



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Meeting: Operational Services Committee

Time: 4:30 pm

Date: Monday 14 September 2026

Venue: Council Chamber, The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE

Enquiries regarding this agenda: Patrick Adams

Telephone: (01353) 616298

Email: patrick.adams@eastcambs.gov.uk

Committee membership

Quorum: 5 members

Conservative members

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Lee Denney
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)
Cllr Lucius Vellacott (Vice-Chair)

Conservative substitutes

Cllr Anna Bailey
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr David Miller

Liberal Democrat and Independent Group members

Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Mark Inskip (Lead Member)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Christine Whelan

Liberal Democrat and Independent Group substitutes

Cllr Lorne Dupré
Cllr Mary Wade
Cllr Alison Whelan

Lead Officer: Isabel Edgar, Director Operations

AGENDA

1. **Public question time** [oral]
The meeting will commence with up to 15 minutes of public question time.
2. **Apologies and substitutions** [oral]
3. **Declarations of interests** [oral]

To receive declarations of interests from Members for any items on the agenda in accordance with the Members Code of Conduct.

- 4. Minutes** **Page 5**
To confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Operational Services Committee held on 22 June 2026.
- 5. Chair's announcements** **[oral]**
- 6. Budget Outturn Report** **Page 15**
- 7. ECSS Financial Statements 2025/26 & Annual Governance Statement 2025/26** **Page 21**
- 8. Approval of the 2018/19 Food and Health and Safety Service Plan** **Page 53**
- 9. Application for ICCM Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation – Lake View Bereavement Centre** **Page 73**
- 10. Housing Association Performance** **Page 187**
- 11. Draft Minutes of Anglia Revenues Partnership for 9 June 2026** **Page 195**
To note the minutes of the Anglia Revenues Partnership meeting held on 9 June 2026.
- 12. Forward Agenda Plan** **Page 203**

Exclusion of the public including representatives of the press

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category 3 of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

- 13. East Cambs Street Scene Management Accounts for Quarter 1 to 30 June 2026** **Page 207**
- 14. Exempt Minutes** **Page 211**
To confirm as a correct record the exempt minutes for the meeting of the Operational Services Committee meeting held on 22 June 2026.

Notes

1. Members of the public are welcome to attend this meeting. If you are visiting The Grange during normal working hours you should report to the main reception desk. If you come to an evening meeting please enter via the door in the glass atrium at the back of the building.

Admittance is on a "first come, first served" basis and public access will be from 30 minutes before the start time of the meeting. Due to room capacity restrictions, members of the public are asked, where possible, to notify Democratic Services (democratic.services@eastcambs.gov.uk or 01353 665555) of their intention to attend a meeting.

The livestream of this meeting will be available on [the committee meeting's webpage](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/node/3481) (www.eastcambs.gov.uk/node/3481). Please be aware that all attendees, including those in the public gallery, will be visible on the livestream.

2. Public Questions/Statements are welcomed on any topic related to the Committee's functions as long as there is no suspicion that it is improper (for example, offensive, slanderous or might lead to disclosures of Exempt or Confidential information). Up to 15 minutes is allocated for this at the start of the meeting.

[Further details about the Public Question Time scheme](http://www.eastcambs.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/public-participation-meetings/public-question-time) (www.eastcambs.gov.uk/about-council/meetings-agendas-and-minutes/public-participation-meetings/public-question-time).

3. The Council has adopted a 'Purge on Plastics' strategy and is working towards the removal of all consumer single-use plastics in our workplace. Therefore, we do not provide disposable cups in our building or at our meetings and would ask members of the public to bring their own drink to the meeting if required.
4. Fire instructions for meetings:
 - if the fire alarm sounds, please make your way out of the building by the nearest available exit, which is usually the back staircase or the fire escape in the Chamber and do not attempt to use the lifts
 - the fire assembly point is in the front staff car park by the exit barrier
 - the building has an auto-call system to the fire services so there is no need for anyone to call the fire services

The Committee Officer will sweep the area to ensure that everyone is out.

5. Reports are attached for each agenda item unless marked "oral".
6. If required, all items on the agenda can be provided in different formats (such as large type, Braille or audio tape, or translated into other languages), on request, by calling main reception on (01353) 665555 or e-mail: translate@eastcambs.gov.uk
7. If the Committee wishes to exclude the public and press from the meeting, a resolution in the following terms will need to be passed:

"That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item no(s). X because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the item(s) there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category X of Part I Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended)."



East Cambridgeshire District Council

Minutes of a Meeting of the Operational Services Committee

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 4:30 pm on
Monday 22 June 2026

Present

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Anna Bailey (substitute)
Cllr David Brown
Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Mark Inskip
Cllr Julia Huffer (Chair)
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Lucius Vellacott (Vice Chair)
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Nigel Ankers – Senior Finance Manager
Nick Baker – Waste and Environmental Services Manager
Isabel Edgar – Director Operations
Tracey Flack – Principal Accountant
Emma Graves – Neighbourhood and Community Safety Officer
Christopher Partrick – Conservation Officer
Catherine Sutherland – Senior Waste Management Officer
Anne Wareham – Senior Accountant

In Attendance

Lis Every – Chair of East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership

1. Public Question Time

No public questions were submitted.

2. Apologies and Substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lee Denney. Cllr Anna Bailey attended as a substitute for Cllr Denney.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4. Minutes

It was resolved:

That the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Chair's Announcements

The Chair asked Councillors to inform their residents that due to the hot weather, waste operatives would be starting work at 6 am instead of 6:30 am.

6. Community Safety Partnership 6 Monthly Report

The Chair stated that this report had been deferred from the last meeting as Lis Every, Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership, had been unable to attend.

Emma Graves, Neighbourhood and Community Safety Team Leader, introduced this report, AB17 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the work of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership over the last six months.

Lis Every explained that the aim of the Partnership was to work with other stakeholders to reduce crime across East Cambridgeshire. She thanked officers for their work in helping to meet crime reduction targets. The Partnership had met twice since March but would not meet again until September. She made the following points:

- All actions were owned by one of the lead partners.
- All the actions set for 2025/26 had been completed.
- The new action plan would be for three years' duration instead of one.
- The Partnership completed a strategic assessment every year.
- An action on Rape Crisis Centre's Education Programme had been added to the Action Plan.
- The probation service will be reduced due to a lack of funding, and this would impact on community services.

The Committee expressed concerns about the situation facing the probation service. Cllr Anna Bailey asked if the probation service would now have to focus on more serious crimes. Lis Every explained that the next Community Safety Partnership would focus on this issue and its implications. Some form of mitigation process would be put in place.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, Lis Every explained that the Partnership had received an update on the Shop Watch scheme from Andrew Olley, who runs the City Cycle Centre

in Ely. An increasing number of local businesses had signed up to the scheme that allowed shop owners to share concerns and information, including descriptions of known shoplifters. The scheme was looking to expand into Littleport.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, Lis Every stated that she hoped that a Community Safety Partnership showcase event would be organised shortly, which will invite members of the public to meet Partners and ask questions. The Partnership continued to work with the City Council, Town Councils and Parish Councils and she was shortly going to the Soham Community Forum, to determine their local needs.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Lis Every explained that Community Safety Partnership chairs liaised with each other about a variety of issues, including criminal activity across county boundaries. Emma Graves, Neighbourhood and Community Safety Officer, added that whilst the Partnership could only fund initiatives in East Cambridgeshire, it did share best practice with Partnerships in Norfolk and Suffolk.

It was understood that the phrase “rural immigration drops”, described instances where immigrants entered into the district via the back of a vehicle.

Lis Every explained that the Community Safety Partnership had decided to employ social care workers but this meant that there was less funding for community projects. Lis Every concluded that compared to the cities of Peterborough and Cambridge, East Cambridgeshire was a low crime area.

On behalf of the Committee, Cllr Julia Huffer thanked Lis Every and the Community Safety Partnership for the valuable work that they did.

It was resolved to:

Note the report from the Chair of the East Cambridgeshire Community Safety Partnership.

7. Budget Outturn Report

Tracey Flack, Principal Accountant, presented this report, AB18 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the financial position of services under the Operational Services Committee.

Cllr Mark Inskip asked for more information regarding the longer-term plans for Bed and Breakfast accommodation for high-risk clients. Isabel Edgar, Director Operations, explained that this query would be referred to the Housing Service Manager and a response would be distributed to the members of the Committee.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, the Director Operations explained that the capital funds for the Bereavement Centre had been carried over to the current financial year as the money had been reprofiled to different parts of the project. The Council was still on target to spend the funds by the scheduled end of the project.

It was resolved to:

- (i) Note that the Committee had a revenue underspend of £476,084 when compared to its approved budget of £6,842,567.
- (ii) Note that the Committee had a capital programme spend of £9,514,373. This was an underspend of £5,572,775 when compared to its revised budget.

8. Register of Buildings of Local Interest

Christopher Partrick, Conservation Officer, presented this report, AB19 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the expanded Register of Buildings of Local Interest. He explained that he had worked systematically to build up a comprehensive list of buildings of local interest.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, the Conservation Officer explained that the previous list had been inconsistent. He had established benchmarks that indicated where the gaps were, which had resulted in a consistent, accurate list.

In reply to Cllr Anna Bailey, the Conservation Officer explained that the selection criteria was set nationally and each building was assessed on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes an owner would ask for their building to be removed from the list, following substantial building works. Some buildings had been removed because they had been demolished.

It was resolved to

Note the report on the expanded Register of Buildings of Local Interest.

9. Quarter 4 2025/26 Performance Report for the Waste and Street Cleansing Services

Catherine Sutherland, Senior Waste Management Officer, presented a report, AB20 previously circulated, which provided the Committee with the Quarter 4 performance report on the delivery of the waste and street cleansing services by East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS). She stated that overall, the ECSS were performing well. The waste team were focussing on increasing recycling, after the new service had been established.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, the Senior Waste Management Officer agreed to provide more information to the Committee on the number of near misses, which was a Key Performance Indicator under the “Health and Safety – staff welfare” heading.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Senior Waste Management Officer explained that usually graffiti was removed from a private property within 24 hours of receiving the request. The Council would always try to gain the permission of the owners of the property in question, although officers had the power to remove graffiti if necessary.

In reply to Cllr Mark Inskip, the Senior Waste Management Officer reported that the final figures for recycling for 2025/26 would become available later in the summer. She agreed to find out why the percentage of fly-tipping removed within two days had dropped to 77%, and what action was being taken to reduce the amount of waste contamination and then report this back to the members of the Committee.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Senior Waste Management Officer explained that staff absence was usually why the target for overflowing dog bins was being missed but she would confirm whether this the case and report back to the members of the Committee.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, the Senior Waste Management Officer explained that metal and plastics simply needed to be rinsed, before being recycled. If waste could be crushed by hand it could probably be classed as “soft waste” in recycling. There was an a-z guide on the website for more information.

It was resolved to:

Note the performance of service delivery for Quarter 4 (January-March) 2025/26.

10. Waste Roll-Out Update – oral report

Nick Baker, Waste and Environmental Services Manager, presented an oral update on the roll-out of the new waste service. He explained that the new service was now in its fourth week and was going well. There had been a delay in receiving the new containers in April and May but 130,000 containers had now been delivered. Whilst there were still 200-300 households who had not yet received their containers, it was expected that these would be delivered by the end of the week.

The Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that the new service had gone live on 1 June and the collections had gone extremely well. New collection rounds had been successfully completed by new waste collection crews. Any bins that had not been collected were then collected the following day. The number of calls being received by the call centre had reduced to a third of the total received in the first two weeks.

The Waste and Environmental Services Manager reported that residents had a four week amnesty period regarding the collection of non-recyclable rubbish. After this period had expired, side waste, left beside the black bin, would not be collected.

The Waste and Environmental Services Manager informed the Committee that last week, 80% of residents were using the food waste caddies which had resulted in 92 tonnes of food waste being collected. In comparison with other authorities, this was exceptionally high and if this continued an additional vehicle would probably be required. In conclusion, he stated that the roll-out had been a Council-wide effort, involving over 100 staff and it had been a success.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that the amount of food waste being collected was a testament to the Council's communication strategy and residents' desire to do the right thing. There had been issues with food caddies being blown over and complaints that they had been put back incorrectly, however, food collection, during the current heat wave, was a nauseating job, which was being carried out well. He considered the 23-litre waste caddy, which was being collected weekly, to be of sufficient size for most families. If an extra caddy was really needed, this would be provided in the future. Cllr John Trapp suggested that peelings could generate a surprising amount of food waste.

Cllr Martin Goodearl thanked the Waste and Environmental Services Manager for the refurbishment of Littleport railway station car park, after it had been used for bin storage. It was noted that after confusion regarding which bins to put out, all bins in Littleport had been collected.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that the waste collection crews had responded well to the unexpected challenges of the heat and having to collect more food waste than expected. Other than that, the waste collections were going more or less as planned.

In reply to Cllr David Brown, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that waste operatives were using a green coloured bin to collect food waste from the caddies, which was then being collected by the main vehicle. This may have resulted in erroneous allegations that waste operatives were putting food waste straight into the green bin.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager reported that a separate, assisted waste collection service, had been implemented for disabled residents. Every request for assisted collection was considered on its merits. Help was available if it was required.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that there could be a variety of reasons for missed collections, and these bins would be collected. He asked councillors to inform him of any reoccurring problems, so these could be addressed.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that any liners could be used for food caddies and the new collection vehicles were expected shortly. It was noted that black bags could go straight into the black bins.

Cllr Anna Bailey hoped that all residents could be encouraged to recycle more, by understanding that all black bin rubbish was being put into landfill.

The Committee expressed its thanks to the waste operatives for the successful implementation of the new collection scheme, which had been made more challenging due to the unseasonably hot weather.

It was resolved to:

Note the update from the Waste and Environmental Services Manager on the roll-out of the new waste service.

11. Long Term Empty Housing Strategy

Nick Baker, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager, presented a report, AB21 previously circulated, which invited the Committee to approve the new Long Term Empty Homes Strategy. He reported that Council had agreed a motion last year, calling for a Strategy. He explained that the authority needed to be flexible when dealing with empty homes and every attempt should be made to work with the owners of these buildings before resorting to compulsory purchase orders. He recommended that the Committee receive an update on this matter in six to nine months' time, as suggested in the original motion.

Cllr Anna Bailey suggested that buildings on the Local Interest Register should score 5 points on the Empty Homes Assessment Matrix, which was the same for those buildings in a conservation area. The Waste and Environmental Services Manager accepted this suggestion. In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, The Waste and Environmental Services Manager explained that he was happy for buildings to be referred to him, which would then be scored by the Matrix. Page 89 of the agenda gave details of what a building would need to score, to be considered a priority.

Cllr Mark Inskip welcomed the Strategy, which recognised that all empty properties were different and required different responses from the Council. He agreed that the Strategy should be reviewed by the Committee after Christmas.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Waste and Environmental Services Manager stated that the Strategy would be assessed during the Local Government Review process in the expectation that it would be carried forward by the new unitary authority. With regards to enforcement, he suggested that if there was debt on the property it would probably be preferable to sell it. Action could be taken on property owners who refuse to sell or meaningfully engage with the Council. With regards to cost, he estimated that approximately £1,500 had been spend so far on the Strategy. Adam Cliff, Empty Homes Consultant, had been engaged to work on the Strategy.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved to:

Approve the Long Term Empty Homes Strategy, which covered work in this area over the next two years, and for officers to provide a progress update for the Committee in 6-9 months.

12. Annual Reports from Representatives on Outside Bodies

Patrick Adams, Senior Democratic Services Officer, presented a report, AB22 previously circulated, which provided members with the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Committee. Reports received after the agenda had been published, had been circulated. Committee members were asked to amend the membership for the Citizens Advice West Suffolk, Community Safety Partnership and Sanctuary Housing Services & East Cambridgeshire District Council Committee. The Chair asked for nominations.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded that Cllr Lee Denney replace Cllr Julia Huffer as a substitute on Citizens Advice West Suffolk. Cllr Christine Whelan proposed and Cllr Mark Inskip seconded Cllr John Trapp as a substitute on Citizens Advice West Suffolk. A vote was taken and Cllr Lee Denney received 6 votes and Cllr John Trapp received 5 votes. So, Cllr Denney was elected as the substitute on Citizens Advice West Suffolk.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded that Cllr Lee Denney replace Cllr Martin Goodearl on the Community Safety Partnership. Cllr Christine Colbert proposed and Cllr John Trapp seconded Cllr Christine Whelan as a member of the Community Safety Partnership. A vote was taken and Cllr Lee Denney received 6 votes and Cllr Christine Whelan received 5 votes. So, Cllr Denney was elected to the Community Safety Partnership.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded that Cllr Lee Denney replace Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith on the Sanctuary Housing Services and East Cambridgeshire District Council Committee. Cllr Christine Whelan proposed and Cllr Ross Trent seconded Cllr Christine Colbert as a member of the Sanctuary Housing Services and East Cambridgeshire District Council Committee. A vote was taken and Cllr Lee Denney received 6 votes and Cllr Christine Whelan received 5 votes. So, Cllr Denney was elected to the Sanctuary Housing Services and East Cambridgeshire District Council Committee.

Cllr John Trapp suggested that it would make more sense for Sanctuary Housing to use generic contact details, instead of individual e-mail addresses as individuals will be replaced. Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith explained that she had received contact details from Sanctuary Housing, which she could circulate if necessary.

It was noted that the report for the Community Safety Partnership referred to Cllr James Lay, who was no longer a representative for that outside body.

Cllr Christine Colbert queried why representatives were asked whether there was an insurance provision in their reports.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott explained that Soham and District Sports Association did not invite him to a single meeting during 2025/26.

It was resolved to:

- (i) Note the annual reports from Council representatives on Outside Bodies within the responsibility of the Committee.
- (ii) Agree to replace
 - Cllr Julia Huffer with Cllr Lee Denney as substitute on the Citizens Advice West Suffolk outside body.
 - Cllr Martin Goodearl with Cllr Lee Denney on the Community Safety Partnership.
 - Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith with Cllr Lee Denney on the Sanctuary Housing Services and East Cambridgeshire District Council Committee.

13. Draft Minutes of Anglia Revenues Partnership for 17 March 2026

The Committee received the minutes from the Anglia Revenues Benefit Joint Committee meeting on 17 March 2026.

It was resolved:

To note the Minutes of the Anglia Revenues & Benefits Joint Committee meeting on 17 March 2026.

14. Forward Agenda Plan

The Committee considered its Forward Agenda Plan. It was suggested that the Committee should receive an update on the Community Safety Partnership in November as the next meeting of the Partnership was not until September.

It was resolved to:

Note the Forward Agenda Plan, with the following amendments:

- Move the Community Safety Partnerships Update from September to the meeting on 16 November 2026.
- Include a report on the Street Naming and Numbering Policy for the meeting on 16 November 2026
- Include a report on Long Term Empty Homes for the meeting on 22 March 2027.

15. Exclusion of the Press and Public

Cllr David Brown proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded that the meeting should go into private session. A vote was taken and it was unanimously resolved:

That the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining items because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there

would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Category 3 of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

16. East Cambs Street Scene Management Accounts for the Year to 31 March 2026 – EXEMPT

The Senior Finance Manager presented a report, AB23 previously circulated, which updated the Committee on the ECSS Management Accounts for the year to 31 March 2026.

It was resolved that:

The ECSS Management Accounts for the year to 31 March 2026 be noted.

17. Exempt Minutes of the Committee held on 23 March 2026 - EXEMPT

It was resolved:

That the exempt minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 23 March 2026 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

The meeting concluded at 6.20 pm

Chair

Date.....

TITLE: Budget Monitoring Report

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 14th September 2026

Author: Director, Finance

Report number: AB65

Contact officer: Jude Antony

Director, Finance

Tel: (01353) 616470

E-mail: jude.antony@eastcambs.gov.uk

Room 127, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. This report provides Members with details of the financial position for services under the Operational Services Committee.

Recommendations

2. Members are requested to note that the Committee is currently projecting a year-end underspend of £114,000 on its revenue budget of £8,368,382
3. Members are further requested to note that the Committee has a projected capital programme outturn of £9,535,966. This includes slippage from 2025/26 and additional budget for Wheelie Bins and Food Waste Caddies.

Background/Options

4. Under Financial Regulations each policy committee is required to consider projections of financial performance against both its revenue and capital budget on a quarterly basis
5. This is the first quarterly report for the 2026/27 financial year and details actual expenditure incurred and income received as of 30th June 2026 and the current projection as to the yearend position is an underspend of £114,000.

Revenue

6. The revenue budget for each service that falls under the stewardship of this Committee has been reviewed with appendix 1 detailing the current variance and forecast outturn for each service line.
7. The significant variances of actual spend compared to profiled budgeted spend at the end of June 2026, where no variance is forecast for yearend, are detailed in the table on the next page:

Service	Variance £	Explanation
Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL)	(£36,866)	CIL transactions are treated as a revenue income or expense during the year, but any balance on the account at yearend, is transferred to reserve.
Community Projects & Grants	(£23,580)	Facility improvement grants weren't paid in the first quarter.
Crematorium	(£42,722)	The favourable variance is primarily due to the timing of expenditure against the 2026/27 budget. The variance is therefore expected to reduce as expenditure is incurred during the remainder of the financial year.
Environmental Health	(£94,611)	The favourable variance is mainly due to the timing of grant income relating to the MHCLG Renters' Rights Act, received/recognised earlier than anticipated.
Care & Repair	£55,992	Disabled Facility Grant improvements to clients' homes in Fenland have been carried out in the first quarter of the year, the invoices for these will be raised in quarter two.
Homelessness	£295,579	The variance is mainly due to grant income being received later in the financial year than in previous years. The position is expected to improve as the grant income is received.
Marketing & Grants	(£25,866)	The favourable variance is due to 2025/26 accrued expenditure not yet being paid in the current financial year.
Refuse Collection Refuse Recycling	(£22,778) (£167,630)	The favourable variance is due to payments being made later than originally anticipated.
Traveller Sites	£12,740	The variance is due to income being transferred in Quarter 2 and is therefore a timing difference.

8. The net revenue expenditure for this Committee at yearend is forecast to be £8,254,382. This is an underspend of £114,000 when compared to the approved budget.

Building Regulations	£40,000	There has, however, been a change in the type of application, from new dwellings and larger extension projects to smaller extension and conversions. These attract less fees, which has resulted in less fee income than anticipated. A full fee review has taken place, and new fees will be implemented during the second half of the year which address some of the shortfall, plus new charges regulations will allow us to make charges for work which currently we have to offer free of charge (FOC)
Emergency Planning	£16,000	This relates to the council's increased contribution towards the Cambridge & Peterborough Local Reliance Forum.
Licensing	(£100,000)	The licensing team continues to expand due to additional work entering the department. The discretionary fees continue to be monitored and are formally reviewed annually in November. It is forecast that the service will underspend at year end. This underspend will support the corporate charges incurred by the service outside of the direct Licencing budget
Planning	(£70,000)	A strong start to the year with some large applications and pre-app enquiries received with associated PPA agreements to allow the Council to be able to resource accordingly. The Planning service has reduced its reliance on temporary staff and has filled a number of its vacancies with permanent staff members.

Capital

- The revised capital budget for Operational Services stands at £9,535,966, including slippage of £5,772,063 brought forward from 2025/26. This includes £27,506 for Conservation Area Schemes – 2nd round, £1,032,993 for Refuse & Cleansing Vehicles, £786,909 for Wheelie Bins, £168,147 for Food Waste Caddies, £188,116 for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, £39,157 for Empty Properties, Discretionary DFGs, Minor Works and Home Repair Assistance, and £3,529,235 for the Bereavement Centre.

10. The current forecast for Committee is a balanced budget position on capital at yearend.

Arguments/Conclusions

11. The current forecast is that the Committee's net revenue position will be a £114,000 underspend at the end of this financial year.

Additional Implications Assessment

12. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications Yes	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

13. You only need to put 'Yes' in the above boxes, if the content of your report has **new or additional** implications relating to the listed areas. You do not need answer yes, if the proposals do not impact upon current finance or staffing levels or do not have new/changed legal requirements. If you put yes in any of the boxes, you need to give a brief summary of the implications under the relevant heading, for example:

Financial implications

14. The Committee's underspend has been incorporated into the overall 2026/27 Council Finance Report, which is to be presented to Finance and Assets Committee on the 24th September 2026. Any over or underspend at yearend, will be transferred to the Surplus Savings Reserve to assist in balancing the budget in future years.

Appendices

15. Appendix 1 – Revenue budget monitoring report – 30th June 2026.

Appendix 2 – Capital budget monitoring report – 30th June 2026.

Background documents

Council Budget as approved by Full Council on the 24th February 2026.

Operational Services Committee - Budget Monitoring Report - June 2026

Revenue	Total Budget 2026-27	Profiled Budget to 30 June 2026	Actual to 30 June 2026	Variance	Forecast Outturn	Variance between Total Budget & Projected Outturn
	£		£	£	£	£
Building Regulations	45,677	(7,083)	(104,882)	(97,799)	85,677	40,000
CIL	0	0	(36,866)	(36,866)	0	
Community Projects & Grants	212,295	72,297	48,717	(23,580)	212,295	
Community Safety	73,219	35,113	39,288	4,175	73,219	
Cons. Area & Listed Buildings	77,144	19,286	21,194	1,908	77,144	
Crematorium	242,649	105,558	62,836	(42,722)	242,649	
Customer Services	649,638	169,537	167,069	(2,468)	649,638	
Dog Warden Scheme	50,674	12,194	15,138	2,944	50,674	
Emergency Planning	34,578	8,616	32,941	24,325	50,578	16,000
Environmental	53,377	13,344	5,012	(8,332)	53,377	
Environmental Health	708,373	177,851	83,240	(94,611)	708,373	
Care & Repair	(25,836)	73,986	129,978	55,992	(25,836)	
Homelessness	383,692	(550,977)	(255,398)	295,579	383,692	
Leisure Centre	(548,183)	0	500	500	(548,183)	
Licencing	(105,213)	(25,553)	(116,123)	(90,570)	(205,213)	(100,000)
Marketing & Grants	33,766	6,552	(19,314)	(25,866)	33,766	
Parish Forums	1,561	390	0	(390)	1,561	
Nuisances	119,898	29,975	29,262	(713)	119,898	
Planning	419,250	169,537	70,348	(99,189)	349,250	(70,000)
Public Relations	130,557	32,639	31,971	(668)	130,557	
Refuse Collection	1,438,796	335,191	312,413	(22,778)	1,438,796	
Refuse Recycling	3,048,931	1,100,283	932,653	(167,630)	3,048,931	
Street Cleansing	1,284,471	321,118	317,599	(3,519)	1,284,471	
Street Naming & Numbering	39,067	9,017	12,834	3,817	39,067	
Travellers Sites	0	(88)	12,652	12,740	0	
Revenue Total	8,368,382	2,108,783	1,793,062	(315,721)	8,254,382	(114,000)

Capital Monitoring 2026/27

Capital	Published Budget 2026-27	Slippage from 2025-26	Additions	Revised Budget 2026-27	Actual at 30 Jun 2026	Outturn	Variance between Revised Budget & Outturn
	£	£	£	£	£	£	£
OPERATIONAL SERVICES							
Conservation Area Schemes - 2nd round		27,506		27,506	0	27,506	0
Refuse & Cleansing Vehicles	80,000	1,032,993		1,112,993	69,002	1,112,993	0
Waste - Wheelied Bins	40,000	786,909		826,909	993,669	993,669	166,760
Food Waste Caddies		168,147		168,147	290,408	290,408	122,261
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants	697,299	188,116		885,415	319,015	885,415	0
Empty Properties, Discretionary DFGs, Minor Works, Home Repair Asst.	75,000	39,157		114,157	10,071	114,157	0
Vehicle Etc. Replacements	100,000			100,000	62,726	100,000	0
Bereavement Centre	2,482,583	3,529,235		6,011,818	2,291,032	6,011,818	0
Leisure Centre				0			0
Operational Services Total	3,474,882	5,772,063	0	9,246,945	4,035,923	9,535,966	289,021
Total	3,474,882	5,772,063	0	9,246,945	4,035,923	9,535,966	289,021

SOURCES OF FINANCING	Published Budget 2026-27	Slippage from 2025-26	Additions	Revised Budget 2026-27
	£	£	£	£
Operational Services				
Government Grants (DFG)	602,678	188,116		790,794
Government Grants (Food Waste)		894,056		894,056
Capital Receipts	209,621	66,663		276,284
Borrowing	(420,000)	1,093,993	0	673,993
Section 106 / CIL	3,082,583	3,529,235		6,611,818
Operational Services Total	3,474,882	5,772,063	0	9,246,945
Capital Funding Total	3,474,882	5,772,063	0	9,246,945

Outturn	Variances
£	£
790,794	0
894,056	0
276,284	0
963,014	289,021
6,611,818	0
9,535,966	289,021
9,535,966	289,021

TITLE: ECSS FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2025/26 & ANNUAL GOVERNANCE STATEMENT 2025/26

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 14 September 2026

Author: ECSS Finance Manager and ECSS Managing Director

Report number: AB64

Contact officer:

Nigel Ankers, ECSS Finance Manager

Nigel.ankers@palacegreenhomes.co.uk, 01353 616393.

Issue

1. To receive the East Cambs Street Scene Financial Statements and Annual Governance Statement for 2025/26.

Recommendations

2. Members are asked to note the East Cambs Street Scene Financial Statements 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 1.
3. Members are asked to note the East Cambs Street Scene Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 as set out in Appendix 2.

Background/Options

4. East Cambs Street Scene (ECSS) auditors, Price Bailey, have issued an unqualified opinion on the statements and confirmed that they give a true and fair view of the state of ECSS's affairs as at 31 March 2026. They also confirm that they have been prepared in accordance with the relevant laws and regulations.
5. The ECSS 2025/26 accounts were approved by ECSS Board on 27th August 2026.
6. The ECSS Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 was approved by ECSS Board on 27th August 2026.

Arguments/Conclusions

7. The 2025/26 Financial Statements and the Annual Governance Statement 2025/26 are now provided to Operational Services Committee as Shareholder Committee for noting.

Additional Implications Assessment

Financial Implications	Legal Implications	Human Resources (HR) Implications
No	No	No

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)
No	No	No

Appendices

Appendix 1 – ECSS Financial Statements 2025-26

Appendix 2 – ECSS Annual Governance Statement 2025-26

Background documents

None

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

**DIRECTORS' REPORT AND
FINANCIAL STATEMENTS**

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

DRAFT

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

COMPANY INFORMATION

Directors	P J Remington J Hill (Resigned 31 December 2025) S Bonnett E Grima (Appointed 5 February 2026)
Company secretary	E L Grima
Company number	11150811
Registered office	The Grange Nutholt Lane Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4EE
Auditors	Price Bailey LLP Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors Tennyson House Cambridge Business Park Cambridge CB4 0WZ

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

CONTENTS

	Page
Directors' report	1 - 2
Independent Auditors' report	3 - 5
Statement of Comprehensive Income	6
Statement of Financial Position	7
Statement of Changes in Equity	8
Cash Flow Statement	9
Notes to the Financial Statements	10 - 22

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

DIRECTORS' REPORT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

The directors present their report and the audited financial statements of the company for the period ended 31 March 2026.

Directors

The directors who served during the period were:

P J Remington
J Hill (resigned 31 December 2025)
S M Bonnett
E Grima (appointed 5 February 2026)

Statement of directors' responsibilities

The directors are responsible for preparing the Annual Report and the financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company law requires the directors to prepare financial statements for each financial period. Under that law the directors have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards. Under company law the directors must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the directors are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the company's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

The directors are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the corporate and financial information included on the company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Statement as to disclosure of information to auditors

So far as the directors are aware, there is no relevant audit information (as defined by Section 418 of the Companies Act 2006) of which the company's auditors are unaware, and each director has taken all the steps that he ought to have taken as a director in order to make himself aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the company's auditors are aware of that information.

