Individual Cabinet Member Decision Making - Leisure and Culture

Wednesday, 1 November 2017

2.00 pm in Committee Room 4, Civic Centre, High Street, Esher

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Part I Items

1. Declarations of Interest

All Members are required to declare, at this point in the meeting or as soon as possible thereafter

(i) any disclosable pecuniary interests and / or
(ii) other interests arising under the Code of Conduct

in respect of any item(s) of business being considered at this meeting.

Leisure and Culture – Councillor Mrs. J.R. Turner

2. Temporary Allocation of Portfolio Holder Responsibilities

To note that, in line with the Council’s Constitution, the Leader of the Council, Councillor S.J. Selleck, has confirmed that Councillor Mrs. M. Marshall, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Development, is authorised to oversee the Leisure and Culture Portfolio in Councillor Mrs. J.R. Turner’s absence. Councillor Mrs. M. Marshall is therefore authorised to determine the business on this agenda.

3. Avenue of Remembrance, Tilt Common, Cobham

Contact Officer: Mrs. T. Hulse Direct Line: 01372 474175
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Avenue of Remembrance on Tilt Common in Cobham is both a well-known local landmark and a registered war memorial. It consists of forty-four flowering cherry trees originally planted in 1946 by the Village Women's Institute in commemoration of local members of the armed forces who died during the Second World War. The dedication took place on Sunday 24 February 1946. At that time, each tree had a metal collar giving details of the member of the forces it commemorated.

Cherry trees as a species are fast growing and have a naturally shorter life span than other landscape trees, often reaching a stage of over maturity and beginning to decline within 20 years. They are also susceptible to compacted ground, pest and diseases. Over the last 61 years, several of the original cherry trees have died and had to be removed. The remaining original trees, now over 70 years old, are at a stage of decline. The new replacement trees, are not thriving and as a result, the Avenue has lost its impact.

The point has been reached where a decision had to be taken to ensure the future of this memorial.

RECOMMENDATION: THAT

A) THE RESULTS OF THE CONSULTATION ARE NOTED; AND

B) OFFICERS BEGIN THE WORK NECESSARY TO DELIVER OPTION 2.

1. REPORT:

2. The Avenue of Remembrance on Tilt Common in Cobham is both a well-known local landmark and a registered War Memorial. It consists of forty-four flowering cherry trees originally planted in 1946 by the Village Women's Institute in commemoration of local members of the armed forces who died during the Second World War. The dedication took place on Sunday 24 February 1946. At that time, each tree had a metal collar giving details of the member of the forces it commemorated.

3. Cherry trees as a species are fast growing and have a naturally shorter life span than other landscape trees, often reaching a stage of over maturity and
beginning to decline within 20 years. They are also susceptible to compacted ground, pest and diseases. Over the last 61 years, several of the original cherry trees have died and had to be removed. The remaining original trees, now over 70 years old, are at a stage of decline. The new replacement trees, are not thriving and as a result, the Avenue has lost its impact.

4. In light of the issues above, and mindful of the sensitivities and importance of the memorial, Officers have reviewed options to preserve the avenue for the future, involving local Councillors and stakeholders.

5. Options

2 options have been explored by the Council to ensure the future of the Avenue of Remembrance.

1) Option 1: Continue to replace existing trees as original and those more recently planted fail. This option would involve retaining the existing cherry trees (original and more recently planted) and managing their decline, removing them when their condition was such that it was no longer safe or practical to retain them. Replacement trees would be planted as required.

2) Option 2: invest and renew the Avenue of Remembrance, protecting it for the future. This option would involve the removal of all of the existing trees, carrying out significant soil improvement works and replacing with new young cherries, accompanied by a strip of meadow underneath, to help reduce compaction and aid establishment.

6. Following initial consultation with Cobham Ward Councillors and key community stakeholder groups, it was considered important to gather the wishes of the wider community of Cobham and Stoke d’Abernon.

