

Equality Impact Assessment

Name of Policy: Cemeteries

Directorate: Environment and Regeneration
Green Space Service

Head of Service: Nick Burton

Lead Officer: John Billson

Names and Roles of people carrying out the E.I.A.

John Billson: Cemeteries Superintendent Registrar

Dave Calvert: Assistant Cemeteries Manager

Section 1 – Introduction

Identify the aims of the Policy

The Cemeteries Section is responsible for Chingford Mount Cemetery and Walthamstow Cemetery (Queens Road Cemetery).

Carrying out approximately 310 burials per year including cremated remains.

Providing a safe and attractive environment for grave visitors, also areas for passive leisure.

The service is mostly provided in house with minimal assistance from outside sources e.g. weed control and tree work is undertaken by contractors.

It fits in with the wider aims of the Council by improving environmental quality, increasing wellbeing of bereaved persons whilst providing value for money.

What is the rational behind the policy and its delivery?

The Cemeteries Policy is backed up by the Green Space Service Plan 2007/2010 and the Environmental Service Plan 2007/2008.

- To get the basic service right.
- To provide value for money
- To provide services and facilities that meet the needs of Waltham Forest's diverse residents
- To strive toward providing a safe, clean and healthy environment in parks and open spaces (cemeteries).

Is the policy aimed at a particular client group?

The main users of the service are current or previous residents of the Borough. However visitors are from worldwide.

How is the policy/service delivered

New graves are only available for the burial of deceased persons who were residents of London Borough of Waltham Forest at their time of death. Apart from this there are no eligibility criteria.

The service is statutory.

The service is part funded by council tax and part funded by cemetery charges.

Section 2 – Broad Needs Analysis of the Service Area

Some training of staff in equality and cultural awareness has taken place and more will be planned for. We have liaised with specialist Funeral Directors to provide what is required for Greek, Afro Caribbean and Chinese burials.

The main equalities impact issues that have been identified are:

- Gender – Women sometimes concerned about personal safety within cemetery grounds.
- Age – Personal safety a concern of the elderly. Children at risk from unsafe memorials.
- Ethnic origin – different needs of certain ethnic groups to enable them to carry out their traditional burial customs.
- Faith – certain requirements to be met to enable some ethnic groups to maintain their faith. Walthamstow (Queens Road) Cemetery – Plots A and B are consecrated. This means that a faculty will be needed for exhumations and certain memorial works carried out in these areas.
- Disability – accessibility to certain areas of the cemetery is of some concern
- Sexuality – no specific needs have been identified

The service is promoted by local Funeral Directors and by word of mouth by previous cemetery service users.

There have been no complaints from the public that involve equality issues.

Section 3 – Data Collection and Analysis

At the beginning of 2002 surveys were carried out with cemetery users and Funeral Directors as part of the Best Value Review.

This revealed that 70% of respondents thought the standard of the cemeteries was good and this view was supported by Funeral Directors that use the service.

There are at present:

6 x white British male staff
1.56 white British female staff
2 x full time vacant posts

No current information on faith or sexuality.

Section 4 - Consultation

Whilst the KMC Survey (2005) and the Green Stat survey (started 2006) will continue, they do not really identify cemetery specific items.

At present cemeteries' consultation is based on feedback from cemetery service users, both public and professional.

At present there has been no external consultation. However all feedback to the cemeteries office has been positive. Over the last two years there have been four complaints and nineteen letters of thanks.

Section 5 – Assessment

The service is universally available to all members of society. With the exception of new graves only being available for the burial of London Borough of Waltham Forest residents.

Followers of the Muslim faith tend to use the Muslim Burial Trust Cemetery within London Borough of Waltham Forest and some Catholics use St Patrick's Cemetery.

For all other users, adjustments are made to our service to accommodate specific needs.

i.e.

Longer service times

Allowing mourners to backfill graves

Selection of grave spaces (where appropriate) to improve accessibility

Music at graveside

Allowing refreshments to be made available near the grave following Greek Orthodox traditional funerals

These requirements are continually monitored in view of the changing requirements of a diverse community.

Section 6 – Adverse Impact

There is no disproportionate or adverse impact caused by this policy, but there is a need for the service to be sensitive to the requirements of the community to ensure that the service user profile becomes more representative of the community as a whole. Information received from Funeral Directors will keep us in touch with the burial requirements of borough residents.

Section 7 – Monitoring and Review of Policy

We will continue to monitor Green stat figures within the Cemeteries' Management and Development plan (which will be made in the next year). A survey will be designed to be sent out with existing correspondence to cemetery users.

Any complaints/enquiries on SAP CRM will be monitored and acted on accordingly.

The Management and Development Plan will reflect the needs of the community. This will include:

Burial Space

Memorial Safety

Access

Grounds Maintenance and concerns about Personal Safety.