

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

SCRUTINY MONITORING – PROGRESS UPDATE	
Review:	Management of Memorials
Link Officer/s:	Dale Rowbotham / Craig Willows
Action Plan Agreed:	September 2018

Updates on the progress of actions in relation to agreed recommendations from previous scrutiny reviews are required approximately 12 months after the relevant Select Committee has agreed the Action Plan. Progress updates must be detailed, evidencing what has taken place regarding each recommendation – a grade assessing progress should then be given (see end of document for grading explanation).

Recommendation 1:	There be a continuation of the current Grave Personalisation Policy (GPP) (incorporating the ‘soft’ enforcement approach) in the five existing Borough cemeteries.
Responsibility:	Dale Rowbotham & Andrew Ruddock
Date:	Complete / Ongoing
Agreed Action:	GPP to continue – with policy, and associated awareness raising literature, amended to incorporate ‘soft’ enforcement approach. Bi-annual audit of all graves within the Borough Cemeteries.
Agreed Success Measure:	To enable accurate monitoring/success rate of GPP. Reduction of non-compliance, particularly category 4 & 5.
Evidence of Progress (November 2019):	<p>a) <u>Amendment of Rules and Regulations</u></p> <p>The Rules and Regulations in respect of the Borough Cemeteries were substantially revised in July 2018 to reflect the “soft approach” in implementation of the GPP.</p> <p>b) <u>Amendment to “Personalising a Grave Space” Leaflet</u></p> <p>The Council’s existing leaflet was also revised in July 2018, again to reflect the “soft approach”. In continuation of previous practice, a copy of the leaflet is sent to every Grantee after memorial installation.</p> <p>c) <u>Bi-annual Audit of all Borough Cemeteries</u></p> <p>Full audits on all graves in the five Borough cemeteries, ranking the level of grave personalisation from 1 to 5, were undertaken in January 2017 and July 2018.</p> <p>The table below summarises the percentages of fully compliant graves (ie Category 1 or 2) in the five cemeteries. In the 18-month period between the two audits, the level of personalisation has remained broadly constant, with a slight</p>

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

	decrease in compliance in Durham Road, slight increases in Thornaby, Billingham and Oxbridge Lane, and no change in Egglecliffe.										
	Cemetery	Durham Road		Thornaby		Billingham		Oxbridge Lane		Egglecliffe	
	Year	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018	2017	2018
	% Compliance	97.3	97.1	97.2	98.2	95.8	98.2	99.4	99.7	100	100
A further audit is scheduled to take place in the summer of 2020.											
<p>d) <u>Contact with Families when Breaches Identified</u></p> <p>When instances of Category 4 or 5 personalisation are identified, Bereavement Services will write to the grantees to request a meeting, usually at the cemetery, to discuss the situation. The GPP and the reasoning behind it is outlined, and the difficulties caused by excessive personalisation are explained. Families are then encouraged to scale back personalisation to a more compliant level.</p>											
Assessment of Progress (November 2019): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)										

Recommendation 2:	Further work with memorial masons be undertaken to emphasise the problems with unauthorised professionally-fixed kerb sets and the impact of these on all cemetery-users, and for appropriate action to be taken against masons who knowingly sell items which are not approved or permitted in the Borough's cemeteries.
Responsibility:	Dale Rowbotham & Andrew Ruddock
Date:	Complete/ Ongoing
Agreed Action:	<p>Re-engage with all approved memorial masons to reinforce problems with permanent, fixed kerbs.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Letter issued to masons – 25th May 2018 and 17th August 2018 • Meeting and presentation regarding unauthorised memorials/kerbs arranged for: 7th September 2018 <p>Rules and regulations, disciplinary process and associated actions to be reviewed and strengthened to better manage and control non-compliance.</p>
Agreed Success Measure:	<p>Raise awareness</p> <p>Alleviate breaches of regulations</p>
Evidence of Progress (November 2019):	<p>a) <u>Disciplinary Action</u></p> <p>In spring 2018, three separate sets of unauthorised, professional-style kerbs were installed in Durham Road Cemetery. There was evidence that each set of kerbs had been supplied to the families concerned by masons for self-fixing. Disciplinary proceedings were commenced against the masons.</p>

