

Councillor Gow joined the meeting during consideration of the foregoing item.

EX134. POLICY DEVELOPMENT PANEL – BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

The Executive considered a report by the Director of Corporate and Neighbourhood Services setting out the key findings and recommendations of the policy development panel review of bereavement services.

The terms of reference for the panel were to consider the Council's long term approach to the provision of cemetery space and other policies covering the Council's cemeteries and crematoria and to ensure that the Council's bereavement services were fit for purpose, met customer needs and had appropriate standards for the short, medium and longer term.

The report outlined the work of the panel and the input from stakeholders and included a summary of recommendations for consideration by the Executive.

Councillor Dr Martin presented the findings of the panel.

The Executive discussed the panel's recommendations and the work of the panel was commended. However, the following observations were made:-

- the views of bereaved persons with regard to the proposals were important and there should accordingly be public consultation on the panel's findings.
- there had to be flexibility within any policies and rules to recognise the views of bereaved persons.
- it was not practical to set a consistent maximum number of interments per grave across all cemeteries as the number would depend on variables including ground conditions.
- the Council's policies in regard to bereavement services had been in place for a number of years and it was likely that, in some cases, practice had developed which did not reflect the original policy. A review of all policies was therefore required.
- the proposal to ensure consistency in the material used for headstones was considered to be too rigid and it was suggested that the choice of material should be left to personal preference.
- while the health and safety risk of falling headstones was acknowledged, it was suggested that a limit in the size of headstones would not necessarily address those concerns, and that appropriate maintenance of all gravestones would have greater benefit.
- the length of services and the opening hours of the crematorium should be reviewed.

Councillor C Martin, seconded by Councillor Nicol, moved that the Executive:-

- (1) notes the recommendations of the policy development panel set out in appendix 1 to the report and agrees to consult on them with the residents of Falkirk and relevant counselling groups; and
- (2) requests a report on the outcome of the consultation exercise and on the issues raised with regard to the maintenance of headstones.

Decision.

The Executive agreed the motion.