
**EXCERPT FROM THE MINUTES OF THE
OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE
HELD ON 20 DECEMBER 2001**

OSM.34/01 SCOPING THE BEREAVEMENT SERVICES BEST VALUE REVIEW

The Director of Leisure and Community Development submitted documentation providing the background to the Best Value Review of Bereavement Services and invited the Committee's input into how the Review should be conducted.

The Best Value Officer made various suggestions as a starting point for debate.

In considering the matter, Members raised the following list of objectives:

- (i) The service provided by the City Council should be extensive and able to cater for individual choices/needs. The following should be investigated:
 - the possibility that the Council may also provide those services currently undertaken by Funeral Directors;
 - a high quality Municipal Funeral Service endorsed by the City Council. It was noted that the Town Clerk and Chief Executive's previous Local Authority had operated such a scheme and details should be obtained from them.
 - as part of the challenge process the Council should look at how other Local Authorities managed their services.
- (ii) It was noted that space at all Cemeteries was likely to run out within 15/20 years and therefore the issue of capacity must be addressed.
- (iii) The issue of operational deficit must be considered. Although the service must be run on a business footing, it should not be totally cost focussed since there was a statutory duty to provide a service for the whole community.

The future utilisation of the "Capital Fund", following completion of improvements to the Chapel, should be considered.

- (iv) When considering future charging policy the needs of those caught in the poverty trap should be addressed. People were not always in a position/able to purchase insurance to assist them i.e. in cases of infant mortality.

Conditions for the sale of graves and memorials should be investigated.

It was also suggested that charges could be varied according to whether the deceased was a resident or non-resident of Carlisle.

- (v) The environmental issues associated with the service must be addressed.

- (vi) Notwithstanding the services high level of performance, it was important to strive for improvement.

Members also felt that all service options should be publicised more widely to help inform the public of the environmentally friendly services offered i.e. "Carlisle Coffins and Woodland Graves" via the Focus Magazine, the press, etc. In addition, communication with users could also be improved.

It was felt that the input of outside agencies, such as the Anti-Poverty Forum, Clergy, Funeral Directors, Age Concern, the Health Service and Bereavement Counsellors would also be beneficial for inclusion in the Review by the Community Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

RESOLVED - That the points raised be included within the key issues for the Review.