

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting22nd November 2007

1. Title of Item/Report

Report of Environment Select Committee - Scrutiny Review of the Management of Memorials

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to a report that set out the findings and recommendations from the Environment Select Committee's review of the management of memorials. The report sought to ensure that the Council was providing a safe environment for visitors to the Council's cemeteries and to ensure that the Council's policies were up to date and enforceable.

The report presented Cabinet with the findings of the scrutiny review into the management of memorials in the Council's cemeteries undertaken by the Environment Select Committee between June and October 2007. The topic formed the second phase of a review of the Council's Cemeteries and Memorials – the first phase having concluded an investigation into the future development of cemeteries. The review was identified as it was felt that there was a need to ensure that the Council was providing a safe environment for everyone visiting the Council's cemeteries and to ensure that the Council's policies were up to date and enforceable.

Following consideration by Cabinet an action plan would be submitted to the Select Committee setting out how the approved recommendations would be implemented detailing officers responsible for action and timescales.

RECOMMENDED that:-

Memorial Safety

(1) the Exclusive Right of Burial and Right to Erect a Memorial be granted separately.

(2) the Right to Erect a Memorial be granted for a maximum of 30 years to coincide with the NAMM Guarantee of Compliance with the option for renewal for periods of 5 years provided that the memorial meets

appropriate safety standards; in cases where the Right to Erect a Memorial has already been approved for a longer period, the option for 5 year renewal be offered to the original Grantee after its expiry or to the next of kin where rights have been transferred.

(3) That memorial masons be required to:

- register with BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) which requires the memorial mason to obtain a fixers licence, submit full risk assessments, current health and safety policy and evidence of insurance cover;
- provide full construction details on application to erect a memorial;
- provide a 30 year written guarantee for stability and safety of the memorial to Bereavement Services as well as the grave owners;
- provide a statement of compliance with the NAMM Code of Working Practice;
- to comply with a monitoring and disciplinary process
- advise the Council's Bereavement Services Section when they will be undertaking work in any of the Council's cemeteries.

(4) a growth bid be submitted to enable the service to employ an additional member of staff to be responsible for carrying out checks on memorial masons and to deal with enforcement issues. The duties of this additional post to include responsibility for:

- enforcing of the Council's policies and taking action in respect of unauthorised memorials;
- inspecting memorials 28 days after fixing to ensure compliance with BS8415/ NAMM Code of Working Practice;
- undertaking random checks of works;
- assisting with a 5 year rolling safety inspection programme;
- controlling entry into cemeteries to ensure that only authorised works are being undertaken and to seek to co-ordinate works around funeral times;
- ensuring safety of visitors to cemeteries.

Memorial Policy

(5) the Council's Cemetery Regulations be revised to allow:

- a small second memorial to be fixed at the head of the grave, providing that they are fixed in accordance with NAMM Code of Working Practice and the overall size of the two memorials does not exceed the grave width;
- excluding the actual lawn heading, personalisation by appropriate

planting of an area at the head of the grave no larger than 25% of the grassed area (i.e. approx 1'9"/ 53cms for lawn/traditional graves and 9"/23cms for graves within the cremated remains and babies garden areas) (detailed guidance to be drawn up but not allowing any type of edging/ kerbing);

- restrictive regulations in respect of the type of memorials permitted within babies sections be relaxed to allow greater choice (provided that memorials are within specified size and fixed in accordance with the NAMM Code of Working Practice).

(6) inscribed commemorative memorial wall plaques and featured remembrance areas be provided by Bereavement Services to allow bereaved families to commemorate the memory of a loved one.

(7) a programme for removal of kerb surrounds in traditional areas be developed starting first with the oldest graves and those which have damaged or dangerous kerb sets as identified by the inspection programme, following detailed consultation and consideration of all the issues including alternative uses for the old kerb sets.

Unauthorised Memorials

(8) an extensive publicity programme be developed for elected Members, officers and the public to raise awareness of the Council's policies including road show events and leaflets and that copies of the most up to date leaflets are distributed to all elected Members for reference.

(9) the Council's regulations be enforced in respect of all unauthorised memorials following the extensive publicity programme and after giving grave owners a period of notice to remove unauthorised items from graves.

(10) unauthorised items be removed from graves, labelled and stored for collection and that removal of unauthorised items be handled sensitively allowing a 3 month period following a burial and some flexibility around the time of significant dates.

Operational Issues

(11) alternative methods be explored and best practice adopted to enable improvements to the way graves are reinstated following a burial to reduce grave sinkage and improve memorial stability and the appearance of the grave immediately following an interment.

(12) planting schemes be investigated, where concrete plinths are not used to improve the aesthetics of the lawn headings and prevent soil

erosion.

3. Reasons for the Decision

To ensure that the Council is providing a safe environment for visitors to the Council's cemeteries and to ensure that the Council's policies are up to date and enforceable.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not Applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

No later than Midnight on Friday 30th November 2007.

Proper Officer
26 November 2007