

<b>11 January 2023</b>		<b>ITEM: 11</b> <b>Decision: 110634</b>
<b>Cabinet</b>		
<b>Cemetery and Burial Strategy</b>		
<b>Wards and communities affected:</b> All	<b>Key Decision:</b> Key	
<b>Report of:</b> Councillor Andrew Jefferies – Cabinet Member for Environment		
<b>Accountable Assistant Director:</b> Daren Spring – Assistant Director Street scene and Leisure		
<b>Accountable Director:</b> Julie Rogers – Director Public Realm		
<b>This report is Public</b>		

## Executive Summary

This report introduces the proposed Cemetery and Burial Strategy that outlines the aims and aspirations for Thurrock Burial Grounds for the next ten years.

### 1. Recommendation(s)

- 1.1 That Cabinet formally adopt the Cemetery and Burial Strategy and its associated policies.**

### 2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 Thurrock Council has not previously had a formalised Cemetery and Burial Strategy. The benefit of the strategy is that it not only outlines the aims and ambitions relating to the maintenance and improvement of burial grounds but, provides an opportunity to look at the broader long-term possibilities including crematoria and natural burials.
- 2.2 The ethos and aims of the strategy have been based both on research by the Registrar of Burials and an understanding of best practise.

### 3. Issues, Options and Analysis of Options

- 3.1 Adoption of the strategy and the associated policies /procedures will address the fact that there is currently no Cemetery strategy in place, cemeteries are important spaces. In developing this strategy Thurrock Council are keen to ensure that we share the aims and ambitions for cemeteries and burials for the next ten years. We also want to ensure that policies relating to burials and

memorials are clear, well communicated, and consistent. Providing a framework which enables the service to effectively manage our cemeteries and provide future focus.

#### **4. Reasons for Recommendation**

4.1 A strategy that provides a clear direction of travel and guidelines for current management, helps to ensure that burial grounds are maintained and developed well. It also ensures consistency and provides an opportunity for strategic aims to be explored. The aim is to provide cemeteries for Thurrock residents that are beautiful, peaceful and well used. To offer burial spaces that support a diverse range of cultural and individual needs. To ensure that our policies relating to burials and memorials are clear, well communicated, and consistent and to ensure that procedures for the purchase and use of burial sites and memorials are clear, efficient, and compassionate

#### **5. Consultation**

5.1 From June to August 2022, a public consultation took place, covering a number of key aspects of burial ground maintenance and facilities, safety and memorial management and strategic developments. During the period of consultation circa 500 individuals accessed the consultation and reviewed the questions. The public consultation was extended by a week and additional communication messages were sent out to try to encourage more participants. 88 respondents completed the survey. All responses have been considered as part of the proposed strategy.

5.2 Key messages and views from respondents were: -

- Strong support for the development of a crematorium and for provision of natural burials.
- Agreement that the level of maintenance of the burial grounds is good with a clear desire to see more trees planted as well as areas of meadow.
- There is understandably concern relating to the enforcement relating to memorial items on graves, with ambiguity amongst respondents if the enforcement should be restricted to new items.
- There is a strong view that when unstable head stones are required to be laid down, notification of the reason or action should be published both at the cemetery entrances as well as adjacent to the memorial itself.
- The potential refurbishment of chapels was strongly advocated.
- There is a strong consensus that memorials in terms of benches and trees should be offered.

5.3 This report was presented at Cleaner, Greener and Safer Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the 11 October 2022. The committee supported the adoption of the Cemetery and Burial Strategy and its associated policies.

## **6. Impact on corporate policies, priorities, performance and community impact**

- 6.1 Maintenance standards in burial grounds should reflect the respect and care due to those resting there, as well as for loved ones visiting. The strategy proposes the ongoing use of an assessment tool from The Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE) Land Audit Management System (LAMS). This is to ensure that maintenance levels are to the standard required.
- 6.2 The strategy also includes a Burial Ground and Memorial Management policy, clearly outlining the permitted memorials in different areas of the cemeteries. This is an up-to-date version of Thurrock Cemetery Regulations, which was originally in place. The policy also details the approach that is required by law to be taken regarding memorial stones identified as unsafe.

## **7. Implications**

### **7.1 Financial**

Implications verified by: **Laura Last**  
**Senior Management Accountant**

Whilst the strategy outlines plans for the future development of burial facilities in the Borough. All proposed developments will be subject to the approval of full business cases prior to progressing. Financial implications will be fully outlined and addressed in those documents. As such the adoption of the Burials Strategy has no direct financial implications.

- 7.2 Implications verified by: **Mark Bowen**  
**Acting Head of Legal**

The Burials Strategy has been developed with the legislation and guidelines relating to burials and burial sites firmly in mind. A consultation exercise has been undertaken and regard has been given to the feedback. All proposed developments will be subject to the approval of business cases prior to progressing. Legal implications will be fully outlined and addressed in those plans. As such the adoption of the Burials Strategy has no direct Legal implications.

### **7.3 Diversity and Equality**

Implications verified by: **Roxanne Scanlon**  
**Community Engagement and Project Officer**

There are no equality and diversity implications arising from this report. The strategy contains information relating to accessibility and diversity of burial options available to all residents. There is also an aim to offer burial spaces that support a diverse range of cultural and individual needs.

7.4 **Other implications** (where significant) – i.e., Staff, Health Inequalities, Sustainability, Crime and Disorder, and Impact on Looked After Children

N/A

**8. Appendices to the report**

- Appendix 1 – Cemetery and Burial Strategy
- Appendix 2 – Potential Future Cemetery Extension
- Appendix 3 – Draft Thurrock Cemetery Regulations
- Appendix 4 – Draft Thurrock Memorial Safety Policy and Procedure

**Report Author**

Vincent Taylor

Strategic Lead for Clean and Green

Public Realm