7. Public consultation was advertised online for a period of 3 weeks until 30 September. Drop-in sessions were organised at Cobham Library, at the Cobham Farmers Market and the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust facilitated a presentation about the survey. The consultation was also advertised on the Elmbridge Borough Council Website, local social media sites and in local noticeboards. Local community groups also supported the consultation by promoting the link to the online consultation.

8. Results

9. In total 230 local residents took part in the consultation over a period of 3 weeks.

10. 96% of respondents supported option 2 which was to invest and renew the Avenue of Remembrance, protecting it for the future. This option involves the removal of all of the existing trees, carrying out significant soil improvement works and replacing with new young cherries, accompanied by a strip of meadow underneath, to help reduce compaction and aid establishment. 4% of respondents supported option 1.
11. **Summary of the main comments made by the 96% respondents in favour of options 2:**

- The Avenue of Remembrance is a long standing and attractive feature of Cobham.
- It contributes to Cobham’s identity and is a source of pride for villagers.
- It is a treasured feature that needs to be restored, preserved and maintained as a fitting memorial for the local soldiers who lost their lives in WWII.
- It is sound investment for the future and to keep the Avenue looking at its best.
- The combination of new trees and the granite memorial stone will be a worthy replacement for generations to come.

12. **Comments made by the 4% of respondents in favour of option 1:**

- Trees are an important part of our past, so should be maintained.
- It would be a sacrilege to remove the trees in decline and preferable to let them die naturally and replace as was the intention.
- Dog owners should still be allowed to walk near the trees – the meadow strip under the cherry trees might not allow this.

13. Full comments can be found in Appendix A.

14. **Next steps**

Following approval officer will work with all key stakeholders to the following milestones:

**November 2017**
- Establish working group with community stakeholders
- Procurement process to appoint contractor to carry out works

**December 2017 – February 2018**
- Removal of existing trees and ground preparation works

**March 2018**
- Plant new trees and sow meadow

During consultation with key community stakeholders they expressed the view that they would like to establish a working group to support and work with the Council on the delivery of this project. This group will be invaluable in acting as a link between the Council and the community, communicating information, involving other groups in the project - schools for example - and also in reaching a decision on the future of the wood/trees from the existing avenue once it has been removed.

**Financial implications:**
Capital funding of £12,000 has been allocated to this project for 2017/18.
Environmental/Sustainability Implications:
Replacement of trees and addition of meadow provides an environmental improvement to the area, as well as representing the regeneration of a registered war memorial.

Legal implications:
The memorial is registered as ‘Tilt Avenue of Remembrance’ (Reference 23222) on the War Memorials Register maintained by the Imperial War Museum. The record contains all known details about the memorial, including the date of dedication, the plaque inscription and the condition of its component parts. There are no protections arising from any statutory designation relating to this memorial landscape but tree replacement and other works will need to be carried out sensitively and in accordance with conservation best practice.

It is noted that the Avenue of Remembrance is in a conservation area. However under section 212 of the Town & Country Planning Act 1990, it states that no notice (211 notice) is required to notify the authority if those works are by, or on behalf of, a local planning authority.

Equality Implications:
None for the purpose of this report

Risk Implications:
Some of the trees are at risk of becoming dangerous and so work is required. The war memorial needs to be preserved, and will be lost if no action is taken.

Community Safety Implications:
None for the purpose of this report

Principal Consultees:
Ward Councillors: Cobham and Downside Ward and Oxshott and Stoke d’Abernon Ward
Head of Legal Services
Group Services Accountant
War Memorials Trust
Key Community Stakeholder Groups:
   Cobham Cedar Club Women’s Institute
   Royal British Legion, Cobham
   St Andrews Church
   Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust
   Cobham and Downside Residents Association
   Stoke d’Abernon Residents’ Association
Public Consultation (230 responses received)

Background papers:
n/a

Enclosures/Appendices:
Appendix A – Avenue of Remembrance Consultation Results
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Background

The Avenue of Remembrance on Tilt Common in Cobham is both a well-known local landmark and a registered war memorial. It consists of forty-four flowering cherry trees originally planted in 1946 by the Village Women's Institute in commemoration of local members of the armed forces who have died during the Second World War. The dedication took place on Sunday 24 February 1946. At that time, each tree had a metal collar giving details of the member of the forces it commemorated.

