



FULL COUNCIL - INFORMATION REPORT

Date Written	1 st October 2018
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Service Area	Communications, Consultation and Engagement
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non-Exempt
Committee Date	24 th October 2018

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

LOCKING OF THE CEMETERY GATES

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 At a Full Council meeting on 27th September 2017, Council approved that a listening and engagement exercise and public consultation take place regarding the possible re-introduction of locking the vehicular access gates in cemeteries throughout the County Borough.
- 1.2 This report presents the methodology and findings of both the listening and engagement exercise and the public consultation.

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In December 2013 a Cabinet decision, subsequently ratified by Full Council on 26th February 2014, was taken to leave the Cemeteries' vehicular gates unlocked reducing a security contract and resulting in a £75k saving per annum.
- 2.2 At this time, as the action of leaving the gates open resulted in an improved service to the public (i.e. no restrictions on visiting times) no consultation was required.
- 2.3 The pedestrian gates on all our cemeteries have always remained open.

- 2.4 In the 4 years since the vehicular gates have been left unlocked, there have been no Anti-Social Behaviour Reports on the Police 'Niche' system or via the Council's Corporate Complaints procedure in relation to any of our cemeteries.
- 2.5 A request made to look at re-introducing the locking of vehicular gates at Pant cemetery necessitated a review of the situation. This was raised by the ward councillors of Dowlais following feedback from residents.
- 2.6 A public engagement was required as the re-introduction of locking the vehicular gates would constitute a detrimental position to the service user. This was undertaken in two parts – a listening and engagement exercise and public consultation.
- 2.7 A listening and engagement exercise took place between 20th November, 2017 and 28th November, 2017 followed by a public consultation exercise between 29th January and 26th February.
- 2.8 Due to an administrative error, the results of the public consultation exercise could not be used. The survey software is 'rule' driven. This means that the questions answered are dependent upon the answers given to previous questions. i.e. if the answer to the first question is 'yes', then the survey will take you straight to question five.
- 2.9 As the rule setting wasn't activated on the first survey, respondents could view and answer every question, regardless of their responses. This meant that the results couldn't be analysed correctly.
- 2.10 This error was corrected and the public consultation was carried out again, for a period of 4 weeks, from Monday, 14th May, 2018 until Monday, 11th June, 2018.

3.0 LISTENING & ENGAGEMENT EXERCISE

- 3.1 We wanted to listen to the views of the community and as part of pre-consultation, we held a listening and engagement exercise which consisted of five public drop-in sessions.
- 3.2 11 people in total attended the sessions. Details of turnout at each venue are listed below:

Venue	Date & time	Number of attendees
Fir Tree Community Centre, Treharris	20 th November, 2017 3pm – 5pm	0
Bedlinog Rugby Club	21 st November, 2017 3pm – 5pm	0

Cefn Community Centre		22 nd November, 2017 4pm – 6pm	5
Aberfan Centre	Community	23 rd November, 2017 3pm – 5pm	1
Pantyscallog School	Primary	28 th November 3:30pm – 5:30pm	5

3.3 Those who attended these sessions were in favour of the vehicular access gates at cemeteries in Merthyr Tydfil being locked at certain times.

4.0 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

4.1 The purpose of the public consultation was to establish if the public want the vehicular access to the cemeteries in Merthyr Tydfil to remain open as they are currently, or if they want them to be locked at certain times.

4.2 A questionnaire was available to complete online or in hard copy.

Online questionnaire

4.3 A questionnaire was created using the Smart Survey software.

4.4 The link to the questionnaire was:

- Uploaded to the Council's website
- Uploaded to Facebook and Twitter
- Sent to all staff and Councillors

Hard copy questionnaires

4.5 Hard copy questionnaires were handed out to members of the public at the cemeteries.

Awareness Raising

4.6 Awareness raising of the public consultation was undertaken in a number of ways:

- A press release was issued to and published in, the Merthyr Express
- A press release was uploaded to the Council's website
- Information was uploaded regularly to Facebook and Twitter
- An e-mail was sent to all staff and councillors

Responses

- 536 questionnaires were completed in total

- 466 completed the questionnaire online
- 70 completed a hard copy questionnaire
- In 2014, approximately 600 signatories expressed concerns that the gates to Pant Cemetery would no longer be locked during the hours of darkness. They wanted the Council to reconsider its decision in order to prevent unnecessary damage to memorials.

Partial Responses

4.7 There were 146 'Partial Responses' to the questionnaire online. This meant that some questions were answered, but the questionnaire wasn't submitted.

Key findings

4.8 320 (59.70%) of respondents thought that the vehicular access gates should remain open, as they are currently.

4.9 216 (40.30%) of respondents thought that the gates should be locked at certain times.

4.10 We asked those who wanted the gates to be locked at certain times for their reasons. Anti-social behaviour was the overwhelming reason (ie. drug-use, vandalism, theft and fly-tipping) with some respondents citing respect as being the reason that the gates should be locked.

4.11 The most popular time for the gates to be open were from 8am until 8pm, followed by 7am until 7pm.

4.12 Of the 216 who thought the gates should be locked, only 61 said they would consider getting involved in a community group within their area to take ownership of locking and closing the gates. 87 said they wouldn't and 68 said they weren't sure.

4.13 Despite anti-social behaviour being the main reason why people want the vehicular access gates locked at certain times, only 75 people said that they had witnessed or been a victim of anti-social behaviour while visiting one of the cemeteries in Merthyr Tydfil, compared to 461 who said they hadn't.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

5.1 No financial implications to the Public Consultation.

6.0 INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT

	Positive Impacts	Negative Impacts	Not Applicable
1. Merthyr Tydfil Well-being Objectives	0 of 4	0 of 4	0 of 4
2. Sustainable Development Principles - How have you considered the five ways of working: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Long term • Prevention • Integration • Collaboration • Involvement 	1 of 5	0 of 5	4 of 5
3. Protected Characteristics <i>(including Welsh Language)</i>	0 of 10	0 of 10	0 of 10
4. Biodiversity	0 of 1	0 of 1	0 of 1
<p><u>Summary:</u></p> <p>The main positive impact is that the public were consulted with as part of the listening and engagement exercise and public consultation in order to seek their view on the locking/opening of the cemetery gates.</p> <p>There were no negative impacts, as this report is presenting the findings of the listening and engagement exercise and public consultation, with no proposals being put forward at this stage.</p>			

ELLIS COOPER
DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE

COUNCILLOR ANDREW BARRY
CABINET MEMBER
FOR GOVERNANCE AND CORPORATE
SERVICES

BACKGROUND PAPERS

Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Findings from the Listening and Engagement Exercise on the Opening and Locking Of Cemeteries within the County Borough Of Merthyr Tydfil	Nov 2017	Communications, Consultation and Engagement Office
Findings from the Public Consultation on the Opening and Locking Of Cemeteries within the County Borough Of Merthyr Tydfil	May – June 2018	Communications, Consultation and Engagement Office
Petition received in 2014	2014	Democratic Services Office
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No