AGENDA 12, Enc x) Workers Memorial Garden Enhancement Proposal Newbiggin Road, St. John's Churchyard

Background

The Workers Memorial Garden, located in St. Johns churchyard on Newbiggin Road, represents an important tribute to those who have lost their lives to work. Commemorated annually on Workers Memorial Day (April 28th), this space holds significant meaning for our community. While Northumberland County Council (NCC) cemetery staff have maintained the garden, there is an opportunity to enhance this meaningful space with a sustainable approach that honours its significance while addressing practical maintenance considerations.

Project Vision

Following a collaborative site meeting between NCC and Ashington Town Council (ATC) representatives, a vision has emerged for a respectful enhancement that will create a dignified, impactful memorial garden that can be maintained effectively for years to come.

Proposed Enhancements

Paved Area Restoration:

- Professional cleaning and scrubbing of the existing paved area to restore the brickwork.
- Removal of vegetation growth between paving stones.
- Application of protective sealant to preserve the restored surface and facilitate future maintenance.

Quadrangle Redesign:

Complete renovation of the four quadrangle beds with the following elements:

- Installation of professional grade weed membrane following excavation.
- Application of appropriate weed control measures.
- Filling with heritage gravel in two beds to complement the existing churchyard aesthetic.
- Introduction of crushed plum slate in front bed as a contrasting element, offering visual interest while remaining low maintenance.
- Placement of sandstone boulders (repurposed from rockeries being removed outside the grounds) as mounting surfaces for mining memorial plaques in two designated areas in front beds (with crushed plum slate).

Planting Scheme:

- Planting of matching cherry trees in each quadrangle bed, building upon the existing cherry tree in the rear quadrangle.
- Addition of slow-growing evergreen specimens in the rear bed to provide protection and year-round visual appeal
- Refurbishment of memorial plaques to be set on sandstone plinths in the front quadrangle.

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Implementation Partnership

This project represents another excellent example of collaborative working between Northumberland County Council and Ashington Town Council. It is proposed that:

- NCC Cemetery team will undertake the paved area restoration.
- ATC will complete the redesign of the quadrangle beds, including labour and materials.
- NCC Cemetery staff will support with removal of soil from the beds, with some material being repurposed for backfilling graves elsewhere in the cemetery.
- Upon completion, NCC will incorporate the enhanced garden into their ongoing maintenance schedule.

This partnership approach allows ATC, through the expertise of Mark and Ryan, to lead on capital improvements to enhance this meaningful memorial space, while ensuring its long-term care through NCC's ongoing maintenance commitment.

Funding Request

The estimated budget for landscaping and planting materials is £1,600 (max). It is proposed that this is funded from the College Ward Environmental Enhancements budget, of which there is £5,000 remaining.

The Council is requested to approve the estimated budget of £1,600 and to delegate spending authority to the Executive Officer upon agreement of final costs.