Auditors

The auditors, Price Bailey LLP, will be proposed for re-appointment at the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

DIRECTORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026**

Small companies note.

In preparing this report, the directors have taken advantage of the small companies exemptions provided by section 415A of the Companies Act 2006.

This report was approved by the board on and signed on its behalf.

E Grima
Director

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of East Cambs Street Scene Limited (the 'Company') for the year ended 31 March 2026 which comprise The Statement of Comprehensive Income, Statement of Financial Position, Statement of Changes in Equity, Cash Flow Statement and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and UK adopted international accounting standards.

In our opinion the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the company's affairs as at 31 March 2026 and of the profit for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with UK adopted international accounting standards;
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

In auditing the financial statements, we have concluded that the director's use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is appropriate.

Based on the work we have performed, we have not identified any material uncertainties relating to events or conditions that, individually or collectively, may cast significant doubt on the company's ability to continue as a going concern for a period of at least twelve months from when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Our responsibilities and the responsibilities of the directors with respect to going concern are described in the relevant sections of this report.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The directors are responsible for the other information contained within the annual report. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon. Our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the course of the audit, or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether this gives rise to a material misstatement in the financial statements themselves. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the Directors' Report for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the Directors' Report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the Directors' Report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters where the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report to you if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of Directors' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the Directors were not entitled to take advantage of the small companies exemptions in preparing the Director's Report and from the requirement to prepare a Strategic Report.

Responsibilities of Directors

As explained more fully in the Directors' Responsibilities Statement set out on page 1, the Directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the Directors determine necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the Directors are responsible for assessing the company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the Directors either intend to liquidate the company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditors' responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an Auditor's Report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below:

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT (CONTINUED) TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the company and the industry in which it operates and considered the risk of non-compliance with the applicable laws and regulations including fraud, in particular those that could have a material impact on the financial statements.

This included those regulations directly related to the financial statements, including financial reporting, tax legislation and distributable profits. In relation to the industry this included employment laws and health and safety.

The risks were discussed with the audit team and we remained alert to any indications of non-compliance throughout the audit. We carried out specific procedures to address the risks identified. These included the following:

Reviewing minutes of Board meetings, correspondence with their regulators, agreeing the financial statement disclosures to underlying supporting documentation, enquiries of management including those responsible for the key regulations for any instances of actual, suspected or alleged fraud or non-compliance.

To address the risk of management override of controls, we reviewed systems and procedures to identify potential areas of management override risk. In particular, we carried out testing of journal entries and other adjustments for appropriateness, and evaluating the business rationale of significant transactions to identify large or unusual transactions. We reviewed key authorisation procedures and decision making processes for any unusual or one-off transactions. We also assessed management bias in relation to the accounting policies adopted and in determining significant accounting estimates.

Because of the inherent limitations of an audit, there is a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those leading to a material misstatement in the financial statements or non-compliance with regulation. This risk increases the more that compliance with a law or regulation is removed from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, as we will be less likely to become aware of instances of non-compliance. The risk is also greater regarding irregularities occurring due to fraud rather than error, as fraud involves intentional concealment, forgery, collusion, omission or misrepresentation.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our Auditor's Report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of Part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the company's members those matters we are required to state to them in a Report of the Auditors and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the company and the company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Stella Athanasiadou ACA (Senior Statutory Auditor)
for and on behalf of Price Bailey LLP
Chartered Accountants & Statutory Auditors
Tennyson House
Cambridge Business Park
Cambridge
CB4 0WZ

Date:

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

REGISTERED NUMBER: 11150811

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	2026	2025
Notes	£	£
CONTINUING OPERATIONS		
Revenue from contracts with Customers		
Revenue from contracts	5,001,452	4,601,370
Revenue from recycling credits	(6,795)	736,297
Sale of goods	95,237	92,156
Other income	116,378	145,665
	<u>5,206,272</u>	<u>5,575,488</u>
Cost of sales	<u>(2,985,023)</u>	<u>(3,638,735)</u>
Gross profit	<u>2,221,249</u>	<u>1,936,753</u>
Administrative expenses	<u>(2,215,727)</u>	<u>(1,931,769)</u>
Operating profit	<u>5,522</u>	<u>4,984</u>
Interest received	-	-
Profit before income tax	<u>5,522</u>	<u>4,984</u>
Income tax expense	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>
(Loss) / Profit and total comprehensive income / (loss) for the period	<u><u>5,522</u></u>	<u><u>4,984</u></u>

There were no recognised gains and losses from 2026 or 2025 other than those included in the Statement of Comprehensive Income.

The notes on pages 10 - 21 form part of these financial statements.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

REGISTERED NUMBER: 11150811

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 MARCH 2026

		2026	2025 £
Non-current assets	Notes		
Property, plant & equipment	6	67,385	30,637
Current assets			
Inventories	7	19,579	13,351
Trade and other receivables	8	100,946	207,943
Cash at bank and in hand	9	628,113	786,057
		<u>748,638</u>	<u>1,007,351</u>
Current Liabilities			
Trade and other payables	10	(789,473)	(1,016,960)
		<u>(789,473)</u>	<u>(1,016,960)</u>
Net current liabilities		(40,835)	(9,609)
Net assets		<u>26,550</u>	<u>21,028</u>
Equity			
Called up share capital	12	1	1
Retained earnings		26,549	21,027
		<u>26,550</u>	<u>21,028</u>

The financial statements were approved and authorised for issue by the board and were signed on its behalf by:

E Grima

Director

Date:

The notes on pages 10 – 21 form part of these financial statements.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

STATEMENT OF CHANGES IN EQUITY FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

	Share Capital £	Retained earnings £	Total equity £
Balance as at 1 April 2024	1	16,042	16,043
Profit for the period	-	4,984	4,984
Total comprehensive income	-	4,984	4,984
Balance as at 31 March 2025	1	21,027	21,028
Balance as at 1 April 2025	1	21,027	21,028
Profit for the period	-	5,522	5,522
Total comprehensive income	-	5,522	5,522
Balance as at 31 March 2026	1	26,549	26,550

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED
CASH FLOW STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

		2026	2025
	Notes		
Cash flows from operating activities			
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities	15	(115,322)	520,291
Net cash inflow/(outflow) from operating activities		(115,322)	520,291
Cash flows from investing activities			
Payments for plant and equipment	6	(42,622)	(11,365)
Proceeds from sale of plant and equipment		-	-
Net cash from / (used in) investing activities		(42,622)	(11,365)
Net increase in cash and cash equivalents		(157,944)	508,926
Cash and cash equivalents at beginning of year		786,057	277,131
Cash and cash equivalents at end of year	9	628,113	786,057

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1. Accounting policies

1.1 Statutory information

East Cambs Street Scene Limited is a private company limited by shares incorporated and domiciled in England and Wales, United Kingdom. The address of the registered office is The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4EE.

The Company is primarily involved in providing waste and street cleansing services to the residents of East Cambridgeshire on behalf of East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC).

The Financial Statements are presented in sterling which is the functional currency of the Company and rounded to the nearest £1.

1.2 Going concern

The Directors have prepared cash flow forecasts for a period of 12 months from the signing of the financial statements which demonstrate that the cash reserves of the company will be sufficient for it to be able to continue as a going concern.

A new contract was signed with East Cambridgeshire District Council in March 2026 with a specification to reflect the new waste legislation required by central government. This contract will run until March 2033.

The financial statements do not contain any adjustments that would be required if the Company were not able to continue as a going concern.

1.3 Compliance with accounting standards

These financial statements have been prepared in accordance with UK-adopted international accounting standards.

The financial statements have been prepared under the historical cost convention.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Revenue recognition

Revenue from contracts with customers

Revenue is recognised at an amount that reflects the consideration to which the Company is expected to be entitled in exchange for transferring goods or services to a customer. For each contract with a customer, the Company: identifies the contract with a customer; identifies the performance obligations in the contract; determines the transaction price which takes into account the time value of money; allocates the transaction price to the separate performance obligations on the basis of the relative stand-alone selling price of each distinct good or service to be delivered; and recognises revenue when or as each performance obligation is satisfied in a manner that depicts the transfer to the customer of the goods promised. It also gives consideration to significant payment terms, obligations for returns and/or refunds.

East Cambridgeshire District Council is the main customer. The company is awarded the contract as part of a joint venture with East Cambridgeshire District Council for waste collection and street cleansing services. The current contract expired on 31 March 2026 but a new contract starting April 1, 2026, and in force for seven years, has been agreed. Performance obligations are satisfied on performing the service and payments are made monthly.

Sale of goods

The Company's other revenue mainly comprises the sale of recycling bins. Revenue is recognised at the point in time when the customer obtains control of the goods, which is generally at the time of delivery and the time when the performance obligation of the Company has been satisfied. Payments are received on placing the order.

Other income

Other income relates to the provision of ad-hoc services to residents, housing associations or companies within the district and is recognised when the service has been provided.

1.5 Property, plant and equipment

Property, plant and equipment is stated at historical cost less accumulated depreciation and any accumulated impairment losses. Historical cost includes expenditure that is directly attributable to bringing the asset to the location and condition necessary for it to be capable of operating in the manner intended by management.

Depreciation is charged so as to allocate the cost of assets less their residual value over their estimated useful lives, using the straight-line method.

The estimated useful lives range as follows:

Leasehold improvements	- 7 years
Plant & Machinery	- 5-8 years
Fixtures & Fittings	- 5-12 years
IT Equipment	- 4-5 years

The assets' residual values, useful lives and depreciation methods are reviewed, and adjusted prospectively if appropriate, or if there is an indication of a significant change since the last reporting date.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.6 Trade and other receivables

Short term receivables are measured initially at transaction price and are measured subsequently at amortised cost.

1.7 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash is represented by cash in hand and deposits with financial institutions repayable without penalty on notice of not more than 24 hours.

1.8 Operating profit

Operating profit consists of items which are operational nature, excluding investment income and finance cost.

1.9 Trade and other payables

Short term payables are measured fair value, and subsequently at amortised cost. Other financial liabilities, including bank loans, are measured initially at fair value, net of transaction costs, and are measured subsequently at amortised cost using the effective interest method.

1.10 Provisions

A provision is recognised if, as a result of a past event, the Company has a present legal or constructive obligation that can be estimated reliably, and it is probable that an outflow of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation. Provisions are determined based on the expected future cash flows. The policies used to determine specific provisions are:

- Motor insurance – a provision is recognised based on the expected costs of claims related to motor accidents to settle the present obligation at the end of the reporting period. The expected costs of claims is based on the advice of the Company's external insurance advisers and is determined on a claim by claim basis.
- If time value of money is material, the amount of a provision shall be the present value of the expenditures expected to be required to settle the obligation. The discount rate used to determine the present value is a pre-tax rate that reflects current market assessments of the time value of money and the risks specific to the liability. The increase in the provision due to the passage of time is recognised as interest expense.

