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| Report to     | - | Cabinet                                   |
| Date          | - | 15 January 2018                           |
| Report of the | - | Executive Director of Business Operations |
| Subject       | - | Cemetery Lodge, Bexhill                   |

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**Recommendation:** It be **RESOLVED:** That:

- 1) Approval be given for the submission of a planning application for a new entrance to Bexhill Cemetery from St Marys Lane, incorporating if practicable the original cemetery gates and pillars, the cost of construction to be met from reserves; and
  - 2) Officers be authorised to identify the level of interest within the community for a community-led housing scheme at the Cemetery Lodge site and to report back to Members at a future meeting.
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**Service Manager: Brenda Mason**  
**Lead Cabinet Member: Councillor Mrs Hughes**

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**Introduction**

1. In December 2017 Members considered proposals for the long term use and disposal of the Cemetery Lodge site, Bexhill, as a community led housing scheme. This was followed by a Cabinet site visit to consider further the suitability of the land and to help Members make an informed decision.
2. This report provides additional information and a revised set of recommendations to reflect Member feedback. Further information is provided on relocating the cemetery entrance, preparing the cemetery lodge site ready for future disposal/redevelopment, and a proposal for discussions with the local community on community led housing scheme and the adjoining site at 276 Turkey Road.

**New entrance to Bexhill Cemetery and associated works**

3. Relocating the access to Bexhill Cemetery has a number of benefits. Principally, a new entrance will deal with the existing awkward junction of St Mary's Lane and Turkey Road. It will also enable some additional parking provision at the new entrance to accommodate busier periods. By separating access from the cemetery, it will create a self-contained development site where the Cemetery Lodge now stands.
4. It is recommended that officers be authorised to proceed with a planning application to reconfigure the entrance to the cemetery. As part of the planning submission, officers will commission detailed drawings of the

intended new entrance, road layout, car parking provision, drainage and associated landscape works. Proposals will be sought that, if feasible and affordable, re-use the current gates and pillars at the new entrance. It is possible that this will significantly increase the cost of the works and a view will be taken on the value created by the relocation.

5. It is envisaged that this project could be completed in the financial year 2018/2019. Planning and Highways have both indicated their support in principle to the outlined approach.

### **Site Value**

6. The site was last valued in 2014 and as existing, was valued for market sale between £225k and £235k. However, the development potential for the site was separately considered, providing a higher value of £300k. That was based on the assumption that the site would have exclusive access separated from that to the cemetery and creating a larger plot of land for redevelopment with planning potential for a minimum of 5 dwellings. Officers are seeking an up to date valuation of the redevelopment potential of the site and will report this, if available, at the meeting.

### **Community Led Housing Scheme**

7. It is recommended that, working in conjunction with Action in Rural Sussex Community Housing Hub, officers make further enquiries to establish what interest may exist in the wider community for a community-led housing scheme and for officers to report back progress to a future meeting. A decision on the future of the current building will be made after the outcome of these preliminary discussions.

### **Land at 276 Turkey Road**

8. The Cemetery Lodge site adjoins a vacant plot of land at 276 Turkey Road that is the subject of significant planning history and a number of different development plans. A confidential account of the background to this site is attached at Appendix 1. In summary, the Council sold the land to Gullivers Bowls Club in 2002 for use as an indoor bowls club, subject to a restrictive covenant constraining development for other uses. A number of development proposals have come forward in the interim, none so far with any success. There are proposals currently under discussion for the lifting of the covenant to enable the development of housing as the Gullivers Bowls Club no longer require this land.
9. In recent times officers have enquired if the adjacent landowner would be interested in acquiring Cemetery Lodge as part of their development proposal. However, the owner has declined, stating it offered limited additional development value.

### **Conclusion**

10. Progressing the work to install a new cemetery entrance would optimise the site either for a community-led housing scheme or for sale on the open market

or as a development site. In the meantime, and whilst this work is carried out, there is the opportunity for discussions to establish what interest may exist within the community to develop the site for the benefit of the local residents.

Dr Anthony Leonard  
Executive Director Business Operations

**Risk Assessment Statement**

The Council is under pressure to deliver affordable housing to meet the growing needs of those in housing need. The proposal offers an opportunity to meet our statutory housing duties and the needs of residents.

The property is currently standing empty and the Council will come under increasing pressure from nearby residents and the emergency services to make the site available for redevelopment.

There is a risk that by retaining the existing building, with no planning requirement to do so, that the Council may fail to obtain best value for the site, both financially and in view of the opportunity available to meet other strategic priorities.

(Appendix 1 to this report (Agenda Item 8.1) was considered exempt from publication by virtue of paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended).