



FULL COUNCIL REPORT

Date Written	7 th March 2017
Report Author	Robert Barnett
Service Area	Neighbourhood Services
Committee Division	Portfolio
Exempt/Non Exempt	Non Exempt
Committee Date	22 nd March 2017

To: Mayor, Ladies and Gentlemen

CEMETERY MEMORIALS

1.0 SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

1.1 The Bereavement Services Section has recently received several requests from bereaved families and memorial masons to place memorials that are not currently permitted under the council's regulations. Since the 1980's the authority has had a policy whereby the traditional 'full set' kerb surround to graves have not been allowed. This has limited choice to the public and restricted the types of memorials offered by local monumental masons. This has also led to people adding their own unauthorised fences, gravel and artificial grass making maintenance more difficult. It is proposed to allow full set memorials once again in the council's cemeteries.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION(S) that

- 2.1 The proposal to allow full set memorials and increase the size of memorials permitted be approved.
- 2.2 Delegated authority is given to the Parks and Bereavement Services Manager in conjunction with the Portfolio Member for Neighbourhood Services and Public Protection to make final decisions on approving memorials in the event of needing to vary from Corporate Policy.

3.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

3.1 Councillors will be aware that the current policy doesn't permit full sets (traditional full grave kerb surrounds) and restricts the sizes of memorial allowed. In the past, cemeteries offered a wide choice of grave types, with an associated variety of memorials. Due to various reasons, grave choice became limited and, gradually, a perception developed that memorials were a nuisance and that they should be rigidly controlled as to size and design. The result was the introduction of the lawn type grave. Whilst some would prefer the neat and uniform layout of the lawn section with its regularly mown grass there is evidence that where this is the only available choice some grave owners will attempt to personalise the grave and memorial by placing unauthorised fences and other articles. The rapid accumulation of unauthorised articles causes subsequent problems with maintenance of the lawn area which can increase maintenance costs and health and safety implications and defeat the object of the lawn section. People who decide to put unauthorised surrounds on their graves may have opted for ones authorised by the council if they had that option open to them. It is hoped that as well as giving people more choice the proliferation of unauthorised additions to graves will be reduced.

4.0 CURRENT POSITION

4.1 It has been a long held policy of the authority that cemetery memorials be restricted to headstones only and within the dimensions shown in table below. In recent years the choice of memorial available to monumental masons has expanded but their use has been restricted by the council's policy on size and type.

Current Regulation

4.2 Standard Lawn, current maximum sizes (sizes shown are in inches as grave dimensions are traditionally shown in feet and inches)

Maximum Sizes	Height	Width	Front-back
Headstone Inc. base	34"	34"	16"
Foundation	4"	36"	18"
Bearer/Plinth	3"	42"	18"
Full set kerb surround	NOT PERMITTED		

5.0 PROPOSAL

5.1 It is proposed to re-introduce the use of full set type memorials in the cemeteries as well as increase the size of headstone height permitted from 34" to 48". The maximum dimensions that will be allowed are shown in the table below. To aid memorial masons in the future a sketch showing the new regulation sizes will be issued (see appendix 1). Any memorial within the dimensions of the cube diagram will be allowed. Any memorial which extends beyond the new guidelines will be rejected. However, if memorials are fitted and do not adhere to the original sketch

then the undertaker and memorial mason will be instructed to remove the memorial and re-fit so it complies with the new regulations.

- 5.2 Where full set surrounds have to be moved for repair or interment of another body then the memorial mason will arrange for the lifting and transportation off site until they can be re-fitted. The temporary storage of these memorials will not be allowed within the cemetery and will remain the responsibility of the monumental mason.

Proposed Regulations

- 5.3 Standard Lawn, proposed maximum sizes (sizes shown are in inches)

Maximum Sizes	Height	Width	Front-back
Headstone Inc. base	48"	36"	18"
Foundation	4"	36"	18 max
Bearer/Plinth	3"	42"	18"
Full set kerb surround	Allowed, dimensions must be inside the cube dimensions shown on the diagram BS1a		

FREEDOM OF CHOICE

- 5.4 The customer's right to a wider choice of memorial is supported by the following organisations: -
- The institute of Cemeteries and Crematoria Management.
 - Confederation of Burial Authorities.
 - Charter for the Bereaved.
 - National Association of Monumental Masons and British Registered Association of Monumental Masons

6.0 RESTRICTIONS

- 6.1 Whilst it is proposed to allow full sets in all areas of our cemeteries there may be circumstances where the authority may have to decline a request for a full set surround. Requests for full sets in areas which will restrict access for others or situations which will prevent access to family vaults are some examples where permission will not be granted. Each application will be judged on its own merit but the authority reserves the right to decline the application.
- 6.2 Future developments such as new cemeteries or new sections within existing cemeteries may be set aside solely for full set memorials or lawn type graves. Where these areas exist members of the public requiring a new grave will be advised that the area allocated to them will be dependent on the type of grave requested.

7.0 WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT

7.1 The Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 is about improving the social, economic, environmental and cultural wellbeing of Wales. It requires public bodies to think more about the long term, working with people and communities, looking to prevent problems and take a more joined up approach. This will create a Wales that we all want to live in, now and in the future. The Act puts in place seven wellbeing goals and the content of this report links into three i.e. “a more equal Wales, a prosperous Wales and a healthier Wales”.

- (i) A Healthier Wales - If members are minded to remove restrictions on memorials then families will have the choice to select the memorial they want. this will clearly reduce stress on families at probably one of the most difficult time of their lives.
- (ii) A Prosperous Wales - The removal of restrictions on memorial sizes will benefit local monumental masons as the size and range of memorials offered by them will increase.
- (iii) A More Equal Wales - The removal of the size restrictions will increase choice allowing a much larger range of memorials to be chosen.

8.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATION(S)

8.1 There are no financial implications with this proposal.

9.0 SINGLE INTEGRATED PLAN AND SUSTAINABILITY IMPACT SUMMARY

9.1 The Single Integrated Plan & Sustainability Impact Assessment has been completed and the proposals positively impact on a number of aspects of the Corporate Plan and Single Integrated Plan, including People in Merthyr Tydfil benefit from a strong, sustainable and diverse economy and People, who live and work in Merthyr Tydfil are supported to enjoy a healthier and better quality of life.

10.0 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10.1 There are no potential equalities implications associated with this report for any specific groups or individuals therefore a full Equalities Impact Assessment has not been carried out.

CHERYLLEE EVANS
CHIEF OFFICER NEIGHBOURHOOD
SERVICES

COUNCILLOR CHRIS BARRY
CABINET MEMBER FOR
NEIGHBOURHOOD SERVICES AND
PUBLIC PROTECTION

BACKGROUND PAPERS		
Title of Document(s)	Document(s) Date	Document Location
Does the report contain any issue that may impact the Council's Constitution?		No

Consultation has been undertaken with the Corporate Management Team in respect of each proposal(s) and recommendation(s) set out in this report.