

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
Scrutiny Panel 1 - Cemeteries

Your attendance is requested at a meeting to be held at The Jeffrey Room,
The Guildhall, St. Giles Square, Northampton, NN1 1DE on
15 March 2018 at 6pm

S 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

Northampton Borough Scrutiny Panel 1 Cemeteries

Agenda

Item No	Title	Pages	Action required
1.	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 - 3	The Scrutiny Panel to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2018.
5.	Chair's Draft Report	4 - 60	The Scrutiny Panel to consider the Chair's draft report.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 CEMETERIES

Monday, 8 January 2018

COUNCILLORS PRESENT: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair), Councillors Andrew Kilbride, Arthur McCutcheon and Dennis Meredith

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Simon Hollowell

Officers Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Councillor Anamul Haque - Observing

Members of the Public Mr Abdul Ali
Mr Thomas Appleyard
Mrs Margaret Pateman
Mrs Coolman

1. APOLOGIES

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair) and Councillor Alan Bottwood.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Abdul Ali, St George's Mosque, addressed the Scrutiny Panel on agenda item 5(a). Mr Ali commented on the need for a seven day cemetery service. The Muslim community bury their deceased as soon as possible. He suggested this as a possible recommendation for the Panel to consider. He also asked for there to be toilet and washing facilities at cemeteries. Mr Ali concluded his address by conveying his concern on the shortage of burial space and what will happen when it is full. The specific area at Towcester Road cemetery is getting filled up very quickly; there is a need for extra land for cemetery space. It was suggested that potential extra land for burials is a potential recommendation of the final report.

Mr Thomas Appleyard and Mrs Pateman addressed the Scrutiny Panel on agenda item 6. Mrs Pateman commented that Mrs Coolman and herself would like to thank the members of the panel for taking the time to visit Dallington Cemetery in November 2017. She did not agree with a number of points from the Panel's site visit report: She did not feel that Dallington cemetery is of a high standard or it is well

maintained. The whole cemetery has been deemed by several people they have spoken to as a dark and dismal place due to the number of trees and shrubs that have become extremely overgrown and need attention. Boundary fences need to be repaired in several places as the gaps only serve to provide access for people who have no interest in the Cemetery. Recently, an adult on a scrambling bike was sighted near the grave plots overlooking Kings Heath where access can be gained through the shrubs. Mrs Pateman referred to her own inspections, commenting that litter bins are constantly overflowing, and many of the wire bins are not fit for purpose as they are bent out of shape. The water tanks are in working order, but there are only three in the whole of the cemetery and none in the lower part which overlooks Kings Heath, making it difficult for relatives to fetch and carry water to graves in these areas. There are only 3 dog bins in situ. Several dog walkers use the cemetery. The 3 roundabouts on the main avenue are in poor condition, especially the one at the end, with traffic cones permanently sited there. This is a place where funeral cortege's park, whilst burials take place and is not a pleasant place for mourners to wait in any case as it is very dark and dreary due to the overgrown trees. Mrs Pateman concluded her address advising that whenever a grave is excavated for a burial, the lack of care and attention is unacceptable as mud and other debris is left on the paths and grass prior to and after the burial has taken place which is disrespectful to the mourners.

Mr Appleyard commented that he had visited Dallington Cemetery; and was surprised that the report of the Panel made no reference to the toilets there. He commented on the condition of the toilets. Mr Appleyard advised that the water tanks are often full of plastic bottles that often blow out of the tanks across the cemetery. The verges are muddy and driving around the cemetery is dangerous. Mr Appleyard suggested that the bins are in the wrong place, wrong area and of wrong type. Mr Appleyard acknowledged the problems of trees on graves but also referred to the problems that trees in Kingsthorpe cemetery are causing to the residents. Mr Appleyard concluded his address by conveying his disappointment that the Friends of Dallington Cemetery were not informed of the date of the site visit.

The Scrutiny Panel made comment, asked questions and heard:

- In response to a query regarding whether the water tanks in situ in cemeteries and allotments are to be replaced, the Scrutiny Officer undertook to find out and report the findings to the Panel.
- The Scrutiny Panel commented on some cemeteries in other towns having stand pipes and felt this to be a useful alternative to water bottles. It was suggested as a potential recommendation of the final report. It was also felt that service users need educating on using and disposing of plastic bottles.

Mr Ali, Mrs Pateman and Mr Appleyard were thanked for their addresses.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 November 2017 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM SERVICE USERS

The Chair advised that contact had been made with various groups, forums and associations but no written evidence had been received, however, a number of service users had previously written to the Panel and addressed it; the comments of which would be included in the final report.

(B) WRITTEN EVIDENCE - WAR GRAVES COMMISSION

The Chair drew the Panel's attention to the written report of the War Graves Commission. The Panel commented on how immaculate the war graves are kept.

It was suggested that the Imperial War Graves Procedures Guide would be useful for the Panel to have sight of; the Scrutiny Officer undertook to circulate this to the Panel.

The evidence received would inform the Scrutiny Review.

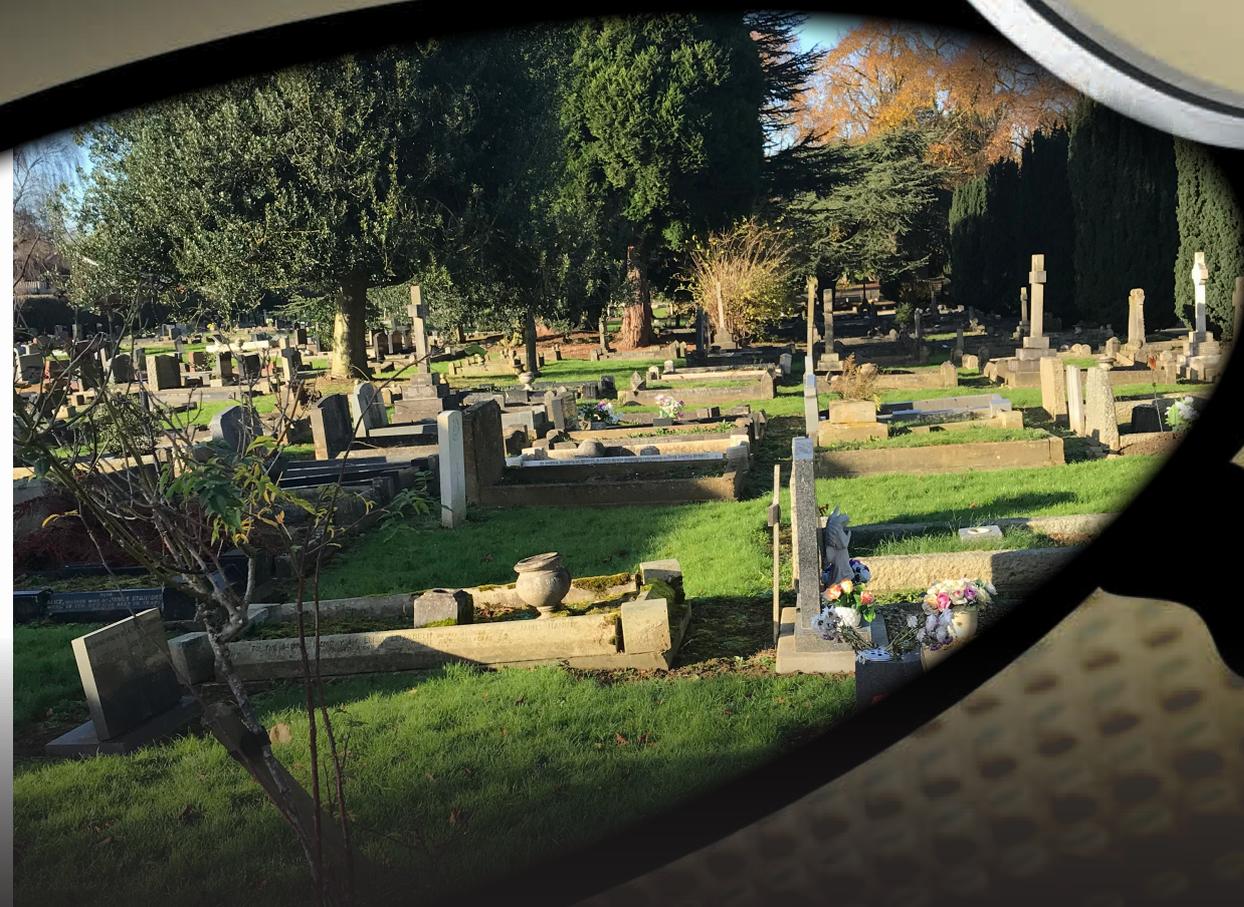
6. SITE VISIT

Councillor Meredith presented the report of the site visit to the Panel and highlighted the salient points. He referred the Panel to the conclusions and potential recommendations following the site visit.

The Co Optee referred to a Regulations Guidance Booklet for cemeteries and queried why this no longer existed. It was a useful document for service users.

