



OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY VIEWS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TO CABINET 13 JUNE 2018

Report Title	RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – CEMETERIES
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Agenda Status: PUBLIC

1. Purpose

- 1.1 To present to Cabinet for consideration, the comments and recommendations of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the findings of the Scrutiny Review – Cemeteries.
- 1.2 All Overview and Scrutiny review reports are published on the Overview and Scrutiny page on the Council's Webpage and a copy of this report can be located: www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny - Previous Scrutiny Reviews.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommends to Cabinet that:

Maintenance

- 2.1.1 That a number of maintenance and safety issues are considered for action:

Some of the large trees located in the town's cemeteries that have been planted on, or outside the burial plot investigated for removal as soon as possible.

The water tanks located in the extension at Duston Cemetery are plumbed in as soon as practicable.

The trees that are obscuring the sign at the entrance to Duston Cemetery are pruned as soon as possible.

Litter and recycling bins in situ within the cemeteries are replaced with modern bins, including recycling bins, uniformed throughout all cemeteries, where appropriate.

The footpaths and roadways in Kingsthorpe Cemetery that are in need of repair, are repaired as soon as possible.

The tops of the vaults are made secure.

The sign located at the entrance to Dallington Cemetery is cleaned and fresh signage placed behind the glass cabinet.

Signs be erected in cemeteries “ Dogs to be kept on a leash at all times” “Please clean up after your dog.”

All signs erected within the borough’s cemeteries are of the same style and standard as other Borough signage.

2.1.2 Information regarding the usage and disposal of plastic bottles in cemeteries is produced for users. The information could be included within a Regulations Guidance booklet for users of cemeteries. All Funeral Directors are provided with a copy of the booklet.

2.1.3 The Policies and procedures for the usage of cemeteries within the borough are tightened up and a zero tolerance approach is applied.

Amenities and Facilities

2.1.4 Consideration is given to the issuing to Funeral Directors based in the borough of Northampton, key passes, to the chapels in Towcester Road and Kingthorpe cemeteries.

2.1.5 The facility of the chapels at Kingthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries are promoted.

2.1.6 The lack of burial space is addressed and potential new sites are investigated, for example, consideration is given to re-categorising the borough owned land (currently categorised as commercial land) that edges the cemetery at Dallington as further cemetery land.

2.1.7 A feasibility study is undertaken into the requirement of a new large crematorium and cemetery for the town that offers the required services and facilities.

3. Background and Issues

3.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements
Amenities and facilities
Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough’s cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough’s cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough’s cemeteries

3.2 Following approval of its work programme for 2017/2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in April 2017 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake

the review – Cemeteries. An in-depth review commenced in June 2017 and concluded in March 2018. A Scrutiny Panel was established.

3.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority 4- Protecting our Environment (a clean and attractive town for residents and visitors)

3.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

Evidence Collection

3.5 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data, including:

Presentation to set the scene: Maintenance and health and safety requirements, amenities and facilities, financial implications
Relevant national and local background research papers
Relevant Legislation and Ecclesiastical Legislation including:

- Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations 1989
- Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977
- Cremation Act 1902
- Integrated Pollution Control (IPPC)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

Relevant Statistics: including:

- Burial space – current and projected
- Population statistics
- Budgetary information regarding the Borough's Cemeteries
- Relevant published papers (if applicable)

Best practice external to Northampton

Internal expert advisors:

- Cabinet Member for Environment, NBC
- Environmental Protection Officer, NBC (re: Public Health Burials)
- Cabinet Member for Finance, NBC

External expert advisors:

- Funeral Directors within the Borough
- Service users, via Community Groups such as Residents' Associations, Interfaith Group etc.
- War Graves Commission
- Representative(s) from local churches, with a current graveyard
- Humanist celebrant

