



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Streetscene and Engineering Cabinet Committee

20th September 2019

Report of the Head of Streetcare – Mike Roberts

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: All Wards

Report Title: Memorial Testing Policy

Purpose of the Report:

To seek member approval for a Memorial Testing Policy.

Executive Summary:

A memorial testing policy is proposed to formalise current procedures and provide a clear and consistent approach to the inspection of memorials within all cemeteries managed by the authority. It sets out the reasons for inspections whilst providing guidance on what is and is not permitted for service users and visitors.

Background:

The authority is responsible for 9 Cemeteries, these being Margam, Goytre, Cymmer, Ynysymaerdy, Llantwit, Onllwyn, Giants Grave, Carmel and Godregraig.

The proposed policy has been produced to set out the council's position with regards to memorial safety, the responsibilities of the Council, its contractors, memorial masons and grave owners as well as the actions that will be taken to minimise risk to the users of council managed cemeteries across the borough.

Whilst Neath Port Talbot County Borough Council has overall responsibility for the safety of the cemeteries, including risks from unstable memorials, it does not own the memorials. The owner of the memorial will be the grave owner. In many cases there is no identifiable owner.

The Health & Safety Executive (HSE), Institute of Cemeteries and Cremation (ICCM) and the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1997 (LACO) sets out standards that all burial authorities in England and Wales must adhere to.

The authority acknowledges that the management of cemeteries is very emotive and families frequently contact the authority to discuss matters during very difficult times. However, it is important that whilst dealing with the needs of families sensitively and providing assistance during these difficult periods, the authority also has clear guidance that provides a consistent approach throughout all of its cemeteries. It is therefore considered essential that a memorial testing policy is in place that balances the needs of family members and loved ones, with the need to maintain a safe environment for all.

Whilst providing guidance for families, the proposed policy also sets out expectations on Memorial Masons.

Only memorial masons that are registered to BRAMM (a national organisation) are permitted to work in authority cemeteries, and the benefit of this registration is set out for families within the proposed Policy.

Inspections for memorials will be carried out by a suitable qualified person. A survey has identified that whilst the majority of memorials are below 70"/1778 mm in height there are 1456 memorials that are higher and will need more specialist inspection. Inevitably some memorials will from time to time be identified as requiring immediate action such as staking and banding or, as a last resort, laying down to make safe.

Financial Impacts:

The proposed safety inspections for memorials less than 70"/1778 mm in height will be carried out at no cost by existing trained cemetery staff. External expertise will be bought in where required with respect to larger memorials.

There is currently a specific reserve of £40,000 set aside for memorial inspections and mitigation measures, including the inspection of larger memorials and works to make safe.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016.

The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required. A summary is included in Appendix 1.

The implementation of the Recommendations supports and embraces this assessment process.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

Four of the cemeteries are within valley communities.

Workforce Impacts:

Consultation has been undertaken with the relevant workforce regarding the process.

Legal Impacts:

Implementing this policy will allow the authority to meet its legal obligation as set out by Health & Safety Executive (HSE), Institute of Cemeteries and Cremation (ICCM) and the Local Authorities Cemetery Order 1997 (LACO).

Risk Management Impacts:

Failure to have a formalised process in place to inspect and make safe cemetery memorials leaves cemetery visitors and the authority exposed to potential risks.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item. It is noted that, in essence, the report only seeks to formalise ongoing custom and practice and raise awareness of Council policy.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that:

- The memorial testing policy included as Appendix 2 is adopted by the council.

- The memorial testing policy be added to the cemetery rules and regulations.
- A link to the policy is placed within the relevant section on the authority's website.
- The Director of Environment and Head of Streetcare be delegated authority to take decisions in respect of repairing memorials of historic significance where the owner cannot be traced.

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To provide a clear and consistent approach to the management of memorials within this authority's cemeteries.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices:

Integrated Impact Assessment – Appendix 1
Memorial Testing Policy – Appendix 2

List of Background Papers:

None

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