

**Bereavement Working Party**

**22<sup>nd</sup> August 2006**

**Bereavement Services Office, Cemetery Lodge, Birchfield Road, Widnes**

**NOTES**

**Present:** Councillor K. Morley (Chair), Councillor Geoffrey Swift, Councillor Linda Redhead, Councillor Pamela Wallace, Councillor Martha Lloyd-Jones, Mr. J. Downes, Mrs. M. Carter, Mrs. D. Philbin.

**1. Apologies for Absence**

Councillor S. Osborne

**2. Widnes Crematorium working arrangements**

Proposed changes to existing working arrangements were discussed. It was agreed that there should be further consultation with partners etc. and any changes eventually agreed should initially be introduced on a trial basis.

**3. Future grave provision for 2015 and beyond**

The Working Party discussed some of the options that members may wish to consider in order to ensure continued availability of new grave space for 2015 and beyond.

JD is scheduled to meet with Property Services Department in early September and it seems likely that a member led Options Appraisal will be undertaken, to provide members with detailed information on a range of options so that proper consideration may be given regarding longer term new grave provision. Members of the Working Party will be kept informed of developments.

**4. Headstone safety**

Just like all cemeteries in the Country, Halton's cemeteries are affected by the national problem of headstone safety. Discussions revolved around the Council's own strategy for safe headstones and the recently published Ombudsman's report on Headstone Safety.

Bereavement Services have looked at the different methods of making headstones temporarily secure and a favoured method was demonstrated.

It was agreed that the Council's Strategy for Safe Headstones be reviewed, and a programme of action put into place that would include the erection of example headstones, made-safe for the public to view, at the cemetery main

entrances, and the issuing of press articles and letters to grave deed owners to inform them of what we were doing to make headstones safe, and why.

**5. BRAMM Scheme (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons)**

This Memorial Mason Registration Scheme, which is administered by NAMM (National Association of Monumental Masons), is aimed at raising the standards of memorial mason work in cemeteries, and providing additional consumer protection via mandatory guarantees. If adopted, this scheme would replace the present Monumental Mason Registration scheme currently adopted by Bereavement Services.

Following a short discussion on the benefits of the proposal, the Working Party was in full agreement to implement the scheme. Further consultation will be arranged with local monumental masons prior to the proposal being submitted formally to members with a view to an April 2007 introduction.

**6. Green Bins**

Waste Management Section would like to install Green bins within the Council's Cemeteries to enhance their re-cycling programme. It was agreed by the Working Party that this would be an acceptable as a cost neutral proposal. The matter would be discussed further with Waste Management with a view to its introduction.

**7. Letter re floral tributes to mark Public grave**

The Working Party considered a letter received from a member of the public regarding this issue. Presently, all public graves are unmarked but families are permitted to lay flowers on a public grave if they so wish.

A discussion took place regarding erecting one modest memorial (possibly grant-funded) on one of the public grave sections in each of the Council's cemeteries to commemorate the people buried in public graves. A reply to the letter would be dispatched to the member of the public and the proposal further investigated.

**8. Drinking and associated vandalism/nuisance in Runcorn Cemetery**

The Working Party heard that there had been a reduction in the amount of nuisance caused in Runcorn Cemetery in recent weeks and it was hoped that this would continue to be the case – thanks to the assistance of the local Police. Councillors were aware that that security staff from Runcorn Town Hall had recently been called to Runcorn Cemetery but this incident had not been brought to the attention of the Bereavement Services Section. This would be investigated further.

**9. Serious complaints against the service or other serious bereavement issues**

There were no serious complaints for the Working Party to consider.

**10. Any Other Business**

Councillor Wallace asked whether Bereavement Services operated a wreath removal programme or the like, following key dates in the year. It was advised that Christmas wreaths/arrangements were removed from the Gardens of Remembrance in early February, but any Christmas tributes placed on individual graves were not removed by Bereavement Services staff.

**11. Date and time of next meeting**

It was agreed that unless anything triggered the need to call a meeting in the interim, the next scheduled meeting would be held on 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006 (4.30pm for 5.00pm).