

RESIDENTS' AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE: REVIEW OF REGULATIONS AND BYELAWS RELATING TO CEMETERIES AND BURIAL GROUNDS WITHIN HILLINGDON

Cabinet Member	Councillor Jonathan Bianco
Cabinet Portfolio	Finance, Property and Business Services
Officer Contact	Steven Maiden, Administration Directorate
Papers with report	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee review of the Regulations and Byelaws relating to Cemeteries and Burial Grounds within Hillingdon. 2. Redrafted Cemeteries Regulations. 3. Equality Impact Assessment.

HEADLINE INFORMATION

Purpose of report	To receive the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee's review of the Regulations and Byelaws relating to Cemeteries and Burial Grounds within Hillingdon.
Contribution to our plans and strategies	Putting our residents first.
Financial Cost	To be contained within budget.
Relevant Policy Overview Committee	Residents' and Environmental Services
Ward(s) affected	N/A

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

1. Welcomes the report from the Residents' and Environmental Services Policy Overview Committee (as in Appendix 1) on the review into the Cemeteries Regulations.
2. Endorses the recommendations of the Policy Overview Committee as reflected below.
3. Approves the redrafted Cemeteries Regulations (as in Appendix 2).

Policy Overview Committee Recommendations

Sustainability / Fairer Usage by All

- a) That Cabinet agree the revised set of Cemetery Regulations that have been updated to make the rules clearer and fairer for *all* residents and users of different religious beliefs. This includes the necessary promotion of the rules both to funeral directors and bereaved families in a suitable and sensitive manner.

Resident Engagement

- b) Support any 'friends' groups that may wish to be established in relation to local cemeteries; additionally, that the Council continues to work closely with the Safer Neighbourhood Team (SNT) and ask officers to agree a local procedure on how to deal with anti-social behaviour, specifically within cemeteries.
- c) Ask officers to investigate the reintroduction of leaflets and a pictorial booklet to summarise key elements of the regulations to be circulated to bereaved families via Funeral Directors.

Good Maintenance

- d) Considers the best way for officers to inspect memorials in cemeteries and how to best achieve this in line with health and safety objectives;
- e) Welcome Cabinet's decision to bring cemetery grounds maintenance back 'in-house' as part of the award winning Green Spaces team.
- f) That Cabinet agree to the creation of a long-term (5 year minimum) rolling strategy for the Council's cemeteries, which should be published on the Council's website and at the cemeteries office. This should include, in particular, a winter rolling programme of works to cemeteries be publicised to residents so they are clear when essential works are taking place.
- g) Having reviewed the grounds and facilities across the Borough and following evidence received from witnesses, to note three particular service improvements, which Cabinet may wish to investigate further and consider as part of the service and budget planning process:
 - To explore more cost effective options of using machinery to break down clay soil used for graves;
 - The lack of toilet facilities and a shelters for families to congregate at any of the Borough's cemeteries with the exception of Hillingdon, noting that there is also a lack of places of prayer;
 - The condition of the Grade I arch at the entrance of Hillingdon & Uxbridge cemetery.

Reasons for recommendations

The main objective of this review was to modernise and update the Council's Cemeteries Regulations, which were no longer seen to be fit for the purposes of providing a sustainable and culturally sensitive service to the Borough's diverse communities. The regulations, first produced in 1994, required redrafting to accommodate some of the specific needs of different cultural and

religious groups as well as to ensure that they provided an equitable and enforceable usage policy throughout the Borough.

The review also sought to assess the maintenance of existing facilities at the Borough's Cemeteries that had, at times, received a service level below the high standards that the Council aimed to achieve in this area. The Committee's priorities here were to ensure the safety of the Borough's memorial headstones and to improve the level of service provided to residents in all of Hillingdon's cemeteries.