APPENDIX 1
Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

	<p>b) <u>Trading Standards</u></p> <p>Concurrently with the disciplinary proceedings, the masons were also reported to Trading Standards, as there was concern that the supply of kerb components to families for self-fixing amounted to the mis-sale of goods. Trading Standards wrote to both masons to warn them against such practices, making it clear that if there were any repetition, then court proceedings would be issued.</p> <p>c) <u>Correspondence with Masons</u></p> <p>Letters were also sent to local masons to notify them that the Council was aware of the unauthorised kerbs and that disciplinary actions were underway (without naming the masons in question). The masons were reminded that they had a professional obligation to abide by Council rules, that kerb sets remained prohibited and that any further breaches of the rules would be treated very seriously.</p> <p>d) <u>Presentation to Masons</u></p> <p>All local masons were invited to a presentation at the Bereavement Services Office on 7 September 2018, so that the rules relating to the placement and sale of kerbs could be clarified, and the problems associated with unauthorised kerbs highlighted.</p> <p>e) <u>Amendment to Rules and Regulations</u></p> <p>The Cemetery Rules and Regulations were amended in July 2018 to clarify and strengthen the Council’s position as to the selling of kerb components by masons to families for self-fixing.</p>
<p>Assessment of Progress (November 2019): (include explanation if required)</p>	<p>1 (Fully Achieved)</p>

<p>Recommendation 3:</p>	<p>A separate, distinct policy be adopted for the offer of different grave types, initially in the new Durham Road cemetery extension (to operate in tandem with the current GPP), and for this to be effectively communicated to all cemetery-users before, and robustly enforced following, implementation. This would require:</p> <p>a) a thorough programme of awareness-raising across the Borough to inform relevant organisations within the funeral industry (e.g. funeral directors, memorial masons, North Tees Mortuary & Bereavement Team) and the public of these plans.</p> <p>b) the Registrars of Births and Deaths to work in partnership with the Bereavement Team. Registrars, following the registration of the death, to advise an informant who is choosing burial of the burial options available to them, thus allowing the family to be aware of what options are available to them prior to meeting with their chosen funeral director / funeral organiser.</p>
---------------------------------	---

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

	<p>c) exploring the potential of widening the colour choice for the grave collars.</p> <p>d) an evaluation of the grave collar concept to be provided to the Place Select Committee prior to any potential further roll-out in other extensions to existing or new Borough cemeteries.</p>
Responsibility:	Dale Rowbotham & Andrew Ruddock
Date:	Ongoing / November 2019
Agreed Action:	<p>Produce new policy, procedure and associated information literature for the new 3 grave options within the extension to Durham Road Cemetery.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New policy produced – July 2018 • Regulations amended – July 2018 • Webpages updated – July 2018 • Information leaflets/posters produced – August 2018 • New Notice of Burial to be produced – September 2018 • Opening – Late Spring <p>a) Arrange and deliver briefing sessions for staff, partners and stakeholders to ensure their understanding and their ability to explain options available to bereaved families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registrars’ briefing – 11 July 2018 • Mortuary & Bereavement Services Staff briefing – 12 July 2018 • Funeral Directors’ briefing – 18 July and 14 August 2018 <p>Produce information literature and update webpages.</p> <p>b) Arrange and deliver an in-depth training session on the available options for bereaved families.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial briefing – 11 July 2018 • In-depth briefing and site visits for each team member – commenced <p>c) Contact supplier/s to ascertain whether other colours are available for grave collars.</p> <p>d) Initial evaluation of grave collar concept to be provided six months after opening of extension. (Extension to be opened – Late Spring 2019, in order for ground to settle following essential drainage works)</p>
Agreed Success Measure:	<p>Effective communication, awareness raising and promotion of the separate policy.</p> <p>a) All parties will have a comprehensive understanding of available options in order that families can make an informed decision.</p> <p>b) All staff familiar and confident with existing and new grave options and administration thereof.</p> <p>Record maintained of advice given and decisions made by each family.</p> <p>c) Improving choice for bereaved families.</p>