Issues

Cherry trees as a species are fast growing and have a naturally shorter life span than other landscape trees, often reaching a stage of over-maturity and beginning to decline within 20 years. They are also susceptible to compacted ground, pest and diseases. Over the last 61 years, several of the original cherry trees have died and had to be removed. The remaining original trees, now over 70 years old, are at a stage of decline. The new replacement trees, are not thriving and as a result, the Avenue has lost its impact.

The point has been reached where a decision had to be taken to ensure the future of this memorial.

Options

2 options have been examined by the Council to ensure the future of the Avenue of Remembrance.

1) **Option 1:** Continue to replace existing trees as old original and those more recently planted fail. This option would involve retaining the existing cherry trees (original and more recently planted) and managing their decline, removing them when their condition was such that it was no longer safe or practical to retain them. Replacement trees would be planted as required.

2) **Option 2:** invest and renew the Avenue of Remembrance, protecting it for the future. This option would involve the removal of all of the existing trees, carrying out significant soil improvement works and replacing with new young cherries, accompanied by a strip of meadow underneath, to help reduce compaction and aid establishment.

Following consultation with Cobham local Ward Councillors and key community stakeholder groups, it felt important to gather the wishes of the wider community of Cobham and Stoke d'Abernon.

The consultation ran for 3 weeks until 30 September. Drop-in sessions were organised at Cobham Library, at the Cobham Farmers Market and the Cobham Conservation and Heritage Trust facilitated a presentation about the survey. The consultation was also advertised on the Elmbridge borough Council Website, local social media sites and in local noticeboards. Local community groups gave their support by advertising the link to the online consultation.
**Results:**

230 Cobham & Stoke d'Abernon residents took part in the consultation over a period of 3 weeks.

96% of respondents opted for option 2 which was to invest and renew the Avenue of Remembrance, protecting it for the future. This option involves the removal of all of the existing trees, carrying out significant soil improvement works and replacing with new young cherries, accompanied by a strip of meadow underneath, to help reduce compaction and aid establishment.

4% of respondent chose option 1.

**Summary of the main comments made by the 96% respondents in favour of options 2:**
- The Avenue of Remembrance is a long standing and attractive feature of Cobham.
- It contributes to Cobham’s identity and is a source of pride for villagers
- It is a treasured feature that needs to be restored, preserved and maintained as a fitting memorial for the local soldiers who lost their lives in WWII.
- It is sound investment for the future and to keep the Avenue looking at its best
- The combination of new trees and the granite memorial stone will be a worthy replacement for generations to come

**Comments made by the 4% of respondents in favour of option 1:**
- Trees are an important part of our past, so should be maintained
- It would be a sacrilege to remove the trees in decline and preferable to let them die naturally and replace as was the intention
- Dog owners should still be allowed to walk near the trees – the meadow strip under the cherry trees might not allow this.
**Full comments on project:**

