

Appendix 3

Cemeteries consultation

Response to key improvements / comments arising from public consultation

Focus area	Improvement / comment	Response
General comments arising under 'missing from the priorities'	Site maintenance	This would fall in the existing priority 'Enhance cemetery green space'. The cemeteries plan has been reworded to include reference to the Council's Grounds Maintenance and Parks Infrastructure teams who look after the grounds and paths respectively together with the Council's Arboricultural Officer.
	Accessibility & safety	Community wardens continue to target key issues where these are raised, for example control orders relating to dogs off lead.
	Beyond green spaces - e.g. natural burial site	Green space management and wildlife is covered in the document. None of our existing cemeteries are designated natural burial sites. A project to establish a natural burial site is subject to similar feasibility requirements as establishing a new cemetery - see priority 'Identify new cemetery provision' in main document.
1. Address capacity for existing cemetery space and identify new cemetery provision	Create more cemetery space	This is explored in the document. Due to geographical constraints more cemetery space needs to be sought outside the municipal boundary.

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	Investigate use of old/derelict/vacant graves	<p>This is explored in the document. The Council has committed in the cemetery plan to review unpurchased graves with headstones and purchased graves where no burials have taken place.</p> <p>Both these options are open to Portsmouth, in accordance with current regulations.</p>
	Maximise layout of existing cemeteries	<p>These are old cemeteries with all areas currently being utilised and very limited opportunities to reconfigure the layout.</p>
2. Enhance cemetery green space	Improve maintenance	<p>There is a weekly maintenance schedule for all grounds areas for each cemetery site which is accompanied by a weekly meeting between the Grounds Manager (Parks Service, Education & West) and Cemeteries Manager.</p> <p>Additional particular works are discussed and scheduled as and when these are required.</p> <p>The grounds maintenance team are engaged as a resource within the current cash limit.</p>
	Encourage wildlife and diversify foliage	<p>This is explored in the document. There is a commitment in the cemeteries plan for the cemeteries team to work collaboratively with the countryside officers to improve biodiversity.</p>
	Provide areas & benches for quiet reflection	<p>An adequate number of benches are provided throughout all three of the city's cemeteries.</p>

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3. Review management of assets (buildings)	Generally feel that old buildings should be used or restored	This is supported in the cemetery plan. The Council's heritage strategy also aims to 'invest in the fabric of historic assets and realise viable uses' where this is sustainable over the long term.
	Should be used for historical / educational purposes	As part of the review of the assets, it may be possible to use the buildings to support an education package, both for general visitors and for schools.
	Restore places for cemetery related services	Subject to the availability of funds and the success of a grant funding bid, the cemeteries plan considers whether the buildings could be regenerated for cemetery related businesses which would be income generating.
4. Review memorials management	Carry out regular inspections and maintenance	<p>The Council has committed to a memorial inspection regime both in a plan and in a report to portfolio (July 2023). The regular inspections will involve a risk assessment to be undertaken every 5 years, with immediate action or sooner re-inspection dependent on the RAG rating at the point of assessment. An inspection of all memorials across all three cemeteries has recently been completed.</p> <p>It should be noted that the purpose of inspections is to make memorials safe.</p> <p>Maintenance of any memorials on grave spaces are the responsibility of the registered grave owner.</p>

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	Ensure good communication with plot leaseholders	The portfolio report connected to the cemeteries plan confirms that prior to any inspections, notices will be placed around the cemetery to inform the public. The report also confirms the process whereby the cemeteries team will contact the grave owner should any issues arise.
	Enforce stricter regulations	<p>Issues related to memorial safety are dealt with as above.</p> <p>The cemetery regulations (available on the Council website) advise that the Council reserves the right to remove unsuitable materials from around a graveside. It also advises that tributes (floral or otherwise) will be removed by the cemeteries staff 17 days after burial.</p> <p>It is appreciated by the cemeteries team that any removal of tributes by them needs to be undertaken in a sensitive manner.</p>
5. Engaging with the community	Guided walks and talks - history is important	The cemeteries document explores the option to establish Friends groups for the cemeteries and/or work in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission's engagement team to offer history tours, together with volunteers.
	Work with the community	The cemeteries document refers to the possibility of working with schools. The cemeteries team will be looking at developing schools information packs. Further developed work with schools would require funding to the current staff establishment.

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		The consultation response suggests working with Libraries and this has been incorporated as an amendment into the cemeteries plan.
6. Development of customer experience	Concerns with the word 'customer'	The cemeteries plan has been amended to replace the word 'customer' with the term 'user' of the cemeteries, which covers both customers and visitors.
	Improve maintenance and accessibility	This comment has already been addressed in General Comments and focus area 2.
	Engagement with community	This comment has already been addressed in focus area 5.
	Provision of facilities - toilets, benches bins	In Milton Cemetery there are toilets within the cemetery. In Kingston Cemetery, users are directed to the toilets in Kingston Recreation Ground. The provision of bins in the city's cemeteries is currently under review.
	Ensure information is available online	The cemeteries plan includes reference to updating the cemeteries webpage (including online brochure). With support of the council's digital team, also to develop online options, for example for making payments.