     | Canterbury | Closed by local business   |
|                          |            |  |

|                  |            |  |
|------------------|------------|--|
| Westgate Gardens | Canterbury | Closed by Serco toilet cleansing staff |
|------------------|------------|--|

The Civil Enforcement Officers will open and close the gates as part of their daily duties. The timings for these are likely to be at 1900 hours (7pm) in the summer months and 1700hrs (5pm) in the winter months

Serco have agreed to utilise toilet cleansing staff to lock gates and this will also be carried out at 1900hrs (7pm) in the summer months and 1700hrs (5pm) in the winter months..

There are three areas which we have been unable to find a solution for within existing resources.

Herne Bay War Memorial Park – The gates which are locked are not the gates for the park but for the car park. We are looking at leaving the car park unlocked. We do not envisage this causing a problem, however if we have an excessive number of local residents parking within the car park, stopping visitors parking we will look to address this but applying to introduce additional parking restrictions

Wincheap Play Area and Marytrs Field Gardens – We are currently proposing to keep these two parks unlocked at night. They are not near toilets which Serco lock, or in an area which has patrols by Civil Enforcement Officers patrolling.

Officers have spoken to a security company who have given an estimated cost of locking and unlocking the two parks of £11,260. This is based on a fee of £8.00 for each of the locking and unlocking at each site.

Serco have confirmed that they would not be able to close just these gates as they would need to employ staff and vehicles to do this.

### 3. **Relevant Council Policy/Strategies/Budgetary Documents**

It was agreed as part of the council budget that this saving would be made, and we may need to make alternative cuts to achieve the saving target.

### 4. **Consultation planned or undertaken**

The proposed budget and savings for 2011/12 were made available to the public through the internet and local press during the budget consultation process.

In addition a meeting was held with local residents and members to discuss the options available.

### 5. **Options available with reasons for suitability**

- 1) Adopt the proposed arrangements for closing of gates implementing the proposed changes to the process which are cost neutral to the Council. This would mean that all gates are locked (albeit earlier in some cases) with the exception of the Herne Bay Memorial Gardens, Wincheap Play Area and Martyrs Field Gardens
- 2) Request Serco to continue locking all gates as before at a cost £37,300 per annum (£38,300 in 2011/12)
- 3) Employ a security Company to lock the gates at Wincheap Play Area and Martyrs Field Gardens at an annual cost of £11,260

## 6. **Reasons for supporting option recommended, with risk assessment**

Option 1 is recommended as it appears to allay most of the concerns raised by residents and make a significant saving on grounds maintenance costs.

Option 2 – This option would not achieve the necessary savings, which may need to be found from somewhere else.

Option 3 – This option is not recommended as it does not make the savings required.

## 7. **Implications**

### (a) Financial Implications

The contracted costs for closing gates for 2010/11 was £37,300 per annum. A provisional sum of £5000 has been held back in the event of increased maintenance, equipment modification, and vandalism so the total saving offered is £32,300 in 2012/13 (£16,800 in 2010/11 to allow for possible redundancy payments etc.)

### (b) Legal Implications - none

### **Other implications**

### (c) Staffing/resource – as detailed in the report

### (d) Property Portfolio - none

### (e) Environmental/Sustainability - none

### (f) Planning/Building Regulations - none

### (g) Human Rights issues - none

### (h) Crime and Disorder – The police believe that locking park gates and providing an obvious barrier to entry is worthwhile. If they are left unlocked they become gathering spots and problems occur relating to drinkers congregating, use by vagrants and general anti social behaviour. The police understand that in these financial times savings must be made however. They welcome very much the Council's efforts to devise a system where those venues most likely to be misused will continue to be locked at night.

### (i) Biodiversity - none

### (j) Safeguarding Children - none

### (k) Energy efficiency - none

## 8. **Conclusions**

The proposed arrangements detailed in 2 above are considered by officers to be the best compromise on savings and service level. Officers will endeavour to seek further volunteers and service improvements over the coming months.

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