- feel strongly that the original intention of an Avenue of Remembrance be restored. The current situation should not be continued, having seen the sorry state of some of the trees over recent years I feel the impact of the site is lost.
- Option 2 is far and away the best answer. Thank you for taking such trouble over this (and for allocating funds), which will be much appreciated by the community.
- The Council's initiative is to be applauded. It is very important indeed that the Avenue of Remembrance be fully preserved and maintained. As forty year residents of Cobham and with vivid childhood memories of the woeful conflict this worthy local feature has always been much treasured and revered by my wife and I. The shelters forming part of the memorial must, of course, be in no way disturbed in the renewal process. We are pleased to wish the project every success.
- I could not actually tick what I wanted to say. I am pro planting a new set of trees but do not agree that we should not be able to walk under them. We often walk to the tilt across the grass with our dogs and wish to continue to do so.
- I had no idea there was an avenue of remembrance, having only lived here for approx. 10 years. I think it's a lovely idea and would very much like to see a new avenue properly established (even if it's not as extensive as the original plan).
- Trees have been damaged by mowing machinery. Cherry Trees susceptible to Honey Fungus... care needed to remove all roots. Can memorial plaques be restored.
- Excellent idea, the trees have not looked healthy for a long time.
- Not really, It makes good sense and looks to a better future for the memorial.
- Future generations will be glad that this has been done.
- The avenue is a long-standing and attractive feature of Cobham and the trees should be replaced if the existing trees are coming to the ends of their attractive lives.
- Excellent idea.
- When we moved to Cobham 25 years ago, the avenue was glorious in spring. It has become less obvious as an avenue since, as trees have died. Maybe not everyone will appreciate the power of the trees when they were in flower as it has not been a feature for some years. The replacement and management is an excellent proposal - congratulations to those concerned. Any photographs you can provide in the consultation process emphasising the avenue in previous years will surely support the case.
- option 2 is the best.
- The new trees should be flowering cherry trees as intended and funds need to be provided to properly water, look after and monitor the trees once they are planted. The beginning of any work would need to be sensitive to war commemoration dates.
- Investment now for the future is the way forward. Also the trees would be uniform rather than all different ages and sizes.
- Very impressed with the long-term planning.
- Very pleased to see the memorial preserved as it was originally intended. It is a distinctive feature of Cobham's identity.
- With option 2 many current residents will remember how lovely it looked but be gone before there is anything to show & those younger will not know what they are missing!
- Do the new trees have to be cherry trees?
- This proposal makes sense and should go ahead as soon as possible.
- The new trees must be PINK as before.
- Excellent plan.
- I think it is a worthwhile project which should be supported. Option 1 would mean that the avenue would always look tatty and neglected, i.e. not fulfilling its purpose.
- We have lived here for fifty years and support long term proper re planting.
I am glad a proper review has been made and I believe the most important aspect is to ensure the avenue of cherry trees remains as a reminder to those who live in the area and pass through Cobham. Although it is a shame that the old trees cannot be retained, the combination of new trees and the granite memorial stone erected by the Cobham Conservation & Heritage Trust will be a worthy replacement. It will require the council to ensure that suitable contractors tend to the new trees to ensure they do establish and thrive. On past experience I do not have a lot of faith in the contractors selected by the council as money saving doesn’t result in a quality service which is what will be required here.

glad to see a positive suggestion
It is the best long-term solution
Option 2 is making the most sense for the long-term future
Option 2 is really the only way forward. Thank you for all your attention to this and for providing funds.
best option to keep the avenue looking at its best
i prefer option 2
Would it be possible to find a more suitable tree if starting from scratch? Something more long-lasting and not so prone to failure on this site.
The trees on the Tilt have been a splendid sight annually in May - it is only now that my eyes have been opened to the change that has taken place. I am all for replacement after the necessary preparation of the land.
Preserves the history of the site for future generations to remember the fallen of a global war.
Wholehearted support
We are very grateful that funds are available for the renewal of the avenue of remembrance.
Mowing machinery damaged trees, not to mention the odd road accident. Care needed to prevent Honey Fungus attack.
Please progress rapidly this Autumn, so Centenary of WW1 finish can be commemorated in as best an environment as possible.
I believe Option 2 would serve the community best
Replant as option 2, to ensure the long term future & hopefully reduced tree replacement/maintenance
The important thing is to keep a visible memorial
After 70 years it is to be expected that some form of refurbishment will be required. We fully support the complete replacement of all the trees. Our only other comments are: a) if the summer of 2018 is very dry then provision will be required for watering the new trees to ensure they establish properly b) the proposed meadow strip is a very good idea and should be used to encourage wild life as much as possible. c) The cherries provide a stunning perspective in the spring but is it worth considering an alternative native tree that will thrive in the prevailing soil and have a much longer life?
I will possibly not see it at its best in future years. I would love to know that future generations will love it as much as I have over the years. To just keep replacing will not bring it back to full glory, and those men it is in memory of must not be forgotten. We all owe them so much.
The flowering cherry trees are a landmark in Cobham, a source of pride to the villagers who knew it as their unique war memorial. Although I am no longer resident I would love to see them replanted as a whole so that future residents and visitors can enjoy what we have known and at best, know their significance
Yes, it is most important that we never forget those who sacrificed their lives in the defeat of facism.
We should replace the avenue of trees and just as importantly, we should replace the plaques on each tree identifying each of those who gave the ultimate sacrifice. The plaques should be made of a material that has no resale value as scrap metal. Why don't we ask the local school to make the plaques as ceramic tiles similar to the tiles on the Winstanley memorial in Hollyhedge Road.