1.11 Pensions

Defined contribution pension plan

The Company operates a defined contribution plan for its employees. A defined contribution plan is a pension plan under which the Company pays fixed contributions into a separate entity. Once the contributions have been paid the Company has no further payment obligations.

The contributions are recognised as an expense in the Statement of Comprehensive Income when they fall due. Amounts not paid are shown in accruals as a liability in the Statement of Financial Position. The assets of the plan are held separately from the Company in independently administered funds.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

1. Accounting policies (continued)

1.12 Taxation

Current taxes are based on the results shown in the financial statements and are calculated according to local tax rules, using tax rates enacted or substantially enacted by the statement of financial position date.

Deferred income tax is provided, using the liability method, on temporary differences between the tax bases of assets and liabilities and their carrying amounts, in the financial statements. Deferred income tax assets relating to the carry-forward of unused tax losses are recognised to the extent that it is probable that future taxable profit will be available against which the unused tax losses can be utilised.

Current and deferred income tax assets and liabilities are offset when the income taxes are levied by the same taxation authority and when there is a legally enforceable right to offset them.

1.13 New IFRS standards and interpretations adopted

For the purpose of the preparation of these financial statements, the Company has applied all standards and interpretations that are effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 April 2025:

- Lack of Exchangeability (Amendments to IAS 21 The Effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates)

There are a number of standards, amendments to standards which have been issued by the IASB that are effective in future accounting periods that the Company has decided not to adopt early.

The following amendments are effective for the period beginning 1 April 2026:

- IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures and IFRS 9 Financial Instruments – Amendments regarding the classification and measurement of financial instruments
- IFRS 7 Financial Instruments: Disclosures and IFRS 9 Financial Instruments — Amendments regarding Contracts Referencing Nature-dependent Electricity
- Amendments to IFRS 1, IFRS 7, IFRS 9, IFRS 10 and IAS 7 resulting from Annual Improvements to IFRS Accounting Standards — Volume 11

The following amendments are effective for accounting periods beginning on or after 1 January 2027:

- IFRS 18 Presentation and Disclosure in Financial Statements
- IFRS 19 Subsidiaries without Public Accountability: Disclosures
- IAS 21 The effects of Changes in Foreign Exchange Rates

The Company has assessed the amendments to become effective in 2026, and onwards, and has concluded they have no material impact on its financial statements.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026**

1.14 Critical accounting estimates and judgements

The significant accounting judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty affecting the Company are disclosed below.

Useful lives of depreciable assets

Estimates have been made in respect of useful economic lives of property, plant and equipment, which determine the amount of depreciation charged in profit or loss. Uncertainties in these estimates relate to the technological obsolescence that may change the utility of plant and machinery and could result in a material change to the amount of depreciation recognised. These estimates are reviewed annually at the reporting date based on the expected utility of the assets. The original cost of the property, plant and equipment was £81,352 at the net book value at the end of the reporting period was £67,385

Further detail on useful life estimates is included in the accounting policy note 1.5.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

2. Profit before tax is stated after charging

	2026 £	2025 £
Rent – licence fee	40,935	39,743
Depreciation	5,874	4,495
Auditors' remuneration	29,000	27,600
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

3. Employees

	2026 £	2025 £
Wages and Salaries	2,358,787	2,249,549
Social security	292,104	221,123
Other pension costs	96,910	88,554
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u>2,747,801</u>	<u>2,559,226</u>

The average monthly number of employees during the year was as follows:

	2026	2025
Directors	3	3
Direct labour	62	59
Administration	7	9
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	<u>72</u>	<u>71</u>

4. Directors' remuneration

The Directors did not receive any remuneration from the Company as a result of their employment.

5. Income tax

	2026 £	2025 £
Corporation tax		
Profit before tax	5,522	4,984
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Profit multiplied by the standard rate of corporation tax in the UK of 19%	1,049	947
Depreciation in excess of capital allowances	(133)	(1,640)
Movement in unrelieved pension provision	490	-
Loss (utilised in the year) / carried forward	(1,406)	693
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Tax expense	-	-
	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

The Company has trading losses of £2,727 carried forward (2025 - £10,128)

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

6. Property, plant and equipment

	Leasehold Improvements	Fixtures & Fittings	Plant & Machinery	IT Equipment	Total
Cost					
As at 1 April 2025	-	25,641	3,253	9,837	38,731
Additions	37,500	-	3,250	1,872	42,622
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31 March 2026	<u>37,500</u>	<u>25,641</u>	<u>6,503</u>	<u>11,709</u>	<u>81,353</u>
Depreciation					
As at 1 April 2025	-	(4,515)	(1,288)	(2,291)	(8,094)
Charge for the year	-	(2,363)	(840)	(2,671)	(5,874)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31 March 2026	=	<u>(6,878)</u>	<u>(2,128)</u>	<u>(4,962)</u>	<u>(13,968)</u>
Net Book Value					
As at 31 March 2026	<u>37,500</u>	<u>18,763</u>	<u>4,375</u>	<u>6,747</u>	<u>67,385</u>
As at 31 March 2025	=	<u>21,126</u>	<u>1,965</u>	<u>7,546</u>	<u>30,637</u>
Cost					
	Leasehold Improvements	Fixtures & Fittings	Plant & Machinery	IT Equipment	Total
Cost					
As at 1 April 2024	-	15,830	3,253	8,283	27,366
Additions	-	9,811	-	1,554	11,365
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31 March 2025	=	<u>25,641</u>	<u>3,253</u>	<u>9,837</u>	<u>38,731</u>
Depreciation					
As at 1 April 2024	-	(2,637)	(881)	(81)	(3,599)
Charge for the year	-	(1,878)	(407)	(2,210)	(4,495)
Disposals	-	-	-	-	-
As at 31 March 2025	=	<u>(4,515)</u>	<u>(1,288)</u>	<u>(2,291)</u>	<u>(8,094)</u>
Net Book Value					
As at 31 March 2025	=	<u>21,126</u>	<u>1,965</u>	<u>7,546</u>	<u>30,637</u>
As at 31 March 2024	=	<u>13,193</u>	<u>2,372</u>	<u>8,202</u>	<u>23,767</u>

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

7. Inventories

	2026 £	2025 £
Inventories	19,579	13,351
Inventories recognised as an expense and included in cost of sales totalled £392,426 (2025: £369,733).		

8. Trade and other receivables

	2026 £	2025 £
Trade receivables	2,959	7,371
Amounts owed by group entities	77,999	167,491
Prepayments and accrued income	19,988	33,081
Amounts due from insurers (see note 18)	-	-
	100,946	207,943

9. Cash and cash equivalents

	2026 £	2025 £
Cash at bank and in hand	628,113	786,057

10. Trade and other payables

	2026 £	2025 £
Current		
Trade payables	221,751	100,327
Amounts owed to group entities	165,508	586,649
Other taxation and social security	213,161	151,003
Corporation tax	-	-
Other payables	13,762	12,168
Accruals and deferred income	175,291	166,813
	789,473	1,016,960

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

11. Financial Instruments

Financial assets and liabilities

The carrying value of the company's financial assets and liabilities as recognised at the year end of the years under review may also be categorised as follows:

As 31 March 2025	Financial assets at amortised cost £	Financial liabilities at amortised cost £	Total balance sheet heading £
Cash and cash equivalents	786,057	-	786,057
Trade receivables	7,371	-	7,371
Amounts owed from group entities	167,491	-	167,491
Other receivables	33,081	-	33,081
Trade payables	-	(100,327)	(100,327)
Amounts owed to group entities	-	(586,649)	(586,649)
Accruals & deferred income	-	(166,813)	(166,813)
Other payables - current	-	(12,168)	(12,168)
Total	994,000	(865,957)	128,043

As 31 March 2026	Financial assets at amortised cost £	Financial liabilities at amortised cost £	Total balance sheet heading £
Cash and cash equivalents	628,113	-	628,113
Trade receivables	2,959	-	2,959
Amounts owed from group entities	77,999	-	77,999
Other receivables	19,988	-	19,988
Trade payables	-	(221,751)	(221,751)
Amounts owed to group entities	-	(165,508)	(165,508)
Accruals & deferred income	-	(175,291)	(175,291)
Other payables - current	-	(13,762)	(13,762)
Total	729,059	(576,312)	152,747

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

11. Financial Instruments (continued)

Financial risk management objectives and policies

The company's financial risk management policy seeks to ensure that adequate financial resources are available for the development of the company's business whilst managing its risks. The company does not engage in speculative transactions or hedging transactions.

The company's principal financial instruments consist of cash and cash equivalents and loans. The main purpose of these financial instruments is to finance the company's operations. The company has other financial instruments such as trade receivables and trade payables that arise directly from its operations.

The directors have overall responsibility for the establishment and oversight of the company's risk management and they recognise that financial risk management is an area in which they may need to develop specific policies should the company become exposed to further financial risks as the business develops. The directors currently ensure that the company has sufficient cash and cash equivalents to ensure there is sufficient reserves to support the business operations. The exposure to other financial instruments are limited to those generated through the operations and borrowings.

The main risks arising from the company's financial instruments are credit risk, interest rate risk and liquidity risk. The Board have also considered currency and market risk but do not believe these to be significant. This note presents information about the company's exposure to each of the main risks. The Board reviews and agrees policies for managing each of these risks as and when they arise. Further quantitative disclosures are included throughout the financial information.

There have not been any material changes in respect of the exposure to financial risks during the periods presented.

Credit risk

The company's exposure to credit risk is limited to the carrying amount of cash deposits and trade and other receivables recognised at the year-end of £729,058 (2025: £994,000). The risks associated with cash deposits are limited as the banks used are reputable. The principal credit risk therefore lies with trade receivables and in order to manage credit risk, limits are set for customers based upon a combination of payment history and third-party credit references.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

11. Financial Instruments (continued)

The company held cash and cash equivalents of £628,113 at 31 March 2026 (2025: £786,057). The cash and cash equivalents are held at NatWest Bank which is rated A to A+ at leading credit rating agencies and so the company considers these to have a low credit risk.

Interest rate risk

Interest rate risk is the risk that the value of financial assets will fluctuate due to changes in market interest rates. The company's income and operating cash flows and the value of its financial assets are largely independent of changes in market interest rates.

Liquidity risk

Liquidity risk is the risk that the company will not be able to meet its financial obligations as they fall due. The company's policy throughout the year has been to ensure that it has adequate liquidity to meet its liabilities when due by careful management of its working capital.

