

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting:-	Cabinet Member for Health and Wellbeing
2.	Date:-	12 th March 2012
3.	Title:-	Installation of kerb sets within RMBC maintained cemeteries
4.	Directorate:-	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

Many people consider kerb set memorials to be an appropriate addition to the grave of a loved one or relative. At the present time, the council does not allow the installation of kerb sets – primarily due to concerns over safety and accessibility. It is considered that the introduction of a registration scheme will overcome these concerns, and will allow the installation of kerb set memorials subject to certain conditions.

6. Recommendations

1. That the Cabinet Member support the proposal to allow the installation of kerb set memorials within RMBC maintained cemeteries, subject to the conditions detailed within this report.

7. Proposals and Details

The crematorium and nine RMBC cemeteries are managed and maintained on behalf of the Council by Dignity Funeral Services Limited. In recent months, both the council and Dignity have received a number of enquiries from members of the public wishing to install kerb set memorials around the graves of family members.

Such applications have been refused, as the current Bereavement Services Rules and Regulations prohibit the installation of kerb set memorials in all RMBC maintained cemeteries.

The primary reasons for the prohibition of kerb set memorials are:

- Kerb set memorials introduce a potential tripping hazard, which may result in injury to members of the public visiting the cemetery,
- Access to the cemetery grounds by mobility impaired visitors may be hindered by the presence of kerb set memorials

However, the council recognises the importance of customer choice and providing a range of memorial options to the bereaved is considered desirable. In addition, it is felt that there is a clear demand for kerb set memorials – as evidenced by the number of application received, along with the number of unauthorised ‘do-it-yourself’ kerb sets that have been installed by grave owners throughout the Borough.

Whilst the safety concerns highlighted above are worthy of consideration, it is felt that they can be effectively mitigated through the introduction of kerb set memorial registration scheme (this would be similar to the scheme that already exists in relation to memorial headstones).

It is therefore proposed that the council permit the installation of kerb set memorials in all RMBC maintained cemeteries, subject to the memorial being installed in accordance with the following conditions:

- An application to install a kerb set memorial is made to the Cemeteries and Crematorium office, along with the payment of the appropriate fee,
- Installation of the memorial must not commence until the application has been approved by Dignity Funerals Limited (on behalf of the council),
- All work in relation to the installation of the memorial must be carried out by a registered memorial mason and in accordance with the relevant sections of the Memorial Masons Registration Scheme,
- Permission to place a kerb set memorial will be for a period of 30 years (permission may be renewed after this time),
- Any kerb set memorial that is installed in a cemetery must allow sufficient room for pedestrian access with or without mobility aids,
- The size, design and specification of the memorial kerb set must be in keeping with the cemetery environment. Applications may be refused if the memorial could be considered to be offensive or otherwise controversial in any way,

- The individual making the application remains responsible for the kerb set memorial for the duration of the permit (if the application is made by a stone mason on a customer's behalf, then responsibility for the upkeep of the memorial rests with the customer),
- Once installed, the memorial may not be amended in anyway without the prior approval of Dignity Funerals Limited (on behalf of the council).

Each application to install a kerb set memorial will be assessed and determined on a case by case basis. What is acceptable in one cemetery may not be considered to be acceptable in another; likewise different sections of the same cemetery may require the consideration of different factors.

Should a kerb set memorial be installed that fails to comply with any of the conditions detailed above, the kerb set memorial may be removed by Dignity Funerals Limited (acting on behalf of the council).

8. Finance

This proposal has no financial implications for the council as the scheme will be administered by Dignity Funerals Limited.

An application fee will be charged for permission to install a kerb set memorial, it is proposed that this fee should be set £225.00 (to be reviewed in April each year).

Any costs associated with the administration of the scheme will be met by income generated from application fees.

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Failure to ensure the effective implementation of the registration scheme may lead to the introduction of safety hazards within the cemeteries. It is therefore essential that the scheme is effectively monitored and enforced on the council's behalf by Dignity Funerals Limited.

Failure to introduce a scheme may lead to the proliferation of DIY memorials, with corresponding aesthetic and safety issues.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

The services contribute to the following objectives:

- Helping to create safe and healthy communities, and
- Improving the environment

11. Background Papers and Consultation

Bereavement Services Rules and Regulations.

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