

REPORT TO: Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 20 March 2007

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health and Community

SUBJECT: British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM)

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek Members' support for the pursuance by the Council of Burial Authority registration with the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons, and for the requirement that only BRAMM accredited memorial masons may operate in the Council's cemeteries.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) the report be noted;**
- (2) comments and suggestions from Members be noted;**
- (3) the Executive Board be requested to agree to the Bereavement Services Manager submitting an application for Halton to be a registered Burial Authority with the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons, and**
- (4) the Executive Board be requested to agree to the re-wording of section 7.5 of the Cemetery Rules as detailed in paragraph 3.14 below, with the proviso that the amended wording comes into effect on 1 October 2007.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The national problem of unsafe headstones in the country's cemeteries led to the setting-up of the British Register of Memorial Masons (BRAMM) in 2004.

3.2 The primary aims of the BRAMM registration scheme are:

- To establish a recognised, uniform standard of workmanship and business practice throughout the UK.
- To promote BRAMM accredited businesses and registered fixers.
- To ensure all businesses, fixers and burial authorities on the BRAMM register follow current health & safety guidelines to protect both the public and their employees.
- To ensure that BRAMM businesses give a guarantee of the stability of their memorial.
- To ensure the scheme will be effectively policed ensuring that acceptable standards of fixing are maintained.

- To encourage ongoing training and education within the memorial masonry industry.
- To promote a closer working relationship between memorial masons and burial authorities.

3.3 Burial authority registration is presently free, but represents a clear demonstration that the authority takes its responsibility for the safety of memorials as seriously as the masons who register on the scheme. In particular, registration requires the authority to meet the following obligations:

- **Commitment to training** – burial authorities should train their own staff to ensure they have a basic understanding of the NAMM (National Association of Memorial Masons) code of working practice or similar installation specification. They should also ensure they are fully aware of burial and grave digging procedures, particularly where this could affect the stability of the memorial.
- **Compliance with NAMM standards** – burial authorities should ensure that any work that relates to memorial safety, e.g. provision of concrete beams, repair of memorials, removal and replacement of memorials etc. should comply to NAMM standards or equivalent.
- **Compliance with the ICCM Code of Safe Working Practice** – all burial and grave digging procedures should be carried out in accordance with ICCM guidance or equivalent, particularly in relation to the re-instatement of graves.
- **Monitoring of memorial masons** – a degree of monitoring will be required by the burial authority, which is still directly responsible for maintaining safe sites. Staff should be aware of the NAMM code or equivalent and should monitor the installation of memorials on a random basis. Risk assessments and safe systems of work will be sent to the burial authority by BRAMM but the authorities will be responsible for approving them or otherwise. The dismantling of memorials as a form of control, is discouraged and should only be carried out in exceptional circumstances. The disciplinary process will be available to burial authorities where masons fail to comply with burial ground standards.
- **Responsibility for local disciplinary procedures** – registered and licensed masons will be expected to work to local management rules and regulations as well as the rules of BRAMM. Where any of these are breached, the burial authority will be expected to deal with the disciplinary process as they have direct responsibility for their own burial grounds. Any action taken should be reported to BRAMM head office.
- **Commitment to providing undisturbed ground or concrete beams for all new memorials, where this is possible** – where it is feasible, the burial authority should provide sufficient room within the grave space to ensure memorials can be erected on undisturbed ground (never to be disturbed by burial) or provide a

concrete beam (to NAMM standards). It is understood that this will not be possible on some old sections and where new rows have been started in new sections.