	Less than one year £	More than one year £	Total £
2026			
Trade and other payables	789,473	-	789,473

	Less than one year £	More than one year £	Total £
2025			
Trade and other payables	1,016,960	-	1,016,960

Fair values

The carrying amounts of all financial assets and liabilities of the company as disclosed in the notes to the financial information are approximately their fair values.

Capital management

The company's objectives when managing capital are to safeguard the company's ability to continue as a going concern in order to provide returns for shareholders, benefits for other stakeholders and to maintain an optimal capital structure to reduce the cost of capital with an appropriate level of leverage for the size of the business so as to maintain investor, creditor and market confidence and to sustain future development of the business. In order to maintain or adjust the capital structure, the company may return capital to shareholders, issue new shares or sell assets to reduce debt.

Market Risk

Market risk is that the fair value or future cash flows of a financial instrument will fluctuate because of changes in market prices, such as currency or interest rates. The company's cash flows are largely independent of any interest rates or currency fluctuations.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026

12. Share capital

	2026 £	2025 £
Share classified as equity		
Allotted, called up and fully paid		
1 Ordinary share of £1	1	1
	=	=

13. Related Party Transactions

In line with paragraph 25 of IAS24, the company has taken advantage of the exemption from the requirement to disclose transactions with East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC) and connected companies due to the control exercised by ECDC by virtue of it being the only shareholder.

All of the income categorised under revenue from contracts derives from the contract the company has with ECDC.

14. Details of Parent Undertaking

The Ultimate parent undertaking is East Cambridgeshire District Council, registered address The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB7 4EE.

15. Net cash inflow from operating activities

	2026 £	2025 £
Profit before income tax	5,522	4,984
Depreciation	5,874	4,495
	<u>11,396</u>	<u>9,479</u>
Increase in inventories	(6,228)	(2,295)
Decrease in trade and other receivables	106,997	332,775
(Decrease) / increase in trade and other payables	(227,487)	308,595
Decrease in provisions for liabilities	-	(128,263)
	<u>(115,322)</u>	<u>520,291</u>
Net cash (outflow) / inflow from operating activities	(115,322)	520,291

16. Reserves

The following is a description of each of the reserve accounts that comprise equity shareholders' funds:

Share capital	The share capital comprises the issued ordinary shares of the company at par.
Retained earnings	Retained earnings comprise the company's cumulative accounting profits and losses since inception.

EAST CAMBS STREET SCENE LIMITED

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS (CONTINUED) **FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2026**

17. Pension commitments

The company operates a defined contribution pension scheme. The assets of the scheme are held separately from those of the company in an independently administered fund. The pension cost charge represents contributions payable by the company to the fund and amounted to £96,910 (2025 - £88,554).

Contributions totalling £13,762 (2025 - £12,168) were payable to the fund at the year end and are included in creditors.

18. Events after the reporting period

There were no events after the end of the reporting period that require disclosure.

Annual Governance Statement 2025/26

Introduction

East Cambs Street Scene Ltd (ECSS) is a private company limited by shares wholly owned by East Cambridgeshire District Council (ECDC). The Company operates at arm's length from the Council with an independent board for operational decision making. It remains accountable to its shareholder through the Articles of Association and Shareholder Agreement.

Mission Statement

We believe that by continuing to develop the services that we offer we will be able to deliver services that are profitable, sustainable and flexible and are focused on meeting the needs of local people and businesses in East Cambridgeshire.

Vision

We believe in improving the quality of life of the taxpayer of East Cambridgeshire and we believe in the Council's objectives that are set out in the Corporate Plan. East Cambs Street Scene Limited will continue to support the Council in achieving objectives.

Strategic Objectives

- To deliver an efficient, resilient, high-quality waste and street cleansing service for the people of East Cambridgeshire.
- To maximise on every commercial opportunity available, and
- To trade in a manner that, wherever possible, acts in the best interest of the Council.

Our Service will be:

- Flexible – Innovative and tailor-made options to meet the needs of the customer.
- Climate Conscious – Operate in a way that reduces the impact on the environment.
- Local – Wherever possible (and relevant) utilise local suppliers.
- Trusted – Reliable services delivered by skilled staff.

These principles continue to underpin the Company's activities and decision-making.

Governance Framework

ECSS is governed through:

- Articles of Association
- Shareholder Agreement
- Memorandum of Agreement with East Cambridgeshire District Council.
- Annual Business Plan.

- Financial Regulations and Internal Controls.
- Risk Management Framework.
- Health and Safety Management Arrangements.

These arrangements provide the framework through which the Company directs and controls its activities and manages risk.

Review of Governance Arrangements During 2025/26

Board Governance

During 2025/26 the Board continued to operate within the requirements of the Articles of Association and Shareholder Agreement. Board meetings were held regularly and received reports covering:

- Financial Performance.
- Service Performance.
- Risk Management.
- Business Planning.
- Health and Safety.
- Governance Matters.

The Board maintained effective oversight of the Company's operations and strategic direction throughout the year.

The retirement of John Hill as Managing Director and Board Member was identified as a governance change requiring succession planning and implementation during 2025/26. Appropriate arrangements, including Council approvals, were put in place to ensure continuity of leadership and governance. Emma Grima succeeds John Hill as Managing Director and Board Manager.

Shareholder Oversight

The Operational Services Committee continued to act as shareholder Committee on behalf of the Council and fulfilled its responsibilities through:

- Review and approval of the business plan.
- Receiving performance reports.
- Monitoring financial performance.
- Receiving statutory accounts and governance reports.

Regular reporting ensured effective shareholder oversight.

Financial Governance

The Company maintained appropriate financial management and control arrangements throughout 2025/26.

Key assurances include:

- Preparation of financial statements in accordance with relevant accounting standards.
- Independent external audit by Price Bailey LLP.
- Regular management accounts presented to Board and Shareholder Committee.
- Cashflow monitoring and financial forecasting.
- Appropriate budget monitoring arrangements.
- Procurement carried out in accordance with ECDC Policy and Procedure.

No significant governance failures relating to financial management were identified during the year. External audit provide assurance regarding the adequacy of the Company's financial arrangements.

Risk Management

The Board maintained a strategic risk register throughout 2025/26, with risk updates considered at each formal Board meeting.

The principle strategic risks monitored include:

- Legislative and regulatory changes affecting waste services.
- Future service delivery arrangements between ECSS and ECDC.
- Regulatory compliance.
- Governance effectiveness and clarity of roles.
- Shareholder decision-making dependencies.
- Financial sustainability and unforeseen cost pressures.
- Workforce recruitment and retention.
- Operational performance and contract management.
- Adequacy of organisational resources.

Risk monitoring and mitigation actions remained in place throughout the year and no significant governance failures arose from these risks during 2025/26.

Operational Governance

Performance monitoring remained a core aspect of governance.

Throughout 2025/26, the Board received reports covering:

- Waste collection performance.
- Recycling performance.
- Street cleansing standards.
- Health and Safety indicators.
- Customer complaints and compliments.

Performance generally remained strong, particularly in street cleansing activities, with ongoing management focus on service improvement and delivery resilience.

Health and Safety

The Company maintained its Health and Safety management arrangements during 2025/26. The Corporate Health & Safety Policy was approved in September 2025.

Following an accident in January 2026 and independent investigation was undertaken during the year and did not identify significant compliance failures and provided recommendations for continuous improvement. Where incidents occurred, investigations were undertaken and learning incorporated into operational practices.

The Board received the outcome of the January 2026 investigation and approved improvement plan.

Governance Challenges and Future Improvements

During 2025/26 the Company identified the following areas for continued attention during 2026/27:

- Embedding governance arrangements following leadership changes.
- Implementation of the new contractual arrangements between ECDC and ECSS from June 2026.
- Continued development of workforce resilience and succession planning.
- Strengthening health and safety arrangements following operational incidents.
- Maintaining service performance during the implementation of service changes.
- Responding to local government reorganisation change where relevant.

These matters will continue to be monitored through the Board's governance and risk management arrangements.

Annual Governance Opinion

The Board has reviewed the effectiveness of its governance arrangements during 2025/26 and is satisfied that:

- Governance arrangements remain fit for purpose.
- Effective systems of internal control operated throughout the year.
- Appropriate financial management arrangements were in place.
- Risks were actively managed and monitored.
- The Company remained compliant with the requirements of its governing documents.
- No significant governance failures were identified requiring disclosure within this statement.

The Board therefore concludes that East Cambs Street Scene Limited maintained an effective governance framework throughout 2025/26 and that the Company's governance arrangements remain proportionate, robust and appropriate to its scale and activities.

TITLE: APPROVAL OF THE 2018/2019 FOOD AND HEALTH AND SAFETY SERVICE PLAN

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 14th September

Author: Senior Environmental Health Officer (Commercial)

Report number: AB63

Contact officer: Richard Garnett
Add name and job title Senior Environmental Health Officer
richard.garnett@eastcambs.gov.uk
01353 616472
Room SF202, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. The Council needs to update its service plan for both food and safety to satisfy requirements of the Food Standards Agency and Health and Safety Executive.

Recommendations

2. The Committee is asked to approve the East Cambridgeshire District Council Food and Health and Safety Service Plan at Appendix 1.

Background/Options

3. Officers are authorised by East Cambridgeshire District Council to carry out a number of statutory functions according to food and health and safety laws.

Under the Food Safety Act 1990 and Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement (Amendment No. 5, 2010), the Food Standards Agency requires East Cambridgeshire District Council to have a Food Safety service plan.

Under the National Local Authority enforcement Code (National Code) East Cambridgeshire District Council is required to develop and approve a Health and Safety service plan. The National Code is given legal effect under Section 18 of the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.

The Food Standards Agency requires local authorities to present its food policy in accordance with its Framework Agreement Amendment and the Health and Safety service plan has been included into this.

Arguments/Conclusions

4. The East Cambridgeshire District Council's service plans for Food and Health and Safety allow the Council to satisfy the requirements for these of both the Food Standards Agency and Health and Safety Executive.

