

Overview and Scrutiny Briefing Note

Title	Update on the Management of Borough Council Owned Cemeteries, and their Rules and Regulations		
Report of the Head of	Community and Leisure Services		
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Report to	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date	November 2016

Briefing Summary

- The Cemetery Rules and Regulations were last reviewed by OSCOM in 2013 following a task and finish panel review in 2011. (Minute 557 and 242 respectively refers).
- At the last review OSCOM requested an update one year after the implementation of the revised rules and regulations. However, at that time, capital works were underway to improve both Charlton and Woodley cemeteries, therefore it was agreed that the review would be deferred until works were completed.
- Physical infrastructure (setting out of land, installation of roadway) works were completed in 2014 and landscaping schemes completed in 2015 – hence this briefing only coming forward now.
- This report sets out progress against actions proposed by the panel and agreed by OSCOM in 2013, and also highlights other potential improvements that can be made going forward, as part of our ongoing responsibility for good cemetery management.
- This report also proposes a number of minor amendments to the Rules and Regulations (intended simply to make information clearer).

Main focus of the document

The summary below provides an update on actions arising from the Panel report in 2013;

1. **Revision of Cemetery Regulations to be approved**
Revised Cemetery Regulations were implemented following direct engagement with Undertakers and Stonemasons. These can now also be found on TVBC's website.
2. **A draft Communication and Enforcement Plan to be approved**

A communications plan was prepared and implemented to ensure members of the public and users of the cemeteries continued to be made aware of the rules and regulations, in particular with regards to ensuring safe access to and between memorials.

3. The Capital bids for improvements to Charlton and Woodley Cemeteries be supported (including the provision of a Children's only section).

Capital bids (£64,000 for Charlton and £150,000) were approved and works completed in 2014.

4. A simple leaflet to be produced to explain the rules and regulations

A summary document has been produced (and shared with undertakers) and is available to download from TVBC's website

5. Consultation to be undertaken with the Hampshire Cemetery Forum regarding the development of an agreed Assisted Burials process – in accord with best practice

TVBC remains a partner of the County Forum, but as yet a formally agreed procedure does not exist. This said, TVBC continues to follow industry guidelines and best practice, and the Forum remains committed to developing a consistent process for all Burial Authorities to follow.

6. TVBC to approve only those stonemasons registered with and working to the Code of Working Practise of the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) in all TVBC cemeteries

Completed - only accredited stonemasons (including NAMM) are allowed to operate in TVBC cemeteries.

7. In the interest of good practice, TVBC is to promote that written certification should be issued to the customer, confirming that the installation of the memorial complies with BS8415

Completed – (BRAMM advises that all Registered Masons issue a Certificate of Compliance).

8. TVBC should register to become a member of BRAMM

Completed – TVBC became a member in April 2013

9. That requests for assistance with the management of Closed Churchyards (under section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972) to only be considered where full responsibility is to be passed to TVBC.

Agreed – April 2013

10. That the revised Rules and Regulations be reviewed by the panel after one year of operation

Due to the sensitivity needed in dealing with bereavement, it was proposed that any decision as to whether to adopt a stronger approach to enforcement was deferred until after the works and Charlton and Woodley were concluded and to ascertain whether improvements have been achieved as a result of a sustained campaign of raising awareness.

Following all of the above, standards in the cemeteries have improved and remain good - to the extent that 'enforcement' action is not considered necessary. If however, standards do deteriorate as a result of the grounds crew not being able to undertake routine maintenance because of non-compliant memorials, consideration will need to be given to whether or not to proactively enforce the regulations (and remove non-compliant memorabilia).

It is suggested that this action remains 'open' for ongoing review.

Other improvements that have been undertaken and further issues for consideration

1. Cemetery regulations

Some minor amendments are necessary... the amendments are not changes as such, but it is suggested that some minor explanatory notes are included to make some of the clauses clear and easier to understand (as there have been ad-hoc questions raised). A revised version will be uploaded to the website subject to OSCOM support.

2. Charlton Cemetery (new G and H sections)

Landscaping improvements have received positive feedback from members of the public attending the site. This includes the 'zero tolerance' approach to unauthorised memorabilia being adopted since the last review. (Any contraventions reported by the grounds crew are followed up directly with the Holder of the Exclusive Right of Burial where appropriate).

3. Charlton Cemetery (Scattering area)

The currently scattering area is somewhat informal in its layout and its demarcation is unclear. It is proposed as part of setting out new sections this area will receive attention (benches around the trees to be renewed and a space for plaques to be promoted).

4. Woodley Cemetery

Landscaping is complete and a new Children's area has been designated. Improvements to the scattering area are also now complete. It is therefore anticipated that the prevalence of unauthorised memorabilia should reduce.

As new grave areas are being opened, a zero tolerance approach is being adopted, and an information leaflet is being produced (consistent with Charlton Cemetery) to ensure the public are aware.

5. New Cremation Plots

The new layout for the interment of cremated remains will commence shortly – (this will enable a greater variety of memorial styles to be offered, whilst still remaining within the rules and regulations). The new area layout should help alleviate the problem of unauthorised memorabilia.

6. Customer Information Packs

All of the above information is to be made accessible through TVBC's website with the addition of further guidance regarding memorial sizes.

7. Transfer of Exclusive Right of Burial (ERoB)

Due to an increase in the number of such requests (where the holder of the ERoB has been interred) a procedure for the transfer will also be produced and published on TVBC's website.

8. Modernisation of the Cemetery Service

'Booking' procedures and the process for providing access to historic data will be reviewed in accordance with TVBC's recently published Digital Transformation Strategy and improvements made where possible and appropriate.

9. Headstone Inspections

Our protocol for inspecting and risk assessing headstone inspections will be made available through TVBC's website

Confidentiality

It is considered that this report does not contain exempt information within the meaning of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, and can be made public.

No of Annexes:	0
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