I think that Option 2 is the best choice.

I agree it is essential to make the memorial symmetrical. Could you use a different type of tree, if it would be easier to establish and last longer?

It is an important war memorial and although the current planting has lasted pretty well it is now appropriate to renew it to revive the original consistency and to set the site up for the coming decades.

Thank you for your well written report setting out all the facts.

This is an important memorial and a very visible one. It would be wonderful to re-invigorate it. I am greatly in favour of this option.

option 2 has most chance of success and value for money in the long run.

It will be better to make the memorial one which is longer lasting than continually needing treatment.

Are there any alternatives to cherry trees which would, (1) be more long lasting, and (2) still have an attractive coloured visual effect, in spring or autumn? If not, then presumably cherry would remain the best even though it would mean a further total replacement in 40-60 years’ time.

Investment of time & soil improvement now will enable future generations to be more aware which is, in my opinion, a vital part of our heritage and awareness. One 'concern' is to protect the new young trees from possible vandalism or accidental breakage - I don't know how this could be done...

The Avenue and its appearance, when approaching Cobham from the East, is an important and visual part of History. The intent of the original planting should be celebrated by a complete renewal, just as happens in Life.

Option 2 makes more sense than Option 1.

If Cherry trees start to decline after only 20 years and there is also a problem with pests and disease, maybe consideration should be given to an alternative kind of tree which would live longer and be more resilient, thereby ensuring an outcome more pleasing to the eye over many years to come. If there is to be a total replanting (which I favour), then let's take the opportunity to choose something more suitable.

Good forward planning

It makes better sense to start again and have a beautiful tree lined Tilt, as it used to be.

Are the cherry tree Kanzan, named after a Japanese mountain appropriate?

Prefer reinstating a full Avenue.

Valuable work

To invest in the future of the War Memorial and restore it to the original intention of an avenue of trees, it seems eminently sensible to uproot what is left of the original/replacement trees and begin again with an avenue of trees of equal maturity.

Option 2 is the only real solution. Thank you for your efforts and for allocating funds.

Like most residents I am used to be so proud of this memorial. I would love to see it reinstated, please.

I'm glad the Council is taking positive action to improve this significant feature of the Tilt area. I have enjoyed the cherry trees colour since moving to Cobham in 1966.

I choose Option 2.

If the trees were all replaced, the new trees would be mature in time for the various WW2 centenary commemorations. When we moved to Cobham in 1988, we did not know the area at all. We first started house hunting in April and the sight of the cherry trees in full blossom was one of the attractive features of the town.
My name is _________ the niece of John Richard Marshall (Uncle Jack) one of those whose sacrifice is commemorated by the trees on the Tilt in Cobham. From when I was a small child in Cobham and until a few years ago the cherry trees had an individually named bronze plaque attached to each tree.

It would be nice to see that provision restored. The reason that I request the provision of the trees is that they are a living representation of our memory and respect. I notice that he is referred to as John Marshall in some places in your documentation and also as John Richard Marshall. We would prefer the latter please.

This is a worthwhile project and will be a great investment for the community for the long term. The council will need to ensure that the new young trees are watered regularly.

Although I am sad that I will not be around when the trees reach maturity, I feel it is the right way to go. I have lived in Stoke d'Abernon since 1964 and have seen what a fine show the original trees were.

Option 1 is in effect only a short-term solution & would never recreate the original avenue.

I'm delighted it is being given proper consideration. The avenue of trees is a beautiful and unusual way of remembering the lives of those who died.

Why not have a memorial stone cross similar to those in most towns and villages throughout the country and leave the trees as they are.