In response to a query regarding the cutting back of trees on cemeteries; the Scrutiny Panel heard that it often depended upon the extent of the problem. It can be a sensitive situation. Initially Officers will start a negotiation process with the service user. However, if the tree is causing damage or is a health and safety issue a decision has to be made regarding the wider implications. Each situation is looked at individually.

Overview & Scrutiny Committee



SCRUTINY PANEL – CEMETERIES

March 2018 4

Index

Chair's Foreword	2
Executive Summary	
Final Report including recommendations	

APPENDICES

Appendix A	Scope of the Review
Appendix B	Fees and Charges
Appendix C	Core Questions
Appendix D	Processes and Procedures
Appendix E	Findings – Site Visits
Appendix F	Desktop research

The objective of this Scrutiny Panel was:

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

- Maintenance and health and safety requirements
- Amenities and facilities
- Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries

The required outcomes being:

- To ensure that the Borough's cemeteries are easily accessible, well maintained with adequate amenities and facilities available for visitors to use.

The Scrutiny Panel was made up from members of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee – Councillors Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Panel), Mohammed Aziz, Alan Bottwood, Dennis Meredith and myself (Chair); together with other non-Executive Councillors Arthur McCutcheon and Andrew Kilbride. The Scrutiny Panel benefitted from the expertise of the co optee, Simon Hollowell of Hollowell's Funeral Services.

The Scrutiny Panel received both written and spoken evidence from a wide variety of expert advisors. Desktop research was carried out by the Scrutiny Officer. Representatives undertook site visits to various cemeteries around the borough and also visited the cemetery at Kettering. All of which produced a wealth of information that informed the evidence base of this high profile Scrutiny review.

Following the collation of the evidence, the Scrutiny Panel drew various conclusion and recommendations that are contained in the report.

The Review took place between June 2017 and March 2018.

I would like to thank all those people acknowledged below who gave up their time and contributed to this Review.



Councillor Brian Sargeant

Chair, Scrutiny Panel 1 - Cemeteries

Acknowledgements to all those who took part in the Review: -

- Councillors Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair of the Scrutiny Panel), Andrew Kilbride, Mohammed Aziz, Alan Bottwood, Dennis Meredith and Arthur McCutcheon who sat with me on this Review
- Simon Hollowell, co-optee, for sitting on this Scrutiny Panel
- Councillor Mike Hallam, Cabinet Member for Environment, Ruth Austen, Environmental Services and Licensing Manager for attending a meeting of the Scrutiny Panel and providing information to inform the Review
- Hollowells Funeral Services, War Graves Commission for providing a written response to the core questions of the Panel
- Thomas Appleyard, Margaret Pateman, Mrs Coolman and Mr Abdul Ali, St George's Mosque, members of the public, for attending a number of the meetings of the Scrutiny Panel, providing written evidence and addressing the Panel

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements
Amenities and facilities
Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries

1.2 The required outcome being:

To ensure that the Borough's cemeteries are easily accessible, well maintained with adequate amenities and facilities available for visitors to use.

1.3 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its work programming event in April 2017, agreed to include a review of cemeteries onto its work programme for the year. The Overview and Scrutiny Committee commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review. An in-depth review commenced in June 2017 and concluded in March 2018

1.4 The Scrutiny Panel was made up of Members from the Overview and Scrutiny Committee: Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair); Councillor Vicky Culbard (Vice Chair); Councillors Mohammed Aziz, Dennis Meredith and Alan Bottwood ; together with other non-Executives Councillors Andrew Kilbride and Arthur McCutcheon. The Scrutiny Panel benefitted from the expertise of a co-optee – Simon Hollowell, of Hollowell's Funeral Services.

CONCLUSIONS AND KEY FINDINGS

A significant amount of evidence was heard, details of which are contained in the report. After gathering evidence the Scrutiny Panel established that: -

Add conclusions when the report is finalised

RECOMMENDATIONS

The above overall findings have formed the basis for the following recommendations: -

The purpose of this Scrutiny Panel was:

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

- Maintenance and health and safety requirements
- Amenities and facilities
- Financial implications

Scrutiny Panel 1 recommends to Cabinet :

Add recommendations when the report is finalised

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of Scrutiny Panel 1- Cemeteries

Draft Version 1

1 Purposes

1.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was:

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements

Amenities and facilities

Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries

1.2 A copy of the scope of the Review is attached at Appendix A.

2 Context and Background

2.1 Following approval of its work programme for 2017/2018, the Overview and Scrutiny Committee, at its meeting in April 2017 commissioned Scrutiny Panel 1 to undertake the review – Cemeteries. An in-depth review commenced in June 2017 and concluded in March 2018.

2.2 A Scrutiny Panel was established comprising Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair); Councillor Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair); Councillors Mohammed Aziz, Alan Bottwood, Dennis Meredith and Andrew Kilbride. Simon Hollowell, Hollowell's Funeral Services was co-opted to the review.

2.3 This review links to the Council's corporate priorities, particularly corporate priority 4- Protecting our Environment (a clean and attractive town for residents and visitors)

2.4 The Scrutiny Panel established that the following needed to be investigated and linked to the realisation of the Council's corporate priorities:

3 Evidence Collection

3.1 Evidence was collected from a variety of sources:

Background data, including:

Presentation to set the scene: Maintenance and health and safety requirements, amenities and facilities, financial implications

Relevant national and local background research papers

Relevant Legislation and Ecclesiastical Legislation including:

- Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations 1989
- Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977
- Cremation Act 1902
- Integrated Pollution Control (IPPC)
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

Relevant Statistics: including:

- Burial space – current and projected
- Population statistics
- Budgetary information regarding the Borough's Cemeteries
- Relevant published papers (if applicable)

Best practice external to Northampton

Internal expert advisors:

- Cabinet Member for Environment, NBC
- Environmental Protection Officer, NBC (re: Public Health Burials)
- Cabinet Member for Finance, NBC

External expert advisors:

- Funeral Directors within the Borough

- Service users, via Community Groups such as Residents' Associations, Interfaith Group etc.
- War Graves Commission
- Representative(s) from local churches, with a current graveyard
- Humanist celebrant

Site visit to various cemeteries within the borough

3.2 Background reports and information

[Presentation to set the scene](#) - Maintenance and health and safety requirements, amenities and facilities, financial implications

3.2.1 Green Burials

Green/Woodland Burial Area

A specific area in Kingsthorpe Cemetery has been dedicated for green/woodland burials. Families have a choice of graves available, but there are only a limited number of graves suitable to have a tree planted.

Only cardboard coffins, wicker coffins and bamboo coffins, are to be used in this area. No other type of coffin will be permitted.

Each grave is for one burial only and additional graves may be pre-purchased.

The following items will not be permitted in the green/woodland area: pots, tubs, lights, lanterns, fences, pebbles and conifers.

Natural wood markers may be purchased but the plaque must not exceed 8x6 inches and must contain text only etched into the wood. No border, designs, or images will be permitted.

Temporary markers are permitted however they must conform within the overall dimensions of 18 inches in length (with at least one third positioned in the ground) equalling 12 inches tall, a plaque can be fixed to the marker but must not exceed the dimensions of 8 inches in width and 4 inches in height.

The Council/Contractor reserves the right to remove the marker from the cemetery if a marker does not conform to the measurements stated herein.

There are approximately 10 burials per annum and have approximately 57 spaces remaining in the only green burial area at Kingsthorpe.

The purchase price of a plot and the interment costs are the same for a green burial as for a normal burial.

3.2.2 Fees and Charges

Fees and charges for burials and cremations from neighbouring authorities were provided as evidence:

- Kettering Borough Council
- Wellingborough Borough Council
- Rugby Borough Council

Complete details at Appendix B.

3.2.3 Burial Space

From the information detailing the number of available spaces and the average number of burials, it has been estimated that the life span of the existing interment space is as follows.

Towcester Road cemetery cremated remains	10 years burials – 17 years cremated remains
Kingsthorpe cemetery cremated remains	4 years burials – 17 years cremated remains
Dallington cemetery remains	2 years burials – 7 years cremated remains
Duston cemetery remains in old part of cemetery (As there has been an extension to the cemetery in recent years, it is difficult to estimate the annual number of burials, as it has been a number of years since there was cemetery space available for new burials.	10 years burials – 7 years cremated remains
Weston Favell cemetery existing purchased graves.	Closed – Only interments into existing purchased graves.
Great Houghton cemetery owned graves – 5 years cremated remains.	Closed – Only interments into family owned graves – 5 years cremated remains.

2.2 There are some areas within existing open cemeteries that have the potential to provide extra burial spaces:

Kingsthorpe cemetery – The “Goat Field” could be extended into, subject to a ground survey. Potential for 300 extra plots if the area is usable.

Dallington cemetery – Old allotment land to the side of the cemetery could be used to accommodate at least 1,000 extra plots.

Towcester Road cemetery – The removal of a groups of trees would provide extra burial space.

3.3 Core Questions

3.3.1 The Scrutiny Panel devised a series of core questions that it put to its key witnesses over a cycle of meetings (Copy at Appendix C).

3.3.2 Key witnesses provided a response to these core questions at the meetings of the Scrutiny Panel held on

3.3.3 Salient points of evidence:

Cabinet Member for Environment, Northampton Borough Council (NBC)

Maintenance operations for open and closed churchyards and cemeteries.

Trees

All trees within the churchyard area will be assessed in accordance with the Councils tree policy. Any trees that are identified as requiring work will be prioritized on a Health and Safety basis, with those considered to be a danger being regarded as High Priority.

Grass Cutting;

Grass cutting operations will run from approx. Mid-March through until late October, dependent on growth rates and weather conditions. The grass shall be cut on a fortnightly basis.

Areas of grass that cannot be mown in their entirety such as around obstacles or boundaries will be strimmed to ensure that a “finished” visual quality is achieved.

Any undesirable arisings that are spread to paths, hard surfaces and memorials due to the mowing operation will be blown or swept to remove and tidy.

Litter/ Litter Bins;

Litter picking operations will take place based on the requirements of the site. E.g., a site that is deemed to have a “littering” problem will receive more visits as would be appropriate.

Litter bins will be emptied weekly with litter picking normally carried out on a weekly basis.

Litter picking will also take place during any schedule maintenance visits i.e., grass cutting or shrub maintenance.

Shrub Areas;

Shrub maintenance will occur during the winter period on an annual basis. Each visit will include pruning and weed control.

Remedial pruning will take place during the summer time to ensure sight lines, paths and windows are not affected by re-growth.

Hedge Cutting;

Hedge maintenance will be carried out to retain the form or shape as required. Cutting will be done outside of the recognized bird nesting period usually between October and February. All arising will be removed from site.

Footpaths/ Hard standing Areas;

Will be kept in a litter and detritus free condition Chemical treatments will take place as indicated below

Chemical Use/ Application;

The use of herbicides will take place annually to control weed species. Area to be treated will include hard standings, paths and walk ways. Also, if appropriate, applications will also be considered around building bases, boundary lines and memorials.

Tombs/ Memorials;

Headstones and Memorials will be inspected on a periodic basis to assess their stability, in consideration of the Ministry of Justice,

Managing the safety of Burial Ground Memorial guidelines 2014, and the Contract Documentation.

Memorials will be checked by visual and “hand” means.

If a memorial is deemed to be of risk it shall be made safe.

Methods of work

In order to ensure that the delivery of the service is consistent, and to maintain safe working conditions, Enterprise has processes in place that the staff should work to.

Process and procedures are adhered to as at Appendix D.

Finance

The costs of the different functions within the service are contained in the costs of other service areas. For example, the grounds maintenance costs for cemeteries are included in the overall cost of grounds maintenance for the whole contract.

The environmental services contract is one contract covering both Daventry District Council and Northampton Borough Council, the cost related to each authority area are not separately identified.

Health and Safety

The most significant health and safety risks are related to the excavation of graves and the stability of headstones and memorials.

Enterprise has Risk Assessments and safe systems of work in place for all operations that are carried out in the cemeteries. Copies of the Risk Assessments are kept onsite in the cemetery buildings used by the staff. As an example, a copy of the grave digging risk assessment can be seen below. This format is used for all risk assessments produced by Enterprise. The management of health and safety, by the contractor, is monitored by the Partnership Unit and the NBC Health and Safety Advisor. All costs related to health and safety management within the current contract, are included within the overall contract costs. There is no specific cost for health and safety management within cemeteries.

The Council fulfils its role in ensuring that health and safety is adequately managed by the contractor, through audits and inspections carried out by the Corporate Health and Safety Department.

Currently, there are minimal costs to the Council for the provision of amenities in the cemeteries. If the capital costs of the maintenance of items such as footpaths, chapels, walls etc. are accepted as being unavoidable costs, the only amenity cost would be the cost of providing water via the standpipes.

Should amenities such as toilets be provided in the cemeteries, not only will there be the construction and building maintenance costs, but there will also be the costs for staff to replenish consumables (toilet roll, soap etc.) and clean the toilets, seven days per week. There would also be the cost of purchasing the consumables, as well as water and electricity charges.

The Council's main operational cemeteries are easily accessible to the public, by car or public transport. All of the cemeteries are accessed via main roads and have bus routes that go past them. However, the locations of the cemeteries within the town, does mean that residents in Eastern side of the town do not have a cemetery local to them. The current open cemeteries are located in the South (Towcester Road, Great Houghton), West (Duston and Dallington) and North (Kingsthorpe) of the town. When looking at the future provision of cemetery space, it would be worth looking at the option of a cemetery in the East of the town

There are minimal amenities in the town's cemeteries. At one time, there were toilets in both Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries, but due to continued vandalism, the toilets had to be closed. There are now no toilet facilities in any of the cemeteries. Towcester Road and Kingsthorpe cemeteries both have chapels, which are available for hire for funeral services. There are no toilets associated with the chapels. All open cemeteries have stand pipes where visitors to the cemetery can obtain water.

Since June 2011, Enterprise Managed Services have managed the cemetery service on behalf of Northampton Borough Council. Enterprise is responsible for all aspects of the service, including both the management of funerals and the maintenance of the cemeteries.

Cemeteries and burial grounds that the council is responsible for. are Kingsthorpe, Towcester Road, Dallington, Duston and Great Houghton cemeteries.

The management of cemeteries complies with the standards set out in the Code of Practice as described by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities.

Grave digging and related works are carried out in accordance with the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) “Code of Safe Working Practices for Cemeteries”.

Environmental Health and Licensing Manager, NBC

Under section 46 of the Public Health (Control of Disease) 1984, it is the duty of the local authority to cause to be buried or cremated the body of any person who has died or been found dead in their area, in any case where it appears to the authority that suitable arrangements have not been made for the disposal of the body. The legislation empowers the local authority to recover its expenses in arranging a funeral from the estate of the deceased person.

The number of local authority funerals carried out by Northampton Borough Council are detailed in the table below.

Year	Total number of local authority funerals	Number of cremations	Number of burials
2016/17	11	10	1
2015/16	11	10	1
2014/15	17	16	1
2013/14	29	27	2
2012/13	28	26	2

The majority of local authority funerals carried out in the last five years have been cremations. In recent year it has been the normal practice. The costs of burials and cremations are broadly similar and a cremation allows for a service to take place in the chapel at the crematorium rather than at the graveside (which would be the case for burials).

The burials that have taken place have been at the request of the Coroner, in cases where the deceased had already purchased a burial plot, where the deceased had religious beliefs that did not allow crematorium or where practical factors such as the size of the deceased meant that cremation was not possible.

The arrangement of local authority funerals is carried out by a funeral director under contract to the local authority. This contract has recently been re-let and it is possible that there may be a change in the proportion of burials and cremations in future.

Local authority funerals are carried out for a range of reasons. Some of the deceased have no immediate family members or friends who are able to carry out the funerals. In some situations estrangements within families mean that no one is willing to arrange a funeral. Sometimes family members do not have sufficient funds to pay the funeral directors, although social fund payments are available to assist with funeral costs, they do not cover the full cost.

Service Users

Four members of the public submitted either written or verbal evidence:

A written report, dated 2016, was provided regarding findings at that time regarding Kingsthorpe Cemetery. A further report was submitted dated 2018. A written report, dated 2017, was submitted regarding concerns about Dallington Cemetery.

Key points:

- 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.
- Bins located in the cemeteries are not fit for purpose, the undamaged wire bins with minimum cost can be modified. Euro bins could be a possible be the solution in identified areas.
- Bins could be emptying bins on a Friday may ensure they have space for the weekend and holidays should be taken into account.
- The cemetery rules require amending. They should also reflect the many different faiths and customs using the facilities.
- A large notice board could be 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. Signed bins for food may be required.
- Trees directly affect the lives of approximately 65 of the 82 properties boarding Towcester Road cemetery and will affect the remainder as the recently planted trees grow. They restrict light and sun this is not just from overhanging trees. There is a problem 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.

- Dogs have been observed running in the cemetery and dog fouling; there is a need for signage.
- Plastic milk bottles are an issue, there is a need for dedicated water containers at each point with signs requesting it is returned.
- A small quantity of benches along with grassed areas have become unauthorised memorials.
- There are concern regarding pebbles and shingle in the cemetery and only small bushes and shrubs should be permitted to be planted.
- The children's areas required attention.
- Fly tipping had stopped.
- Dallington cemetery is not of a high standard or it is well maintained. The whole cemetery has been deemed by several people they have spoken to as a dark and dismal place due to the number of trees and shrubs that have become extremely overgrown and need attention. Boundary fences need to be repaired in several places as the gaps only serve to provide access for people who have no interest in the Cemetery.
- Recently, an adult on a scrambling bike was sighted near the grave plots overlooking Kings Heath where access can be gained through the shrubs.
- Litter bins are constantly overflowing in Dallington Cemetery, and many of the wire bins are not fit for purpose as they are bent out of shape.
- The water tanks are in working order, but there are only three in the whole of the cemetery and none in the lower part which overlooks Kings Heath, making it difficult for relatives to fetch and carry water to graves in these areas.
- There are only 3 dog bins in situ. Several dog walkers use the cemetery. The 3 roundabouts on the main avenue are in poor condition, especially the one at the end, with traffic cones permanently sited there. This is a place where funeral cortege's park, whilst burials take place and is not a pleasant place for mourners to wait in any case as it is very dark and dreary due to the overgrown trees.
- Whenever a grave is excavated for a burial, the lack of care and attention is unacceptable as mud and other debris is left on the paths and grass prior to and after the burial has taken place which is disrespectful to the mourners.
- The staff toilets located in Dallington Cemetery are of a poor condition.

