

## EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

### COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE – 19<sup>TH</sup> SEPTEMBER 2001

#### CEMETERY PROGRESS REPORT

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

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To update members on the progress of the following;
- (i) A Memorial Mason Registration Scheme.
  - (ii) The Tendering process of the Safety Inspection/Survey of Headstones.

## 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 At the meeting of this Committee held on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2001, Members agreed to remit to the Director of Community Services to implement a safety inspection/survey programme of headstones in cemeteries and churchyards throughout East Ayrshire.

## 3. CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 Unsafe headstones have in the past been the cause of a number of accidents and deaths at different cemeteries throughout Britain. The most recent being a young child in a Harrogate cemetery. Many of the problems regarding the safety of headstones in cemeteries can be attributed to poor foundations and unsatisfactory fixing methods.
- 3.2 It is therefore proposed that the Council introduce a Memorial Masons Registration Scheme for all those Memorial Masons that may wish to carry out work in an East Ayrshire Council cemetery or churchyard. This scheme would regulate all work and working hours of those Memorial Masons that wish to work in our cemeteries.
- 3.3 The registration document would also clearly detail specification for foundations and fixing methods and anyone not registered to the scheme will not be allowed to work within a cemetery or churchyard which is maintained by East Ayrshire Council. Anyone failing to meet the standards or specifications set out in the scheme may be subject to the default clause, which would effectively ban a memorial mason from working in East Ayrshire Cemetery and Churchyard.
- 3.4 Memorial Masons were consulted on the introduction of a scheme and two replies were received. The Institute of Burial and Cremation Association (I.B.C.A.) and National Association of Memorial Masons (N.A.M.M) were also consulted.
- 3.5 Having looked at a number of schemes and taken advice from the I.B.C.A. and the N.A.M.M. A tender document for the safety inspection/survey is now in place and has been delivered to interested companies. A charge to join this scheme will be made to cover administration costs and the initial charge will be £100 per annum.
- 3.6 Officers from the Outdoor Amenities Section have been trained in the safe inspection of headstones and memorials by a N.A.M.M. Technical Officer. All headstones that fail the inspection shall be clearly marked by a yellow bag giving a telephone number

for the public or concerned persons to call. Every effort shall then be made to contact the owner of the headstone, however should the Council fail to contact the owner, the headstone shall be made safe by laying flat. It is anticipated that due to the age and condition of many of the headstones in our cemeteries, that a large number of them shall be required to be made safe by laying flat.

- 3.7 All dangerous headstones identified as priority one through the inspection procedures as being “dangerous” will be laid flat immediately, using appropriate methods.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 A Capital sum of £30,000.00 has been set aside for the inspection/survey of headstones. Where possible the cost of making safe a headstone shall be recovered from the owner of the headstone. Any additional funding requirement will be brought to this Committee in due course.

#### **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 those using or working in our cemeteries.

#### **6. CONCLUSIONS**

- 6.1 The implementation of a safety inspection/survey of headstones is essential so as to ensure that dangerous headstones are identified and made safe.
- 6.2 A registration scheme for Memorial Masons will ensure that all memorial masons are operating to standards set out by the council and agreed by the professional bodies of the trade.

#### **7. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 It is recommended that the committee:-

- (i) Approve, in principle, the implementation of a Memorial Mason Registration Scheme and remit to the Director of Community Services to develop a suitable scheme;
- (ii) Note the progress of the Memorial Safety Inspection/Survey Tendering Document; and
- (iii) Otherwise note the content of this report.

William Stafford  
Director of Community Services.

WS/BM/RNA  
20<sup>th</sup> August 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> February 2001.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers listed above should telephone 01563 554066 and ask for Robert McCulloch.

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**AGENDA**