

Place Select Committee
Review of Burial Provision
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>Whilst the provision of burial space does not naturally fit into any single area within the Council Plan, it is a service which, at some point, will be accessed by almost every family in the Borough.</p>	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>The Council have a statutory responsibility to provide suitable burial provision which is discharged through the provision of cemeteries in Billingham, Oxbridge, Durham Road, Thornaby and Eaglescliffe.</p> <p>Stockton Borough Council are also responsible for the maintenance of 9 closed churchyards within the Borough although these sites are not open for any new interments.</p> <p>Of the current cemeteries, Eaglescliffe and Oxbridge are closed for new grave purchases although they are still used for interments where graves have been purchased for one or more people. This leaves the only provision at the remaining 3 sites in Billingham, Thornaby and Durham Road.</p> <p>Prior to the delivery of an extension in the Durham Road Cemetery in 2015 (with new burials commencing in 2019) there was a significant risk of running out of burial provision in the central Stockton area. However, the new extension has current capacity of approximately 5 years of additional provision. Figures for all sites will be updated as part of the scrutiny review to determine a more definitive timescale as to when each of the SBC sites will reach maximum burial capacity.</p> <p>The provision of burial space is clearly a very sensitive issue and the provision of burial space as a Borough needs to be considered alongside individual local need and choice of individual communities to be buried either close to existing family members or their place of residence.</p> <p>Stockton has on average of 2466 deaths per year over the past 5 years and around 80% of all deaths registered opt for cremation as opposed to burial, a statistic which mirrors national trends. Prior to the opening of Stockton's Crematorium in September 2019, more than 90% of deaths which would have been cremated would have been carried out at Teesside Crematorium in</p>	

Middlesbrough. Based upon current levels of cremation numbers at the Stockton facility, it is apparent that most Stockton deaths are now being cremated at the Council's own facility.

The provision of this new facility could have an impact upon the balance between cremation vs burial in Stockton and early indications suggest that there has been an 18% decrease in burial numbers in Stockton since the facility was opened.

Members are asked to review the provision of burial space within the Borough to ensure that sufficient capacity remains to serve all areas within the Borough and to review any links with future demand associated with both the increasing size of the Borough and the addition of the new crematorium.

The provision of burial space is one of the most crucial and sensitive services that the Council provides. There can be significant social implications if the Council is unable to achieve sufficient levels of burial provision to ensure that families are able to bury in areas where they have a personal preference or a connection with.

Whilst SBC have successfully opened the new Crematorium which has provided a much-needed facility for the Borough's communities, it is now a timely opportunity to review existing provisions to ensure that SBC are also able to meet the needs of those residents who still wish to choose burial as opposed to cremation.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What are the current levels of provision (including the internment of cremated remains) in each cemetery across the Borough? (Mapping provision)
- What impact has the Covid-19 pandemic had on burial provision and forecasting?
- What are the impacts of the opening of the Stockton Crematorium on burial provision?
- How will SBC ensure there are local provisions for all residents, including faith communities/communities of interest, across the Borough up to 2050?
- What opportunities are there to expand provision in existing/open SBC cemeteries?
- Do new burial sites need to be identified? If so, in which areas of the Borough should additional provision be prioritised? Should any new provision be provided in sections in accordance with the Durham Road Cemetery extension pilot?
- What are the estimated costs of the identified options?

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

Cabinet, Council.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

6 months (reporting to Cabinet in May 2021)

<p>Approve scope and project plan – Nov 2020 Receive evidence – December 2020 – February 2021 Draft recommendations – March 2021 Final report – April 2020 Report to Cabinet – May 2021</p>	
<p>What information do we need?</p> <p>Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <p>Stockton-on-Tees Local Plan 2020-2023. Background information. Existing reports.</p>	
<p>Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)</p> <p>SBC Officers</p>	<p>What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Background information• Burial provision and forecasting data• Evidence from Stockton Crematorium's Manager• Feedback on grave personalisation scheme• Estimated costs and potential locations of new sites
<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Committee meetings, reports, case studies, research.</p>	
<p>How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Committee meetings, information submissions.</p>	
<p>How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?</p> <p>The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. Public bodies must have due regard to the need to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.</p>	
<p>How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?</p> <p><u>Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023</u>: All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities.</p>	
<p>Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:</p> <p>Whilst there has been a reduction in burial demand since the crematorium opened, it is far too</p>	

early to say whether this trend will continue in the future. It is important to review the Council’s existing provision to ensure that SBC are not left in a position where the Council are unable to respond to requests for burial provision. Whilst life capacity for all sites will be determined as part of any scrutiny review, the area of greatest pressures is in Durham Road where around 5 years of capacity remains.

Any new site would need to be identified, constructed and be allowed to settle before it is ready for new interments. To provide context, the Durham Road extension required 4 years of settlement following its completion before it was deemed ready for new interments.

Potential outcomes of the review could include:

- Recognition of the importance of ensuring that SBC provide sufficient burial space within the borough
- Understanding of the impact on the Council if SBC fail to meet the demands required by residents
- The allocation of appropriate resources to ensure that any demand is met and is delivered in a timely manner

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	October 2020	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	20 October 2020	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	16 November 2020	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBD	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence		14 December 2020 11 January 2021 15 February 2021	Select Committee
Members decide	Review summary of	15 March 2021	Select Committee

recommendations and findings	findings and formulate draft recommendations		
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	March 2021	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBA	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	April 2021	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	April/May 2021	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	May 2021	Cabinet / Approving Body