

STOURBRIDGE AREA COMMITTEE – 30TH JANUARY 2005

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT

STOURBRIDGE CEMETERY/CREMATORIUM – TRAFFIC MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

Purpose

1. To advise the Area Committee of the results of consultation with Funeral Directors relating to the traffic management system at Stourbridge Cemetery/Crematorium.

Background

2. The Committee will recall that comments were made at a previous meeting regarding changes that had been introduced to the traffic management system at Stourbridge Cemetery/Crematorium, resulting in the Committee calling for a report on this matter.
3. In order to assist the Committee with their deliberations on this matter the Committee Chairman, Councillor Adams, requested that the views of Funeral Directors serving the site be sought and reported to a future meeting.
4. A consultation exercise involving 25 Funeral Directors services, taken from the Council's records as being users of the cemetery/crematoria, was undertaken and the results of this exercise are contained in this report.
5. Changes to the traffic management system were introduced in 2004 as a response to severe traffic management problems with the previous system. Specifically there was considerable congestion and blocking in the main drive with a two-way flow of traffic. This led to 'bottle necks' occurring and difficulties with the hearse and limousines where they turned under the canopy causing severe congestion at the chapel entrance.
6. Following extensive discussions a new one-way system was introduced (Appendix 1) A large scale version will be displayed at the meeting. This system provides a one-way flow of traffic and ensures that it is easier for the funeral cortege to access the chapel, removing the congestion and disorganisation that had previously prevailed, whilst also making it generally safer to enter and exit the site.

7. That said there have also been criticisms made of the new system which prompted Members to request the consultation exercise referred to at 3 above.
8. A consultation paper was issued to 25 Funeral Directors and asked the following questions:-
 - i) Is the current one-way system at Stourbridge an improvement on the previous system?
 - ii) If not, would you favour a return to the previous system?
 - iii) What are the main problems with the current system?
 - iv) How would you suggest these problems be overcome?
 - v) What were the main problems with the previous system?
 - vi) Do you favour a continuation with the present system in a reversion to the previous one?
 - vii) Do you have any additional comments?
9. In total the Council received 13 responses to the consultation exercise and the details are attached at Appendix 2. In summary 7 respondents prefer the new system as compared to the previous system with 6 respondents indicating the opposite preference.
10. Those favouring the current system identified issues such as those noted at 5 above as being the main problems with the previous system. They indicate that the new system is more organised and makes it easier for them to deliver their service to the bereaved families and there are fewer obstructions to overcome around the site.
11. For those who preferred the old system of traffic management the main issues of concern with the new system were:
 - The new entrance gate being of a lesser quality/less imposing than the previous entrance – a perception of entering via the ‘back door’ was mentioned
 - Some parking on verges
 - Traffic flow takes vehicles past graves en route to the chapel
 - For a burial service, not being able to follow the hearse due to the one-way system.
12. Clearly this consultation has been inconclusive in establishing whether the views of our key partners in Bereavement Services ie Funeral Directors believe the current system is an improvement on the previous. In terms of operational arrangements on site and also in the context of health and safety considerations it is clearly an improvement with fewer blockages and disruptions caused.
13. With regard to the faults identified with the new system as at 11 above, all of these matters with the exception of ‘vehicles passing by graves en route’ can be addressed. Quotations are being received to improve

the new entrance gate and pillars, posts can be erected to ensure that the problems being experienced with parking on verges is eradicated and due to the limited number of burials taking place it is possible to make the necessary adjustments to operational procedures in order that mourners are able to follow the hearse to the committal at the grave.

14. This report provides Members with feedback from Funeral Directors on the issue of traffic management at Stourbridge Cemetery/Crematorium and Members views on this matter are now sought.

Finance

15. There are no immediate financial implications in this report

Law

16. The Council's powers to manage and improve Cemeteries are contained in a variety of legislation, including Section 214 and Schedule 214 and Schedule 26 of the Local Government Act 1972, the Local Cemeteries Order 1977.
17. Section 111 of the Local Government Act, 1972, enables the Council to do anything which is calculated to facilitate or is conducive or incidental to the discharge of its statutory functions.

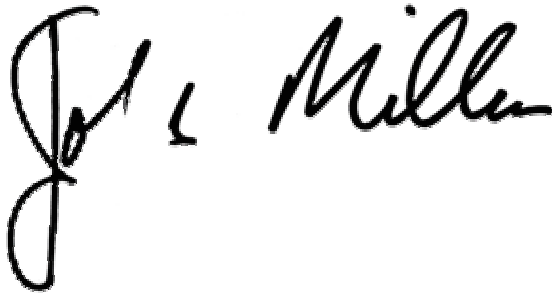
Equality Impact

18. The proposals contained in this report are in full accordance with the Council's equal opportunities policies and should in no way have any impact on different racial groups, disabled people, both genders and/or other relevant groups.

Recommendation

19. That the Committee considers the outcome of the consultation exercise undertaken with Funeral Directors and puts forward their views on the issue for further consideration by the Cabinet Member for Leisure.

List of Background Papers

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Millar'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

J MILLAR
Director of the Urban Environment

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