

**FALKIRK COUNCIL**

**Subject: BEREAVEMENT SERVICES – POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL**  
**Meeting: EXECUTIVE**  
**Date: 18 March 2014**  
**Author: DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES**

**1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. This report advises the Executive of the process and outcomes of the Policy Development Panel established to review Bereavement Services. The recommendations of the Panel are attached to this report as appendix one.

**2. BACKGROUND AND PROCESS**

- 2.1. The Policy Development Panel was established in September 2013. It had its initial scoping meeting at the end of September establishing a fairly ambitious programme of review work.
- 2.2. The scope of the policy development panel is to:-
- 2.3. *'Ensure the Bereavement Services available within the Falkirk Council area are fit for purpose, meet customer needs and have appropriate standards for the short, medium and longer term.'*
- 2.4. The policy development Panel consisted of Cllr Dr Craig R Martin (Chair) and Cllr Allyson Black.
- 2.5. At the first scoping meeting the Service provided a pack to Members of the Panel setting out some background information. This allowed the Panel to think about what they want to cover to ensure they fulfilled their remit and also what evidence they wanted to hear in the course of their business. This scoping meeting was held in private and determined how the panel would do its business. The following programme was then developed.
- 2.6. First meeting of the Panel took the form of a visit to the main cemeteries and Crematorium. The main purpose of this was to examine a number of issues including:
- Memorial headstones e.g. height
  - Tree planting/structures within lairs etc.
  - Muslim and other non-Christian faith burials
  - Tributes
  - Condition of benches
  - Crematorium services
- 2.7. The Panel then asked the Service to prepare three papers covering a number of issues. These papers covered the following information:

- A review of the issues raised by the visits
- Our current provision and standards
- Proposed changes in policy, standards and operations
- Cemetery capacity and on going developments to increase provision
- Proposals to manage cemetery capacity including a review of the temporary policy regarding advance lair purchase
- Crematorium improvements including some policy principles relating to charging.

2.8. The Panel considered areas it might want to take forward with a range of external organisations. It was agreed that in order to progress it was important to hear the views from a range of external organisations. In order to this a meeting was organised and the following organisations invited. A meeting was held in January with a representatives from the follow organisations:

- Churches
- Mosque
- Funeral Services
- Third Sector bereavement services

2.9. Organisations were invited to attend the meeting of the Panel in January and were provided with papers in advance. A copy of the papers sent out to invitees is attached as appendix 2A, 2B, 2C and 2D.

2.10. Invitees were also asked to advise the Panel if they wanted to make a representation or provide written evidence. The meeting itself went through the reports and recommendations contained therein and asked for comments on each issue. This discussion led to some helpful and constructive input into the final recommendations. This evidence provided at that meeting is set out in appendix 3 of this report.

2.11. In addition evidence was received on a variety of issues not contained within the report.

2.12. The Panel then met in private to consider the evidence they heard and consider their recommendations. These are now presented to the Executive for approval at appendix one.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

3.1. This Policy Development Panel is one of the first to report. It met on four occasions and had a site visit to understand the issues the Executive asked them to consider. In addition to getting evidence from officers, the Panel took the opportunity to have wider engagement with interested parties. This event alone was welcomed by those who were invited and found to be positive and constructive. It is hoped that by having this wider input the recommendations of the Panel are more sustainable and will have a wider support.

#### **4. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1. It is recommended that the Executive:
- 4.2. Note the work of the Panel:
- 4.3. Note the views and evidence provided to the Panel by external witnesses;
- 4.4. Approve the recommendations set out in appendix one including:
  - 4.4.1. Cessation of advance lair purchase except in specific circumstances as noted in para 3.1 of appendix one;
  - 4.4.2. Changes in cemetery regulations including interim measures prior to the new regulations being revised and presented back to the Executive for final approval;
  - 4.4.3. Changes in the operational arrangements in the crematorium; and
- 4.5. Ask officers to bring back an update and progress report in the autumn.

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**DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE & NEIGHBOURHOOD**

Date: 18 February 2014  
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#### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

- 1. Papers presented to the Policy Development Panel and report to Council in June 2013.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone Falkirk 01324 501107 and ask for David Crighton, Estates Manager.