- The water tanks are often full of plastic bottles that often blow out of the tanks across the cemetery.
- The verges are muddy and driving around the cemetery is dangerous.
- The bins are in the wrong place, wrong area and of wrong type.

There is a need for a seven day cemetery service. The Muslim community bury their deceased as soon as possible. There needs to be toilet and washing facilities at cemeteries. There is a shortage of burial space and there is concern what will happen when it is full. The specific area at Towcester Road cemetery for Muslim burials is getting filled up very quickly; there is a need for extra land for cemetery space.

Hollowell Funeral Services

Vehicular access is sufficient to allow easy access, turning and exit of all cemeteries. However, there is insufficient parking in all of the cemeteries for following funeral cars and other visitors without sometimes regrettably, using the lawn.

The road surface at all cemeteries, but urgently at Towcester Road (Hardingstone), in places needs improvement where it has degraded. Solution – resurface.

Occasionally at Dallington (Harlestone Road) overhanging trees and branches and unkept trees that line the drive prove obstructive. This can make turning vehicles at the end of the cemetery drive difficult.

Parking for clients' cars can be difficult at Kingsthorpe cemetery in the area where the mausoleum is situated. The road is narrow and parked cars make it difficult to pass without driving on the lawn. The road leaves little space for a small car park or passing space.

In all cemeteries, access when shouldering a coffin along pre-existing paths, can be hampered by low hanging boughs that threaten to whip the flowers from the coffin.

There needs to be better and sustained gardening/grounds keeping.

Some of the tarmacked paths become very slippery when wet. There needs to be the application/addition of a non-slip compound to existing tarmac. Alternatively, new non-slip pathways. In either choice, proper signage displayed to mitigate risk.

From time to time the height of the grass is such that access to graves becomes unsafe if not using a pre-existing path. It is not always enough to have the grass cut only at the site of the grave. Mourners often use a funeral as an opportunity to seek out other family graves.

The chapel at Kingsthorpe is ideal and well-kept and has to date served its purpose adequately.

The chapel at Towcester Road (Hardingstone) by comparison is dark and dreary and not used as much. The Chapel requires brightening up.

It is difficult to ascertain many people know about these chapels. They could be promoted more.

The water troughs and rubbish bins are adequately scattered throughout all of the cemeteries and are widely used.

Encourage recycling

The notice boards in all cemeteries need some work, not just aesthetically but also the content.

The cost to install a toilet is appreciated that it may be beyond any allocated budget, but there are a lot of visitors to the cemeteries, and this would be worthy of consideration.

Signage within the cemetery whilst adequate can be abused and from time to time.

Reassurance was once delivered in the form of a cemetery superintendent or similar who would not only be present but would also show exactly where the grave was located, be on hand during the interment and be able to address any problem that may arise. If any issue prevails during a service apart from the gravediggers there is nobody to approach: It would be beneficial to reinstate an 'on the ground' superintendent or similar.

Grave size - Currently the only grave size that appears to be available is large. this is because under new policy the graves are shored-up. A large grave space makes it very difficult to safely position a coffin over the grave without overstretching.

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.

Its 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 its establishment by Royal Charter it has 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.

3.5 Site Visits

3.5.1 Site visits took place to various cemeteries around the borough and to a cemetery at Kettering.

3.5.2 Key findings:

The cemeteries visited were all of a high standard and were well maintained.

The paths and edges in Towcester Road Cemetery were pristine.

One of the litter bins, as located in Towcester Road Cemetery requires replacing.

Some of the graves located in Towcester Road Cemetery had trees planted on them.

Some of the trees in situ in Towcester Road Cemetery need to be removed as soon as possible.

It would be useful for consideration to be given to the issuing of key passes to the Chapel in Towcester Road Cemetery.

It would be useful for consideration to be given to the water tanks located in the extension at Duston Cemetery to be plumbed in as soon as practicable.

The trees that are obscuring the sign at the entrance to Duston Cemetery need to be pruned as soon as possible.

Some of the footpaths and road way in Kingsthorpe Cemetery is in need of repair.

Signage at Kettering Crematorium and Cemetery is clear and well worded signed.

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

There are a number of trees in situ, either on, or between graves, in Dallington cemetery that require removing.

The sign located at the entrance to Dallington Cemetery requires cleaning and new signage inserted into the glass cabinet.

The commercial land, owned by Northampton Borough Council, that edges Dallington Cemetery could be re-categorised as further cemetery land

3.5.3 Appendix E provides comprehensive findings from the site visits.

4. Desktop Research

4.1.1 As part of its evidence gathering process for this review, desktop research was undertaken regarding best practice elsewhere.

4.1.2 Appendix F provides comprehensive findings from the desktop research exercise.

5 Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Overview and Scrutiny ensures that it adheres to the Council's statutory duty to provide the public with access to Scrutiny reports, briefing notes, agendas, minutes and other such documentation. Meetings of the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and its Scrutiny Panels are widely publicised, i.e. on the Council's website, copies issued to the local media and paper copies are made available in the Council's One Stop Shop and local libraries.
- 5.2 The Scrutiny Panel was mindful of the eight protected characteristics when undertaking this scrutiny activity so that any recommendations that it made could identify potential positive and negative impacts on any particular sector of the community. This was borne in mind as the Scrutiny Panel progressed with the review and evidence gathered.
- 5.3 So that the Scrutiny Panel obtains a wide range of views, a number of key witnesses provided evidence as detailed in section 3 of this report.
- 5.4 Details of the Equality Impact Assessment undertaken can be located on the Overview and Scrutiny [webpage](#).

6 Conclusions and Key Findings

- 6.1 After all of the evidence was collated the following conclusions were drawn:

Maintenance

- 6.1.1 The Scrutiny Panel realised that the cutting back of trees, within a cemetery, particularly those located near to or on graves, can be a sensitive issues. Initially Officers will start a negotiation process with the service user. However, if the tree is causing damage or is a health and safety issue a decision has to be made regarding the wider implications. Each situation is looked at individually. Should a tombstone become unstable and unsafe. Officers can organise for it to be made safe.
- 6.1.2 From its site visits, the Scrutiny Panel concluded that the cemeteries visited were all of a high standard and were well maintained, but there was a number of maintenance issues that required attention, as detailed in paragraph 4 of this report. A written report, dated 2017, was submitted by the Friends of Dallington Cemetery regarding their concerns about Dallington Cemetery. This prompted a site visit by the

Scrutiny Panel to Dallington Cemetery. Representatives of the Scrutiny Panel visited Dallington Cemetery and found it to be of a high standard.

- 6.1.3 The Scrutiny Panel noted that the Council fulfils its role in ensuring that health and safety on the cemeteries, is adequately managed by the contractor, through audits and inspections carried out by the corporate Health and Safety department. Risk Assessments and safe systems of work are in place for all operations that are carried out in the cemeteries. Costs for health and safety management within the current environmental services contract are included within the overall contract cost. There is no specific cost for health and safety management within cemeteries.
- 6.1.4 Evidence received had highlighted that in some cemeteries in other towns, stand pipes are available and the Scrutiny Panel felt this to be a useful alternative to water bottles.
- 6.1.5 From its evidence gathering, the Scrutiny Panel determined that there is a need to ensure that the Policies and Regulations regarding cemeteries are adhered to. A previously issued Regulations Guidance Booklet for cemeteries had been useful to both Funeral Directors and service users; the re-issue of a similar document would be helpful.
- 6.1.6 The Scrutiny Panel realised that some of the suggestions put forward by the Funeral Director, section 3.3 of this report, mirrored some of the potential suggestions proposed by the Scrutiny Panel following its recent site visits to cemeteries with the borough of Northampton.

Finance

- 6.1.7 Evidence gathered determined that the costs of the different functions within cemetery services are contained in the costs of other service areas. For example, grounds maintenance costs for cemeteries is included in the overall cost of grounds maintenance for the whole environmental services contract.
- 6.1.8 There is minimal cost to the Council for the provision of amenities in cemeteries; an amenity cost would be the cost of providing water via the standpipes.

Amenities and facilities

- 6.1.9 Duston cemetery was extended in 2016, providing an additional 800 burial spaces.
- 6.1.10 Burial plots come with rights for 99 years.

