

**STRATEGIC CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of Meeting of 6th September, 2017**

Members Present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);  
Alderman Sandford.

In Attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Assistant Director, City Services;  
Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development  
Officer;  
Ms. T. Slevin, Project Manager;  
Mr. J. Parker, Cremation Officer;  
Mr. A. McHaffie, Senior Woodland and  
Recreation Officer; and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

**Apologies**

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor O'Neill.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 3rd August were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Interest were reported.

**Update on the Implementation of the  
Memorial Management Policy**

The Assistant Director provided the Working Group with an update on the implementation of the Council's Memorial Management Policy which had been implemented in April, 2016. She provided an overview of the historical problems associated with unsafe, hazardous and unauthorised memorial structures which had necessitated the introduction of the policy.

The Members were reminded that a key element of the policy included a memorial inspection programme which had commenced in September, 2016 and which had revealed that a high percentage of headstones in Section D of Roselawn Cemetery were unstable or unsafe. The Assistant Director reminded Members that it was timely after a year of the policy to undertake a review. She referred to the media interest which had been directed at the Council in respect of the staking and banding of headstones to render them secure. She informed the Members that the review was examining a categorisation process whereby headstones will be categorised by the level of risk they pose and what remedial action is required.

She reported that the Council had, as part of its engagement programme with Memorial Sculptors scheduled a meeting to be held in October, 2017, at which an expert would be in attendance to provide advice and guidance on technical issues associated with memorial safety and that the Council would continue to work and provide advice and support to families who were grave owners in the affected plots.

It was reported that once the Memorial Management Policy had been updated a paper would be presented to the Working Group for its consideration.

Noted.

### **Update on Memorial Trees**

The Assistant Director, in conjunction with the Senior Woodland and Recreation Officer, provided the Working Group with an update on the memorial tree scheme which, whilst the scheme had ended in 2008, there had been some contingency provided at Roselawn Cemetery since 2015 until recently. The Members were advised that, valuable burial land was being depleted and that substantial costs were being incurred by the Council to replace and maintain tree planted areas. The Working Group was advised that other problems associated with memorial tree planting had been identified, including tree overcrowding causing accessibility problems for families and visitors to tree planted areas.

The Working Group was informed also that currently no memorial trees were available at Roselawn and of the extremely limited potential to identify new areas suitable for memorial tree planting and requested that the Members endorse the implementation of the Council's 2008 policy decision to end the process of providing memorial trees at Roselawn Cemetery.

The Working Group accepted the recommendation as presented, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee and noted that papers on alternative memorialisation options, including tree replacement and unauthorised surrounds, would be presented to a future meeting of the Working Group for its consideration.

### **City of Belfast Crematorium – Policy Statement for Infant Cremation**

The Cremation Officer provided the Working Group with a copy of the Council's policy statement in respect of infant cremation. He highlighted the need to ensure that there was clarity and consistency of approach on the subject matter and of the need to provide openness and transparency around this sensitive and emotive issue. To this end, he recommended that the Council's policy statement on infant cremation be published on the Council's website.

The Chairman, on behalf of the Working Group, expressed that its gratitude be conveyed to the staff at the crematorium for their dedication and diligent work and agreed, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, that the Council's policy statement in respect of infant cremation be made available to the public via publication on the Council's website in line with national codes of practice and professional industry guidelines.

### **Update on Memorial for Plot Z1 – City Cemetery**

The Assistant Director provided the Members with an update on the progress which had been made in seeking expressions of interest in respect of setting up a focus group to inform the Members on the design and creation of a suitable memorial structure for Plot Z1 at the City Cemetery. She stated that from the 16 responses received, 12 people had expressed an interest in participating as part of the focus group. It was reported that the Members had agreed previously that the focus Group would consist of up to 10 people. Given that 12 responses had been received, it was recommended that the focus group be extended to 12 individuals, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, to allow everyone to be involved in the process. It was anticipated that the focus group would hold its first meeting in early October, 2017. She

stated that any design proposals emanating from the focus group would be referred back to the Working Group for its consideration.

Agreed.

### **Business Case of the Crematorium Development**

The Policy and Development Officer referred to the previous meeting of the Working Group, at which it had been agreed to hold a special meeting in respect of the new crematorium development. She reported that the Director of Property and Projects was involved currently in discussions with Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council in respect of the matter and suggested that it might be beneficial for a report, following these discussions, to be presented at the October meeting of the Working Group.

Noted.

### **Date of next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 4th October at 4.30 p.m.

Chairperson