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

	<p>d) Ascertain popularity of new grave options.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Mechanism for monitoring compliance and complaints.</p>
<p>Evidence of Progress (November 2019):</p>	<p>The extension was opened on 3 June 2019. The original opening date in September 2018 was postponed, to allow ground settlement following drainage works. The following preparatory work was undertaken prior to the opening:</p> <p>a) <u>Awareness-raising</u></p> <p>i) <u>Bereavement Services Staff</u> – Individual briefings on the concept and cemetery visits took place over the course of July 2018. Refresher briefings were held in May 2019, prior to the opening.</p> <p>ii) <u>Registration Staff</u> – A group briefing took place on 11 July 2018, to ensure that Registration staff understood the new concept and would refer enquiries from interested parties to the Bereavement Team. A refresher briefing was held in late May 2019, prior to the opening.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">An additional presentation was given to both teams on 29 November 2018.</p> <p>iii) <u>Funeral Directors</u> – Two briefing sessions took place on 18 July and 14 August 2018. All those FDs attending were appreciative and supportive of the new concept. All agreed to refer their customers to Bereavement Services for full advice before graves in the extension were purchased.</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Confirmatory letters containing detailed guidance to FDs were sent on 21 July 2018 and 15 August 2018. Reminder letters were sent in April 2019 in advance of the extension opening.</p> <p>iv) <u>Memorial Masons</u> – Masons were invited to a briefing session on 7 September 2018. Since then the Cemeteries Superintendent has also repeatedly highlighted the new concept whilst engaged on memorial fixing appointments with masons, and also updated them on the opening date.</p> <p>v) <u>North Tees Mortuary & Bereavement Team</u> – A full briefing session was undertaken by Vicky Hatton on 12 July 2018.</p> <p>vi) <u>Updates to Regulations</u> – in July 2018 the Council’s Rules and Regulations were updated to include provisions specifically relating to the new grave options in the Extension.</p> <p>vii) <u>Updates to Literature</u> – in July 2018 the Council produced a new leaflet, “Durham Road Cemetery (Extension) Grave Options, together with a simple one-sided sheet displaying photographs of the available options.</p> <p>viii) <u>Updates to “Notice of Burial” Form</u> – The form was updated in October 2018 to reflect arrangements for the Extension, and again in July 2019.</p> <p>ix) <u>Update to website</u> – The website was updated in July 2018 to include details of the extension.</p>

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

b) **Registrars of Births and Deaths to work in partnership with the Bereavement Team**

See “Awareness-raising”, above.

Since the opening of the extension, the Registration Team has referred customers to Bereavement Services for information and clarification as to grave options available.

Meetings and discussions with customers have been recorded in a log. The Cemeteries Superintendent has met with several families in the extension to further clarify the concept and assist with the selection of graves (also recorded, as above).

c) **Widening colour choice for grave collars**

Enquiries were made of the collar manufacturer. The only colours possible (other than black) were green and blue, both of which would be approximately 25% more expensive to produce.

Samples of the two plastics were obtained, but neither shade appeared attractive. Moreover, there was concern that some families may not appreciate a coloured collar next to their own, and that limiting collars to black only would ensure overall consistency.

d) **Evaluation of the grave collar concept**

The Durham Road Cemetery Extension was opened on 3 June 2019. Three of the six available sections were opened, each containing graves of one type.

As at 24 October 2019, uptake was as follows:

Section H4 – Pure Lawn Graves –	5 burials 2 solid purchases
Section I4 – Short Collar Graves -	7 burials 2 solid purchases
Section J4 – Full Collar Graves-	4 burials

The initial impression gained when discussing the grave options with families is that they are largely already aware of what is available and have very firm views on the type of grave they wish to purchase. They appreciate being given a choice and have frequently expressed approval that the rules relating to personalisation are going to be enforced.

As at 24 October 2019, only one headstone has been installed within the Extension. This was within a “short collar”. The mason concerned did not experience any difficulty during the fixing, and the work did not take significantly longer than usual.

APPENDIX 1

Progress Update – Review of Management of Memorials

Assessment of Progress (November 2019): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)
--	--------------------

Recommendation 4:	Communication takes place with relevant local media outlets regarding the GPP (current and for the new concept), and the challenges to the Council around grave personalisation, in order to avoid future misrepresentation of situations.
Responsibility:	Dale Rowbotham & Andrew Ruddock
Date:	Ongoing
Agreed Action:	Full briefing to Comms in order to provide appropriate submissions to local media outlets. Press release issued – 13 th July 2018
Agreed Success Measure:	Press release issued, explaining the three new concepts, with contact details for further information.
Evidence of Progress (November 2019):	Press release issued as above.
Assessment of Progress (November 2019): (include explanation if required)	1 (Fully Achieved)

Assessment of Progress Gradings:	1 Fully Achieved	2 On-Track	3 Slipped	4 Not Achieved
---	----------------------------	----------------------	---------------------	--------------------------