



Audit Advisory Committee
5 December 2017

Report from the Chief Finance Officer

Paddington Cemetery Groundworks

Wards Affected:	N/A
Key or Non-Key Decision:	N/A
Open or Part/Fully Exempt: (If exempt, please highlight relevant paragraph of Part 1, Schedule 12A of 1972 Local Government Act)	Not for Publication: Appendix A of this report is not for publication as it contains the following category of exempt information as specified in Paragraph 3, Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, namely: "Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)"
No. of Appendices:	One
Background Papers:	None
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Reason for Urgency

There is significant public concern about the discovery of asbestos contamination at Paddington Cemetery. This report provides some reassurance to the public and members about the actions being taken by the Council.

1.0 Purpose of the Report

1.1 The purpose of this report is to set out the findings from an investigation into the circumstances for procuring works to conduct landscaping work at Paddington Cemetery in 2010; specifically whether works were adequately specified and signed off as required.

2.0 Recommendation

2.1 That the Audit Advisory Committee notes the report and considers what further work may be necessary

3.0 Detail

- 3.1 This review was undertaken following concerns raised by a Councillor in an email dated 10th November 2017. The email raised concerns about contaminated waste discovered in Paddington Cemetery.
- 3.2 The Audit review report concludes that procurement procedures within the Cemeteries service were inadequate at the time that work was undertaken at the cemetery. The Audit report and recommends that management ensure that procedures within the Cemeteries team to procure contractors and approve goods/services are urgently reviewed to ensure they meet the Council's expectations and that management consider the recommendations in from consultants' to proportionately mitigate the soil contamination identified.
- 3.3 The report and its findings have been welcomed by management whose response includes:

“The report concludes that procurement procedures within the Cemeteries service were inadequate at the time that work was undertaken and recommends that management ensure that procedures within the Cemeteries team to procure contractors and approve goods/services are urgently reviewed to ensure they meet the Council's expectations and that management consider the recommendations in from consultants' to proportionately mitigate the soil contamination identified.

The report and its findings have been welcomed by management who have agreed to work to ensure that any deficiencies in the council's protocols or processes that may still apply are remedied as a matter of great urgency. The council cemetery operation is now much changed and is out-sourced. It is anticipated that any deficiencies that led to this contamination are now no longer relevant and/or could no longer happen.

Most importantly, the council has an obligation to give customers complete reassurance that the site can continue to be visited without concern and that it is properly remediated. That is our commitment going forward. The advice to date is that the contamination is very low risk and can be properly contained.

Work to make that happen is underway. A final report is due that will set out options for the council to cleanse the site. We have also appointed specialist contractors to undertake burials at graves that have previously been used. That satisfies a particular commitment to families wishing to have relatives buried together.”

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 The final decision on regularising the land at the cemetery will consider costs against potential revenue.

5.0 Legal Implications

5.1 The Chief Legal Officer has been consulted on the preparation of the report.

6.0 Equality Implication

6.1 None.

7.0 Consultation with Ward Members and Stakeholders

7.1 None.

8.0 Human Resources/Property Implications (if appropriate)

8.1 None.

Report sign off:

Conrad Hall
Chief Finance Officer