

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 14<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2001

#### CEMETERY PROGRESS REPORT

##### Report by the Director of Community Services

### 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update the Committee on progress on various issues related to Cemetery Safety.

### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of the Community Services Committee on 19<sup>th</sup> September 2001 it was agreed that a site visit would be organised to consider headstone safety issues and it was further agreed to introduce a Memorial Masons Registration Scheme.
- 2.2 At the site visit members were able to observe various headstones and the type of stability test that is required, the different methods of making safe headstones, and the various means of warning the public of potential dangers.
- 2.3 The Memorial Masons Registrations Scheme is now being considered in conjunction with the Councils Legal Section and will be introduced in due course.
- 2.4 The contract for cemetery safety works has now been advertised and the returned tenders have been evaluated. The implications of this evaluation and an alternative method of carrying out this important work are included in this report.

### 3. CONSIDERATIONS

#### 3.1 Headstone Safety

Further to the site visit and the discussions that took place during the visit the following approach to headstone testing and safety is considered the most appropriate for East Ayrshire Council:-

- a) An ongoing programme of inspections including all cemeteries and headstones which are East Ayrshire Council's responsibility will be established and widely publicised.
- b) Tests will be carried out using the nationally recognised procedures, in conjunction with the topple tester device.
- c) Any headstone or memorial identified as potentially dangerous will be clearly identified by either – a notice in close proximity or on the memorial, or yellow/black warning tapes, or yellow/black bag (for no more than 5 days).

- d) Where possible and where there appears to be no immediate danger to cemetery users the last known lair holder will be informed that their property needs to be made safe. Failure to take appropriate action could result in the Council seeking to recover any costs incurred from the lair holder.
- e) Any memorials identified as dangerous will be made safe in one of the following ways – laying flat (this may only be necessary for larger memorials) or attaching the memorial to a supporting stake using pallet ties or stripping and re-erecting memorials to approved standards. (This third option would be cost prohibitive for the Council, however individual lair holders could have this work carried out by a memorial mason registered with the Council).

### 3.2 Memorial Inspection and Safety Contract

Several companies, including Memorial Masons, Surveyors and Building Companies, submitted tenders for inspection and safety works in East Ayrshire Cemeteries. Tender evaluation by Officers from Housing and Technical Services and Community Services identified that it would not be possible to achieve all the work required within the timescale available and the allocated resources. The various options available were then reviewed and an alternative proposal, based on the use of existing capital and revenue resources was developed to ensure that this urgent issue could be addressed timeously and without the need for significant additional resources.

The alternative proposal involves utilising the capital allocation for 2001/02 to purchase the inspection and monitoring equipment and tools necessary to carry out the work and creating within Outdoor Amenities section an in-house team of three employees capable of carrying out inspection, testing and essential safety works. The in-house team could also deal with urgent safety issues arising in any cemetery. This approach would ensure that the Council meets its health and safety responsibilities in the most cost effective way, without detrimental effects on the existing service. The ongoing costs of this team would be met from existing revenue budgets.

## 4. **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 Establishing an in-house cemetery safety team would require no additional resources. Capital expenditure in 2001/02 would amount to £ 30,000.

## 5. **POLICY/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 The Council has a duty under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 to ensure the safety of persons visiting or working in its cemeteries.

## 6. **CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 Following discussions at the last Committee meeting and at the site visit an appropriate response to the sensitive issue of memorial safety which can be

achieved utilising existing resources has been developed and is presented for consideration in this report. Whilst alternative options are possible most would require significant resources or result in delays in implementing the inspection/safety programme.

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:-

- i) approve the approach to memorial testing and safety regime detailed in 3.1 above;
- ii) approve the establishing of an in-house memorial safety team;
- iii) note the current status of the Memorial Mason Registration Scheme; and
- iv) otherwise note the contents of the report.

William Stafford  
Director of Community Services

WS/JAG/SAM  
23<sup>rd</sup> October 2001

### **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

1. Draft Registration Scheme document
2. Memorial Safety Inspection/Survey Document
3. I.B.C.A. Journal
4. Cemetery Safety Report to Community Services Committee – 7<sup>th</sup> Feb 2001
5. Tender Evaluation document

Anyone wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should contact Bob McCulloch, Outdoor Amenities Manager on 01563 554066.

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**AGENDA**