

Statement of the Head of Health, Safety, Compliance and Emergency Planning on the group's final report and recommendations

Overview and Scrutiny Committee has brought forward recommendations intended to respond sensitively to personal memorials at the graveside. Officers acknowledge this is an issue that has attracted significant local and political interest. Whilst Officers respect the Committee's aims and objectives, the recommendations as they currently stand do not fully align with officers' professional advice as they introduce an increased and enhanced risk for visitors, employees, and the Council. Further consideration is needed to ensure their implementation addresses key risk areas including:

- Accessibility: ensuring pathways and grave spaces remain accessible, including for people with mobility aids, prams, and wheelchairs.
- Public and employee safety: preventing trip hazards, obstruction and instability of items that could harm visitors or employees.
- Legal and regulatory compliance: adherence to statutory health and safety duties.
- Operational delivery: inspection and maintenance implications and the impact that this would have on resourcing.
- Reputational impact (fairness and consistency): clear, fair, and consistent decisions to maintain public trust and avoid perceived inequity.

Officers will implement both Overview and Scrutiny and Cabinet's agreed direction. Given the sensitivity and complexity of issues involved, it is suggested that Cabinet considers establishing a cross-party working group of only Members and Officers to examine the detailed implications to ensure the recommendations are implemented and are practicable, compassionate, and compliant with the Council's legal obligations. This will be in consultation with other stakeholders, if necessary and where appropriate to do so. This will be for Overview and Scrutiny to review and ultimately Cabinet to approve. This acknowledges the recommendations' divergence from officers' advice while committing officers to mitigate the heightened risks and deliver an outcome that is sensitive, consistent, and is as safe as practically possible for both employees and visitors.