

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S  
REPORT TO CABINET**

**4<sup>th</sup> June 2024**

**Report Title:** Crematorium and Cemeteries Rules and Regulations Update

**Submitted by:** Interim Chief Executive

**Portfolios:** Sustainable Environment

**Ward(s) affected:** Primarily Bradwell and Keele, although affects residents from all wards

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	No <input type="checkbox"/>
To enable Cabinet to review some key issues relating to the Bereavement Services to ensure the Council continues to meet customer expectations.			
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>			
<p><b>That Cabinet:</b></p> <p><b>1. Adopts the following policies to be operated alongside the Crematorium and cemeteries Rules and Regulations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Scattering of Ashes Policy</b></li> <li>• <b>Welfare Funerals</b></li> </ul>			
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>			
<p>The Council has adopted Crematorium and Cemeteries Rules and Regulations which set out the main ways in which the facilities are managed and the expected behaviour of those using the facilities. As part of this there are a number of issues that have been reviewed and it is appropriate for Cabinet to consider adopting additional policies.</p>			

**1. Background**

**1.1** The Council operates a Crematorium at Bradwell and a number of cemeteries across the Borough. Residents expect high quality facilities when they attend for funerals and subsequent visits. When a cremation or burial is purchased the person agrees to what service they are buying and therefore the terms and conditions. It is then the responsibility of the Council to ensure the services are delivered in accordance with these conditions and that other users also comply. These expectations are set out in the Crematorium and Cemeteries Rules and Regulations.

- 1.2** The treatment of remains is an important part of the grieving process and “the scattering of ashes can bring a sense of peace and closure to families” ([www.safewill.com](http://www.safewill.com)). A greater choice of how the remains are laid to rest results in a greater choice of how the deceased is then remembered; “Psychologists say that remembrance practices, from the funeral or memorial service to permanent memorialisation, serve an important emotional function for survivors by helping to bring closure and allowing the healing process to begin” ([www.rfhr.com](http://www.rfhr.com)). This should be encouraged to allow the family to grieve and be able to get closure; grief is unique and the chosen disposal method should reflect the individuality and personality of the deceased as much as is possible.
- 1.3** Officers are continually reviewing customer feedback and seeking views to ensure the services we offer meet current customer expectations. There are a number of areas where improvements can be made to increase customer choice and understanding of our facilities.

## **2. Issues**

### **2.1 Scattering of Ashes Policy**

- 2.1.1** The Council does not currently offer scattering of ashes. Those choosing a cremation can currently decide if to take the ashes home, purchase a burial plot or bury within the monthly gardens. Scattering is a common occurrence and an increasing choice with people requesting it in their wills.
- 2.1.2** The introduction of a scattering area would provide an additional option for cremated remains. This option would be included in the cremation fee like the burial within the crematorium remembrance grounds is, and if cremated elsewhere then the cremated elsewhere fee would be applicable.
- 2.1.3** It is proposed that the new scattering area would be a natural burial area of meadowland and wildflowers; this will enhance the environment, support a range of wildlife and reduce the environmental impact of burial. The longer grass would also reduce the visibility of cremated remains in the area, thus commencement of this service from September is proposed.

### **2.2 Welfare Funeral Policy**

- 2.2.1** The Council has operated welfare funerals for many years, the attached policy seeks to confirm the approach toward this so that all customers understand the services provided.

### **2.3 Time sensitive burials procedure**

- 2.3.1** The Council occasionally, has requests for burials to be completed within a short period of time. The Council is able to work with Funeral Directors to seek to accommodate these requests. Officers are working together to develop the procedure to ensure that these requests are dealt with effectively and timely. Whilst the principle does not require Cabinet

approval it is appropriate that Cabinet are aware of the procedure being in place.

### **3. Recommendation**

**3.1** That Cabinet adopts the following policies to be operated alongside the Crematorium and cemeteries Rules and Regulations:

- Cremated remains scattering
- Welfare Funerals

### **4. Reasons**

**4.1** In order to support residents at the very difficult time of losing a loved one it is appropriate that the Council seeks to offer choices and has relevant policies in place to meet demands.

### **5. Options Considered**

**5.1** The Council has a choice over which services it provides in relation to bereavement services. As Gold Award members of the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved, the Council's targets are:

- to expand grave choice to enable the bereaved to obtain individuality and some element of choice
- to introduce services that directly enhance the environment, as an integral part of the bereavement experience; woodland and wildflower graves are an example of such initiatives.
- to promote cemetery and crematoria design that offers fair and equitable services to all members of the community
- to be sensitive to the psychological and therapeutic needs of the bereaved when they develop and manage the crematorium grounds

### **6. Legal and Statutory Implications**

**6.1** There are no specific issues arising from this report.

### **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

**7.1** The services offered seek to meet the needs of all of our residents. The introduction of the time sensitive procedure supports the Council in meeting expectations from those with specific cultural needs.

### **8. Financial and Resource Implications**

**8.1** The existing charge for those bringing ashes to Bradwell Crematorium which relate to ashes produced elsewhere is £260. This fee will be used to facilitate those wishing to scatter in the proposed areas.

**8.2** There would be no memorial headstone or marker provided within the scattering area, however the lease of a memorial plaque could be popular.

## 9. **Major Risks & Mitigation**

9.1 There are no major risks associated with adopting these policies.

## 10. **UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**

10.1 By operating the Bereavement services the Council seeks to offer customers choice and equality. A scattering area option eases the pressure on land requirement, again reducing the impact on the environment and the pressure of providing more cremated remains graves, in particular at the crematorium where space is now very limited.



## 11. **Key Decision Information**

11.1 This affects residents using our bereavement services in more than 2 wards.

## 12. **Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

12.1 Crematorium and Cemeteries Rules and Regulations

## 13. **List of Appendices**

13.1 Scattering of Ashes Policy

13.2 Welfare Funerals Policy

## 14. **Background Papers**

14.1 None.