

Action Plan

Recommendation	Cabinet response	Action by	Date for review
<p>1. That the Council continues to provide a wide range of services for the deceased, even though it only has a statutory responsibility to provide for the burial and cremation of any deceased person without relatives or other means of arranging burials or cremation. This is subject to our financial viability recommendation (see para 3.2)</p>	<p>We recognise the importance of continuing to provide a wide range of services for the deceased and welcome your comments on financial viability</p>	<p>No action required as service will continue, subject to financial viability</p>	<p>N/A</p>
<p>2. That the council should aim to make the cemeteries self-financing in the next five years.</p>	<p>Recommendations have been put forward under the Councils service prioritisation programme to make the cemetery closer to self financing</p>	<p>Cemetery Manager and Parks &amp; Open Spaces Section Head</p>	<p>Will be kept under review at each annual budget monitoring round in Sept/Oct</p>
<p>3. That the pricing structure be reviewed to ensure that it is simple to understand and that the costs of individual services reflect the cost to the council.</p>	<p>Pricing structures were simplified in 2009/10 and the cemetery manager will seek to simplify the presentation of the fees further for the future. It is a complex service with many options available, which combined with the desire to self finance will require a degree of complexity to be retained. Wherever possible, the range of fees and charges will be simplified, but it is important to ensure a broad choice for bereaved as well as aiming to recover full costs wherever appropriate.</p>	<p>Cemetery Manager</p>	<p>Will be reviewed as part of each annual budget monitoring round in Sept/Oct</p>

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4. That officers look further at the areas of the Charter for the Bereaved which could be easily implemented at Watford in order to improve the council's national ranking, for example, providing a written explanation of 'buying' a grave to purchasers.	Actions to improve our national ranking in the Charter for the Bereaved are already under way	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be reviewed at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and annual review to summarise achievements by 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2012
5. That the council investigates the feasibility of extending the times during which burials can take place. This would mean operating an 'on call' system on Saturdays for the digging staff. The extra cost to this service would need to be reflected in a revised pricing structure.	Extending opening hours will be investigated by the cemetery manager, however, this is an extension to service that will increase costs and will also be more difficult with the reduced core staffing structure that is proposed to meet the service prioritisation savings required by the Council. The cemetery manager will aim to strike an appropriate balance between cost, service availability and the conflicting needs of different cemetery faiths.	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be monitored at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and proposals submitted identifying any cost issues by Sept 2011.
6. That the council continues with the policy of not allowing the pre-purchase of graves.	The pre purchase of graves can cause significant additional digging costs (as some need to be hand dug) and Officers support the recommendation to continue the policy of not allowing pre purchase.	Policy continuing	Not applicable
7. That officers research the logistics of allowing shroud burials within the cemeteries and put in place the requisite measures for shroud burials to be catered for in the future.	The Cemetery manager has begun investigating the potential for shroud burials and would expect to report back her findings in Spring 2011, so that they can be considered and a formal policy implemented.	Cemetery Manager	Progress to be reviewed at quarterly Parks Management Team meetings and changed policy implementation to be timetabled

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8. That the council considers developing the woodland areas of North Watford Cemetery to allow for the scattering of ashes there.	The potential use of the woodlands for scattering of ashes will be investigated at the same time, so a decision can be made and implemented upon this too.	Cemetery Manager	Initial discussions held at Parks Management meeting 31/1/11. Progress on identifying how this links to memorial proposals in Service Prioritisation project to be monitored at monthly meetings.
9. That green burial grounds be included in the planning for future cemetery sites.	The future cemetery provision will need to be resolved in the next few years, as it takes a significant time to develop alternative arrangements and a new site (should this be the outcome). Officers would recommend investigating a green burial site and a new cemetery site in 2012. This will allow the Council sufficient time to consider its decisions carefully and to plan for the future in good time.	Planning Strategy/ Parks Section Head	To be agreed with Planning colleagues
10. That the council starts future planning to identify a future site for the cemetery within the next few years due to the scarcity of available land and the cost (at least £1 million).	As above.	Planning Strategy/ Parks Section Head	To be agreed with Planning colleagues