Additional Implications Assessment

5. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications NO	Legal Implications NO	Human Resources (HR) Implications NO
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) NO	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) NO	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) NO

6. You only need to put 'Yes' in the above boxes, if the content of your report has **new or additional** implications relating to the listed areas. You do not need answer yes, if the proposals do not impact upon current finance or staffing levels or do not have new/changed legal requirements. If you put yes in any of the boxes, you need to give a brief summary of the implications under the relevant heading, for example:

(a) Financial implications

7. In the case of the three impact assessment areas, you also will need to complete the relevant assessment form and forward it to the designated officer detailed in the relevant guidance. Guidance on each of these areas can be found at the listed links:

[Equality Impact Assessment](http://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/employee-self-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments) (intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/employee-self-service/equality-diversity-and-inclusion/equality-impact-assessments)

[Carbon Impact Assessment](http://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/report-template) (intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/report-template)

[Data Protection Impact Assessment](http://intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Data%20Protection%20Impact%20Assessment%20Guidance%20%282%29.pdf)
(intranet.eastcambs.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Data%20Protection%20Impact%20Assessment%20Guidance%20%282%29.pdf)

Appendices

Appendix 1 ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, FOOD SAFETY and HEALTH AND SAFETY, SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS

Background documents

Background Documents Food Standards Agency Framework Agreement Amendment No.5: April 2010

Food Safety Act 1990 s.40

Health and Safety Executive LAC 67 (2)

National Local Authority (LA) Enforcement Code



**ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH
FOOD SAFETY and HEALTH AND SAFETY
SERVICE DELIVERY PLANS**

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	PAGE 3
SECTION 1: SERVICE AIMS & KEY PRIORITIES	PAGE 4
Service Aims	
Key Priorities	
SECTION 2: BACKGROUND	PAGE 5
District Profile	
Organisational Structure	
External Partners	
Scope of the Food Service	
Demands on the Food Service	
Access to the Service	
Challenges	
Enforcement Policy and its application in Food Safety Service Delivery	
SECTION 3: SERVICE DELIVERY	PAGE 10
Food Premises Interventions	
Primary Authority Scheme	
Advice to Business	
Food Sampling	
Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Diseases	
Food Safety Incidents	
SECTION 4: HEALTH AND SAFETY	PAGE 13
Overview	
Primary and Home Authority	
Targeting Inspections	
4.4. Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act	
Competencies and procedures	
SECTION 5: RESOURCES	PAGE 16
Financial Allocation	
Staffing Allocation	
Staff Development Plan	
SECTION 6: QUALITY ASSESSMENT	PAGE 17
Consistency	
SECTION 7: REVIEW	PAGE 17
Review of this Service Plan	

INTRODUCTION

Food Safety and Health and Safety at Work remain important statutory regulatory functions for councils, at the centre of their Environmental Health services and both play a vital role in maintaining public safety. This document sets out what those functions do and importantly, how those duties are carried out. It therefore gives context around what both businesses and the public can expect when interacting with the services.

In common with other Food Safety Authorities, we are facing challenges caused by the increasing cost of living causing business to try and cut costs. Major changes in the way consumers access food, often via direct delivery rather than restaurant visits, present additional problems through a breakdown of the direct customer-restaurant relationship. There is also an increase in the number of home businesses that are registering, providing everything from cakes to ethnic cuisine, and food supplements.

Our role remains to help ensure food businesses produce and deliver products which are safe and produced from premises which are hygienic and properly controlled, thereby also helping the business to grow and thrive. It is also to provide information to the public to help them make informed choices about what and where to eat.

In addition, the team enforces Health and Safety in allocated premises. In 2027 we see the full implementation of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025, designed to improve public safety by requiring venues and events to prepare for and reduce the risk of terrorist attacks. This will affect venues with buildings holding more than 200 attendees, or outside spaces holding gatherings of more than 900. Through our work with event organisers, we will start to disseminate information produced by central government.

Our enforcement model seeks to protect public health, by supporting those businesses which seek to comply, and regulating and enforcing against those who do not, and who pose unacceptable risks to customers and workers alike.

This service plan forms the foundation of the service until the end of the council year in March 2027, and most likely the year after. Whilst Local Government Reorganisation may well change the structure of the service, it is likely that the key components of this Plan will change little, thus giving us a good foundation from which to move forward.

Nick Baker

Waste and Environmental Services Manager

1. **FOOD SAFETY AIMS AND KEY PRIORITIES**

1.1. **Service Aims**

Governmental Policy on food controls is dealt with by the Food Standards Agency (FSA). They set out through the Food Law Code of Practice, and the accompanying Practice Guidance, how food safety authorities should inspect, rate, and enforce food hygiene legislation. East Cambridgeshire District Council are expected to undertake all official food safety controls and related activities prescribed in specific legislation and those recommended within specific guidance as well as meeting the requirements of the FSA.

Food Safety inspection and enforcement is undertaken by the Environmental Health Commercial Team (the Team). The aim is to provide a food safety service in East Cambridgeshire that is proportional to the risk presented and consistent in the standards businesses are expected to maintain.

The annual inspection program is devised to align with the inspection frequencies published in the Food Law Code of Practice and the accompanying Practice Guidance¹. Inspecting officers are qualified, competent, and duly authorised to carry out the full range of interventions.

The Team spends time with new high-risk businesses to give them the best chance of earning and maintaining a high standard of hygiene compliance and works with existing businesses with the same aim.

The workplan consists of the delivery of:

- official controls where nature and frequency are prescribed in specific legislation,
- reactive work including enforcement in the case of non-compliance, managing food incidents and food hazards,
- investigation into and managing food complaints, and
- sampling in response to emerging issues and in support of national studies.

1.2. **Key Priorities**

The Covid pandemic of 2020-23 impacted on the food inspection programme through businesses not trading as normal, and the diverting of resources to enable the Council's specific functions under the pandemic. At the start of 2025 the inspection program was back to normal, but there were peaks and troughs in the inspection numbers throughout the year. A key priority has been to set the inspection numbers so that the team has an achievable target, whilst also ensuring all inspections are completed in accordance with the FSA's requirements.

¹ Food Law Code of Practice (England) (October 2025) and Practice Guidance (England) (October 2025)

Appendix 1

The table below summarises the frequency of interventions for different risk categories of food businesses, where A is the highest risk

Risk Category	Minimum Inspection Frequency
A	At least every 6 months
B	At least every 12 months
C	At least every 18 months
D	At least every 24 months
E	A programme of alternative enforcement strategies or interventions every three years.

In addition, our service priorities are set:

- To ensure that interventions are carried out commensurate with the principles of risk ensuring compliance with the relevant food laws.
- To ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, that imported food used or sold in premises within the district complies with all relevant Food Law.
- To ensure food complaints are investigated.
- To undertake a food sampling regime based on local and national priorities.
- To provide informed and helpful advice to businesses and the public alike on matters relating to food safety.
- To act on food safety alerts promptly and in a manner that is proportionate to the risks involved.
- To play an active role with neighbouring local authorities to ensure a consistent approach to food law enforcement.

2. **BACKGROUND**

2.1. **District Profile**

East Cambridgeshire District has approximately 850 food premises which are regulated by the council. We liaise closely with our partners across the county to ensure a consistent and effective regulatory service.

2.2. **Organisational Structure**

The official food controls are undertaken by the Commercial Team who sit within the wider Waste and Environmental Services Department. The departmental lead is the Waste and Environmental Services Manager who in turn reports to the Director of Operations. The department reports to the Operational Services Committee.

Appendix 1

The Senior Environmental Health Officer in the Commercial team (SEHO) is designated as the Lead Food Officer. They undertake the day-to-day management of the Team as well as contributing to inspection and complaint investigations.

As well as undertaking the official controls laid out by the FSA, the Team are also responsible for the Council's enforcement role in relation to Health and Safety at work, as well as the infection control aspects of public health legislation.

Officers are authorised to undertake a range of food, health and safety, and public health enforcement commensurate with their competence and experience. The staff establishment of the Team comprises 1 SEHO, 2 Environmental Health Officers and a Food Safety Officer representing 3.6 full-time equivalent (FTE) posts. They are supported by 0.4 FTE for administrative support.

Working closely within a small authority, the Team liaises with Licensing, Building Control, the Markets Team, Waste Management, and Ely Tourism.

2.3. External Partners

External to the Council, the Team have an authorised Public Analyst (PA) with the role currently being undertaken by Public Analysts Scientific Services Ltd and a Food Examiner service undertaken by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA)².

Food Standards work, including new Food Allergen Controls, is administered by Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Trading Standards, but operationally, also dealt with by our own team, as the legislation recognises both services have a key role to play.

The Team liaises with neighbouring districts, both directly and through regular regional Cambridgeshire Food and Safety Group meetings. Representatives from UKHSA, Trading Standards (TS), the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and FSA also attend the Group meetings.

Heads of Service attend strategic meetings at a county level.

Liaison and working alongside other authorities are undertaken as required.

Officers attend the Safety Advisory Group meetings allowing work with emergency services and other County representatives on larger events. No special resources are needed to undertake this liaison.

2.4. Scope of the Food Service

The Environmental Health Commercial Team is responsible for delivering the Authority's Food Safety Service. This includes:

- programmed and intelligence led food hygiene interventions and revisits
- the investigation of complaints regarding food sold or prepared in the district

² The UK Health Security Agency was formally known as Public Health England (PHE)

Appendix 1

- the investigation of complaints regarding hygiene standards or practices
- infectious disease control including food poisoning and food borne disease
- responding to food alerts issued by the Food Standards Agency
- the provision of advice and information on food safety issues
- the monitoring of existing approved premises as well as granting new approval applications.
- consideration of planning and licensing applications in relation to food premises
- routine/planned sampling programmes organised in liaison with the Cambridgeshire Food and Safety Group, and national studies organised by the FSA/UKHSA and local needs.
- imported food control

All the officers who deliver services within the Team also

- prioritise health and safety inspections when linked with the Health and Safety Executive's national priorities.
- hazard spot in relation to health and safety issues and work with businesses to improve standards of health and safety
- investigate accidents and other incidents at work premises for which the council is the designated Enforcement Authority

2.5. Demands on the Food Service

The Team are responsible for 850 premises, ranging from large manufacturers to one-person operations. A breakdown of the premises, and a brief historical trend is as follows:

Business Type	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
Caring premises	117	109	96	94	96	94	94
Distributors/Transporters	26	22	20	23	25	26	24
Hotel/Guest House	28	27	24	21	16	15	14
Manufactures and Packers	37	38	37	36	33	36	35
Mobile food unit	33	48	51	57	64	69	71
Primary Producers	11	11	10	13	10	8	10
Pub/Club	67	65	65	64	65	64	64
Restaurant/Cafe/Canteen	117	118	125	127	121	125	122
Restaurants and caterers - other	161	188	169	149	150	151	173
Retailer - other	14	16	16	13	14	16	17
School/College	42	42	42	42	40	42	47
Small Retailer	133	131	129	124	124	109	110
Supermarket/Hypermarket	12	12	12	12	14	14	15
Take-away	43	44	42	46	48	48	51
Importers/Exporters (EU)	3	3	2	3	3	3	2
Importers/Exporters (3rd Countries)	2	1	1	2	2	2	1

Of these premises, approximately 350 are due for inspection in 2026/27. In addition, we also get around 100 new businesses per annum to inspect, some of these are totally new enterprises, but there are also businesses that are sold. New businesses dealing in high-risk foods require inspecting within 28 days of their start date. This adds significantly to the planned inspection program.

