

NORTHAMPTON BOROUGH COUNCIL
MINUTES OF SCRUTINY PANEL 1 CEMETERIES

Thursday, 9 November 2017

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

CO-OPTED MEMBER: Simon Hollowell, Hollowells Funeral Directors

Officers Mick Tyrrell, Contracts Manager
Tracy Tiff, Scrutiny Officer

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

1. APOLOGIES

There were none.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (INCLUDING WHIPPING)

There were none.

3. DEPUTATIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESSES

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

4. MINUTES

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

5. WITNESS EVIDENCE

(A) FUNERAL DIRECTORS

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

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

Toilet facilities in cemeteries out of town were discussed.

The information provided was noted.

(B) FUNERAL CELEBRANTS

There had been no submissions from funeral celebrants.

6. BEST PRACTICE

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note detailing best practice.

AGREED:

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

7. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - GREEN BURIALS

The Scrutiny Panel noted a briefing note around green burials.

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

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

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

AGREED:

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

8. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - FEES AND CHARGES

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

AGREED:

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

9. BACKGROUND INFORMATION - BURIAL SPACE

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

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

AGREED:

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

The meeting concluded at 6:48 pm