

Scope and Background Information for the Burial Choices Scrutiny Review

Background to this review

On 5 November 2019 the O&S Commission commissioned a scrutiny review to scrutinise the burial and funeral choices within Bracknell Forest to ensure that residents' future needs are met

Work Programme Proposal

Review Title	Burial Choices
Why are you asking for scrutiny's input? (optional)	There is a wider variety, and greater freedoms, for funeral and burial choices than ever before. With the lack of current provision within BFC, an options appraisal of how to now meet this need is required. As clients move away from the traditional options, ensuring that any new provision is future proofed to meeting these changing client requirements, but within the resources that the council has available, needs to be investigated and options brought forward.
Scope <i>(What exactly needs to be looked at?)</i>	<p>- Review the current client requirements for funeral and burial. - Produce projections to determine client needs over the next 20 years. - Assess how to meet projected needs to include guidance and direction for the council for investment options, given the council's limited financial resources and access to suitable burial locations within the borough.</p> <p>The options to review are: Traditional funeral, Cremation, Green and woodland funerals, Humanist and civic funerals, any others (new and emerging options).</p>
What is to be achieved?	Advice to the Executive on what options to invest into and recommendations on how to ensure that BFC continues to provide an excellent service, within the resources the council has available.
Council theme <i>(Select one option from drop down list)</i>	Communities
Decision maker <i>(Select one option from drop down list)</i>	Executive
Time Constraints	There is no specific time constraint on this review. An Executive decision will be taken before Christmas 2019. Scrutiny input will be required from early to mid 2020.
Portfolio holder <i>(Select one option from drop down list)</i>	Councillor Harrison, Executive Member for Culture, Delivery and Public Protection
Directorate <i>(Select one option from drop down list)</i>	Delivery
Which team is affected?	Cemetery & Crematorium
Delivery method <i>(select one option from drop down list)</i>	Mixture of Spotlight Sessions, benchmarking and site visits/observations
Are there any costs associated with completing this review?	None identified

Situation:

There is a wider variety, plus greater freedoms, for client choices with regard to funerals and burials than ever before. Bracknell Forest Council (BFC) is currently faced with acquiring new space to provide these services. However, as space for further expansion beyond this new allocation becomes more difficult, making best use of the new allocation is vital.

As clients move away from the traditional burial and funeral options, ensuring that any new provision is future proofed to meet these changing requirements whilst ensuring that the options taken forward are within the resources that the council has available, is at the heart of this review.

The O&S Commission (O&SC) commissioned a short scrutiny review of this topic, but the situation has since changed and it is now proposed to do two pieces of work to complete this review.

- The first piece of work would be a single meeting to appraise the land options which will contribute to the Executive decision on 10 March 2019.

- The second piece of work would retain the same scope as the agreed work programme item, but having completed scoping of the work, Officers considered that more time was needed to address the objectives of the review and so would be done during the first and second quarters of 2020/21 (April to September 2020).

The Panel's initial piece of work, via a single meeting review, would be an options appraisal of the likely sites where additional interment space could be created, supporting the investigation work that Officers are undertaking. The Panel's early piece of work will form an early stage set of comments and recommendations, that will be taken in to consideration as part of the decision-making process on which site, if any, the council should invest in.

Once the site has been acquired and provisioned, how this new allocation is to be used will require further review and recommendations. This will form the second part of the review to address who gets a burial plot in Bracknell, at what cost and how that matches in with the other services provided at Easthampstead Park Cemetery & Crematorium.

The relevant legislation concerning disability access, discrimination and human rights MUST be considered within the context of this review together with emotional and religious requirements.

An increasing number of people are planning ahead for their funerals and burials/interment, making their own arrangements for how their remains will be handled. Other Councils, such as Bedford Borough Council have sought to provide alternative above ground options such as [mausoleums and burial chambers](#).
[Cemetery fees for Bedford](#)

Cremation is still the most requested service, so understanding how this service fits in to the mix of services provided at the site is also vital in order to address the needs of the community for at least the next 25 years until 2045.

Objectives. What do we want to achieve from this review?

NB: Municipal Years are used for timings

During Quarter 4 2019/20 (January to March 2020) the review will:

- Conduct an options appraisal to and contribute to Executive decision on 10 March 2020 as to which new site/s should be selected for the potential for expansion of the current cemetery (subject to survey).
- Provide their recommendations to Damian James, Assistant Director: Contract Services to be included as an appendix to his report that will go to the Executive on 10 March 2020.
- Submit their conclusions to the O&S Commission on 19 Feb 2020 to ratify.