



Communities
Overview Committee

10 September 2018

2.00 pm

Item

Public

**MINUTES OF THE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON 10
SEPTEMBER 2018
2.00 PM – 3.05 PM**

Responsible Officer: Amanda Holyoak
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Present

Councillor Cecilia Motley (Chairman)
Councillors Nick Hignett (Vice Chairman), Ted Clarke, Roger Hughes, Vivienne Parry and
Leslie Winwood

20 Apologies for absence and substitutions

Apologies were received from Councillors Nigel Hartin, Keith Roberts and Tina Woodward.
Councillor Christian Lea substituted for Councillor Woodward.

21 Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

Members were reminded that that they must not participate in the discussion or voting on
any matter in which they had a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and should leave the room
prior to the commencement of the debate.

22 Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2018

Minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2018 were confirmed as a correct record.

23 Public Question Time

There were no public questions.

24 Member Question Time

There were no Member questions.

25 Burial Capacity Within Shropshire

The Chair reported that the Committee had requested an item on burial capacity in
Shropshire having regard to local community concern regarding the future provision of
burial space to meet anticipated Shropshire need and also local provision for non-
Christian burial space.

Mark Foxall, Bereavement Services Manager, was welcomed to the meeting and he introduced the report before members (copy attached to the signed minutes).

The report explained the demand for and position of the current burial provision offered by Shropshire Council and included detail for each cemetery in terms of how many new graves were available, how long these might last and whether there was capacity for non Christian burial. It also set out: detail around Christian burial; Muslim funeral arrangements; recent communication with the Muslim community; and provision by the commercial sector.

During discussion of the paper, Members asked questions including:

What was the extent of 'funeral poverty' whereby the Council provided for funerals where there were no funds available;

What was the current status of Longden Road Cemetery in Shrewsbury;

What was the current status of Mytton Oak Remembrance Park;

What was the current status of Emstrey in Shrewsbury;

Was there a demand in Shropshire for green burials or humanist burials;

What level of response had there been to the survey sent to Parish and Town Councils;

What was the extent of provision of burial space for non-christian burials;

Was the Council able to accommodate the requests of the Muslim community;

In response to the questions, the Bereavement Services Manager reported that there had been a steady increase in demand for public health funerals and over the last five years this had number had grown to between 10 – 15 a year.

He explained that Longden Road Cemetery had been closed to new graves since the re-opening of Emstrey Cemetery in 2009. However, a recent review had identified around 70 unused graves within existing sections and these had been offered for burial and were meeting current demand. Spaces for 200 graves were to be created later this year and space for 300 further graves was to be developed in due course prior to need. Mytton Oak Remembrance Park was 9 Ha in total and anticipated to provide burial capacity for 100 years but this was not yet in operation and required further investment.

It was confirmed that Dignity Ltd had acquired the lease for Emstrey from Co-Op Funeral Care in 2016 and would occupy Emstrey with providing agreed bereavement services until 2041. New graves were only dug in one section of Emstrey which had 29 grave spaces remaining. New sections of the cemetery could only be developed with the agreement of the Environment Agency and Dignity Ltd and to bring some areas into use would require investment in engineered works and outflow treatment.

The Bereavement Services Manager went on to explain requirements of Christian and Muslim burials and confirmed that the Council cemeteries did not exclude any faith or those of no religion in its cemeteries and that all had unconsecrated sections. He reported that in 2015 the Council's bereavement service had been approached by a representative of the Shropshire based Muslim Community. A request, backed by a petition had been submitted to secure many grave spaces together in a single block so that family members could be buried together. The Council position agreed with the then Portfolio Holder was that the council cemeteries were open to all faiths and those of no faith, and unconsecrated areas existed within the cemetery estate for this purpose. However, due to the low level of available burial space known of at that time new graves were and

continued to be sold individually at the point of need and there was currently no opportunity to purchase or reserve blocks or groups of graves. This was the position regardless of chosen faith or if of no faith.

In response to the question about green burials, it was confirmed that demand was increasing and that there were new entrants to the market to provide this kind of facility. The Local Member for Wem shared some information with Members about a long barrow style site close to Wem which had recently opened and provided places for cremation ashes.

The Bereavement Services Manager reported that he had received 33 responses to the survey issued to Town and Parish Councils through the SALC office. Responses had seem to fall into fairly equally into three categories, those with less than 10 years capacity remaining, those with 10 – 50 year capacity and a third with in excess of 50 years capacity. In response to questions he reported that he had not yet received a response as yet from Craven Arms, Ludlow or Highley Town Councils.

The Portfolio Holder suggested that a further prompt be sent to Parish and Town Councils requesting a response to the survey, and said the view of the Parish and Town Councils and Communities Overview Committee would be welcomed.

The Chair thanked the Bereavement Services Manager for the insight he had provided and Members felt it had been a very useful meeting. The Committee agreed that Parish and Town Councils be asked to respond to the survey again, with an emphasis on medium to longer term capacity issues. It was also felt that a little more work was needed on the offer for other faith burials, and that the Council was doing its best but there was a slightly ad hoc approach. It was agreed that the Committee should revisit these issues in a year's time.

26 Work Programme

The Committee considered its proposed future work programme , also intentions for the timescale of the Community Transport task and finish group. The Chair reported that the Local Joint Committee Task and Finish Group had been paused pending the outcome of the review of the Communities Enablement Team. The Scrutiny Officer reported that the Performance Management Scrutiny Committee had recently set up a Task and Finish Group on Road Safety.

Signed (Chairman)

Date: