

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel 1 – Cemeteries

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held in The Jeffrey Room,
The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on
8 January 2018 at 6:00pm

Simon Bovey
Interim Chief Executive

If you need any advice or information regarding this agenda please phone Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer, ext 7408 who will be able to assist with your enquiry. For further information regarding **Scrutiny Panel 1 Cemeteries** please visit the website www.northampton.gov.uk/scrutiny

Members of the Panel

| | |
|-----------------|---|
| Chair | Councillor Brian W Sargeant |
| Deputy Chair | Councillor Vicky Culbard |
| Panel Members | Councillor Mohammed Azizur Rahman (Aziz) Councillor Alan L Bottwood Councillor Andrew Kilbride Councillor Arthur McCutcheon Councillor Dennis Meredith |
| Co-opted Member | Simon Hollowell, Hollowell's Funeral Directors |

Calendar of meetings

| Date | Room |
|-----------------------|--|
| 15 March 2018 6:00 pm | All meetings to be held in the Jeffery Room at the Guildhall unless otherwise stated |

Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 Cemeteries Agenda

| Item No and Time | Title | Pages | Action required |
|------------------|--|---------------|--|
| 1. 6:00pm | Apologies | | The Chair to note any apologies for absence. |
| 2. | Declarations of Interest (including Whipping) | | Members to state any interests. |
| 3. | Deputations and Public Addresses | | <p>The Chair to note public address requests.</p> <p>The public can speak on any agenda item for a maximum of three minutes per speaker per item. You are not required to register your intention to speak in advance but should arrive at the meeting a few minutes early, complete a Public Address Protocol and notify the Scrutiny Officer of your intention to speak.</p> |
| 4. | Minutes | 1 - 4 | The Scrutiny Panel to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2017. |
| 5. | Witness Evidence | | The Scrutiny Panel to receive a response to its core questions from a number of Expert Advisors |
| 5 (a) 6:05pm | Written evidence from service users | | |
| 5 (b) 6:25pm | Written Evidence - War Graves Commission | 5 - 8 | |
| 6. 6:35pm | Site Visit | 9 - 12 | The Scrutiny Panel to consider a briefing note detailing the findings from its recent site visit to Dallington cemetery. |

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 CEMETERIES

Thursday, 9 November 2017

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair), Councillor Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair); Councillors Aziz, Alan Bottwood, Arthur McCutcheon and Dennis Meredith

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Simon Hollowell, Hollowells Funeral Directors

Officers Mick Tyrrell, Contracts Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Thomas Appleyard, Ms Coolman and Ms Pateman

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

The Chair referred to written reports that that been provided by Mr Appleyard and Ms Pateman and Ms Coolman. The reports were discussed. The Chair suggested that the Panel undertakes a site visit to Dallington Cemetery. The Scrutiny Officer undertook to arrange the site visit and notify the Panel of the date and time. Councillors Meredith and Bottwood would lead on the site visit and report back to the January meeting of the Scrutiny Panel.

Mr Appleyard addressed the Scrutiny Panel. He commented that Friends of Dallington have submitted evidence (which the Chair had referred to). Mr Appleyard referred to Kingsthorpe Cemetery. He suggested that all cemeteries would benefit from more colour. Planting extra flowers could be carried out with other partnerships or the pay back scheme. Cemeteries should be locked in the silent hours. He referred to bins commenting that one bin does not fit all. In his opinion of the bins are not fit for purpose, however, the undamaged wire bins with minimum cost can be modified. He suggested a bin type and location review may help to get it right first time. Euro bins may be the solution in identified areas. Mr Appleyard suggested emptying bins on a Friday may ensure they have space for the weekend and holidays should be taken into account.

Mr Appleyard said that he felt the cemetery rules require amending. At the same time they should also reflect the many different faiths and customs using the facilities. A large notice

board erected at all entrances to the cemeteries with easy to read bullet points may help. Picnics are taking place in the cemetery this is common practice in many Asian and eastern European countries. Clearly signed bins for food may be required. Mr Appleyard said he thought that many people may perceive these celebrations as disrespectful and insulting, education is the key

Mr Appleyard referred to the properties boarding the cemetery and commented that the trees directly affect the lives of approximately 65 of the 82 properties and will affect the remainder as the recently planted trees grow. He felt that they restrict light and sun this is not just from overhanging trees. He referred to the problems with clay and roots. A quantity of trees are less than 60cm from the boundaries. Newly planted trees are less than 1.6 metres from gardens. Some trees shed their leaves in the winter and sticky sap in the summer which damages their property.

Mr Appleyard referred to dogs running in the cemetery and dog fouling; suggesting the need for signage. He felt that plastic milk bottles were an issue, suggesting dedicated water containers at each point with signs requesting it is returned. He went on to refer to a small quantity of benches along with grassed areas that he felt had become unauthorised memorials. He conveyed concern about pebbles and shingle. He felt that only small bushes and shrubs should be permitted to be planted.

Mr Appleyard commented that the children's areas required attention.

He was pleased to note that the fly tipping had stopped.

Mr Appleyard closed his address by referring to the war graves, the Commonwealth war graves commission and its counterpart in the USA.

Mr Appleyard was thanked for submitting his report, that of the Friends of Dallington Cemetery and taking the time to address the Scrutiny Panel.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) FUNERAL DIRECTORS

The Scrutiny Panel considered one submission from a funeral director. It was confirmed that all Funeral Directors within Northampton had been asked to contribute. The comments made in the submission were noted by the Panel. It was realised that some of the suggestions put forward by the Funeral Director mirrored some of the potential recommendations proposed by the Scrutiny Panel following its recent site visits.

The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful for a key to be available for request for the Chapel at Kingsthorpe cemetery. It was suggested that a potential recommendation of the final report could be that Funeral Directors within the town are issued with a key to the chapel. A "one key fits all design" might be useful.

Toilet facilities in cemeteries out of town were discussed.

The information provided was noted.

(B) FUNERAL CELEBRANTS

There had been no submissions from funeral celebrants.

6. BEST PRACTICE

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note detailing best practice.

AGREED:

That the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

7. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - GREEN BURIALS

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note around green burials.

The Chair advised that a potential recommendation of the final report of the Scrutiny Panel could be that a feasibility study into the requirement of a new crematorium for the town is investigated.

A further potential recommendation was suggested that the lack of burial space is addressed and potential new sites are investigated.

Mick Tyrrell advised that the new Local Plan is being created and potential burial sites are on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - FEES AND CHARGES

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note around fees and charges.

AGREED:

That the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BURIAL SPACE

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note around burial space. It was noted that the Muslim burial section was already half full and would need to be extended.

In response to a query, Mick Tyrrell reiterated that the new Local Plan is being created and potential burial sites are on the agenda.

AGREED:

That the information provided would inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

The meeting concluded at 6:48 pm

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) honours the 1.7 million men and women of the Commonwealth forces who died in the First and Second World Wars, and ensures they will never be forgotten.

Our work commemorates the war dead, from building and maintaining our cemeteries and memorials at 23,000 locations in more than 150 countries to preservation of our extensive records and archives. Our values and aims, laid out in 1917, are as relevant now as they were 100 years ago.

The Commission's principles are:

- Each of the dead should be commemorated by name on the headstone or memorial
- Headstones and memorials should be permanent
- Headstones should be uniform
- There should be no distinction made on account of military or civil rank, race or creed

Since our establishment by Royal Charter we have constructed 2,500 war cemeteries and plots, erected headstones over graves and where the remains are missing, inscribed the names of the dead on permanent memorials. More than a million burials are now commemorated at military and civil sites in some 150 countries.

Within the United Kingdom there are over 300,000 Commonwealth burials and commemorations across some 12,500 locations.

COMMONWEALTH WAR GRAVES COMMISSION (CWGC) RESPONSE TO NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL CEMETERIES REVIEW

- a. Please can you provide details of the maintenance regime and the financial implication of maintenance of the Borough's cemeteries, please explain.

The CWGC has an interest in the following sites in Northampton:

NORTHAMPTON & COUNTIES CREMATORIUM

14 Casualties listed on a bronze panel within the Chapel.

NORTHAMPTON (BILLING ROAD) CEMETERY

149 Casualties on 2 Screen Walls Memorial. This CWGC memorial is inspected and cleaned by CWGC staff on our cycle maintenance programme. The turf area in front of the memorial is maintained by the CWGC under a contract.