- 6.1.11 Currently funerals do not take place in Northampton on Sundays; there is a limited service on Saturday in exceptional circumstances.
- 6.1.12 There are two cemeteries in the borough with chapels. The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be useful for a key to be available upon request for the Chapel at Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries. Funeral Directors, based in Northampton, could be issued with a key to the chapel. There is a need for the facility of the chapels to be promoted.
- 6.1.13 The Scrutiny Panel noted, from its site visits, that there are no toilets for users to use at the cemeteries. It was realised from the evidence provided, that toilets had been provided at Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries but due to continued vandalism these had been closed. Both cemeteries have chapels but there are no toilets associated with the chapels. The Scrutiny Panel felt that the provision of toilets would be very useful for users of cemeteries.
- 6.1.14 All open cemeteries have standpipes where users can obtain water.
- 6.1.15 The Scrutiny Panel felt that it would be beneficial to the town for a feasibility study to be undertaken into the requirement of a new crematorium

7 Recommendations

- 7.1 The purpose of the Scrutiny Panel was to review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements

Amenities and facilities

Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries –
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries –
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries

Scrutiny Panel 1 therefore recommends to Cabinet that:

Maintenance

7.1.1 That a number of maintenance and safety issues are considered for action:

Some of the large trees located in the town's cemeteries, that have been planted on, or outside the burial plot investigated for removal as soon as possible.

The water tanks located in the extension at Duston Cemetery are plumbed in as soon as practicable.

The trees that are obscuring the sign at the entrance to Duston Cemetery are pruned as soon as possible.

Litter and recycling bins in situ within the cemeteries are replaced with modern bins, where appropriate.

The footpaths and roadways in Kingsthorpe Cemetery that are in need of repair, are repaired as soon as possible.

The tops of the vaults are made secure.

The sign located at the entrance to Dallington Cemetery is cleaned and fresh signage placed behind the glass cabinet.

Signs be erected in cemeteries " Dogs to be kept on a leash at all times" "Please clean up after your dog."

All signs erected within the borough's cemeteries are of the same style and standard.

7.1.3 Information regarding the usage and disposal of plastic bottles in cemeteries is produced for users. The information could be included within a Regulations Guidance booklet for users of cemeteries. All Funeral Directors could be provided with a copy of the booklet.

7.1.4 The Policies and procedures for the usage of cemeteries within the borough are tightened up and a zero tolerance approach is applied.

7.1.5 The Scrutiny Panel welcomed and noted the pristine condition of the war graves.

Amenities and Facilities

- 7.1.6 Consideration is given to the issuing to Funeral Directors based in the borough of Northampton, key passes, to the chapels in Towcester Road and Kingthorpe cemeteries.
- 7.1.7 The facility of the chapels at Kingthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries are promoted.
- 7.1.8 The provision of standpipes, instead of the water butts and water bottles is investigated.
- 7.1.9 The lack of burial space is addressed and potential new sites are investigated, for example, consideration is given to re-categorising the borough owned land (currently categorised as commercial land) that edges the cemetery at Dallington as further cemetery land.
- 7.1.10 A feasibility study is undertaken into the requirement of a new crematorium for the town is investigated.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

- 7.1.11 The Overview and Scrutiny Committee, as part of its monitoring regime, reviews the impact of this report in six months' time.

Appendices

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

SCRUTINY PANEL 1 -CEMETERIES

1. Purpose/Objectives of the Review

- To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements
Amenities and facilities
Financial implications

Key Lines of Enquiry

- To gain an understanding of the maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around maintenance and health and safety requirements within the Borough's cemeteries
- To gain an understanding of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries

2. Outcomes Required

- To ensure that the Borough's cemeteries are easily accessible, well maintained with adequate amenities and facilities available for visitors to use.

3. Information Required

- Background data
- Background reports
- Best practice data
- Desktop research
- Evidence from expert internal witnesses
- Evidence from expert external witnesses

- Site visits (if applicable)

4. Format of Information

- Background data, including:

Presentation to set the scene: Maintenance and health and safety requirements, amenities and facilities, financial implications

- Relevant national and local background research papers
- Relevant Legislation and Ecclesiastical Legislation including:

Cemetery and Crematorium Regulations 1989

Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977

Cremation Act 1902

Integrated Pollution Control (IPPC)

Environmental Protection Act 1990

- Statistics: including:
 - Burial space – current and projected
 - Population statistics
 - Budgetary information regarding the Borough's Cemeteries

- Relevant published papers (if applicable)

- Best practice external to Northampton

- Internal expert advisors:

- Cabinet Member for Environment, NBC
- Environmental Protection Officer, NBC (re: Public Health Burials)
- Cabinet Member for Finance, NBC

- External expert advisors:

- Funeral Directors within the Borough
- Service users, via Community Groups such as Residents' Associations, Interfaith Group etc.
- War Graves Commission
- Representative(s) from local churches, with a current graveyard
- Humanist celebrant

- Site visit to various cemeteries within the borough

5. Methods Used to Gather Information

- Minutes of meetings
- Desktop research
- Site visits
- Officer reports
- Presentations
- Examples of best practice
- Witness Evidence:-

➤ Key witnesses as detailed in section 4 of this scope

6. Co-Options to the Review

- Local Funeral Director to be approached to be a co optee to this Review.

7. Community Impact Screening Assessment

- A Community Impact Screening Assessment to be undertaken on the scope of the Review

8. Evidence gathering Timetable

June 2017 – March 2018

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------------|
| • 22 June 2016 | - Scoping meeting |
| • 6 July | - Evidence gathering |
| • 27 September | - Evidence gathering |
| • 9 November | - Evidence gathering |
| • 8 January 2018 | - Evidence gathering |
| • 15 March | - Approval final report |

Various site visits will be programmed during this period, if required.

Meetings to commence at 6.00 pm

9. Responsible Officers

Lead Officer	Julie Seddon, Director of Environment and Culture
Co-ordinator	Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

10. Resources and Budgets

Julie Seddon, Director of Environment and Culture, to provide internal advice.

11. Final report presented by:

Completed by March 2018. Presented by the Chair of the Scrutiny Panel to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee and then to Cabinet.

12. Monitoring procedure:

Review the impact of the report after six months (approximately November/December 2018)

Processes and Procedures

Excavation of Graves

The excavation of graves shall be undertaken using the process and procedures: -

- Upon receipt of the 'Instruction for Preparation of Burial', the Cemetery Management Team shall undertake relevant checks, which relate to names and location for interment, with any anomalies or concerns to be immediately relayed to the relevant Client Officer where necessary.
- Working in Partnership with the Client Officer, the relevant grave shall be marked out in full, ready for excavation, with all due steps taken to ensure spacing and alignment are precise. Care shall also be taken to ensure that sufficient additional measurement is allowed for the inclusion of grave shoring.
- Prior to the commencement of any works a Site Specific Risk Assessment shall be produced. As well as measuring the risk to carrying out the excavation, consideration shall also be given to the access to the grave, the safe method of operation, the positioning of the soil box, the creation of the burial platform and of course the safety of the public. Consideration shall also be given as to PPE, which shall include safety footwear, hard hats, gloves, overalls and where a mechanical digger is in operation – ear defenders.
- Where the excavation is adjacent to memorials, immediate steps must be taken to prevent damage to those memorials. In certain cases, this may mean seeking approval to dismantle a memorial; in such circumstances, this shall only be undertaken with the express approval of the Client officer and arrangements must be made for the prompt return and safe repositioning by a qualified mason.
- Prior to the commencement of the excavation, all tools and equipment must be present and available for use. Furthermore, wherever shoring is in use it shall have been checked on a weekly frequency as to its condition and in particular the operational capacity of the hydraulic rams.
- Excavation shall be carried out to the centre of the grave space, ensuring a minimization of additional risk of collapse.
- Turf shall be lifted and re-used elsewhere within the cemetery.
- Soil boxes shall be erected, in line with the approved Risk Assessment and checked as secure. Soil boxes shall be located at a sufficient distance from the edge of the grave so as to minimize risk of collapse or fallback. Where a hand-dig, 'walk boards' shall be installed along either side of the grave.

- Heavy clay soil can increase the risk of collapse and where necessary additional wooden struts shall be used to protect the security of the soil box.
- Excavation shall be either by hand or by machine digging, depending upon whether access is available and safe, as well as, whether it is a new or re-opened grave. In any event, it shall be two-person operation, with care taken to ensure the safety of members of the public and the accuracy of the dig. All sides shall be square and vertical, with spoil deposited into the soil box (In certain unique circumstances, spoil will need to be completely removed from the location; in such circumstances, this shall be to the compound, taking care to ensure that there is no deterioration to roads and paths due to soil from tyres. Where this does occur it shall be immediately removed.).
- Any surplus soil shall be removed (as above).
- During the excavation process care must be taken to note any undue matter, such as the discovery of remains or a risk or actual collapse. In any these circumstances work shall cease and the matter should be immediately referred to the Relevant Client Officer for guidance. During this time an operative must remain at the site for safety purposes.
- As the excavation progresses, grave shoring shall be installed by trained operatives.
- Once a depth of 90mm has been reached (during a hand dig) access and egress must only be made using a ladder. All ladders must be regularly checked for suitability or deterioration and replaced as necessary. In no circumstances should an operative use the shoring as an aid to climbing out of, or descending into the grave.
- As the excavation approaches the prescribed depth, regular checks must be undertaken so as to ensure the preparation is accurate. Should an obstruction arise, which prevents the full preparation of the grave this shall also be referred to the relevant Client Officer for a decision on how to progress.
- Once the excavation is complete then the grave shall be fully covered by suitable boards to prevent risk for the public. If for any reason, during the excavation, the grave is left unattended, then the grave shall also be fully covered and all tools removed from site.
- At the completion of the work the entire surrounding area shall be fully cleaned and made safe.