Alternative options considered / risk management

The Cabinet could decide to reject some or all of the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting Information

1. The Terms of Reference of the review were as follows:

- 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.
- To review the existing Council policies, rules, regulations and byelaws as they relate to cemeteries and to look at their application and enforcement.
- To look at the different religious and cultural requirements for burials and memorials within the Borough and how the Bereavement Service provides this.
- To investigate best practice and experiences of other local authorities in relation to their cemeteries and burial grounds.
- To examine the long-term capacity and space, which will be required at the Borough's cemeteries and burial grounds.
- To make recommendations to Cabinet on the outcome of this review.

2. The review took place between July and December 2012 and received evidence from:

- Council officers from Bereavement Services and the Civil Protection Service,
- The Council's Green Spaces, Sports and Leisure Senior Manager,
- Harrow Council's Green Spaces Sports and Leisure Manager,
- The Council's Anti-Social Behaviour Service Manager,
- A representative from the Metropolitan Police,
- The Borough Solicitor,
- Service users of some of the Council's cemeteries, and
- Representatives from local Funeral Directors.

3. Many of the recommendations of this review relate to the redrafting of the Council's Cemeteries Regulations. Based on the discussions of the Committee, officers provided a redrafted copy of the Regulations that was agreed by Members as accurately reflecting the needs of residents as presented by witnesses. These were redrafted with the assistance of the Borough Solicitor to ensure their compliance with the relevant legislation. The updated Cemeteries Regulations are attached to the report and Cabinet is asked to approve them alongside the report itself.

4. For information, the accompanying Equality Impact Assessment is also appended.

5. The review was carried out with the understanding that any suggested recommendations for any possible enhancements to the facilities at the cemeteries would only be undertaken with

further feasibility work by officers and Cabinet as part of the service and budget planning process.

6. It is proposed to undertake a full building services report on the Gatehouse at Uxbridge Cemetery to identify the scope of works required to restore the building and arrest its deterioration. In this regard, a briefing was given to relevant Cabinet Members in February 2013 on the outcome of a tender exercise for the relevant consultants carried out by officers at the request of the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Business Services. It was agreed informally to proceed with funding the survey, though given the expected value, a Cabinet Member report will be required for formal approval. Once this is given, it is expected to take up to 6 weeks to complete the survey. The survey will identify the scope of works and provide estimated costs for a budget strategy to be formulated to present to Cabinet Members for consideration.

Financial Implications

It is expected that Recommendations (a) to (f) of the Committee's report can be implemented within existing expenditure budgets for the management of the Council's cemeteries. Where there are specific service improvements identified in Recommendation (g), these will, subject to the views of the Cabinet Member for Finance Property and Business Services, be costed and any capital investment implications identified for further consideration within the Council's Medium Term Financial Forecast (MTFF) process.

EFFECT ON RESIDENTS, SERVICE USERS & COMMUNITIES

What will be the effect of the recommendations?

The implementation of the modernised and updated Cemeteries Regulations will help to ensure that the services provided by the Council's Bereavement Services and Green Spaces Team will be sensitive to the needs of the Borough's diverse communities as well as being equitable, sustainable and well maintained.

Consultation Carried Out or Required

The Committee heard evidence from the witnesses listed above and undertook site visits to the Borough's cemeteries.

CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Property and Construction

Corporate Property and Construction supports the recommendations made in this report.

Corporate Finance

Corporate Finance has reviewed this report and concurs with the financial implications set out above, noting that the recommendations (a) to (f) of the Committee's report could be implemented within existing resources whereas recommendation (g) could potentially require additional resources. Such additional resources could either be identified through the MTFF process or existing unallocated growth budgets.

As noted within the report, a separate report will be presented to the Cabinet Member for Finance, Property & Business Services recommending appointment of a contractor to undertake survey works on the arch at Uxbridge Cemetery.

Legal

The Regulations as contained in Appendix 2 of the report comply with the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (as amended). It is open to Cabinet to accept, reject or amend the proposed Regulations, subject to amendments conforming with the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (as amended).

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None.