

Item No. 13.	Classification: Open	Date: 20 October 2015	Meeting Name: Cabinet
Report title:		Response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee recommendations on Southwark's Cemetery Strategy	
Ward(s) or groups affected:		All	
Cabinet Member:		Councillor Darren Merrill, Environment and the Public Realm	

FOREWORD – COUNCILLOR DARREN MERRILL, CABINET MEMBER FOR ENVIRONMENT AND THE PUBLIC REALM

I thank the overview and scrutiny committee for looking into recommendations into Southwark's Cemetery Strategy agreed in 2012. Below are the responses to the recommendations made by overview and scrutiny committee:

- As set out in the Cemetery Strategy it is important for many parts of our community that Southwark continues to provide a burial service. We have worked on our plans to bring forward area Z D1 and B so that we are able to provide this service in a way that also protects the environment and enhances bio diversity
- Bringing forward the re-use element of the strategy is a key recommendation and once this work has been completed we will then be able to look into its impact. This will determine if other areas need to remain within the strategy in order to maintain the sustainability of the strategy in the long term.
- We will continue to work with Stakeholder groups and friends through out this process.

I wish to thank everyone for their input into the plans to date, and I look forward to working with you in the future.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That cabinet agrees to the proposed response to Overview and Scrutiny Committee's recommendations on Southwark's Cemetery Strategy.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

2. Southwark's Cemetery Strategy was brought before the overview and scrutiny committee on 17 September 2015.
3. Committee members made a number of recommendations which have been presented to cabinet for consideration on the 20th October.
4. This report therefore provides a proposed response to the recommendations to be approved by cabinet.

KEY ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

Recommendation 1: That the cabinet should support the development of D1, Z and B but freeze all other developments until a full report on reuse throughout both cemeteries is reviewed by the Cabinet, ideally by January 2016.

Proposed response:

5. Cabinet agrees to support the developments of D1, Z and B but freeze all other developments until a full report on reuse throughout both cemeteries is reviewed by cabinet.
6. In order to produce a full report on re-use strategy, it will be necessary to obtain technical support to do a full analysis of the feasibility of re-use across the cemeteries and of the timing of bringing re-use into effect, so that the impact of this on whether other areas need to remain within the strategy in order to maintain the sustainability of the burial strategy in the long term.
7. Officers have looked at the quickest possible timetable taking into account the need for procurement processes to be followed and the technical nature of the work, and consider that a report could be brought to cabinet in April 2016.
8. Cabinet should note that implementation of a re-use approach would have a significant lead-in time; faculty application from May-June 2016, and grave rights extinguished from May-Oct 2016.

Recommendation 2: That Honor Oak Rec, site H1 (and the land between H1 and Z), and sites J,K and L are removed from the Cemetery Strategy and are maintained and improved as a recreation ground and play area (in the case of Honor Oak Rec), as a meadow in the case of H1 (and the land between H1 and Z) and as a woodland (in the case of J, K and L).

Proposed response:

9. Cabinet notes that the removal of areas H1, H2 and J,K and L from the cemetery strategy to would lead to overall reduction of 3440 plots. Therefore the cabinet will not consider the removal of these sites, from the cemetery strategy until a full report of the possibility on re-use has been reviewed in April 2016.
10. Cabinet also notes that in the past, not all areas of Camberwell Old and New Cemeteries have been managed actively. Although these are cemetery sites, it is recommended that sites J, K and L should be managed in accordance with Forestry Commission guidelines using techniques such as coppicing. These standards will ensure that the health of mature trees in these areas and will promote biodiversity.

Recommendation 3: That the use of site Z be conditioned so that only small flat markers can be used and the area maintained as a meadow.

Proposed response:

11. Cabinet agrees to consider this recommendation along with information from Southwark's memorialization survey of funeral directors, which will be supplied at the end of October. This survey is intended to gauge the needs and wishes of

residents who desire burial, so that appropriate memorialization can be provided as part of our burial service.

Recommendation 4: That the use of site D1 be conditioned so that only small flat markers can be used and the area maintained as a meadow.

Proposed response:

12. Cabinet notes that planning approval for D1 contains a condition that headstones are suitable to maintain the feeling of openness of the glade.

Proposed response:

13. Cabinet agrees to consider this recommendation as one of the options for memorialization in area D1 that will not interfere with the openness of the glade, in addition to information supplied by the Southwark's memorialization survey of funeral directors, which will be supplied at the end of October.

Recommendation 5: That the council engage with stakeholders about the future of retaining or not retaining the internal fence at site Z once works are complete (if planning is granted).

Proposed response:

14. Cabinet agrees that officers should continue to consult with stakeholders over the layout and design of area Z, including the internal fence that provides protection for shrubbery on the boundary of the site.

Recommendation 6: That the designers look again at the new footpath proposed at site D1 to see whether sections can be narrowed to prevent tree loss.

Proposed response:

15. Cabinet cannot agree to accept this recommendation as the plans for area D1 have already been developed in conjunction with the London Wildlife Trust and a further review would be unnecessary.

Recommendation 7: That the time frame for site B is made clear to stakeholders.

Proposed response:

16. Cabinet agrees that officers should continue to consult with stakeholder and make clear the time frame for site B as and when this information is available.

Recommendation 8: That the council swiftly support the emerging Friends of Camberwell Old and New Cemeteries so that they become a properly constituted 'friends' group.

Proposed response:

17. Cabinet notes that the council has already been offering support to 'friends' groups as they emerge and recommends that this continues.

Recommendation 9: That the council retains the stakeholders group meeting for as long as the interested parties wish for it to continue.

Proposed response:

18. Cabinet support the recommendation to retain the existing stakeholder group which has already helped inform the designs of area's Z and D1, leading to the retention of more trees.

Community impact statement

General guidance

19. In 2012 an equalities impact assessment of the cemetery strategy found that the implementation of the strategy would not benefit our disadvantage BME groups. However, it also found that if this service were to cease it would disadvantage BME groups for whom burial is an important cultural tradition.
20. The 2012 equalities impact assessment also found that the strategy is likely to benefit some religious or faith groups for whom burial is the only option. Therefore the strategy supports equality of choice and the freedom to practice religion. The implementation of the strategy will not disadvantage other groups and is not likely to lead to worsening tensions between communities.
21. Additionally, if the cemetery strategy were to cease then this would have a negative impact on groups for whom travel is an issues, such as those physically impaired by disability or age.
22. The burial strategy by ensuring burial remains a choice for residents supports Article 9: Freedom of thought, conscience and religion. (Human Rights Act, 1998).

Resource implications

23. All recommendations made by the cabinet member in this report reference actions already budgeted in Southwark's Cemetery Strategy for which capital funding has already been allocated. Therefore, there is no funding implication of supporting these recommendations.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

Background Papers	Held At	Contact
Southwark Cemetery Strategy	Parks and Open Spaces Southwark Council 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Rebecca Towers 0207 525 0771
http://www.southwark.gov.uk/downloads/download/3046/cemetery_strategies		
Southwark Cemetery Strategy: recommendations from Overview & Scrutiny (Item 12 of this agenda)	Overview and Scrutiny Southwark Council 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Shelley Burke 0207 525 7344
Cabinet Report: Future of Southwark Cemeteries	Parks and Open Spaces Southwark Council 160 Tooley Street London SE1 2QH	Rebecca Towers 0207 525 0771
http://moderngov.southwark.gov.uk/mgAi.aspx?ID=21262#mgDocuments		

APPENDICES

No.	Title
None	

AUDIT TRAIL

Cabinet Member	Councillor Darren Merrill, Environment and the Public Realm	
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