

Community Services Scrutiny Panel

14th March 2007

Present: Councillors Howarth (in the Chair), Hepplewhite, Kinghorn, Moderate, Norman, Robinson, Taylor, Walton and Young.

Also Present: Councillors Carr, Kellett and Marsden.

1. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for Absence were received from Councillors Hopgood and Wolstenholme.

2. Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 14th February 2007 were confirmed as a correct record.

COUNCILLOR WALTON IN THE CHAIR

3. Scrutiny of Graveyards

Following discussions at the last Meeting of the next Scrutiny topic of Graveyards and the circulation of a draft planning sheet, Members considered the terms of reference for this Scrutiny.

Members agreed to consider specifically the closed cemeteries/graveyards for which the City Council is responsible. It was decided to look particularly at closed cemeteries/graveyards as open ones were felt to be better maintained. If during the course of the Scrutiny, Members felt open cemeteries required Scrutiny, this could be suggested as a Scrutiny topic in its own right.

After further consideration, Members felt that the Scrutiny should look particularly at:-

- What is a closed churchyard?
- How does a churchyard become 'closed'?
- The ownership of closed churchyards/cemeteries.
- Whether the City Council has an obligation to take on maintenance of closed churchyards/graveyards?
- Who meets the City Council's costs for the maintenance of churchyards/cemeteries?
- Which other organisations/individuals have an input or responsibility for maintenance e.g. Church, families etc and what their roles are?
- The maintenance and management responsibilities for War Graves, and how the monies provided by the War Graves Commission for their upkeep is used.
- How much money the City Council allocates for the management, maintenance and upkeep of closed churchyards and how this compared to the amount of works needed.
- Which aspects of maintenance is the Council responsible for e.g. walls, fences, paths, trees, grass cutting etc.

It was also decided it would be useful for Members to understand how the Council became responsible for closed graveyards/cemeteries historically, and consider whether adequate attention was given to maintenance and to what standards memorial repairs were carried out.

With regard to possible witnesses, Members felt that Officers from Environment & Leisure and Heritage & Design would be appropriate, and possibly the Sustainable Development Manager. Parish Clerks who dealt with graveyards as part of their role might also be able to provide some valuable information.

Having decided to base the Scrutiny around these issues, Members agreed that the topic was ready to be commenced following Annual Council in May 2007.

COUNCILLOR HOWARTH IN THE CHAIR

4. Any Other Business

The Chairman advised the Panel, that the topic of graveyards was now to be held over until after Annual Council in May 2007, and as all necessary reviews had been completed, there were no items of business for the April Meeting of the Panel. She therefore proposed that it be cancelled. Accordingly, Members agreed that, subject to there being no urgent items for consideration, the Meeting scheduled for 10th April 2007 be cancelled.

The Meeting terminated at 6.30 pm