

Report of Community Services Scrutiny & Performance Panel to Cabinet - 14 December 2011

Cemetery Rules and Regulations

Summary

The Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel considered a petition regarding cemetery rules and regulations at its meeting on 29 November 2011. The petition was handed into Council on 7 November 2011.

The petition was signed by 744 people which requires referral to a Scrutiny and Performance Panel under the petitions scheme contained in the Councils Constitution.

The petition read:

Background: *Walsall Council plans to remove borders around all graves at cemeteries in Walsall including Streetly Cemetery, thus allowing lawn mowers, workmen and members of the general public to pass on top of the graves. The Council has never objected or removed any of the borders before or maintained the cemetery as a lawn cemetery. No consultation has taken place with the families of those buried in this and other cemeteries in the borough.*

Action petitioned for: *The plan to remove the borders around graves, and as a result allowing lawn mowers and workmen to pass over graves, is an infringement of our human rights, beliefs and dignity. We, the undersigned are concerned citizens who, call upon Walsall Council to reconsider and change their decision to remove the borders around graves.*

At the meeting the Panel considered the views of the lead petitioner, the Union of Muslim Organisations along with a response from the Executive Director for Neighbourhoods and the Bereavement and Registration Services Manager.

Following a long debate the Panel resolved to recommend to Cabinet to undertake to try and resolve the issues raised by the lead petitioners. This should include consideration of best practice applied elsewhere in the country. The Panel also agreed to recommend that further enforcement action be halted against those graves that do not meet with the cemetery rules and regulations. Members asked that they be informed of the outcome of this work on or before this last meeting of the municipal year.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. undertake engagement with the lead petitioners and the Union of Muslim Organisations to seek agreement on the preferred method of tending to Muslim graves in Walsall;
2. investigate best practice with regard to Muslim graves elsewhere in the country;
3. cease enforcement action against those graves which currently breach cemetery rules and regulations until a preferred option for tending to Muslim graves has been agreed;
4. provide a report back to the Community Services Scrutiny and Performance Panel on the outcome of this issue on or before the 10 April 2011.

Signed:



COUNCILLOR LOUISE HARRISON
CHAIR, COMMUNITY SERVICES SCRUTINY & PERFORMANCE PANEL

14 December 2011

Contact officer

Craig Goodall – Scrutiny Officer

☎ 01922 653317

✉ goodallc@walsall.gov.uk