

Environment & Regeneration Select Committee

A meeting of Environment & Regeneration Select Committee was held on Thursday, 25th January, 2007.

Present: Cllr Mrs J Beaumont (Chairman); Cllr D Cains, Cllr A Larkin, Cllr W Noble, Cllr R Rix, Cllr Mrs B Robinson, Cllr F G Salt and Cllr B Woodhead.

Officers: R Bradley, S Daniels, A Gibson, P Hutchinson J Robins (DNS); P K Bell, J Trainer (LD); A Bryson (R).

Also in attendance: No other persons were present.

Apologies: Cllr Fletcher, Cllr Leckonby, Cllr Mrs Norton, Cllr Smith and Cllr Walmsley.

976 Draft minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2007.

Consideration was given to the content of the draft minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2007.

CONCLUDED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8th January 2007 be forwarded to Council for Consideration.

977 Review of Cemeteries and Memorials - Evidence from:- Richard Bradley - Care For Your Area Service Manager Andy Bryson - Finance Manager Paul Hutchinson - Land and Property Manager

As part of the Review of Cemeteries and Memorials R Bradley (Care for Your Area Service Manager), A Bryson (Finance Manager) and P Hutchinson (Land and Property Manager) had been invited to the meeting and to give evidence to Members. Also in attendance to help answer any questions and to give further background information was J Robins (Registration and Bereavement Manager, S Daniels (Performance and Business Services - DNS) and A Gibson (Bereavement Services Officer).

R Bradley (Care for Your Area Service Manager) gave evidence which centred around the following areas:-

1. Vandalism and Unsocial Behaviour
2. Vehicular Access
3. Maintenance
4. Grave Excavation
5. Administration

Members questioned why Durham Road Cemetery in particular had suffered from vandalism problems. Officers outlined that security had been increased in the surrounding parks and a Dispersal Order had been placed on Primrose Hill Park. Officers therefore felt that many of the vandalism problems that had been occurring in the surrounding parks had unfortunately shifted to the Durham Road Cemetery. Officers outlined that there would be cost implications for

stepping up security patrols and installing security lighting. Officers also outlined that they were interested in establishing Friends of Cemeteries Groups which would help police the cemeteries.

Members requested that R Bradley provide further information on staffing levels involved in the maintenance of the cemeteries.

Members discussed the use of Chapels at Durham Road Cemetery and Oxbridge Cemetery. It was agreed that the Chapels had potential for alternative uses and that Officers should provide more detail on the current usage of the Chapels, how the Chapels could be utilised more, the cost of demolition and price of the brick and if they could be brought back to full use. Members also requested the details of the locations of the Closed Churchyards in the Borough.

A Bryson (Finance Manager) then gave evidence which outlined that the Cemeteries and Memorial service was made up of two distinct budget areas, The Cemeteries Section which had the responsibility for the maintenance of all fixed assets in cemeteries and closed churchyards, grave digging and grounds maintenance. The other being Bereavement Services with the key responsibilities for the funeral booking service, facilitation and registration of legal ownership of graves and information service for the bereaved. Both these services were based within the Neighbourhood element of the Development and Neighbourhood Services Department.

A Bryson (Finance Manager) then gave budget details for the previous financial years and the current year 2006/07. The keys areas for Cemeteries and Bereavement were also detailed. With regard to future funding sources, it was noted that the following areas could be explored:-

1. Operating Lease
2. Private Finance Initiative (PFI)
3. Prudential Borrowing
4. Grant Funding / Headroom Bids

Members felt that Heritage Funding should be investigated for an area of possible future funding.

P Hutchinson (Land and Property Manager) outlined that throughout the Borough there was a lack of land that could be developed for Cemetery expansion. He felt that the problem needed to be addressed as soon as possible. The issue of a possible new crematorium was also discussed by Members and Officers. Members requested further information on the possibility of a new crematorium.

CONCLUDED that the evidence received from the Officers in attendance be noted.

