

Report on	Update on Administration of Burials and Cemetery Operations
Reporting Officer	Terry Scullion, Head of Property Services
Contact Officer	Nat Woodside, Grounds & Cemeteries Manager

Is this report restricted for confidential business?	Yes	
If 'Yes', confirm below the exempt information category relied upon	No	X

1.0	Purpose of Report
1.1	This report is to provide an update to members on the administration of burials and Council's operational cemeteries.
2.0	Background
2.1	Members were advised in September 2017 of the ongoing work in the standardisation of the administration of burials in how it's delivered to the public and administered by the Council in its five operational cemeteries.
2.2	This work focused on six main areas as previously agreed by Committee, including the two remaining areas below that are still in progress: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Consideration and harmonisation of existing bye-laws, and B. Standardisation of on-site cemetery policies and processes.
2.3	It was agreed that a further paper be brought to Committee on the existing by-laws and regulations in place in the Cemeteries. To aid harmonisation of burial arrangements it was agreed to explore options to consider the future burial provision in the cemeteries and burial layouts in more detail, including the continue practice of religious division in any future development of the cemeteries.
3.0	Main Report
3.1	<p><i>Consideration and harmonisation of existing bye-laws:</i></p> <p>Existing rules and regulations for the three predecessor Councils have been reviewed. Many aspects of the rules are common across the operational cemeteries. Legal Services advice has been sought in regard to same and are of the opinion that in the absence of a requirement to have bye laws regulating the management of cemeteries, and with no advantage to the Council in doing so, then it would seem appropriate to progressed same by way of rules/policy for approval by council and apply a district wide approach.</p> <p>Attached in Appendix 1 is a draft example of a district wide approach that would cover the operational cemeteries, which also reflects updated industry practice covering a broad range of Cemetery Operations including:</p>

- Cemetery Hours of operation,
- Fees,
- Ownership of Graves,
- Burial Rights,
- How to arrange a burial
- Opening a Plot for Interments,
- Exhumation
- Lawn sections
- Responsibilities of the Grave owner
- Memorials and Monuments,
- Responsibilities of Memorial masons
- Site Behaviour and General Rules

Any changes would have to be considered in practical and operational terms, and would require consultation with key stakeholders (e.g. Church representatives, Funeral Directors, Memorial Stonemasons, etc) to help inform a common set of rules.

3.2 Standardisation of on-site cemetery policies and processes through Burial Provision Options

Forthill Cemetery Options (See appendix 2 for layout)

Option 1 - Status Quo

At present, the cemetery has distinct sections for catholic and protestant burials with four designated areas. This option would be to keep the status quo and continue burials within the current zoning with new burials taking place within the respectful new catholic and new Protestants sections. New religious based zones will be created as required.

Option 2 - Incremental/Partial

Adopt an incremental or partial approach. Continue to develop the existing new protestant (Zone A & B i.e. 222 no. Plots remaining). When the current catholic (Zone F 41no. available plots) is fully utilised create a new catholic section (Zone G 423 no. available plots) on the map. When all sections are used in zone A, B, F and G create a new area (Zone D with 698 no. available plots) where plots are sold in rotation irrespective of religion.

Option 3 - Integrate

Fully integrated Catholic and Protestant burials and develop a section in the cemetery (Zone D with 698no. available plots) where plots are sold in rotation irrespective of religion once plots A and F are used.

Preferred Option - Option 2

Continue the current practice to ensure adequate short to medium term burial provision is made available in the next 2-3 months and move to an integrated with Zone D once either Zone B and G are used. This would provide provision based on current trends for approx. 8 years before moving to Zone D.

Cottagequinn Cemetery (See Appendix 3 for layout)

Option 1 - Status Quo

The cemetery has no religious sub-divisions with all burials carried out in rotation. Currently burials are carried out in (Zones A and B). Within the cemetery, there is a

	<p>garden of remembrance for the burial and or scattering of ashes. This option considers retaining the status quo and current burial practises with burials taking place in rotation irrespective of religious belief.</p> <p>Option 2 - Incremental/Partial This option considers changing practises incrementally within the cemetery to a religious based burial procedure and subsequently creating sections in the cemetery based on religion. This option proposes continuing with current practices and completing (Zones A and B) Once these are fully utilised a new religious based (Zone C) will be sub divided into Catholic and Protestant sections.</p> <p>Option 3 - Full implementation This option considers ceasing current practise sub divided Zones B & C into the respectful religious groupings.</p> <p><i>Preferred Option - Option 1</i> Continue with the Status Quo due to manage current and future burial operations.</p> <p><i>Polepatrick Cemetery (See Appendix 4 for layout)</i></p> <p>Option 1 - Status Quo At present, the cemetery has three distinct areas, Protestant, Catholic and Interdenominational. The option is to keep the status quo and continue with the current zoning within the Cemetery - Protestant (Zone A 125 available plots) Catholic (Zone E & F with 328 available plots) and Interdenominational (Zone G with 36 remaining available plots)</p> <p>Option 2 - Incremental The current practice in the cemetery is that a single grave space is left between each single plot purchased in all sections of the cemetery. This option proposes to use this vacant space and when all the plots are utilised open a new integrated section of cemetery (Zone I with approx. 240 plots) and J (with approx. 210 plots) where plots will be sold in rotation irrespective of religion. This option is subject to ground condition</p> <p>Option 3 - Integrate This option propose to develop a new section in the cemetery, (Zone I and J) these plots will be sold in rotation with no religious zoning this will include any burials that are classified Interdenominational</p> <p><i>Preferred Option – Option 2</i> Infill space will be utilised (Approx. 125 plots in Zone A and 328 plots in Zone B) when completed a new zone I and J will be created with approx. 416 plots. Approx timeframe (based on current trends) until fully intergrated approx.7 years</p>
4.0	Other Considerations
4.1	<p><u>Financial & Human Resources Implications</u></p> <p>Financial: Service budget provision includes with pathway development and plinths across the cemetery</p> <p>Human: Staff in the administration burials and management of cemetery operations.</p>

4.2	<p><u>Equality and Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>Stakeholder consultation on the proposed Cemetery rules and regulations, and longer term physical development in advance of carrying out an Equality Screening and Rural Impact Assessment.</p>
4.3	<p><u>Risk Management Implications</u></p> <p>Short to medium term physical developments on cemetery layouts as detailed in the respective preferred options to ensure continuity of service delivery.</p>
5.0	<u>Recommendation(s)</u>
5.1	<p>Members are requested to note the content of this report and ask to approve the following recommendations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A. Burial Provision/Future Layouts: Proceed with the preferred options in each cemetery to ensure continued short to medium term burial provision. B. Consultation: Undertake stakeholder consultation on the draft rules and regulations to incorporate into a policy for Council approval, including consultation on the longer term burial layouts and provision in each cemetery.
6.0	<u>Documents Attached & References</u>
6.1	Appendix 1 – Draft Cemeteries Rules and Regulations Booklet
6.2	Appendix 2 – Block plan layout of Forthill Cemetery, Cookstown
6.3	Appendix 3 – Block plan layout of Polepatrick Cemetery, Magherafelt
6.4	Appendix 4 - Block plan layout of Cottagequinn Cemetery, Dungannon