

**Meeting date:** 30 January 2019  
**Report to:** Cabinet Member for Stronger Communities and Partnerships



**Subject/report title:** Review of Solihull's Cemeteries & Crematoriums Policy

**Report from:** Head of Customer Services

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**Wards affected:**

All Wards |  Bickenhill |  Blythe |  Castle Bromwich |  Chelmsley Wood |  
 Dorridge/Hockley Heath |  Elmdon |  Kingshurst/Fordbridge |  Knowle |  
 Lyndon |  Meriden |  Olton |  Shirley East |  Shirley South |  
 Shirley West |  Silhill |  Smith's Wood |  St Alphege

**Public/private report:** Public

**Exempt by virtue of paragraph:** N/A

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**1. Purpose of Report**

1.1 To request Cabinet Member Approval for the updated policy in relation to Solihull's Cemeteries and Crematoriums.

**2. Decision(s) recommended**

2.1 To agree to exclude alcohol from our cemeteries and crematoriums.

2.2 To approve the revised Policy on Solihull's Cemeteries and Crematoriums included as Appendix 1.

**3. What is the issue?**

3.1 Solihull's Cemeteries and Crematoriums Policy was last updated in November 2014.

3.2 In recent years there has been an increase in anti-social behaviour linked to the use of alcohol in our cemeteries and crematoriums. This has created unnecessary distress to people at a very difficult time and it is therefore recommended that alcohol is not permitted to be brought in, left or consumed within Solihull's cemeteries and crematoriums. We will continue to work closely with the police to prevent / reduce anti-social behaviour in our cemeteries and crematoriums.

- 3.3 It is important that our cemeteries be safe havens and reflect the appropriate respect required in these areas. The anti-social behaviour has taken various forms from theft of flowers and lanterns from graves to threat of physical violence to one of our grounds staff. There has also been an increase in visitors 'having a drink' with their deceased loved ones and leaving not insignificant quantities on graves when they depart, creating a risk of alcohol falling into the possession of vulnerable people such as children.
- 3.4 At the same time there has been an increase in the number of unauthorised memorials within our cemeteries. As an example we have helium balloons tied to the trees, shepherds crooks, solar lanterns as well as alcohol mentioned in 3.2. Some of these items cause a Health and Safety risk and in addition make maintenance of the cemeteries more difficult.
- 3.5 Whilst we recognise the individual's need to grieve, the Cemeteries and Crematoriums Policy is aligned with the Policy for the Removal of Roadside Memorials. The Cemeteries and Crematoriums Policy makes provision for the removal of unauthorised memorials that will be stored securely for a period of six weeks to allow time for relatives to collect them after which if not collected they will be disposed of.

#### **4. What options have been considered and what is the evidence telling us about them?**

- 4.1 We have worked with the Police and Friends of Woodlands Charity to explore how we can resolve these issues. Staff at all of our cemeteries now carry personal alarms and the advice from the Police is to ban alcohol to try to achieve a change in culture and behaviour. North Warwickshire Police are also carrying out plain clothes patrols on an ad hoc basis at Woodlands Cemetery which is the venue experiencing much of the anti social behaviour described.

#### **5. Reasons for recommending preferred option**

- 5.1 To ensure the policy is up to date and to address the issue of alcohol related anti-social behaviour within Solihull's cemeteries and crematoriums.

#### **6. Implications and Considerations**

- 6.1 Delivery of key themes in the Council Plan:

How will the options/proposals in this report contribute to the delivery of the key themes in the Council Plan?

- Improve Health and Wellbeing -
- Managed Growth -
- Build Stronger Communities -
- Deliver Value –

6.2 Implications for children and young people, vulnerable groups and particular communities:

6.2.1 The exclusion of alcohol from our cemeteries and crematorium will help to protect vulnerable, bereaved families when visiting their deceased loved ones.

6.3 Consultation and Scrutiny:

6.3.1 This latest report has not been viewed by Scrutiny Board.

6.4 Financial implications:

6.4.1 There will be a minor financial outlay to procure appropriate signage.

6.5 Legal implications:

6.5.1 There are no legal implications as a result of this report.

6.6 Risk implications:

6.6.1 The Corporate Risk Management approach has been followed.

6.7 Statutory Equality Duty:

6.7.1 Solihull Cemeteries and Crematoriums welcome all visitors and users of our facilities

## **7. List of appendices referred to**

7.1 Appendix 1 – Cemetery and Crematorium Policy 2019

## **8. Background papers used to compile this report**

8.1 Bereavement Services Policy November 2014

## **9. List of other relevant documents**

9.1 N/A