The CWGC Cross of Sacrifice is inspected and maintained by CWGC on our cycle maintenance programme.

NORTHAMPTON (DALLINGTON) CEMETERY

30 Casualties buried at this site. These headstones are inspected, cleaned and maintained by CWGC staff on our cycle maintenance programme.

NORTHAMPTON (KINGSTHORPE) CEMETERY

55 Casualties buried in a plot with planted borders maintained by the CWGC's contractor. A further 61 war graves scattered across the site and maintained by Northampton Borough Council.

The CWGC Cross of Sacrifice is inspected and maintained by CWGC on our cycle maintenance programme.

NORTHAMPTON (TOWCESTER ROAD) CEMETERY

130 Casualties buried in a plot with planted borders maintained by the CWGC's contractor. A further 11 war graves scattered across the site and maintained by Northampton Borough Council.

The CWGC Cross of Sacrifice is inspected and maintained by CWGC on our cycle maintenance programme.

- b. Please can you provide details of the health and safety requirements and the financial implications within the Borough's cemeteries. Please explain.

The CWGC provide its teams with task bask risk assessments and, in broad terms, site risk assessments highlighting potential risks such as slips, trips and falls. These relate to the areas our staff might work in only and are not full site risk assessments for public use. Our staff assess any potential risk in respect of the CWGC headstones as part of our inspection programme. We assume the Borough undertakes tree risk assessments twice per year and assesses all other headstones in its sites.

The CWGC bears its own costs in respect of our internally used risk assessments.

- c. Please can you provide details of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries. Please explain.

The CWGC does not utilise amenities and facilities within the cemeteries other than to advise cemetery managers of our presence and occasionally to make enquiries on grave locations.

- d. In your opinion, are the Borough's cemeteries easily accessible? Please provide details. If not, please can you provide suggestions for improvement.

Our Regional Teams have no concerns with regards accessibility.

- e. Are you aware of the location and the provision of amenities in the Borough's cemeteries, please provide details.

Our Regional teams are aware of the locations of amenities.

- f. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to the Borough's cemeteries?

The CWGC is appreciative of the support the Borough provides to ensure the upkeep of the Commonwealth War Graves from the two world wars.



NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – CEMETERIES

8 JANUARY 2018

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS TO DALLINGTON CEMETERY, NORTHAMPTON

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 At its November meeting, Scrutiny Panel 1 (Cemeteries) agreed that it would undertake a site visit to Dallington Cemetery.

1.2 A public address to the Scrutiny Panel and a written report regarding some findings at Dallington Cemetery that had been provided to the Scrutiny Panel, by two members of the public, had prompted the site visit.

2 SITE VISIT

2.1 On Friday 24 November 2017, Councillors Dennis Meredith and Alan Bottwood, together with Mick Tyrrell, Contract Manager and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer visited a Dallington Cemetery to inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

2.2 DALLINGTON CEMETERY



2.2.1 The site visit walked around the cemetery noting:

- The cemetery was well maintained and very tidy



- Litter bins and seating is in situ. Most were in very good condition. There was a couple of different styles of bins. The bins looked as though they had been recently emptied with fresh bags inside. There was also a dog waste bin in situ.



- Some graves had conifers planted on them and other trees which would also grow very large. The planting of such trees is contrary to the cemetery rules and regulations.



- The water tanks located in the cemetery were in full working order.



- The noticeboard located at the entrance of the cemetery requires cleaning and fresh signage putting in:



- There is a lot of borough owned land that edges the cemetery. This land has been categorised as commercial land. The site visit felt this land would be useful to be re-categorised as further cemetery land.

3 CONCLUSIONS

3.1 The Site Visit concluded that:

3.1.1 Dallington Cemetery is of a high standard and is well maintained.

3.1.2 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – Some of the trees in situ, either on, or between graves, in Dallington cemetery are removed as soon as possible.

3.1.3 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – Officers are instructed to ensure the enforcement rules and regulations of cemeteries are adhered to such as the planting of trees either on or near to a grave.

3.1.4 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – The sign located at the entrance to Dallington Cemetery is cleaned and fresh signage placed behind the glass cabinet.

3.1.5 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – Consideration is given to re-categorising the borough owned land (currently categorised as commercial land) that edges the cemetery as further cemetery land.

Brief Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Date: 24 November 2017