

**BLAKENALL AND BLOXWICH LNP**

**5<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2007**

**BLOXWICH CEMETERY**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership regarding the vehicular access at Bloxwich Cemetery. Partners will recall that this matter has been considered at several meetings.

**2. RECOMMENDATION**

- 2.1 The Local Neighbourhood Partnership is asked to note this report and to agree to receive a further update report once the rising arm barrier has been installed.

**3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 At your meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006 it was resolved that :-
- i) Funding be approved to the sum of £4,750 to install a rising arm barrier in place of the existing manual barrier situated adjacent to the chapel.
  - ii) Funding be approved to the sum of up to £800, if required, to ensure that staff are on duty at the cemetery on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day.
  - iii) The timescale for works to be reported to members of the Local Neighbourhood Partnership.
- 3.2 Accordingly, an order was placed to install a rising arm barrier. However, as it transpired that this work would not be complete in time for the Christmas holiday period, arrangements were established to recruit volunteers to staff the cemetery to enable access on Christmas Day, Boxing Day and New Year's Day. Instructions to these staff were issued to permit access to Blue Badge holders as agreed at the meeting on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006.
- 3.3 At your meeting on the 13<sup>th</sup> December 2006 it was further resolved that:-
- i) Access and passes for the barrier control at the cemetery be granted for not only Blue Badge holders, but for any other person who has a physical impairment which makes navigating the cemetery difficult for the individuals, subject to written and signed evidence from their respective G.P.'s.

- 3.4 Subsequent instructions were issued by the Leader of the Council, the Cabinet Portfolio Holder and the Chair of the LNP, that members of the public who could provide a G.P.'s note were also allowed vehicular access as well as Blue Badge holders for this Christmas holiday period.
- 3.5 For the many reasons outlined in a previous report to the LNP on the 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2006, and in a letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2006 to all LNP members, officers remain concerned about a policy permitting access to members of the public with G.P. letters. This would be contrary to the advice of the Council's Access Officer, and it remains the view of the service managers that this would cause operational difficulties. Staff issuing access cards for the barrier, and operational staff based in cemeteries are not in a position to assess the merits of personal and confidential correspondence, to ask for doctor's notes in this way, and to assess whether this entitles the bearer to take advantage of the additional access for visitors experiencing mobility difficulties.
- 3.6 On Christmas Eve afternoon, in fact, two members of staff reported that they were subjected to verbal abuse, threats and spitting by a member of the public who was unable to drive his vehicle into the cemetery. The staff quite rightly withdrew from the scene in order to diffuse the situation.
- 3.7 The service managers continue to recommend the Blue Badge Scheme as being the most consistent and objective means of assessing mobility difficulty. It will therefore not be possible to extend additional access concessions beyond Blue Badge holders to vehicle drivers/passengers with a G.P.'s letter.
- 3.8 The Blue Badge scheme is administered by the Council and anyone that feels that they qualify for one, can contact the Council's One Stop Shop at the Civic Centre. This is a relatively simple process and details of the scheme are explained in the appendix to this report.
- 3.9 It is hoped that the installation of the rising arm barrier will take place before the end of the financial year. Once installed, Blue Badge holders may apply for an access card which will permit them vehicular access anytime during normal cemetery opening hours. A verbal update on progress will be given at the meeting.

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