

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL
CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT
REPORT OF THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF
ENVIRONMENT & REGULATORY SERVICES

Report prepared by:

Tim Jefferson – Environment Facilities Manager

Date: 02 June 2011

1. BEREAVEMENT SERVICES – NEW MEMORIAL OPPORTUNITIES

1.1 Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To agree to the introduction and associated charges and grounds development for new memorials being provided at the Vinters Park Crematorium and the Maidstone Cemetery.

1.2 Recommendation of the Assistant Director of Environment & Regulatory Services

1.2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment:

- i) agrees to the proposed range of new memorials being introduced at the Crematorium and the Cemetery as shown at **Appendix A**;
- ii) agrees to the associated charges and income/expenditure projections for the new memorials being introduced as shown at **Appendix B** and **C**;
- iii) agrees to the proposed development of new pathways and strewing area and the refurbishment of the Woodside walk.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Crematorium site has recently undergone a major upgrading and redecoration/refurbishment programme to the buildings and some landscaping to the grounds that makes it one of the best facilities in the south east. As part of this upgrading work consideration was also given to improving the customer service and chapel service side of the operation and this has been particularly well received by visitors and

local funeral directors.

- 1.3.2 An area of the service that now needs to be considered in Bereavement Services is the memorial opportunity for both the Crematorium and Cemetery sites.
- 1.3.3 A review of the demand for the current range of memorials offered at the Crematorium suggests that some are not as popular now as in years gone by.
- 1.3.4 At the Cemetery the only memorial opportunity offered by the council is confined to dedicated benches though the main focus for families is usually a headstone which is obtained from a stone mason.
- 1.3.5 This range of memorials at the Crematorium and Cemetery has been maintained for many years with few additional or different opportunities being introduced. Whilst this situation satisfies the wishes of bereaved families who choose to adopt their personal memorials for a loved one, the industry has developed a number of new memorials that have proved to be very popular at neighbouring crematoria and cemeteries around the country.
- 1.3.6 In tandem with introducing new memorials at the Crematorium will be the opportunity to develop associated pathways and improve access to the Woodside walk area and also to create a new strewing area as part of the on going work to improve the grounds and their ambiance.

1.4 The new memorials

- 1.4.1 Attached at **Appendix A** is the range of new memorials that it is proposed are made available at the Crematorium and Cemetery. Many of these memorials will assist in the development of the grounds and create a location for the interment or strewing of cremated remains.
- 1.4.2 The proposed charges for the new memorials are attached at **Appendix B** and **Appendix C** shows the income/expenditure projections. The charges presented have been reviewed against other neighbouring authority charges for similar products and provide a range of prices that will allow families individual choice over the type and period of their preferred adoption.

1.5 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

- 1.5.1 An alternative action would be to maintain exactly the same memorial opportunities as at present, but this situation is not recommended as it would result in the further reduction in the adoption of memorials from the current range as they become less popular. Not reviewing and offering new memorial opportunities would deprive and restrict

bereaved families from more choice to match their personal preferences.

1.6 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.6.1 Providing new memorial opportunities that represent value for money with high levels of satisfaction will support the outcome for the strategic plan priority for corporate and customer excellence.

1.7 Risk Management

1.7.1 The development of non statutory service provision has to be considered against the cost to the council and the likely return. It is essential that the new memorial opportunities are well marketed in a sensitive manner to ensure that bereaved families are aware of the choices available which should provide a good take up of the memorials. The bereavement services staff will receive appropriate training and support marketing material to deliver this outcome.

1.8 Other Implications

1.8.1

- 1. Financial
- 2. Staffing
- 3. Legal
- 4. Social Inclusion
- 5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
- 6. Community Safety
- 7. Human Rights Act
- 8. Procurement
- 9. Asset Management

X

1.8.2 Financial implications:

It is intended that the cost for the additional individual standard roses and specimen trees; Octagon; woodside Memorial Book; Mushrooms and Sanctums will be covered by treating these items as stock. The charge to the revenue account will be made on each occasion that a

sale is made.

It is intended that the labour cost for the pathway development and creation of the new strewing area etc can be achieved from within the existing grounds maintenance budget for the Crematorium site. There will be one off start up expenditure for the material element of the work totalling £6,790 over the first two years and it is proposed to fund this from the additional income generated.

The introduction of new memorials should stimulate sales opportunities though it is expected that some income streams from existing memorials will decrease. This should be compensated for from the new memorial sales and would therefore balance and eventually improve the revenue budget outcome in future years. The current year's revenue budget included a provision for the potential introduction of new memorials and the impact on income streams. The projections are detailed in **Appendix C** and are summarised as under:

2011/12 BUDGET	CEMETERY	CREMATORIUM
INCOME		
New sales items	2,590	24,730
Total	2,590	24,730
EXPENDITURE		
Sales items	410	16,040
Materials – start up costs	150	3,790
Total	560	19,830

Based on the projected sales the estimated net benefit in 2011/12 would total £6,930 and in future years **Appendix C** shows significant net income benefits subject to the anticipated demand.

There is a need to utilise £5,990 from this additional income stream to address a shortfall in the Bereavement Service revenue budget from the loss of rent from the Supervisor's House at the Cemetery due to it becoming unoccupied and currently being considered for disposal, therefore realising a capital gain for the council.

1.9 Background Documents

1.9.1 Bereavement Services Fees & Charges 2011-12 report

NO REPORT WILL BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT THIS BOX BEING COMPLETED

Is this a Key Decision? Yes No

If yes, when did it appear in the Forward Plan? _____

Is this an Urgent Key Decision? Yes No

Reason for Urgency

How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

Cllr Marion Ring Cabinet Member for Environment
Telephone: 01622 686492
E-mail : marionring@maidstone.gov.uk

Tim Jefferson Environment Facilities Manager
Telephone: 01622 602121
Email: timjefferson@maidstone.gov.uk