



Executive
18 October 2010

**Report from the Director of
Environment and Culture**

Ward(s) Affected:
Alperton

Petition Against Reduced Staffing Levels at Alperton Cemetery

1.0 Summary

- 1.1 This report informs the Executive of a petition that was received from residents against the reduction of staffing levels at Alperton cemetery. They have concerns that the level of maintenance of the cemetery will reduce. The petition also states that visitors felt safe when staff were present and that already a noticeable difference in security issues has arisen.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 That the Executive note the contents of the petition received concerning the security issues and levels of maintenance.
- 2.2 That the Executive note the current status of security concerned.
- 2.3 That the Executive note information on why the changes of service have occurred.
- 2.4 That the Executive does not support the reinstatement of staffing levels at the present time and officers will provide a further report after the new arrangements have been in operation for 12 months.

3.0 Petition

- 3.1 A petition has been received from residents. The petition is headed "Petition Alperton Cemetery, Brent Council has recently decided to move the workmen from Alperton Cemetery to another site. As visitors to the cemetery we would like to strongly object to this decision as we are very concerned about the maintenance of the grounds which is suffering and our safety. Many of us, some

only recently bereaved visit the cemetery alone and have felt safe knowing the staff were always nearby, now we feel vulnerable and often intimidated by groups of youths that have started loitering around the cemetery. Please reconsider this decision and bring the staff back to Alperton, the cemetery of the year 2007 which we are all very proud of”.

- 3.2 The petition has been verified as containing the signatures of at least fifty persons on the Borough’s electoral register and hence requiring the consideration of the relevant Committee,

4.0 Details

- 4.1 Alperton Cemetery was declared full to new burials in March 2010. With this in mind, as part of the Councils recent restructuring and reduction in layers of management, the decision was made to reduce the number of team leaders in the Cemetery Service and to manage the grounds maintenance aspect of Alperton Cemetery via a mobile team based at Willesden New Cemetery. This new working arrangement was introduced from April 6th 2010.
- 4.2 In April 2010, a decision was made to make further savings by reducing a further 250 posts across the council. As part of this process, the decision was made to disband the Cemetery and Mortuary service with effect from the 13th September 2010 with the grave digging and grounds maintenance element of the work transferring to the Parks Service. Linked to this, the office based cemetery staff moved from the Alperton Cemetery office to Brent House in September. This is consistent with the Councils policy of reducing the number of buildings and offices the council operates around the Borough.
- 4.5 The Parks Service is better resourced to support the mobile gang and standards of maintenance should improve under these new arrangements. The Parks Service has a good record of producing outstanding horticultural practice and Alperton cemetery will be able to benefit from that experience.
- 4.6 There has not been any reports of incidents that would cause concern to visitors but with the introduction of the new arrangements in September the Parks Warden service now visit Alperton Cemetery to add to the visits made by the Metropolitan Police Neighbourhood team and the Councils contracted security team, who are responsible for locking and unlocking the gates. The smaller gates to Alperton cemetery will, in future, also be locked at the appropriate time rather than being left unlocked.
- 4.7 In summary, officers believe that cemeteries grounds maintenance will improve under the new arrangements with the Parks Service able to offer additional support and experienced staff. Additional visits by the Park Wardens will alleviate any fears of undesirable behaviour in the cemetery
- 4.8 The area concerned has not been highlighted through information from the Borough Intelligence Unit at Wembley Police Station as a high crime area. There will be continued monitoring and any issues reported back. In addition, a

telephone contact number is displayed on the cemetery notice board for members of the public to report any concerns.

- 4.9 Officers recommend that a review be conducted during 2011 of service provision to Alpertown and Willesden Cemeteries once the new arrangements with the Parks Service have bedded down. Officers will bring back any recommendations to a future Executive meeting.

6.0 Financial Implications

- 6.1 If a permanent staff team were to be reinstated at Alpertown Cemetery it would cost £33,904. There is no revenue budget currently identified for this.

7.0 Legal Implications

- 7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations of this Report

8.0 Environmental Implications

- 8.1 There are no environmental implications arising from the recommendations of this Report.

9.0 Staffing/Accommodation Implications (if appropriate)

- 9.1. This is covered in the main body of the report.

Background Papers

None

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