

HALLS, CEMETERIES & ALLOTMENTS COMMITTEE

Date: Monday, 11 September 2023

Title: Cemetery Feedback

Contact Officer: Deputy Town Clerk

Background

The Council strives to ensure the best service possible for residents at both Tower Hill and Windrush Cemeteries.

The Council facilitates meetings of the 'Friends of the Cemeteries' focus group and since 2022, has entered Windrush Cemetery into the 'Cemetery of the Year' awards to help inform the Council and officers on achieving this aim.

Current Situation

Friends of the Cemeteries

A meeting of the group was held on Tuesday 29th August 2023. The notes from the meeting are attached as **Appendix A**.

Members are asked to note the minutes and the information contained therein and consider any further recommendations as a result. Officers will undertake actions agreed at the meeting.

Cemetery of the Year Awards

This year the score received by the Town Council was 453 out of 700. In 2022, the score was 455 and the average score of comparable to other Council-run burial grounds (as advised by the organisers) was 466 so Windrush Cemetery is within the average range for the services it provides.

In 2022, 26 questions were scored less than the average mark, of these WTC received 14 'zero' marks which was generally repeated in 2023. 27 questions scored a greater higher than the average mark.

The questions where the Cemetery was marked down with zero points were related to:

- Not having a gate
- Not having a map of sections
- Not having individual grave search facilities available on the website
- Not having downloadable burial & memorial forms available on the website
- Having a small width of memorials (up to 2'6")
- Not allowing kerb sets/kerbs on cremation plots
- Not allowing porcelain photo plaques
- The cost of burying cremated remains.
- Burial times
- Facilitation of short notice burials (i.e., 24 hours)
- Providing rain protection at a burial (i.e., grave canopy)

Although the feedback is useful and can lead to improvement, some cannot be due to logistics and resources.

The Council may like to consider the benefit of entering the competition as it is a desk-top exercise which does not take into account the aesthetics of the facility and the other things an offer such as woodland and meadow burials, which are not readily available in other Council-owned burial grounds. The scoring system is also particularly complex, with no published criteria and weighted scoring.

The awards were entered to inform of best practice and to benchmark against other Councils. The Council's senior management team will review the feedback and feed into the developing strategic plan.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should give consideration to any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

➤ Implications will be judged on individual future actions emanating from the feedback.

Recommendations

Members are invited to note the report.