The usage of a mechanical digger, the installation of grave shoring and acting as banks-man are key activities, which must only be undertaken by properly trained and accredited employees.

Excavation of Re-Opened / Reserved Graves

All processes and procedures are undertaken, as detailed in *Excavation of Graves* above, with the following additions; -

- Mechanical digging shall not be a consideration.
- Care shall be taken when approaching the depth of the previous interment, ensuring an avoidance of damage to previously interred remains.

Exhumation

All processes and procedures are undertaken, as detailed in ***Excavation of Graves*** above, with the following additions; -

- Work shall only progress with the relevant paperwork in place; i.e. the license issued by the Home Office or the Faculty issued by the Church Authority.
- Work will only commence following the erection of suitable and approved screening, which is used to prevent public view of the exhumation site.
- Suitable lifting equipment shall be engaged as necessary to remove the coffin/remains from the grave. Excess soil shall be cleared from the remains/coffin.
- Freshly ground lime and disinfectant shall be used as required.
- The removed remains shall be carefully placed in a container supplied. All other items, which are removed from the grave, shall be treated and disinfected.
- Should any other remains require removal (to attain access) then such remains shall be returned to the grave in the same position.
- All operatives involved with the process shall be supplied with specific PPE (goggles, disposable coveralls, gloves, etc. all of which disposed of following the completion of the procedure).
- Wherever possible, the procedure shall be arranged outside normal hours, seeking to achieve completion, outside the view of the general public.

Cremated Remains

Cremated Remains shall be treated in various manners, dependent upon into which medium the interment is going to be made. This will include into earth, vault or gravelled areas; or indeed scattered.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY

Appendix C



SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - CEMETERIES
CORE QUESTIONS – EXPERT ADVISORS

The Scrutiny Panel is currently undertaking a review: Cemeteries

To review cemeteries in the Borough, concentrating on:

Maintenance and health and safety requirements

Amenities and facilities

Financial implications

Outcomes required:

- To ensure that the Borough's cemeteries are easily accessible, well maintained with adequate amenities and facilities available for visitors to use.

CORE QUESTIONS:

A series of key questions have been put together to inform the evidence base of the Scrutiny Panel:

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

- b. Please can you provide details of the health and safety requirements and the financial implications within the Borough's cemeteries. Please explain.
- c. Please can you provide details of the financial implications around amenities and facilities within the Borough's cemeteries. Please explain.
- d. In your opinion, are the Borough's cemeteries easily accessible? Please provide details. If not, please can you provide suggestions for improvement.
- e. Are you aware of the location and the provision of amenities in the Borough's cemeteries, please provide details.
- f. Do you have any other information you are able to provide in relation to the Borough's cemeteries?

Maintenance operations for open and closed churchyards and cemeteries.

Trees;

All trees within the churchyard area will be assessed in accordance with the councils tree policy. Any trees that are identified as requiring work will be prioritized on a Health and Safety basis, with those considered to be a danger being regarded as High Priority.

Grass Cutting;

Grass cutting operations will run from approx. Mid-March through until late October, dependent on growth rates and weather conditions. The grass shall be cut on a fortnightly basis.

Areas of grass that cannot be mown in their entirety such as around obstacles or boundaries will be strimmed to ensure that a “finished” visual quality is achieved. Any undesirable arisings that are spread to paths, hard surfaces and memorials due to the mowing operation will be blown or swept to remove and tidy.

Litter/ Litter Bins;

Litter picking operations will take place based on the requirements of the site. E.g., a site that is deemed to have a “littering” problem will receive more visits as would be appropriate.

Litter bins will be emptied weekly with litter picking normally carried out on a weekly basis.

Litter picking will also take place during any schedule maintenance visits i.e., grass cutting or shrub maintenance.

Shrub Areas;

Shrub maintenance will occur during the winter period on an annual basis. Each visit will include pruning and weed control.

Remedial pruning will take place during the summer time to ensure sight lines, paths and windows are not affected by re-growth.

Hedge Cutting;

Hedge maintenance will be carried out to retain the form or shape as required. Cutting will be done outside of the recognized bird nesting period usually between October and February. All arising will be removed from site.

Footpaths/ Hard standing Areas;

Will be kept in a litter and detritus free condition Chemical treatments will take place as indicated below

Chemical Use/ Application;

The use of herbicides will take place annually to control weed species. Area to be treated will include hard standings, paths and walk ways. Also, if appropriate, applications will also be considered around building bases, boundary lines and memorials.

Tombs/ Memorials;

Headstones and Memorials will be inspected on a periodic basis to assess their stability, in consideration of the Ministry of Justice, Managing the safety of Burial Ground Memorial guidelines 2014, and the Contract Documentation.

Memorials will be checked by visual and “hand” means.

If a memorial is deemed to be of risk it shall be made safe.

Methods of work

In order to ensure that the delivery of the service is consistent, and to maintain safe working conditions, Enterprise has processes in place that the staff should work to.

- ***Excavation of Graves***
- The excavation of graves shall be undertaken using the following process and procedures; -
- Upon receipt of the ‘Instruction for Preparation of Burial’, the Cemetery Management Team shall undertake relevant checks, which relate to names and location for interment, with any anomalies or concerns to be immediately relayed to the relevant Client Officer where necessary.
- Working in Partnership with the Client Officer, the relevant grave shall be marked out in full, ready for excavation, with all due steps taken to ensure spacing and alignment are precise. Care shall also be taken to ensure that sufficient additional measurement is allowed for the inclusion of grave shoring.
- Prior to the commencement of any works a Site Specific Risk Assessment shall be produced. As well as measuring the risk to carrying out the excavation, consideration shall also be given to the access to the grave, the safe method of operation, the positioning of the soil box, the creation of the burial platform and of course the safety of the public. Consideration shall also be given as to PPE, which shall include safety footwear, hard hats, gloves, overalls and where a mechanical digger is in operation – ear defenders.
- Where the excavation is adjacent to memorials, immediate steps must be taken to prevent damage to those memorials. In certain cases, this may mean seeking approval to dismantle a memorial; in such circumstances, this shall only be

undertaken with the express approval of the Client officer and arrangements must be made for the prompt return and safe repositioning by a qualified mason.

- Prior to the commencement of the excavation, all tools and equipment must be present and available for use. Furthermore, wherever shoring is in use it shall have been checked on a weekly frequency as to its condition and in particular the operational capacity of the hydraulic rams.
- Excavation shall be carried out to the centre of the grave space, ensuring a minimization of additional risk of collapse.
- Turf shall be lifted and re-used elsewhere within the cemetery.
- Soil boxes shall be erected, in line with the approved Risk Assessment and checked as secure. Soil boxes shall be located at a sufficient distance from the edge of the grave so as to minimize risk of collapse or fallback. Where a hand-dig, 'walk boards' shall be installed along either side of the grave.
- Heavy clay soil can increase the risk of collapse and where necessary additional wooden struts shall be used to protect the security of the soil box.
- Excavation shall be either by hand or by machine digging, depending upon whether access is available and safe, as well as, whether it is a new or re-opened grave. In any event, it shall be two-person operation, with care taken to ensure the safety of members of the public and the accuracy of the dig. All sides shall be square and vertical, with spoil deposited into the soil box (In certain unique circumstances, spoil will need to be completely removed from the location; in such circumstances, this shall be to the compound, taking care to ensure that there is no deterioration to roads and paths due to soil from tyres. Where this does occur it shall be immediately removed.).
- Any surplus soil shall be removed (as above).
- During the excavation process care must be taken to note any undue matter, such as the discovery of remains or a risk or actual collapse. In any these circumstances work shall cease and the matter should be immediately referred to the Relevant Client Officer for guidance. During this time an operative must remain at the site for safety purposes.
- As the excavation progresses, grave shoring shall be installed by trained operatives.
- Once a depth of 90mm has been reached (during a hand dig) access and egress must only be made using a ladder. All ladders must be regularly checked for suitability or deterioration and replaced as necessary. In no circumstances should an operative use the shoring as an aid to climbing out of, or descending into the grave.
- As the excavation approaches the prescribed depth, regular checks must be undertaken so as to ensure the preparation is accurate. Should an obstruction arise, which prevents the full preparation of the grave this shall also be referred to the relevant Client Officer for a decision on how to progress.

