



**Lewes District Council**

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**MINUTE EXTRACT**

**Cabinet – 23 April 2008**

**228 Scrutiny Review of Future Provision of Land for Cemeteries**

The Cabinet considered Report No 68/08 relating to a Scrutiny Review which had been undertaken in respect of the future provision of land for cemeteries.

At its meeting in January 2007, the Scrutiny Committee had considered the Council's Budgets and Capital Programmes for 2007/08. At that time, attention had been drawn, within the portfolio of the Lead Councillor for Community, to there being only sufficient plots for limited further use at Lewes Cemetery and that there was no land earmarked for future use. The Committee had agreed to place that subject on its Work Programme which was subsequently approved by the Council on 26 September 2007.

At its meeting on 29 August 2007, the Scrutiny Committee had accepted the Remit for the Review, a copy of which was set out at Appendix 1 to the Report. The Committee had also agreed to undertake the Review with a timescale which ended in March 2008. The Group Leaders had agreed to the Committee's request that the Review be undertaken by the full Committee rather than a Panel thereof.

The Committee had met on four occasions between August 2007 and February 2008 and had followed the internal document 'Good Practice for Reviews', examined the Council's and other councils' policies, reviewed relevant literature and surveyed funeral professionals and neighbouring councils.

Paragraphs 4 to 10 of the Report set out details of the baseline information in respect of the Review and paragraphs 11 to 22 detailed the findings of the investigative research which had been undertaken. The italicised headings were in accordance with those of the Remit.

The Committee had concluded that there were sufficient spaces for the interment of bodies for perhaps 6 years and of ashes for perhaps 3 years at Lewes Cemetery and for the interment of bodies and ashes for perhaps 10 to 20 years at Seaford Cemetery.

District Councils had a statutory power, rather than a duty, to provide cemeteries. The Committee had therefore suggested there was a case that local provision could be made by town and parish councils, or other interest groups, to deal with the demand for burials in view of strong local connections.

The Committee also suggested that any land which was identified by residents, town and parish councils, landowners and commercial concerns, should be reviewed and considered against the suggested planning criteria relating to new sites, details of which were set out at Appendix 5 of the Report, in the context of the Lewes District Local Plan and the emerging Local Development Framework.

The Committee further suggested that the Council could decide not to provide additional cemetery land within the District once the existing land was exhausted. Such action would offer some financial savings but the ongoing cost of existing cemeteries would then not be offset by income. Therefore, further detailed analysis of that option would be necessary.

Councillor E E J Russell, Chair of the Scrutiny Committee, attended the meeting and answered councillors' questions in respect of the Report.

Resolved:

- 228.1** That, with regard to Report No 68/08, the Council continue to manage the existing cemeteries in Lewes and Seaford in the absence of any other viable option;
- 228.2** That to maximise the use of available land in Lewes and Seaford cemeteries, the following measures be implemented:
- Each grave space is excavated to enable three interments to take place if that is practicable;
  - All grave spaces that have been sold in perpetuity but which currently contain no interments be investigated to see if the purchasers, or their successors, still want to retain their rights over the grave space;
  - People living outside the District be not allowed to pre purchase a grave space unless they can show strong reasons why they have a continuing local association that would justify their expectation of burial within the District;

- People who are resident outside the District at the time of their death be not accepted for burial in a cemetery operated by the Council unless there are strong reasons that show a continuing local association with the District; and
- Rights of burial continue to be granted for a period not exceeding 50 years;

**228.3** That the Council considers the costs and benefits of the potential extension to Seaford Cemetery as highlighted in paragraphs 12 and 15 of the Report;

**228.4** That the Council considers offering assistance to residents, town and parish councils, churches and other interest groups including commercial concerns, either individually or in partnerships, who may be able to make future cemetery provision in their localities;

**228.5** That any land identified for cemetery provision be considered for allocation in the emerging Local Development Framework against planning criteria such as those set out at Appendix 5 to the Report; and

**228.6** That the Council makes provision for the costs of maintenance at Lewes and Seaford Cemeteries once space is exhausted and there is no fee income.

Reason for the Decisions:

To address the issue of the future provision of land for cemeteries.