- 3.4 Halton Borough Council is presently in a position to satisfy the above obligations.
- 3.9 So far as the industry is concerned, the BRAMM register will effectively regulate both accredited businesses and licensed fixers. Accredited businesses are required to re-register on an annual basis and will only be able so to do, if they are able to demonstrate that they continue to meet the business accreditation requirements. Unless they have obtained a higher level qualification, with evidence of continuous professional development, licensed Fixers will be required to re-register after a period of three years upon a retest, or on the production of documentary evidence of relevant ongoing training.
- 3.10 Moreover, the rules of the scheme applicable to the industry require that:
- **Eligibility** – any business or fixer who has been barred from performing work in any cemetery within the previous two years may be ineligible to be accredited within the BRAMM scheme. In these circumstances, each case will be considered individually. Businesses or Fixers must submit details of such disciplinary actions with their application. Failure to disclose details of disciplinary actions, which subsequently come to the attention of the BRAMM Board, may result in disciplinary action.
 - **Insurance** – every business must be covered for public liability insurance to the value of £5 million for any one incident. Similarly, employers liability insurance cover to the value of £10 million must be obtained.
 - **Health & Safety policy** – every business must be compliant with current health and safety legislation. Proof of compliance is required in the BRAMM business accreditation requirements documentation.
 - **Risk Assessment** – every business must be compliant with current risk assessment legislation for its practical work within its workshop, cemeteries and churchyards. Proof of compliance is required in the BRAMM business accreditation requirements documentation.
 - **Written guarantee** – every business must provide its customers with a written company guarantee which, at the very least, provides a stability and safety guarantee for a minimum of 10 years. (It is strongly advised that this is tied into a 5-year maintenance check.)
 - **BS8415** - every business is expected to have a copy of the British Standard “Monuments within burial grounds and memorial sites – Specification BS8415: 2005” on its premises, and understand clearly what it means.
 - **NAMM code of working practice** - every business must have at least one copy of the current NAMM code of working practice on

its premises and conform to it. It is also recommended that a copy of the current code of working practice be carried in any vehicles used for fixing. Masons must also ensure that they have evidence that all materials purchased in from wholesalers meet the standards defined within NAMM's code of working practice.

- **Spot check visits** - every business may receive a random visit from a BRAMM representative to ensure on-going compliance with the BRAMM rules and regulations. 48 hours notice will be given of an intended visit and the relevant documentation must be made available to the representative for inspection. The representative may also wish to inspect the workshop to ensure that working practices, supplies, materials used, etc. are in line with current NAMM code of working practice.
- **Burial authority** - every business must provide details of any burial authority cemeteries where it normally works. BRAMM will apply for any references it considers relevant.
- **Disciplinary procedures** – every business or individual listed on the BRAMM register is deemed to have agreed to fully comply with the disciplinary procedures and abide by its decision in all matters.

3.11 One benefit of permitting only BRAMM accredited memorial masons to carry out memorial works within the cemeteries is that the Council will no longer need to maintain its own local Register of Memorial Masons. Whilst this will result in a small loss of income (see paragraph 5.1 below) it will free-up resource to police memorial masons operating under the new scheme.

3.12 Nationally over 40 burial authorities have applied for burial authority registration under the scheme and this figure is rising over time. As a consequence, the majority of memorial masons are now BRAMM registered or are pursuing registration.

3.13 Members will be well aware of the financial and resource costs that have had to be met by this Council over recent years as a result of unsafe headstones in the Council's cemeteries. The issue has also resulted in distress and financial cost to bereaved families. The BRAMM scheme is a well-constructed industry response to these problems and it goes a considerable way towards providing quality assurance in headstone fitting for the future. It is a positive scheme for the burial authority, it will provide for a recognised uniform standard of workmanship and business practice within the industry, and it would appear to be a very good consumer protection measure.

3.14 If members are in support of the requirement that only BRAMM accredited memorial masons may operate in the Council's cemeteries, then Section 7.5 of the Cemetery Rules will require amending. It is suggested that this amendment is effective from 1 October 2007 to give all Memorial Masons sufficient notice of the change. The present rule states "Memorial works must only be carried out by memorial masons

who are registered with the Council to carry out such work". The rule then continues by detailing the insurance cover that is a pre-requisite to registration. The amended rule could simply state "Only BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) accredited memorial masons may carry out memorial works within the Council's cemeteries".

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This main effect of pursuing the recommendations would be the change to the Cemetery Rules outlined in paragraph 3.14 above, which would mean that from the appointed date, only BRAMM accredited memorial masons would be able to carry out memorial works in the Council's cemeteries.

5.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no additional resource implications flowing from this report as Bereavement Services can meet the obligations placed on a registered burial authority from within existing resources. There will be a small annual loss of income of approximately £470 (from a total income target of just under £600k), which would otherwise have been collected as memorial mason registration fees.

6.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 6.1 Given that the memorial industry has taken the BRAMM scheme on board, there is no perceived risk flowing from this report. On the contrary its effect should be to minimise the future risk of a repetition or prolonging of the unsafe headstone problem.

7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

- 7.1 There are no equality or diversity issues flowing from this report.

8.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
BRAMM Application Pack	Rutland House Halton Lea Runcorn WA7 2GW	John Downes