Site visit to various cemeteries within the borough

4 Key Findings and Conclusions

4.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Maintenance

- 4.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel realised that the cutting back of trees, within a cemetery, particularly those located near to or on graves, can be a sensitive issues. Initially Officers will start a negotiation process with the service user. However, if the tree is causing damage or is a health and safety issue a decision has to be made regarding the wider implications. Each situation is looked at individually. Should a tombstone become unstable and unsafe. Officers can organise for it to be made safe.
- 4.1.2 From its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel concluded that the cemeteries visited were all of a high standard and were well maintained, but there was a number of maintenance issues that required attention, as detailed in paragraph 4 of this report. A written report, dated 2017, was submitted by the Friends of Dallington Cemetery regarding their concerns about Dallington Cemetery. This prompted a site visit by the Scrutiny Panel to Dallington Cemetery. Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Dallington Cemetery and found it to be of a high standard.
- 4.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel noted that the Council fulfils its role in ensuring that health and safety on the cemeteries, is adequately managed by the contractor, through audits and inspections carried out by the corporate Health and Safety department. Risk Assessments and safe systems of work are in place for all operations that are carried out in the cemeteries. Costs for health and safety management within the current environmental services contract are included within the overall contract cost. There is no specific cost for health and safety management within cemeteries.
- 4.1.4 Evidence received had highlighted that in some cemeteries in other towns, stand pipes are available and the Scrutiny Panel felt this to be a useful alternative to water bottles.
- 4.1.5 From its evidence gathering, the Scrutiny Panel determined that there is a need to ensure that the Policies and Regulations regarding cemeteries are adhered to. A previously issued Regulations Guidance Booklet for cemeteries had been useful to both Funeral Directors and service users; the re-issue of a similar document would be helpful.
- 4.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel realised that some of the suggestions put forward by the Funeral Director, section 3.3 of the [Overview and Scrutiny report](#), mirrored some of the potential suggestions proposed by the Scrutiny Panel following its recent site visits to cemeteries with the borough of Northampton.

Finance

- 4.1.7 Evidence gathered determined that the costs of the different functions within cemetery services are contained in the costs of other service areas. For example, grounds maintenance costs for cemeteries is included in the overall cost of grounds maintenance for the whole environmental services contract.

- 4.1.8 There is minimal cost to the Council for the provision of amenities in cemeteries; an amenity cost would be the cost of providing water via the standpipes.

Amenities and facilities

- 4.1.9 Duston cemetery was extended in 2016, providing an additional 800 burial spaces.
- 4.1.10 Burial plots come with rights for 99 years.
- 4.1.11 Currently funerals do not take place in Northampton on Sundays; there is a limited service on Saturday in exceptional circumstances.
- 4.1.12 There are two cemeteries in the borough with chapels. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful for a key to be available upon request for the Chapel at Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries. Funeral Directors, based in Northampton, could be issued with a key to the chapel. There is a need for the facility of the chapels to be promoted.
- 4.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel noted, from its site visits, that there are no toilets for users to use at the cemeteries. It was realised from the evidence provided, that toilets had been provided at Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries but due to continued vandalism these had been closed. Both cemeteries have chapels but there are no toilets associated with the chapels. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the provision of toilets would be very useful for users of cemeteries.
- 4.1.14 All open cemeteries have standpipes where users can obtain water.
- 4.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be beneficial to the town for a feasibility study to be undertaken into the requirement of a new crematorium and cemetery.

5. Options

- 5.1 Cabinet will need to consider the possible options as part of its response to the recommendations.

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Policy

- 6.1.1.1 The work of Overview and Scrutiny plays a major part in the development of the Council's policy framework through its work programme.
- 6.1.1.2 The report and its recommendations have policy implications in relation to the Council's response to cemeteries. Cabinet's response will need to consider these issues in detail.

6.2 Resources and Risk

- 6.2.1 Cabinet will need to consider the resourcing issues for the recommendations made.

6.2.2 **Legal**

6.2.2.1 Legal issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.3 **Equality**

6.3.1.1 Equality issues will need to be considered as part of Cabinet's response to the recommendations.

6.5 **Consultees (Internal and External)**

6.5.1 The Committee received evidence from a variety of sources as detailed in paragraph 3.5 of this report.

Background Papers

Overview and Scrutiny Committee report – Cemeteries (March 2018)
Minutes of the meeting of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – 1 May 2018

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