

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 - CEMETERIES

Thursday, 15 March 2018

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

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Simon Hollowell

Officers Julie Seddon, Director of Customers and Communities
Mick Tyrrell, Contract Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

Members of the Public Mr T Appleyard
Mrs M Pateman
Mrs Coolman

1. APOLOGIES

An apology for absence was received from Councillor Kilbride.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

Mr Appleyard addressed the Scrutiny Panel on item 5 and thanked the Scrutiny Panel for being inclusive to members of the public. He supported some of the recommendations contained in the final report but felt that they didn't address problems on the ground, such as issues with trees. He gave details of problems with trees in Obelisk. He went on to refer to anti social behaviour and the lack of toilet facilities in cemeteries.

Mr Appleyard was thanked for his address.

4. MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 January 2018 were signed by the Chair as a true and accurate record.

5. CHAIR'S DRAFT REPORT

The Scrutiny Panel considered the Chair's draft report, concentrating the conclusions and recommendations; making updates as appropriate.

AGREED: That the report is agreed and presented to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee for approval.

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL

Overview and Scrutiny

Report of Scrutiny Panel 1- Cemeteries

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
Kingsthorpe cemetery cremated remains	4 years burials – 17 years
Dallington cemetery remains	2 years burials – 7 years cremated
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
Weston Favell cemetery existing purchased graves.	Closed – Only interments into
Great Houghton cemetery	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 and cemetery. f

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, including recycling bins, uniformed throughout all cemeteries, 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 as other Borough signage.

- 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 are 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 Kingsthorpe cemeteries.
- 7.1.7 The facility of the chapels at Kingsthorpe and Towcester Road cemeteries are promoted.

7.1.8 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.

7.1.9 A feasibility study is undertaken into the requirement of a new large crematorium and cemetery for the town that offers the required services and facilities.

Overview and Scrutiny Committee

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