



Subject:	Update on Commonwealth War Graves
Date:	12 th October 2021
Reporting Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services
Contact Officer:	Michael Patterson, Bereavement Services Manager

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	To seek Members' views on a request for a new Commonwealth War Grave Headstone in Dundonald Cemetery and a request to plant a tree under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme in Shankill Graveyard.
2.0	Recommendations
2.1	The Committee is asked to: <ul style="list-style-type: none">Consider and agree to the requests from the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to erect a new headstone in Dundonald Cemetery and plant a tree in Shankill Graveyard under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme.
3.0	Main Report
	<i>Main Issue</i>
3.1	The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) was established in 1917 to construct cemeteries and memorials and maintain records for the war dead of the First

World War. The commission owns 2,500 cemeteries; and has built 23,000 memorials across 150 countries and territories. One of the principles of the CWGC is to make no distinction between rank, race or creed. The CWGC works under a royal charter as a not-for-profit organisation. Currently the CWGC is paid £23 per year for every UK related grave and other governments have similar arrangements.

3.2 *CWGC*

The Commission has constructed 791 headstones for graves of war dead in all of the Council's cemeteries (apart from Friar's Bush) and 172 in Milltown Cemetery. They have constructed and maintain a 'Cross of Sacrifice' in Dundonald and City Cemeteries. The large screen wall monument in City Cemetery also belongs to the CWGC. The CWGC undertakes extensive research on all the dead it is responsible for commemorating. The CWGC's comprehensive and linked websites are a significant resource for those doing genealogical research and this contributes to some of the visitors to our cemeteries.

3.3 *Construction*

The CWGC use Kilkenny Limestone to construct their headstone. Their unique foundations and ground anchoring system complies with BS 8415 and all memorial safety requirements. The sculptor they use is registered with the Council. The foundation system comes with the stone and the sculptor undertakes all the work. If a CWGC headstone is damaged or fails a safety test they carry out the repairs quickly. There is no cost to Belfast City Council in the construction and maintenance of CWGC headstones.

3.4 *Application*

Recent research has identified one additional war casualty who died from wounds after the First World War. They are currently buried in Dundonald Cemetery with only a wooded cross as a marker. The Plot was bought in 1915 and the grave owners registered with the Council are no longer alive. The CWGC have conducted an established communication process to connect and consult with any remaining family members and a descendant of the deceased has consented. The CWGC has applied to the Council to erect a headstone at the grave. Members may be aware that on 25th February 2019 the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group decided that that the administrative charge of £18 would not be applied to CWGC as it is not-for-profit organisation and this decision was approved at P&C on 5th March 2019 and ratified at Council on 1st April 2019.

3.5	<p><i>The Queens Green Canopy Scheme</i></p> <p>The Commission have asked permission to plant a tree in Shankill Graveyard adjacent to one of their headstones under the Queens Green Canopy Scheme. The Commission are planning to mark the Queen’s Platinum Jubilee by planting a tree in every County in the UK, adjacent to one of their marked graves. Shankill Graveyard is their choice for County Antrim.</p> <p>This is in line with the agreed policy of tree planting which states:</p> <p><i>‘Permission for future tree planting requests may be granted by the People and Communities Committee on a request by request basis. Any tree planting proposals/request received by the Council should fit in and be aligned with the Council’s ‘Tree Management Plan’ for that individual Park/Open Space as advised by Council Officers within City and Neighbourhood Services’</i></p>
3.6	<p>If Committee support the tree planting proposal, it will come under the tree management plan for Shankill Graveyard, as part of a replacement planting programme and can be resourced from the related revenue budget. The additional tree will be included as part of the one million tree planting running total.</p>
3.7	<p>The Commission will work with the Councils Woodland and Recreation Officer to source a local species. The planting season is from November to March. The Commission have confirmed that they will plant the tree with minimal publicity, and it is not planned to have any additional markers onsite. Subsequent maintenance will be completed by the OSS team in North Belfast.</p>
3.8	<p>Based on the noted policy statement above, Committee is asked to accede to the request.</p>
	<p>Financial & Resource Implications</p>
3.9	<p>The administrative fees will be borne within everyday budgets.</p>
	<p>Equality and good relations implications / Rural Needs Assessment</p>
3.10	<p>There are no equality or good relations implications associated with this report.</p>
4.0	<p>Appendices – Documents Attached</p>
	<p>None.</p>