

**ENVIRONMENT SCRUTINY PANEL
BEREAVEMENT SERVICES – ACTION PLAN**

DATE: 18 FEBRUAY 2014

SCRUTINY RECOMMENDATION	PROPOSED ACTION	BY WHOM	BUDGET COST	TIMESCALE
<p>1. That, while recognising the Council's difficult financial position, the current approach of maintaining high standards of maintenance at the Council's cemeteries and crematorium is continued as far as possible in order to respect the sensitivity of this issue . While this may involve increasing fees and charges, account should be taken of the Council's Change Programme and the need to examine issues such as more efficient ways of working, or further reducing service standards in other areas.</p>	<p>A commitment to protecting standards as far as possible has already been demonstrated.</p> <p>The proposals contained in the Mayor's statement for 2014 made provision to exclude cemeteries from all of the savings relating to grounds maintenance, for example, it is proposed to continue bedding plants in cemeteries and to continue grass cutting frequencies in cemeteries.</p> <p>The Executive Member for Environment has confirmed that priority is being given to maintaining standards in cemeteries.</p>	Tom Punton	Nil	April 2014 onwards
<p>2. That, in view of the authority's budget position, the possibility of either using existing Friends Groups and/or establishing new Friends Groups to assist with cemeteries and crematorium grounds maintenance is examined.</p>	<p>The Friends of Linthorpe Cemetery add value to work in the cemetery</p> <p>The Friends Of Thorntree Cemetery have undertaken occasional work in Thorntree Cemetery</p>	Colin Duncan	No extra cost	Continuing

	Prisoner placement and community payback schemes also help maintain standards			
<p>3. That, in respect of headstone safety:</p> <p>a) The current approach is continued, with costs of the necessary checks being met from cemetery and cremation fees and charges.</p> <p>b) That the position is examined in respect of the £16,000 budget that is created each year from fees and charges to deal with this issue - in particular whether this results in a budget surplus that could be used to offset, or reduce, potential increases in fees and charges.</p>	<p>Headstones will continue to be tested to meet national health and safety guidance.</p> <p>The £16,000 set aside for headstone safety work has been reduced to £8,000 to make savings.</p>	Jeff Duffield	£8,000 saving	December 2013
<p>4. That, once the private crematorium in Redcar and Cleveland becomes operational, its impact on the level of cremations at Middlesbrough Council's crematorium is closely monitored. While the Council's fees need to be competitive, services should continue to be provided at the highest possible standard, including the further use of technological innovations and improvements, as appropriate. Work should also be undertaken to review service</p>	<p>The impact of Yearby Crematorium will be monitored</p> <p>Equipment to allow DVD displays and web broadcasts is on order. The broadband line is due to be upgraded in April 2014 to enable the new facility to operate.</p> <p>The new services will be available to the public at an additional charge</p>	Colin Duncan	Provision has been made in the 2013/14 budget	January to March 2014

<p>provision to mitigate any future loss of income and to determine the possible implications of this.</p>	<p>Service standards are discussed three times a year with stakeholders at the multi agency Bereavement Services Forum</p>			
<p>5. That the position is noted in respect of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Increased burial and cremation fees due to the necessity of providing a Medical Examiner’s Certificate. b) Work to reduce mercury emissions from the Council’s crematorium. c) The availability of future burial land. d) Grave maintenance. 	<p>Whilst this remains a proposal by the Government it is not clear when it will be introduced</p> <p>The issues will be monitored and engagement takes place with stakeholders at the multi agency Bereavement Services Forum</p>	<p>Jeff Duffield/ Colin Duncan</p>	<p>No additional costs</p>	<p>Continuous</p>