- Once the excavation is complete then the grave shall be fully covered by suitable boards to prevent risk for the public. If for any reason, during the excavation, the grave is left unattended, then the grave shall also be fully covered and all tools removed from site.
- At the completion of the work the entire surrounding area shall be fully cleaned and made safe.
- It is important to note that the usage of a mechanical digger, the installation of grave shoring and acting as banks-man are key activities, which must only be undertaken by properly trained and accredited employees.
- **Excavation of Re-Opened / Reserved Graves**
 - All processes and procedures shall be undertaken, as detailed in **Excavation of Graves** above, with the following additions; -
 - Mechanical digging shall not be a consideration.
 - Care shall be taken when approaching the depth of the previous interment, ensuring an avoidance of damage to previously interred remains.
- **Exhumation**
 - All processes and procedures shall be undertaken, as detailed in **Excavation of Graves** above, with the following additions; -
 - Work shall only progress with the relevant paperwork in place; i.e. the license issued by the Home Office or the Faculty issued by the Church Authority.
 - Work will only commence following the erection of suitable and approved screening, which is used to prevent public view of the exhumation site.
 - Suitable lifting equipment shall be engaged as necessary to remove the coffin/remains from the grave. Excess soil shall be cleared from the remains/coffin.
 - Freshly ground lime and disinfectant shall be used as required.
 - The removed remains shall be carefully placed in a container supplied. All other items, which are removed from the grave, shall be treated and disinfected.
 - Should any other remains require removal (to attain access) then such remains shall be returned to the grave in the same position.
 - All operatives involved with the process shall be supplied with specific PPE (goggles, disposable coveralls, gloves, etc. all of which disposed of following the completion of the procedure).
 - Wherever possible, the procedure shall be arranged outside normal hours, seeking to achieve completion, outside the view of the general public.

- ***Cremated Remains***

Cremated Remains shall be treated in various manners, dependent upon into which medium the interment is going to be made. This will include into earth, vault or graveled areas; or indeed scattered.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – CEMETERIES

BRIEFING NOTE: SITE VISITS TO A VARIETY OF CEMETERIES
IN NORTHAMPTON AND KETTERING

1 SITE VISITS

1.1 On Thursday 3 August 2017, Councillor Brian Sargeant (Chair) Councillor Vicky Culbard (Deputy Chair), Councillor Dennis Meredith, Councillor Arthur McCutcheon and Councillor Andrew together with Mick Tyrrell, Contract Manager and Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer visited a variety of cemeteries to inform the evidence base of this Scrutiny Review.

1.2 TOWCESTER ROAD CEMETERY



1.2.1 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 but one required replacing



- The paths and edges were very well maintained
- Some graves had conifers planted on them and other trees which would also grow very large.



- The area of the cemetery dedicated to war graves was immaculately kept.
- The natural area within the cemetery looked a bit over grown, but the Panel understood that it is a natural area.
- The Panel was very impressed by the condition and upkeep of Towcester Road cemetery
- Some of the graves comprised of eight plots and contained a number of monuments.
- The Panel felt that a number of trees in the cemetery at Towcester Road should be removed as soon as possible so that the land could be used fully as burial ground.
- The water tanks were in full working order.



- - The Chapel was locked. The Panel realised that this was due to anti-social behaviour previously taking place but felt it would be useful for consideration to be given to the issuing of a pass or key to visitors to the cemetery.
 - There are areas within the cemetery for burials of those of different religions

1.3 **DUSTON CEMETERY**

1.3.1 The site visit walked around the cemetery noting:

- Duston is a small cemetery but is very well kept
- The original cemetery is now full but there is an extension of 800 plots

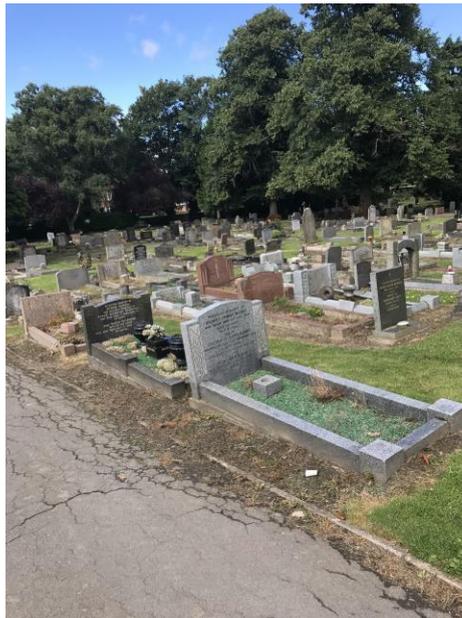


- The edging to the pathways is not as pristine as it was in Towcester Road cemetery
- The water tanks in the extension Duston Cemetery are not plumbed in



- The sign at the entrance to “Duston Cemetery” is obscured by tree growth
- The Site Visit felt that the architecture of Duston Cemetery is austere

1.4 KINGSTHORPE CEMETERY



1.4.1 The site visit walked around the cemetery noting:

- Kingsthorpe Cemetery is the largest cemetery in Northampton which opened in 1899

- There are 38,000 interments over approximately 19,000 grave spaces
- Approximately 1000 new designated grave spaces (not including possible Goat Field expansion)
- There are spaces for further graves in the extension
- There were toilet facilities in this cemetery but they had been vandalised and burnt down
- The water tanks are in working order
- Litter bins and seating is situated around the cemetery
- It is very tidy and well-kept cemetery
- The footpaths are in need of repair



- The grounds of the cemetery are pleasant with nice flowers and trees planted



- Vaults and the mausoleum is located in Kingsthorpe cemetery



1.5 CREMATORIUM AND CEMETERY - KETTERING

1.5.1 The site visit walked around the cemetery noting:

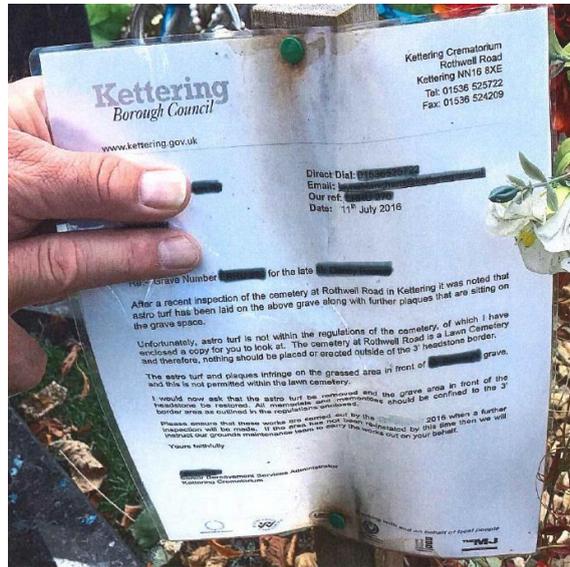
- Toilets are available on site but are only open when the crematorium is in use. The crematorium has full time staff employed.
- There is clear signage within the cemetery:



- Cemetery regulations are clear and on display



- Should plot owners not adhere to the rules a notice is put up next to the plot informing them of this



- Memorial testing takes place and visitors are informed of this



- Rules regarding the scattering of ashes are clearly communicated:



- The cemetery is very well maintained and is a fully functioning cemetery.
- There are a number of flower displays around the grounds of the cemetery. Shrubs were very well maintained with evidence of summer pruning

1.6 DALLINGTON CEMETERY

1.6.1 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.



1.6.2 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.

2 CONCLUSIONS

2.1 The Site Visit concluded that:

- 2.1.1 The cemeteries visited were all of a high standard and were well maintained.
- 2.1.2 The paths and edges in Towcester Road Cemetery were pristine.
- 2.1.3 One of the litter bins, as located in Towcester Road Cemetery, as detailed in paragraph 2.2 of this briefing note requires replacing.
- 2.1.4 The Site Visit was concerned that some of the graves located in Towcester Road Cemetery had trees planted on them.
- 2.1.5 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – some of the trees in situ in Towcester Road Cemetery are removed as soon as possible.
- 2.1.6 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – consideration is given to the issuing of key passes to the Chapel in Towcester Road Cemetery.
- 2.1.7 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – the water tanks located in the extension at Duston Cemetery are plumbed in as soon as practicable.
- 2.1.9 A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – the trees that are obscuring the sign at the entrance to Duston Cemetery are pruned as soon as possible.
- 2.1.10 Some of the footpaths and road way in Kingsthorpe Cemetery is in need of repair. A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested - those footpaths and roadways in Kingsthorpe Cemetery that are in need of repair, are repaired as soon as possible.
- 2.1.11 The Site Visit was impressed by the clear and well worded signed located at Kettering Crematorium and Cemetery. A potential recommendation of the final report was suggested – Signage, similar to that located at Kettering Crematorium and Cemetery, as detailed in paragraph 2.5 of this briefing note is implemented in Northampton’s cemeteries. Signage to be made of similar material to that of the signage at Kettering Crematorium and Cemetery and be installed onto plinths for easy maintenance and cleansing.
- 2.1.12 Dallington Cemetery is of a high standard and is well maintained.
- 2.1.13 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.
- 2.1.14 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.

- 2.1.15 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.
- 2.1.16 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.



