

<b>Place Select Committee</b>
<b>Review of Management of Memorials</b>
<b>Outline Scope</b>

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<b>Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?</b>	
<p>The review supports the following Council policy principles:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing strong and healthy communities: development and delivery of the Council's Environmental Policy and strategies that contributed to the overall Green Vision.</li> </ul>	
<b>What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?</b>	
<p>Stockton Council ceased approval of fixed, permanent kerb-sets on all graves in 1969 following the adoption of the then much preferred lawn graves, where no items were permitted to be placed on the actual grassed part of the grave. Approximately 15 years ago, however, the Council recognised that some families needed to tend and care for their family graves by the placing of personal items, which reflected the personality and character of their loved ones.</p> <p>The Council also acknowledged and fully understood its duties under health and safety legislation to ensure that neither its own employees, nor the public, were exposed to risk from potentially dangerous memorials, when visiting the Borough's cemeteries and closed churchyards.</p> <p>In 2007, the Environment Select Committee carried out an extensive review of the Management of Memorials, which made recommendations to improve memorial safety inspections on existing headstones, introduce robust control measures over memorial masons, and initiate checks on new headstones at point of installation. The Committee also recommended extending the Council's Cemetery Regulations to allow personalisation of purchased graves by appropriate planting of an area at the head of the grave no larger than 25% of the grassed area, with guidance being drawn up. During the review, the Committee consulted extensively with cemetery staff, cemetery visitors, funeral directors, monumental masons and faith groups.</p> <p>The new policy was implemented in a sensitive way over a five year period. Since the introduction of Council policy, however, it has yet to be assessed/scrutinised for how it is being managed, how it is being received by bereaved families, visitors and cemetery users and whether any amendments or additional choices are required to meet with public opinion.</p> <p>Whilst the inspection and safety of memorials and control measures for memorial masons</p>	

within cemeteries has greatly improved since the introduction of the Council policy, criticism of maintenance and access (particularly for the excavation of graves), together with the Council's approach to the 'light touch' enforcement of non-compliance cases to the Grave Personalisation Policy, both for and against, is still being received. Bereaved families, particularly recently bereaved, can become extremely distressed and emotional when they are unable (or feel they are unable) to personalise and memorialise their family grave in their own special way. Likewise, those families who have chosen a lawn grave and whose preference is to have an orderly, tidy and well-maintained grave for their loved one feel this is jeopardised and penalised by the fact that the Council is not fully enforcing the policy.

This review will therefore seek to:

- Understand the current policy around grave personalisation, maintenance of cemeteries and access requirements for such sites.
- Ascertain how the Council communicates with bereaved families in terms of current policy, and how it manages complaints.
- Establish how effective the current policy is and determine if any amendments are required.

**The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:**

What is the current Council policy regarding the management of memorials, and what rules are in place in relation to enforcement of unauthorised personalisation?

How was the current policy initially publicised and how does the Council communicate with bereaved families in terms of its content?

What are the key issues regarding the maintenance of the Borough's cemeteries?

How effective is the current policy? What are the key issues/concerns being raised and are these pertinent to specific geographical locations?

How does the Council deal with complaints in relation to unauthorised memorialisation and its impact on maintenance, access and other cemetery visitors?

Is there a need for changes to the current policy, and if so, what are the identified options?

**Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?**

Cabinet, public.

**Expected duration of review and key milestones:**

3 months

**What information do we need?**

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- SBC Environment Select Committee - Review of Management of Memorials (October 2007)
- SBC Personalising a Grave Space (June 2013)

- Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) - Management of Memorials (June 2012)

New information:

- Complaints - number and nature of
- Other Local Authority approaches

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)

What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?

Registration & Bereavement Services/  
Care For Your Area

Current policies and how these are communicated and enforced  
Issues around unapproved kerb-sets/edging and unauthorised grave personalisation

Cemeteries Maintenance Staff

Maintenance and access challenges  
Feedback from cemetery users

**How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)**

Committee meetings, reports, desktop research.

**How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?**

Committee meetings, feedback on current policy and enforcement.

**How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?**

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities. This review will be mindful of these factors.

**How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?**

The environment has a significant effect on health and wellbeing. High quality environments have a key part in helping people to live healthier and happier lives (Stockton JSNA – Wider Determinants, Environment).

**Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:**

A publicly accepted approach to grave personalisation and memorialisation that creates greater choice and meets the needs of all bereaved families, whilst ensuring that funeral directors, coffin bearers and mourners can walk safely and easily to gravesides for funerals. Families and those visitors with mobility problems having easy access, and the management and maintenance of the cemetery is unrestricted. Also, items placed on a grave are easier to remove at the time of a second burial or burial in an adjacent grave.

## Project Plan

<b>Key Task</b>	<b>Details/Activities</b>	<b>Date</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>
<b>Scoping of Review</b>	Information gathering	<b>25.01.18</b>	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	<b>05.02.18</b>	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Agree Project Plan</b>	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	<b>12.03.18</b>	Select Committee
<b>Publicity of Review</b>	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	<b>TBC</b>	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
<b>Obtaining Evidence</b>	Registration & Bereavement Services/Care For Your Area  Cemeteries Maintenance Staff	<b>09.04.18</b>	Select Committee
<b>Members decide recommendations and findings</b>	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	<b>14.05.18</b>	Select Committee
<b>Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders</b>	Circulation of Report	<b>May/June 2018</b>	Scrutiny Officer
<b>Tri-Partite Meeting</b>	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	<b>TBC</b>	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
<b>Final Agreement of Report</b>	Approval of final report by Committee	<b>11.06.18</b>	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
<b>Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee</b>	Consideration of report	<b>[17.07.18]</b>	Executive Scrutiny Committee
<b>Report to Cabinet/Approving Body</b>	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	<b>12.07.18</b>	Cabinet/ Approving Body