

CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL

OFFICER'S REPORT TO THE PARISH COUNCIL

Meeting Date: 26th June 2025

Subject: Cemetery Gate Operations Contractor – Opening, Closing & Call-Out Services

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval from Chigwell Parish Council to engage a contractor for managing the opening and closing of cemetery gates, including acting as the primary contact for all public access call-outs, over a 6-month period from 30th June 2025 to 29th December 2025. This arrangement excludes any gate repairs or mechanical maintenance responsibilities.

2. Background

The automated gate system at the cemetery has cost approximately £40,000 to £50,000 since installation. The system has deteriorated and is now estimated to require £10,709 + VAT in repairs. Ongoing issues and future repairs or replacement would incur significant additional costs. To avoid further capital expenditure while maintaining reliable access and public safety, it is proposed that a contractor manage gate operations.

3. Proposal

- Engage a contractor at £10 per gate action (opening or closing).
- **Responsibilities:**
 - **Contractor:**
 - Open and close gates on weekends and national holidays from 30th June to 29th December 2025
 - Close gates on weekday evenings from 30th June to 30th September 2025
 - Act as primary contact for public call-outs (e.g. visitors locked inside)
 - **Cemetery Staff:**
 - Open gates on weekdays year-round
 - Open and close gates on weekdays from 1st October to 29th December 2025
- Visitors who become locked inside will be subject to a call-out charge, payable to the contractor
- Contractor to hold public liability insurance and maintain logs of all activity

4. Items to be Purchased by Chigwell Parish Council

- Commercial padlock, chain and keys — £75.00

- Contractor services for gate operations and call-outs — £10 per gate action

5. Cost Breakdown and Comparison

30 June – 30 September 2025 (Summer)

- Weekday evening closings: 5 per week @ £10 = £50/week
- Weekend and holiday openings/closings: 4 per weekend @ £10 = £40/week

1 October – 29 December 2025 (Autumn/Winter)

- Weekday opening/closing: Covered by staff — no contractor cost
- Weekend and holiday openings/closings: 4 per weekend @ £10 = £40/week

| Activity | Number of Weeks | Weekly Cost | Total Cost |
|--------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------|---------------|
| Weekday evening closings | 14 weeks | £50 | £700 |
| Weekend/holiday openings (full term) | 26 weeks | £40 | £1,040 |
| Total Estimated Cost | | | £1,740 |

Cost Comparison with Caretaker

- Caretaker hourly rate: £16.45
- Estimated 9 hours/week: £148.05
- Equivalent contractor service (9 gate actions): £90.00
- Caretaker cover is not guaranteed during absence, leave, or illness

6. Supporting Information

- Contractor quotation at £10 per gate action
- Gate operation schedule
- Cost comparison with caretaker-based service
- Budget cost code: 100

Preferred Supplier Note:

The preferred contractor already provides similar gate management services for the Woodland Trust at Hainault Woods. The contractor is already working in the area during the required times and has quoted a significantly lower rate than other local providers. A local security firm quoted £27 per visit for comparable services. This reinforces the value and efficiency of appointing the preferred contractor.

7. Council Responsibilities and Considerations

Finance and Best Value for Money:

Contractor engagement presents a lower-cost alternative to internal staff or repairs and ensures operational continuity.

Governance:

A written agreement will set out clear roles and responsibilities.

Community Engagement:

Reliable gate access supports public confidence and visitor satisfaction.

Equal Opportunities:

Applies equally to all members of the public.

Crime and Disorder:

Controlled access improves security.

Human Rights:

Reasonable access is maintained while securing the site.

Health and Safety:

Contractor will follow safe procedures for all operations.

Biodiversity:

No impact on local ecology

Additional Considerations:

Caretaker cover cannot be guaranteed year-round, especially during absence or sickness. The contractor arrangement includes contingency cover at a fixed cost.

8. Recommendation

That Chigwell Parish Council:

- Approves the engagement of the contractor for cemetery gate operations and call-out services from 30th June to 29th December 2025 as outlined
- Authorises officers to finalise and execute the contract
- Approves expenditure of approximately **£1,815** (£1,740 for contractor services + £75 for padlock and keys), charged to budget code 100

Prepared by

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