Appendix F

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL SCRUTINY PANEL 1 – CEMETERIES

BRIEFING NOTE: BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE AND CEMETERIES

1 BEST PRACTICE GUIDANCE

1.1 The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA)

1.1.1 The International Cemetery, Cremation and Funeral Association (ICCFA) published in May 2006, Top 10 Cemetery Best Practices.

1.1.2 The ICCFA suggests five criteria:

1. Does it do something for the customer? Does it improve the delivery of products or services for your families?
2. Does it benefit your company? Does this practice help you become more profitable, reduce costs or increase safety?
3. Does it benefit the employee? Does it increase employee morale, or foster teamwork and buy-in?
4. Does it also improve the community?
5. Does it raise the bar for the entire profession and make funeral and cemetery services that much more relevant to consumers?

1.1.3 The ICCFA further suggests:

- Have a good performance management system in place
- Have written policies and procedures
- Have a focus on career development
- Have a vehicle, equipment and facilities maintenance programme

- Undertake internal inspections and quality control and compliance audits
- Disclose the nature of all services
- Have a system in place for resolving any customer complaints
- Have good technology, such as an informative Webpage
- Have cemetery master planning, and build this around what you know about your customers
- Have safety processes in place:
 - Safeguard the deceased
 - Safeguard the employees
 - Safeguard the visitors

2.2 ICCM

2.2.1 The ICCM has produced excellence criteria for Cemeteries and Crematoria. It is reported that the guidance is a tool to encourage organisations to pursue recognised principles of organisational excellence. The guidance is for organisations that provide and operate cemeteries, using the experiences of organisations working in this field.

2.2.2 The guidance states that the excellence criteria incorporates elements that are relevant of specific quality initiatives for cemeteries and crematoria such as ISO9002, ISO14001.

2.2.3 The excellence criteria is split into 18 sections:

1. **Leadership** - The aim being Leaders demonstrate commitment to providing value-adding cemetery and crematoria services, and to the concepts and practices of continuous improvement; Leaders create a system in which the team and individuals “own” the responsibility for planning, delivering and improving the service, Leaders seek to develop partnerships and relationships with other bodies to deliver integrated cemetery and crematoria services for the community,
2. **Public Consultation and Research** - The aim being a proactive approach to formal and informal consultation is implemented, to develop an understanding of the needs, wants and expectations of the various individuals and groups in the community for cemetery and crematoria services, external market information is used to develop an understanding of the needs of the various individuals and groups in the community for cemetery and crematoria services.

3. **Policy and Strategy** - The aim being the organisation reviews and develops its strategic approach to ensure that it is attempting to meet the needs and expectations of the community for cemetery and crematoria services, the organisation effectively implements and communicates its policy and strategy.
4. **Process Management and Improvement** - The aim being the processes involved in providing cemetery and crematoria services are systematically identified and managed to ensure that they are effective and efficient, the processes involved in operating cemetery and crematoria services are improved as required, in order to generate increasing value for the stakeholders, particularly the bereaved.
5. **Environmental Performance Planning** - The aim being the organisation's formal policy and strategy reflects a commitment to sustaining and improving the environment, particularly relating to bio-diversity, management of waste, pollution, global warming and the use of non-renewable, global resources, the environmental policy and strategy is effectively implemented and communicated.
6. **Financial Management** - The aim being the organisation values the cemeteries and crematoria as assets, and is committed to using financial resources to ensure sustainability and to enhance these assets, the organisation's financial resources are managed in a way which ensures added value to the community
7. **Staff Planning, Training and Development** - The aim being Cemetery and crematoria staffing is planned, managed and improved to enable the services to be provided safely, effectively and efficiently, the organisation ensures that all staff involved in planning and implementing the service are competent, and that the service is improved continuously through ongoing training and development.
8. **Service Design** - The aim being Cemetery and crematoria facilities and services are designed and regularly reviewed and developed, bearing in mind the identified needs, wants and expectations of the community.
9. **Grounds Maintenance** - The aim being Preparation and maintenance of the grounds is planned, based upon the identified needs of the bereaved, and these plans are implemented effectively, Grounds maintenance work outside of the planned work is identified and action is taken effectively.
10. **Burials** - The aim being Burials are organised and conducted in a dignified manner, to meet the identified needs and expectations of the bereaved, based on the statutory

requirements and the standards identified in the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved (“Rights” and “Targets”).

11. **Cremations** (this is outside the scope of the Scrutiny Review, but the aim is Cremations are organised and conducted in a dignified manner, to meet the identified needs and expectations of the bereaved, based on the statutory requirements and the standards identified in the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved (“Rights” and “Targets”).
12. **Buildings, Equipment and Consumables** - The aim being Suitable equipment and consumables are provided to support the provision of the service, Maintenance of buildings and equipment is planned, based upon the needs of the service and available resources, and these plans are effectively implemented, Repairs to the buildings and equipment are carried out in an effective manner to ensure that any adverse effects are minimised, The negative impact upon the environment arising from buildings, equipment and consumables is reduced.
13. **Health and Safety Management** - The aim being the organisation implements a planned and proactive approach to the management of health and safety for the bereaved and staff, in conjunction with partners; e.g. Funeral Directors, etc.
14. **Communication with the Bereaved** – The aim being the organisation manages communication with the bereaved so that all staff deal with users in a sensitive, friendly, professional and informative manner, portraying a suitable image.
15. **Feedback** - The aim being routine feedback from the bereaved regarding the service is encouraged and dealt with in a manner which attempts to achieve satisfaction, and this feedback is used as a means of improving the service.
16. **Public Relations** – The aim being Cemetery and crematoria services are effectively communicated throughout the community.
17. **Measurement and Review** – The aim being the organisation regularly measures and reviews its progress in pursuing its desired outcomes, to enable improvements to be planned and initiated.
18. **Results Achieved** - The aims of this area are to analyse how well the organisation is performing in achieving its desired outcomes throughout the community that it serves.

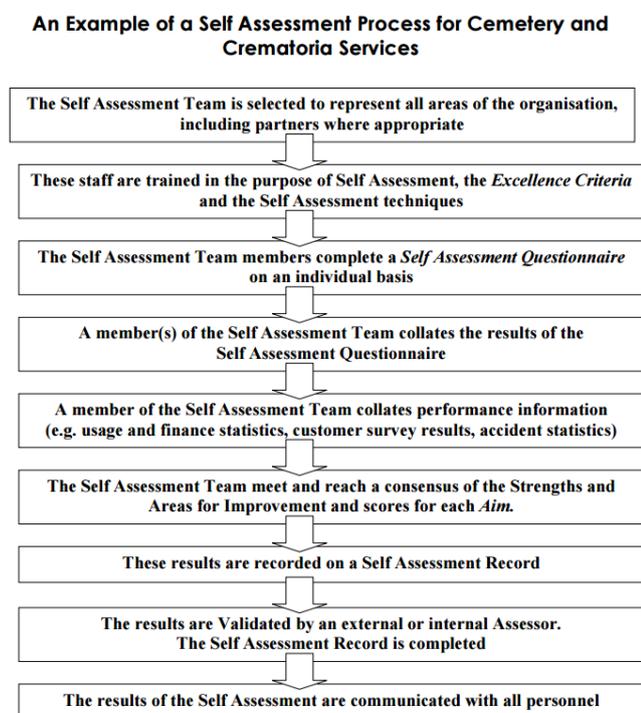
2.2.4 The Guidance states that it is important that self-assessments are undertaken as these are a key part of continuous improvement. ICCM states that effective self-assessment provides:

- Identification of the organisation’s strengths;
- Identification of the organisation’s areas for improvement;
- Measurement of the organisation’s progress (i.e. through scores);
- A basis for the development of plans for improvement.

The process of carrying out Self-Assessment can also improve:-

- staff awareness of the organisation; April 2001 40
- staff ownership of improvements;
- values of continuous improvement;
- teamwork;
- understanding of what is required to improve the service;
- ability to view the organisation through customers’ eyes.

2.2.4 The Guidance provides an example of a self-assessment process for cemetery and crematoria services:



2.2.5 The Guidance states that best practice benchmarking plays a significant role in assisting and driving continuous improvement. It goes on to suggest that benchmarking could involve the following steps:

1. Identify the issue which needs to be the subject of benchmarking. This could be carried out using Self-Assessment or process measurement and review activity;
2. Establish project team and plan;
3. Clarify the subject to be benchmarked;
4. Find suitable internal, external or competitive benchmarking partners. The following tools could be considered:-
 - I Researching Industry media for information on organisations and benchmarks;
 - II The ICCM facilitate Benchmarking partnerships through workshops and personal contact, involving organisations which have carried out ICCM Best value Charter Assessment, or have undergone an Excellence Recognition assessment;
 - III Staff networks often identify suitable partners, particularly regional groups;
 - IV Consultants can be used to identify and facilitate suitable partnerships;
 - V Industry networks; through the ICCM, etc.
5. Make contact and establish partnership;
6. Meet, discuss and collect the information;
7. Plan and carry out improvements;
8. Review progress.

2.2.6 A copy of the Guidance can be [accessed](#).

Brief Author: Tracy Tiff, Overview and Scrutiny Officer

Date: 15 August 2017