



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Replacement of existing Gravedigger posts to Cemetery Operative posts and Parks & Cemeteries Seasonal Requirements for 2014/15
Date:	13 February 2014
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier Assistant Director
Contact Officers:	Fiona Holdsworth, Principal Parks & Cemeteries Services; Manager or Sharon McCloy, Cemeteries & Crematorium Manager

1.	Relevant Background Information												
	<p>Currently within the Parks & Cemeteries Services Section there are:-</p> <p>10 x Gravedigger posts (Scale 3) 14 x Cemetery Operative posts (Scale 4)</p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th></th><th>City Cemetery</th><th>Dundonald Cemetery</th><th>Roselawn Cemetery</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td>Gravedigger</td><td>4</td><td>2</td><td>4 (includes 1 vacancy)</td></tr><tr><td>Cemetery Operative</td><td>7</td><td>1</td><td>6</td></tr></tbody></table> <p>The Cemetery Operative posts were introduced in 2008 following approval by Committee on 15 May 2008.</p> <p>It has been identified by management that the posts within the cemeteries, and in particular Roselawn, are not providing sufficient operational flexibility to meet today's demands, service standards and health & safety requirements. At Roselawn there is a growing requirement that staff must be flexible in order to deal with the increasing number of burials on this expanding site, associated increases in ground maintenance requirements, the introduction of memorial safety and the provision of operational back-up cover at the Crematorium.</p>		City Cemetery	Dundonald Cemetery	Roselawn Cemetery	Gravedigger	4	2	4 (includes 1 vacancy)	Cemetery Operative	7	1	6
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	<p>It is within the job description of the Cemetery Operative to provide this required level of operational flexibility, but not all the required aspects are covered within the job descriptions of the current Gravedigger posts – See Appendix 1 Cemetery Operative job description and Appendix 2 Gravedigger job description.</p> <p>There are over 55,000 graves in Roselawn Cemetery which is expanding rapidly, at approximately 250 new graves per annum. Dundonald Cemetery has approximately 22,000 graves. Within Roselawn and Dundonald Cemeteries approximately 80% of graves have headstones/memorials already erected on them. None have yet been inspected for memorial safety, stability and permission to erect.</p> <p>Within the existing structure there is currently 15 seasonal staff, i.e. 4 Park Operatives and 11 Gardener Scale 3s to assist with the seasonal increase in work within Parks & Cemeteries.</p>
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2.	Key Issues
	<p>At present there is 1 vacancy for a Gravedigger at Roselawn Cemetery, this post needs to be filled as it currently is being covered by the extension of a Seasonal Gardener's contract which cannot continue long term.</p> <p>In addition Memorial Safety Inspections must be introduced at Roselawn and Dundonald Cemeteries as reported to Committee on 14th March 2013. The Cemetery Operatives, under the supervision of the Community Park Supervisors and following directives from the Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager will shortly commence carrying out these vital inspections.</p> <p>In order to ensure that the staff 's job descriptions are suitably flexible to provide the full range of operational requirements within the cemeteries, it is proposed that the current vacant post of Gravedigger at Roselawn and all other Gravedigger posts elsewhere (10 in total) would be replaced by the recruitment of Cemetery Operatives, if and when they become vacant.</p> <p>Discussions have recently been with the current Gravedigger post holders and their Trade Unions representatives at their request to review the role of Gravediggers.</p> <p>Outcomes from this review will be brought to a later Committee.</p> <p>To reduce agency staff and overtime usage, the Parks & Cemeteries Managers have requested 11 Park Operatives and 9 Gardener Scale 3s seasonal staff across all areas for 2014/15. This will be a change to our current establishment by an additional 5 seasonal posts and the designation numbers will also change.</p>

3.	Resource Implications
	<p>The phasing in of the new Cemetery Operative posts will have financial implications, the differential between the current remuneration of Scale 3 for Gravedigger to the current remuneration of Scale 4 for Cemetery Operative posts. This will incur an additional cost of £1984 per post per annum.</p> <p>It is anticipated, as a result of the proposed memorial safety work that the Cemetery Operatives will undertake, that income will increase however it is difficult to establish by how much at this stage. This is due to the recouping of income from the many unauthorised memorials and foundation fees.</p> <p>Many fees are not being currently paid by sculptors, as there is not an adequate checking mechanism in place within the cemeteries to ensure that the correct procedure and fees are paid before a headstone is erected. Sculptors therefore are erecting headstones ad hoc which are not only a potential health & safety risk to staff and visiting public, but the council is not receiving any income through the required fees. By replacing current Gravediggers with Cemetery Operatives posts, this will mean more flexibility and provide an adequate checking mechanism to ensure correct procedures and fees are paid before headstones are erected.</p> <p>Proposed changes to seasonal staff would increase the limit to recruit up to 20 staff, i.e. 11 Park Operatives and 9 Gardener Scale 3s which is an increase of 5 posts. Please note that these will not be recruited unless operationally necessary.</p> <p><u>Human Resources</u> If approved to recruit Cemetery Operatives instead of Grave diggers the recruitment of the current vacancy at Roselawn and those in the future, as and when required, will be carried out through the normal Council recruitment and selection procedures. Please note the others will be replaced as and when further vacancies occur within the Gravedigger designations at Roselawn, Dundonald and City cemeteries. A reserve list will be compiled (with a time limit) so that if/when a vacancy arises successful candidates may be recruited off this list.</p> <p>If approved, seasonal staff will also be recruited through the normal Council recruitment and selection procedures to commence in April 2014.</p>

4.	Equality Implications
	None

5.	Recommendations
	Members are asked to approve the contents of this report namely:-

	- To agree to the phasing out of existing gravedigger posts (10) as they become vacant and replace these posts with Cemetery Operative posts.
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6.	Decision Tracking
	None

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Cemetery Operative Job Description Appendix 2 - Gravedigger Job Description