

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMERCIAL SERVICES
POLICY AND SCRUTINY PANEL, 5TH APRIL 2006**

Re : Gravestones

1. At the Commercial Services Policy and Scrutiny Panel's meeting on 21st December 2005, Members considered a Scrutiny Proposal Form from the Joint Chairmen of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, asking the Panel to consider undertaking a scrutiny review into safety issues relating to gravestones in Kidderminster Cemetery. This followed safety inspections by the Council's officers which was based upon a suggestion from the Health and Safety Executive that local authorities should carry out their own 'topple tests' and that memorial stones should be installed to the national Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) standards.
2. The affected memorials in Kidderminster Cemetery were therefore made safe according to the current Health and Safety checks. The 'banding' or 'staking' that was carried out to those memorials that had failed the checks was intended as a temporary remedial measure, whilst officers attempted to locate the plot holder. None of the memorials in questions were laid flat as a result of the failure to comply with current standards.
3. Whilst it was the local authority's responsibility to check the headstones for stability, the responsibility for ongoing maintenance of individual memorials rested with the plot holder, including the cost of any remedial work.
4. In line with the guidelines issued by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management and the diocese of Worcester's policy, plot holders were quite properly notified of any issues, wherever possible.
5. The Task and Finish Group consulted affected members of the public, as well as local stonemasons. The Group particularly welcomed the participation of the Cabinet Member for Commercial Services, who attended all of its meetings.
6. At the Panel's meeting on 5th April 2006, the following recommendations were considered and agreed.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet:

- a) **Officers establish a clear protocol regarding memorial stones, stating that the plotholder has to pay for remedial work, including work carried out for health and safety purposes.**

- b) **Leaflets/flyers up to the cost of £250 be issued to local funeral directors, plot holders and stonemasons to include the following information:**
- i) **Advice that graves less than 10 years old can be affected and therefore at risk from health and safety tests including 'topple' tests;**
 - ii) **Information on the recommended/required standards for erecting memorial stones;**
 - iii) **A condition that the plothead only use accredited NAMM Stonemasons and a list of contact names be included.**
- c) **Co-operation be requested from local stonemasons to act in a professional manner with regard to giving help and advice to the plot holder, and to erect memorials to the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) standards and guarantee the memorial for a set number of years;**
- d) **The plot holder be requested to inform the Council of any changes to circumstances, including house moves;**
- e) **Officers formulate a clear 'Exit Strategy' regarding banded and/or staked memorials to advise whether 'dangerous' headstones are laid flat on the grave, removed, unbanded or left as they are.**
- f) **Future advertising include, where possible, press releases prior to the health and safety tests being carried out to headstones.**
- g) **A copy of the British Register of Approved Memorial Masons (BRAMM register) which conformed to the required standards, be placed in the Cemetery office.**

**RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE COMMERCIAL SERVICES POLICY AND
SCRUTINY PANEL, 5TH APRIL 2006**

Re : Toilet Provision

1. A strategic review of the District's public conveniences, undertaken in mid-2000, considered a conditions survey, usage, maintenance cost exercise, alternative provision and the public's views on paying for increased levels of service.
2. One of the outcomes of the 2000 review was to establish a five-year refurbishment programme of public conveniences. The Council is now in year five of the programme with only the Rowland Hill Centre toilets to be refurbished.
3. A further scrutiny review of public conveniences in 2004 made a number of recommendations, in particular relating to signage and cleaning standards.
4. At the Panel's meeting on 30th March 2005, it had been agreed to include a general review of Public Conveniences on the Panel's Work Programme.
5. At the Panel's meeting on 19th October 2005, two Task and Finish Groups were established.
 - Group A to consider cleanliness issues.
 - Group B to concentrate on the provision of public conveniences.
6. The two groups worked independently and received various reports from officers and met with third parties, and came together at a single meeting to visit each of the District's toilets as a familiarisation exercise. The two groups also amalgamated to draft their final recommendations.
7. At the Panel's meeting on 5th April 2006, the following recommendations were considered and agreed.

RECOMMENDED to the Cabinet:

- a) **The vehicle and equipment renewal schedule for 2006/07 be revised to provide provision for a small van, budget sum £10,000.**
- b) **Provision be made for the revenue implications of a small van to include road tax, servicing, repair, capital charges and fuel at a cost of £4,100 per annum.**
- c) **The Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services staffing budget for toilet cleansing be increased by £4,500 per**

annum to take account of the additional skills requirements of an additional driver.

- d) Additional staffing resources be provided to cover the Whitsun Weekend period up until the start of the school summer holidays at a Revenue cost of £1,900 per annum.
- e) The Council investigate in discussions, as part of the Stourport-on-Severn development proposals, the possibility that public toilet provision is included in any new development.
- f) The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services, the Head of Legal and Democratic Services and the Head of Financial Services be authorised to carry out a full feasibility study and project plan with a view to relocating the APC on Raven Street to a more central location near to or on Stourport High Street and to report back to the Panel at a future meeting.
- g) The wall, floor and sanitary fittings at the Brinton Park toilets be improved at a revenue cost of £35,000.
- h) Pending the outcome of discussions with the owners of the Rowland Hill Centre, that should any delay in the refurbishment of the toilet block be likely, then the Council carry out a mini refurbishment of the toilets at a cost not exceeding £10,000.
- i) A trailer type toilet unit be hired throughout the school summer holiday period at the Stourport Riverside at a revenue cost of £7,550 per annum, to include £3,000 maximum per annum for additional planting and screening.
- j) A door counter device be purchased to allow usage data to be collected at a revenue cost of £500.
- k) The Head of Cultural, Leisure and Commercial Services in consultation with the Head of Financial Services and the Head of Legal and Democratic Services enters into negotiation with the Friends of Broadwaters Park for them to undertake additional toilet cleansing to improve cleansing standards and that subject to monitoring that a similar scheme is rolled out on other blocks such as Upper Areley. That a sum of £2,000 per annum be set aside from the Revenue Budget for the Broadwaters Trial.
- l) Officers investigate and report options for a longer term solution for the provision of toilet facilities at Riverside Meadows, Stourport-on-Severn, the options to include the

possibility of replacing the current toilet block on this site with facilities which incorporate:

- i. accommodation for a caretaker/cleaner; and**
- ii. a section that can be kept locked during the winter when usage is lower.**