



# HILLINGDON

LONDON

## Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee Review Scoping Report 2012/13

### **OBJECTIVE**

**A REVIEW OF THE REGULATIONS AND BYELAWS RELATING TO  
CEMETERIES AND BURIAL GROUNDS WITHIN HILLINGDON**

#### **Aim of review**

To examine the Regulations and Byelaws which relate to the Council's 8 cemeteries and burial grounds and to look at modernising and updating them to reflect the differing cultural and religious requirements of residents of the Borough.

#### **Terms of Reference**

1. To look at the cemeteries and burial grounds within the Borough, and to examine how they are maintained to ensure they are at a good standard.
2. To review the existing Council policies, rules, regulations and byelaws as they relate to cemeteries and to look at their application and enforcement.
3. To look at the different religious and cultural requirements for burials and memorials within the Borough and how the Bereavement Service provides this.
4. To investigate best practice and experiences of other local authorities in relation to their cemeteries and burial grounds.
5. To examine the long term capacity and space which will be required at the Borough's cemeteries and burial grounds.

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PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee  
18 October 2012

6. To make recommendations to Cabinet on the outcome of this review.

### **Reasons for the review**

The current regulations which relate to the Council's cemeteries and burial grounds were produced in 1994 (see attached **Appendix 1**) and they are in need of modernising and updating to reflect the changing needs and requirements of the different cultural and religious groups within the Borough.

The regulations will need to strike a balance in relation to the requirements of different cultures and religions. There are differences in terms of burials, memorials and the different manner in which people pay respect to their loved ones at their grave sides.

### **Supporting the Cabinet & Council's policies and objectives**

The Council's Cemetery Regulations will be updated, together with policies and byelaws which relate to cemeteries.

## **INFORMATION AND ANALYSIS**

### **Key Issues**

1. Rules on mementos, furniture and memorials (including size, types, materials, permissions etc)
2. Rules on purchase of grave spaces
3. The use of authorised installers for memorials and maintenance of safe condition of memorials
4. Revision of the Council's byelaws
5. Maintenance and upkeep of the Council's cemeteries
6. Rules on behaviour?
7. Application of policies and byelaws

### **Remit - who / what is this review covering?**

The review will look at the following Council owned and maintained cemeteries and burial grounds and look at the issue of modernising and updating the Council's regulations and byelaws which relate to them.

Cherry Lane Cemetery  
Harlington Burial Ground  
Harmondsworth Burial Ground  
Hillingdon & Uxbridge Cemeteries  
Northwood Cemetery  
Victoria Lane Burial Ground  
West Drayton Cemetery

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Woodland Burial Ground (to the rear of West Drayton Cemetery)

**Connected work** (recently completed, planned or ongoing)

There is no other current work in this area at Hillingdon Council. However, similar reviews recently took place in Harrow and Slough (albeit with slightly varying objectives).

### **Key information required**

- Cemetery Regulations 1994
- Summary of existing bylaws and policies which apply to cemeteries and burial grounds
- Views of service users
- Examples of current noncompliance of byelaws and inconsistency of application

## **EVIDENCE & ENQUIRY**

### **Witnesses**

- Bereavement Services – London Borough of Hillingdon
- Funeral directors
- Services users/stakeholders
- Legal Services Officers
- Officers from neighbouring boroughs
- Site visits if appropriate

### **Intelligence**

- The Council's Cemetery Regulations (drafted in 1994)

### **Consultation and Communications**

- Consultation with funeral directors?
- Neighbouring boroughs (that are seen as exemplars in this field)

### **Potential Lines of enquiry**

- What policies are currently in place?
- What byelaws currently exist?
- What is the guidance to the size of memorials?
- Who is responsible for the maintenance of individual burial plots?
- Are there any sanctions for not maintaining individual burial plots?
- What steps are taken to promote dignity and respect for when visitors visit cemeteries?

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## PART 1 – MEMBERS, PUBLIC AND PRESS

- What maintenance arrangements are currently in place?
- What regulations are there on what is acceptable and unacceptable in terms of memorials?
- Are there currently any policies in place with regards to authorised memorials?
- What processes are there in place for applying byelaws in terms of restrictions?
- Is equalities suitably covered by the policies?
- Are there restrictions to acquiring plot sizes and what plot sizes are currently available?
- By whom and how are decisions made on what can and cannot be installed around graves and where are the records of these decisions?
- What is seen as good practice across London (in terms of byelaws, weekend enforcement/monitoring of application of byelaws, etc)?

## **PROPOSALS**

- 1) To create a 5 year strategy and implementation plan for the Council's cemeteries.
- 2) To develop a proper (and ongoing) survey of all graves for structural integrity.
- 3) To create a fair and consistent process for approving applications for graveside memorials.
- 4) To propose standards for the design and layout of future cemeteries.

## **LOGISTICS**

### **Proposed timeframe & milestones**

<b>Meeting Date *</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Purpose / Outcome</b>
30 July 2012	Agree Scoping Report	Information and analysis
20 September 2012	Witness Session 1	Evidence & enquiry
18 October 2012	Witness session 2	Evidence & enquiry
15 November 2012	Witness session 3	Evidence & enquiry
6 December 2012-06-28	Draft Final Report	Proposals – agree recommendations and final draft report

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*\* Specific meetings can be shortened or extended to suit the review topic and needs of the Committee*

## **Risk assessment**

Risks include:

- continuing complaints about grounds maintenance, with knock-on income implications and costs to council budgets to cover shortfall;
- damage to Council's reputation;
- impact to arrangement with Harrow Council;
- byelaws remain out of date, leading to complaints;
- application of byelaws remains inconsistent leading to further noncompliance and subsequent complaints;
- benefits from appropriately and consistently applied byelaws not realised.