This option gives the better prospect of the avenue becoming again worthy of the intentions of the originators of the project. Choosing option 1 would mean there being a range of trees for many years to come.

It is an excellent project to progress.

Ensuring the future for the Avenue of Remembrance is my main concern. Whilst retaining the older trees sounds a good idea, it is short term and not sustainable. I believe that the original reason for the trees would be best observed by replacing all trees with new varieties.

Take the opportunity to remove the defunct old posts which supported the removed 40mph signs, remove the old "bend" road sign which disappeared over 10 years, and remove the either defunct or inoperative electronic speed indicator.

Great idea to renew completely to keep it looking lovely and special.

to take out the remaining trees .. would sadly be sacrilege ... the truth is ... yes the trees die naturally, those who we remember did not have that privilege. let the trees die naturally and replace as was the intention

The Stoke D'Abernon Residents' Association is delighted to have been invited to take part in this consultation. We are pleased that Elmbridge council is so supportive of the need to revive this iconic and beautiful war memorial. Having considered the options, the committee of this Association is unanimous in supporting Option 2, as this provides a much better long term solution. Ian Nelson, chairman, Stoke D'Abernon Residents' Association

Although I have chosen option 2, I think the older existing trees are stunning, the ones that have been planted more recently have been quite small examples, I therefore think that replacing them all would be good, I do also feel that the trees should be of a reasonable size and maturity so as not to be too small for too many years.

This really is the only sensible option (2) for the restoration of this memorial in the long term. I suggest that a single wooden rail fence around two feet from the ground is placed all around the groups of trees to discourage 'short-cutting' and signs to be erected to advise people why it is fenced and request them to respect the nature of the memorial by walking round.

Do the trees have to be flowering cherry?

I know some people are concerned that the trees will not be out in blossom for many years with option 2 but from a small sapling planted outside my house, blossom appeared within a couple of years or thereabouts. It may not be the full blossom of a mature tree but very pretty nonetheless.
Although you say that the trees should be fully mature by the centenary of the second world war in 2045, maybe you should also say that residents will not be devoid of blossom until then!!

Sad to destroy the last survivors but the argument for total replacement is compelling.

Do they have to be cherry trees? How about Acers which look great throughout the seasons! Cherry trees only look good for a week or two in the Spring.

It is vital that the avenue continues to be Cobham's memorial to the fallen of WW2. As the new trees are likely to flower in 2018 and continue for another 60+ years with the ground work and meadow planting this has to be the best option even if the few original trees have to be sacrificed.

The cherry trees have been a major feature of Cobham for as long as I can remember, but all the old trees are nearing the end of their lives. Providing remedial work to the ground is done well, and new trees are watered regularly for their first year or so after planting, I think radical action is the best long term solution.

Full replacement is the only proper solution. Should have been done at least 5 years ago, if not 10. If the younger trees can be carefully dug up, why not transplant them to the opposite sides of The Tilt.

Don't just cut them down. At least try to make use of them. I'm sure a use for them can be found somewhere local !

Do it as soon as possible - i.e. Start next Monday 2nd October 2017.

The trees used to look much better in previous years. Investing money to properly renew this area is a good idea. This is likely to require new soil + oxygenation to encourage growth.

The second option sounds a very sound idea.

The war Graves Commission should manage this scheme admirably. We must remember the men who gave their lives for us.

The trees are an important part of our past so they should be maintained.

We are fully supporting option 2. The Avenue of Remembrance is such an important part of what Cobham is all about. Cannot imagine it not being there. When in bloom, a most wonderful sight to behold

I think it would be a good idea to refurbish the air raid shelter also. thank you for your service.

Please consider the damage from the salt from road

very worthwhile

1) Some form of notice should be installed, on each side of the Avenue of Remembrance indicating what the trees are for. 2) Should it be title the Avenue of Remembrance for the length of the Avenue. 3) Some form of ceremony should be carried out by the current Mayor, when the first of the new trees are planted with thanks to all who contributed to the replacement. In any way, by sponsorship and by planting.

Look at salt spray damage. Consider spray of trees from road.
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