WARWICK DISTRICT COUNCIL	**Overview & Scrutiny Committee – 10th September 2013**	**Agenda Item No. 8**

Title	Oakley Wood Crematorium Proposed Improvements
For further information about this report please contact	Richard Hall Head of Health & Community Protection 01926-456700 richard.hall@warwickdc.gov.uk Pam Chilvers Bereavement Services Manager pamela.chilvers@warwickdc.gov.uk Richard Jones Organisational Development Officer richard.jones@warwickdc.gov.uk
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	Executive – May 2012 Item No. 4
Background Papers	None

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality & Sustainability Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
Final designs for the car parks are yet to be completed; details of such designs may have an impact upon the impact assessments.	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Deputy Chief Executive	21st August	Andy Jones
Head of Service		n/a
CMT	21st August	
Section 151 Officer	21st August	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	21st August	Andy Jones
Finance	21st August	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	21st August	Cllr. Coker
Consultation & Community Engagement: N/A		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

1. SUMMARY

1.1 Funding for a project to improve facilities at Oakley Wood Crematorium was agreed by Executive at its meeting of 30th May 2012. This report provides an update on the current status of the project.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That members note the content of this report.

3. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATION

3.1 To ensure that members are up to date with the progress of the project.

4. POLICY FRAMEWORK

4.1 Planning ahead for changes in population and demography in our area is very much part of the Fit for the Future approach, as is ensuring that the crematorium facility is sustainable into the future.

5. BUDGETARY FRAMEWORK

5.1 Capital

The Capital Costs of this scheme were outlined in the previous report that went to Executive in May 2012 (Appendix 1). Works are financed from the Capital Investment Reserve.

5.2 Revenue

As shown in the supporting information, the Crematorium raises a significant amount of income, in excess of £1 million per year, yielding net surpluses in the region of £600,000 before taking into account support service recharges and depreciation. Whilst the improvements have limited scope to increase this, not undertaking these works would undermine the Councils ability to maintain such levels in the future. Members were reminded in the February Budget Report that this Council needs to find on-going savings in excess of £2.5 million over the next 5 years. A reduction in income would increase the savings needed.

5.3 Spend to Date

The project was financed to the sum of £983,000. To date, we have spent (or committed to spend) a total of £11,890.

6. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

6.1 N/A

7. BACKGROUND

Oakley Wood offers a unique setting for a crematorium, which many people greatly appreciate. However, this setting that has necessitated a number of delays and changes to the project schedule.

The project can be broken down into four sections; Car Parks, North Chapel, Lodge and Reception Area.

7.1 Car Parks

7.1.1 The original planned location for the additional car parking was to be sited immediately to the right of the site entrance. This would have provided a single, additional car park in which all the additional capacity would be sited.

7.1.2 The project team commissioned a suite of ecological, arboriculture, topographical and ground condition surveys to ensure that the development complies with planning regulation, and to ensure that the improvements have a minimal impact upon the locally unique ecology and biodiversity of the site. In addition to any constraints raised by these surveys, any development must also ensure that interred remains are not disturbed.

7.1.3 Initial consultation prior to submission of the report for Executive approval indicated that the parking area was suitable for development. However, detailed surveys once the project commenced flagged up that the proposed car park would be restricted because of the extent of the adjoining ancient woodland area. As a result of this the overall design of the car parking area had to be reviewed. The forecast timeframe also had to be changed to fit with ecological considerations (i.e. nesting birds and avoidance of bat colonies).

7.1.4 Additional surveys and consultations were undertaken to explore other options for car parking and to ensure that any such locations did not house any other protected species or habitats. These have now concluded that 80 additional car parking spaces can be created. This is considered to be a significant increase above the existing 56 parking spaces.

7.1.5 We have now engaged contractors through the SCAPE framework to take forward work packages for the car parks and the north chapel extension. They are in the process of drawing up detailed designs and specifications, and providing initial budget estimates for these two elements of the project.

7.1.6 Due to the limits of the site and the requirement for new designs, it has not been possible to create dedicated parking for coaches as was originally hoped. However, via the feasibility work undertaken, it has been confirmed that some of the existing space (once combined with the proposed additional car parks) could easily be managed as and when required to accommodate larger vehicles.

7.2 North Chapel

7.2.1 The original plans for the north chapel have thus far remained unchanged through the project. Initial bat surveys have taken place to ensure that we do not put endangered species at risk, but these have shown that the local bats are concentrated in an area of the building unaffected by the developments.

7.2.2 As with the car parks, the SCAPE contractors (Kier) are now in the process of drawing up a budget estimate with detailed plans for the building works and subsequent remodelling of hearse access to the chapel.

7.2.3 We have engaged local ministers and funeral directors to ensure that any alterations form an acceptable change to their procedures, and to make sure that they are aware of the potential impact upon their working practices. This engagement has also involved discussions on the proposed car parking changes.

7.3 Lodge

7.3.1 At the outset of the project proposal, it was uncertain whether the lodge would be available for development as part of this project due to its status as a tenanted domestic dwelling tied, to a position of employment at the crematorium.

7.3.2 Work has been undertaken with County legal to establish the position of the Council and the tenant in terms of how the building could potentially be used.

7.3.3 Since this work, the lodge has been vacated and permission granted for a change of use from a domestic dwelling to office space. This was granted in March 2013.

7.3.4 With the planning granted, we are able to proceed with the planned changes to the building via our corporate contractors. This work has, thus far, been held back to allow for the feasibility designs to be completed on the car park.

7.4 Reception Area

7.4.1 We have been working with the ICT department to understand the requirements of the new building set-up, and are taking the opportunity to use the project to address long-standing issues with connectivity and infrastructure problems on site. This will help to alleviate ongoing service risks.

7.4.2 As part of this work, we have engaged a specialist telecoms engineer to assess the site and identify the many redundant systems that have been added to over the decades. A full inventory has now been produced, and recommended alterations given.

7.5 Next Steps

7.5.1 By the time this report goes to committee, we will have initial budget estimates and designs back from the SCAPE contractors. Once this information is in hand, a project order form will be signed with the contractor, and work will begin to move forward the designs, and to build the car parks and north chapel.

7.5.2 Work on converting the Lodge is due to start in the autumn at an estimated cost of £45,000 (excluding ICT infrastructure and rewiring).

7.5.3 The modifications to the reception area cannot commence until the Lodge is complete due to the need for continuous service and the transfer of offices from their current location (where the reception area will be sited) to the Lodge.

7.5.4 Whilst the exact scheduling of the car parks/north chapel work package is still being developed by Kier, we currently anticipate work to commence in late autumn/early winter. The exact details are not yet known as the contractors are working hard to ensure they operate around the various demands of running a continuous service at the site during the works. Part of the budgetary consideration is the potential loss of income if the crematorium closes. Scheduling of works is therefore important.