

Agenda Item No: 9 **Report No:** 91/14
Report Title: Future Provision of burial space in cemeteries within the District
Report To: Scrutiny Committee **Date:** 26 June 2014
Cabinet Member: Cllr Ron Maskell
Ward(s) Affected: All
Report By: Director of Service Delivery
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Purpose of Report:

At a previous Scrutiny Committee, Officers were requested to circulate an update on the provision of burial space in cemeteries within the district to members of the Scrutiny Committee.

Officers Recommendation(s):

- 1 To note this update report on cemetery provision within the district.
 - 2 To agree whether any further research is required into how other District / Parishes are dealing with the issue of burial space.
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Reasons for Recommendations

- 1 At a previous meeting, the Scrutiny Committee requested that an update report be brought to a future meeting.

Information

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- 2.1 The provision of cemeteries by district councils is a statutory power, not a duty. The District Council does not have a duty to provide any cemeteries within its area.
- 2.2 The Council inherited Seaford and Lewes Cemeteries at the time of its inception in 1974. Previous research in the 1990s into the need for additional cemetery land led to the purchase of land for the extension of

Seaford Cemetery but no land has been identified for additional cemetery space in Lewes or elsewhere in the District.

- 2.3 As of 13th May 2014, Lewes Cemetery has an estimated 35 grave spaces and 56 dedicated Ashes Plots that are not currently purchased. In addition, there are likely to be available spaces for burials/ashes interments amongst the grave spaces/ashes plots already purchased but not as yet used.
- 2.4 It is estimated that in Lewes Cemetery there are enough burial plots to last a further 18 months and ashes plots to last for 2 years.
- 2.5 Actual burials/interments will continue for many years to come because of pre-purchased plots. A Deed of Grant is often purchased well in advance of use, not just when a burial is required. Families from time to time may also purchase several adjoining Grave Spaces. This means that the Purchase of a Deed of Grant is not necessarily an indication of the numbers of interments that are taking place and makes it extremely difficult to calculate future demand. It also means that Grave Spaces may remain allocated but unused for many years.
- 2.6 The Lewes cemetery is completely landlocked without any potential for extension.
- 2.7 Seaford Cemetery has an identified provision for approximately a further 10-15 years based on current purchases. A new Muslim burial area has also recently been developed.
- 2.8 Within Seaford Cemetery there is provision for grave spaces as well as separate plots within a dedicated Garden of Rest specifically for Ashes Interments where small tablets can be erected as a lasting memorial.
- 2.9 There is potential for an additional extension of the Seaford Cemetery, subject to Planning Permission, into land adjacent to the current extension that is also owned by LDC. This would extend the capacity by up to 20 years.
- 2.10 Development costs for the further extension in terms of landscaping, access, fencing etc are in the region of £200,000 at the current time for which Cabinet would need to identify funding. This investment would be offset partially by income generated in the future period of use. A detailed business case would need to be undertaken to ascertain the potential payback period.

St.Anne's School Site

- 2.11 A possible option to increase the lifespan at Lewes Cemetery by using land at the adjacent to the cemetery was considered in 2013. The proposal was to lease the land adjacent which was part of the former St.Anne's School. This was subject to a successful bid from the Sussex Central YMCA to ESCC to purchase the overall site.

- 2.12** This option would have been more cost effective as the Chapel, toilet facilities and water supply would have been available to use in the adjacent cemetery.
- 2.13** This would have been in partnership with the Sussex Central YMCA who put in a bid to purchase the entire site. They proposed to use part of the site for an under 5's nursery, sports hall, community facilities, a small café and to discuss further community uses with 3VA, along with social housing dedicated to the needs of young people. Part of this land is an area that adjoins the existing cemetery which was not required by the Sussex Central YMCA, but could have been used for additional cemetery space.
- 2.14** It was agreed by the Nexus Board that this proposal should be researched further, but unfortunately the bid by the Sussex Central YMCA to purchase the site was not successful and the project could not be progressed further.

Future Burial Provision

- 2.15** No other suitable LDC land has been identified as a possible extension to Lewes Cemetery.
- 2.16** Lewes Cemetery will run out of space very soon and Lewes residents may have to use an alternative burial ground, such as Newhaven or Seaford if they wished to be buried or their ashes interred. There would still be a requirement to maintain Lewes Cemetery, and to keep it "open" whilst burials are still taking place in pre-purchased plots.
- 2.17** Seaford Cemetery and Newhaven Cemetery (owned by Newhaven Town Council) still have capacity for burials / ashes internments for an estimated 10 – 15 years.
- 2.18** It is estimated that approximately 80% of all deaths are disposed of through cremation.
- 2.19** Some people are buried outside the district and likewise those who have died elsewhere may elect to be buried within the district due to historical/family ties.
- 2.20** A significant number of cremated remains (ashes) are disposed of other than through interment in a cemetery and some may be retained or scattered.

General Information

- 2.21** The provision of cemeteries by district councils is a statutory power, not a duty. The District Council does not have a duty to provide any cemeteries within its area.
- 2.22** Anyone can purchase a grave space. However, this does not confer ownership of the land. The purchaser is effectively acquiring an "Exclusive Right of Burial". The purchaser is referred to as "The Deed of

Grant Holder" and is the only person who can thereafter authorise the use of the grave space and any memorial. These grants are purchased for a period of 50 years for burial plots and 10 years for ashes interments and may be well in advance of any burial taking place.

- 2.23** The fees and charges for Cemetery Services are set in line with the policy approved by Cabinet in January 2009 of setting fees and charges within the upper quartile range when compared with other local authorities.
- 2.24** The re-use of graves is not permitted by law, except in London.
- 2.25** The Council could decide not to provide additional cemetery land within the district once present land is exhausted. This would offer some financial savings but the ongoing cost of existing cemeteries would then not be offset by income.
- 2.26** The numbers of burials and ashes interments over the past 3 years are as follows:

2011/2012		Ashes	Burials
	Seaford	42	25
	Lewes	26	25
2012/2013	Seaford	34	33
	Lewes	24	18
2013/2014	Seaford	27	33
	Lewes	22	29

Financial Appraisal

- 3** During the period 2013/14 the following income was generated from the Lewes District Council cemeteries:

Lewes: £58,764

Seaford: £64,678

This income is from burial fees, purchase of Deed of Grants, Memorial Permits etc.

Legal Implications

- 4** None

Sustainability Implications

- 5** I have not completed the Sustainability Implications Questionnaire as this Report is exempt from the requirement because it is an update report.

Risk Management Implications

- 6** There are no risk management implications arising directly from this report as it is an update report and no officer recommendations have been made.

Further risk assessments may be required depending on what, if any, actions are requested following this report.

Equality Screening

- 7** I have completed the initial Equality Impact Assessment screening exercise and have identified no negative impacts arising from this Report. Therefore, a full Equality Impact Assessment is not required.

Appendices

- 8** None.