

Subject: Development of Ashes Plots

Status: For Publication

Report to: Cabinet

Date: 29 July 2010

Report of: Director of Customers and Communities

Portfolio

Holder: Environmental Services

Key Decision: Yes

Forward Plan

General Exception

Special Urgency

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To gain approval for the development of ashes plots within three Rossendale Borough Council Cemeteries.

2. CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 2.1 The matters discussed in this report impact directly on the following corporate priorities:-

- Delivering Quality Services to our Customers
- Keeping our Borough Clean, Green and Safe
- Providing Value for Money Services

3. RISK ASSESSMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 It may be perceived that there would be a potential loss of grave space as the land area will be used for ashes plots instead of traditional graves. However, there is sufficient space in each of the remaining three cemeteries to develop ashes plots without altering the current number of allocated grave spaces. In addition, customers have requested these plots as alternatives to grave spaces.

4. BACKGROUND AND OPTIONS

- 4.1 Rossendale Borough Council manages four cemeteries of which only one (Whitworth) has an ashes garden. The ashes here are placed in an earthen plot underneath a flagstone and each plot has sufficient space for two caskets. Ashes can also be buried within a grave plot in any cemetery but this option is not always wanted by the customer. An ashes garden provides a designated area and can be developed as an attractive peaceful part of the cemetery.
- 4.2 Recently the Bereavement Services Officer has noted an increase in the number of enquiries regarding ashes plots both directly from customers and via Funeral Directors. At least 12 private enquiries were made during 2009 and another 3 so far this year. There is a constant request from undertakers in Haslingden as they have customers waiting for such a service.
- 4.3 There is sufficient space in each of the remaining three cemeteries to develop ashes plots without altering the current number of allocated grave spaces (only future undeveloped plots may be affected). The plots would be in the following locations:
- In Bacup Cemetery the ashes plot may be located on the site of a demolished chapel which is currently a small area of mown grass with no other purpose.
 - In Haslingden Cemetery an area in the south east corner has been identified and while this is adjacent to the existing Muslim plot – the number of planned Muslim graves will not be affected.
 - Within Rawtenstall Cemetery a corner of the currently wooded area can be developed.
- 4.4 Several designs for the chambers have been considered and one style has been identified as particularly good value for money and has been developed in Pendle with positive feedback. Typically 15 - 30 chambers would be constructed in one row with associated flagged path alongside. Each chamber can hold four caskets of ashes.
- 4.5 In addition to the chamber construction there would be some additional landscaping such as site preparation (tree felling or leveling) and planting to create an enclosed garden effect. This work can be carried out in house.
- 4.6 The suggested price for each chamber is £600. This price includes:
- the charge for the right of interment;
 - the granite memorial with flower vase;
 - the interment fee; and
 - the plaque with first inscription.

Subsequent inscriptions and interment fees would apply for each additional casket.

- 4.7 This price has been benchmarked against four neighbouring authorities and is lower than the nearest equivalent plot style, but higher than authorities which provide only plots directly in to the ground. We therefore consider the amount to be value for money for the customer when considering the style, items and services provided within that cost. The prices will be reviewed annually.
- 4.8 The report, Ashes Plots Management Guidance document and Community Impact Assessment were submitted to the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and discussed on 15th June 2010. The committee recommends that the development of the ashes plots in the three cemeteries (Haslingden, Rawtenstall and Bacup) is supported.

COMMENTS FROM STATUTORY OFFICERS:

5. SECTION 151 OFFICER

- 5.1 The financial implications for Council are noted within the report.

6. MONITORING OFFICER

- 6.1 No additional comments required.

7. HEAD OF PEOPLE AND POLICY (ON BEHALF OF THE HEAD OF PAID SERVICE)

- 7.1 No People and Policy implications, does need a CIA (note: which is now completed)

8. CONCLUSION

- 8.1 The report has identified a gap in service provision which can easily be accommodated and in doing so improve and extend the range of bereavement services offered to customers.

9. RECOMMENDATION(S)

- 9.1 That the Cabinet approves the Development of Ashes Plots Policy.
- 9.2 Cabinet agree that all future minor amendments to the policy to be delegated to the Assistant Operations Manager in consultation with the Portfolio Holder and Director of Customers and Communities.

10. CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT

- 10.1 Undertakers have been asked what demand they have been receiving for such services and the result is that ashes plots would be a welcome addition to the range of bereavement services offered at Rossendale Borough Council. The undertakers have told us that members of the public have asked about this service and that people are waiting to hear if it will become available as they will then purchase ashes plots.

- 10.2 Requests have been received from members of the public directly to the Bereavement Services Officer.
- 10.3 We have consulted with neighbouring authorities regarding designs, layout and costs.
- 10.4 In addition, we have referred to the Charter for the Bereaved which states that people should have a right to choose plots. By providing ashes plots we are extending the choice available.

11. COMMUNITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is a Community Impact Assessment required Yes
- Is a Community Impact Assessment attached Yes

12. BIODIVERSITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment required No
- Is a Biodiversity Impact Assessment attached No

Contact Officer	
Name	Tamzin Percival
Position	Assistant Operations Manager
Service / Team	Operations Team
Telephone	01706 252518
Email address	tamzinpercival@rossendalebc.gov.uk

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Ashes Plot Management Guidelines. Cemetery Rules and regulations. Community Impact Assessment	Henrietta Street depot.