Figures show that nearly 50% of businesses either close or change hands within three years of registering, and after 5 years that figure increases to 65%. This churn creates unplanned work that must be accommodated throughout the year.

Under the Food Hygiene Rating Scheme (FHRS), premises are graded between 5 (very good) and 0 (urgent improvement necessary) with a rating of 3 being considered generally satisfactory. Food businesses that are unhappy with their scores can request a re-rating after they have made improvements. As the FHRS is customer facing, and the achievement of a certain rating can be written in some performance criteria, local businesses are keen to achieve and maintain a 5 Rating. There is a charge of £174 (reviewed annually) for this service, as it requires an additional inspection to be carried out. This adds about 20 inspections to the annual workload, with even premises earning a 4 Rating on inspection applying and paying for a re-rating.

The Environmental Health Commercial Team is responsible for 5 premises under Approved Premises Regulations. These are typically food businesses that make, prepare or handle meat, dairy, egg, fish, shellfish or animal produce for supply to other businesses. These premises are not inspected in accordance with our usual risk rating programme and instead an intervention is planned to be on an annual basis

The external operational factors that have an impact on Food Safety Service Delivery in the short to medium term are

- demands around health and safety enforcement in line with the Health and Safety Executive national priorities.
- demands from UK Health Security Agency, in particular responding to issues around communicable disease.

2.6. Access to the Service

Inspections typically take place during weekdays and office hours; but evening and weekend inspections and advisory visits are made where the business is not open at other times. In accordance with the FSA Food Law Code of Practice, inspections are without warning. However, inspections may be made by appointment where a business does not open at set times or where officers need to meet with a particular person or see a particular operation in progress.

Where a food business is based in residential premises, officers must give 24 hours' notice of entry. The Team does not have a safety enforcement responsibility in dwellings.

Appendix 1

Access for service users	Details
Office address: The Grange Nutholt Lane Ely Cambridgeshire CB7 4EE	Opening Hours 08:45 - 17.00 Monday to Thursday 08.45 - 16.30 on Fridays
Day time telephone number	01353 665555
Out of hours contact	07710 978 900
Email	foodandsafety@eastcambs.gov.uk
Council website	www.eastcambs.gov.uk

The Council does not operate a manned Duty Officer service but there is a senior manager who is contactable.

2.7. Challenges

The biggest challenges faced by the Team at present are both internal and external.

Recruitment and retention of staff together form the biggest internal challenges. With Local Government Reorganisation on the horizon, fewer officers are willing to move, so recruiting and then retaining high quality officers is very difficult. This is exacerbated by a recognised national shortage of qualified Environmental Health Officers. The team lost a fully qualified officer early in 2025 and it took almost a year to secure a replacement, and even then with additional flexibility of working.

The Environmental Health service is active in succession planning, with Student EHOs being developed, but any such strategy takes time (typically 4 years) and the staff effort in guiding and mentoring a student will also have short term impact on staff resources, especially within a small team..

Externally, there appears to be a drop in the standards being maintained by food businesses and this is reflected nationally. Some have blamed this on a reduction in customers; others have reported difficulty in retaining staff. The impact on the team is two-fold, because more time needs to be spent on the original inspection and letter writing, and a revisit may then be required to ensure that the legal requirements are met. There could also then be a request from the business to re-rate the premises, which although paid for, still adds to the officers' workload.

The number of 'new' food business notifications that are received remain consistently high with an average of 105 per year. A 'new' business may be a change in the ownership of an existing business, or a completely new enterprise. The change in ownership can be for any number of reasons, but it resets the inspection liability and, for high-risk businesses, requires a fresh inspection with 28 days of opening.

Appendix 1

Where the business is new, and particularly home based, some may never start trading, whilst others may quickly cease trading. The Team is currently reducing the amount of assistance that can be given to new, low risk, home businesses such as cake makers.

2.8. Enforcement Policy

The Council has signed up to follow the principles laid out in the Government's Regulator's Code³ and the principles contained therein. A service specific Enforcement Policy has been developed and is available on the Council's website.

Officers always aim to support and guide businesses in compliance with food laws. When advice and guidance and an informal route fails, officers will use a graduated approach in enforcement following the ECDC Food Safety Enforcement Policy.

3. SERVICE DELIVERY

3.1. Food Premises Interventions

All businesses receive an intervention within the minimum frequency set in the current Food Law - Code of Practice. The category of the premises, i.e. A - E, is defined by scoring premises around potential hazard associated with the business and food safety compliance, this then relates to the interval between inspections. As the category is determined in part by risk to food safety it is possible for a business to move up or down the scale as they improve food hygiene practices, or present different risks in the food produced.

The following is a breakdown of categories of risk, frequency of intervention, and number of premises within the district.

Rating	Minimum frequency of Intervention	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026
A	Once every 6 months	1	1	3	1	1	5	1
B	Once every 12 months	17	17	20	20	35	24	24
C	Once every 18 months	122	116	117	112	104	123	119
D	Once every 24 months	305	296	310	299	294	294	314
E	Once every 36 months	401	445	391	394	308	348	393

In addition to visits undertaken as part of the risk assessment programme, interventions are also undertaken in respect of:

- complaints regarding food business operations.
- enquiries and requests for advice from a food business.
- investigation following a poor sampling result.
- transient stalls and mobiles including working with the Ely Markets team.

We aim to inspect new high-risk businesses registering with the authority within 28 days of

³ <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>

the business opening for trading or sooner if requested. Low risk new businesses e.g. home bakers, will be given less priority and initially targeted through remote interventions.

3.2. **Primary Authority and Home Authority Principle**

The Primary Authority Scheme is managed by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy. The Primary Authority scheme enables businesses to form a legal partnership with one local authority, which then provides assured advice on complying with regulations that other local regulators must respect. If a business has a Primary Authority partnership, officers must use any published inspection plans and have due regard to any assured guidance agreed under the scheme.

Primary Authority partnerships are suitable for businesses with multiple sites, ensuring consistency of enforcement across the country. Due to the nature of ECDC's largely small, independent businesses culture, it is not predicted that the Team will form a Primary Authority partnership with a business in the foreseeable future.

If no Primary Authority arrangement has been established, multi-site Businesses are able to build up a relationship with, and receive advice and information from, one local authority. This is usually a local authority where the business' head office is based and that authority is referred to as the 'Home Authority'. No inspection plan is published under this scheme and any guidance issued is not given the same weight as through the Primary Authority but should still be followed.

The Team acts as the Originating Authority for our Approved Establishments and any businesses supplying food outside the district. At the request of another regulatory authority, the Team will give appropriate information and assistance.

3.3. **Advice to Businesses**

The district has a high proportion of small, independent businesses that do not have the technical support usually associated with big companies. Therefore, and in keeping with the Council's "open for business" ethos and business growth policy, the emphasis of the Team is to work with businesses and develop positive working relationships. Officers are willing to invest significant amounts of time on advice and guidance to both support enterprise and maintain compliance; and in doing so hopefully avoid the need for future formal action.

Special emphasis continues to be placed on disseminating the FSA guidance on preventing E.coli 0157 in local food businesses, both before businesses open and at the time of inspection. Businesses can be signposted to the Council's webpages which contain links to the FSA's site.

3.4. **Food Sampling**

Microbiological and physical examination and analysis of food is undertaken based on: -

- businesses identified for sampling as part of nationwide, regional or local projects.
- businesses subject to consumer complaints or linked with outbreak investigations.

Appendix 1

- or during a programmed inspection where an inspector deems a sample is necessary.

The Council supports all relevant nationally coordinated food sampling programmes organised by the Food Standard Agency and the UKHSA as well as any relevant cross-regional surveys, where there are suitable premises on our district.

3.5. **Control and Investigation of Outbreaks and Food Related Infectious Diseases**

Investigation into outbreaks will be in accordance with the UKHSA Communicable Disease Outbreak Management Plan. All infectious disease notifications are followed up by a questionnaire wherever practicable to identify possible sources of infection and recommend practices to prevent its spread.

There has been an increase in the number of notifications being received owing to the capacity of the UKHSA to process isolated cases.

3.6. **Food Safety Incidents**

The Council complies with Food Safety Act Code of Practice in relation to handling food alerts. All officers within the Team are alerted to food alerts via Food Standards Agency E-mail alerts. We respond to all food alerts that require action within 1 working day.

4. HEALTH AND SAFETY

4.1. Overview

Whilst the responsibility for managing health and safety risks lies with individual business, the council has a statutory responsibility for safeguarding through regulation, the health, safety and welfare of employees and the public, in many businesses located within the district.

Under the Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, a duty is placed on ECDC to make “adequate arrangements” for the enforcement of health and safety. These “arrangements” are set out in The National Local Authority Enforcement Code 2013; a framework ensuring LA regulators adopt a consistent and proportionate approach to enforcement. It directs that business operating in comparatively lower risk premises should not be subject to proactive, unannounced inspections, unless there is real and proportionate reason to suspect poor performance (“no inspection without a reason”).

A business can make a complaint to the Council and to the Independent Regulatory Panel if it believes that the Code has not been followed and there is no doubt that the code has reduced the number of proactive inspections carried out by council officers.

Enforcement of health and safety in businesses is divided between the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) and local authorities under The Health and Safety (Enforcing Authority) Regulations 1998 and examples of these are shown below:

LA enforcement	HSE enforcement
Offices (not LA or government)	Factories
Shops and retail premises	Farms
Hotels, restaurants, pubs, clubs	Gas, electricity and water service providers
Leisure premises	Garages undertaking repairs/ MOTs
Care homes, sheltered accommodation	Nursing homes, hospitals
Nurseries and playgroups	Schools and places of education
Skin piercers and beauty sector	Construction sites
Storage warehouses	Warehouses (mainly distribution)
Zoos	Government / LA undertakings
Churches and places of worship	Offshore installations

Appendix 1

Local businesses may come to the Team's attention through complaints, reports, referrals, and national intelligence. In addition, the HSE issues Local Authority Circulars (LAC) on topic areas considered suitable for Local Authority proactive and project work.

Accidents may be reported to the Council through service requests or formally, under The Reporting of Incidents, Diseases and Dangerous Occurrences Regulations 2013 (as amended). Any accidents are investigated according to the HSE guidance.

The Team also reacts to referrals from engineers reporting unsafe lifting equipment.

Officers attend the regular Safety Advisory Group meetings (SAG), supporting event organisers and businesses with advice, before, during and after the meetings. Officers also attend the regional Food and Health and Safety Group meetings, sharing information with the group and use it to undertake peer reviews.

The Team disseminates information about health and safety because of alerts from the HSE Advice is given any business seeking support.

The Team will refer any matters of potential national significance to the HSE and reports its activities to the HSE annually.

4.2. Primary and Home Authority

As with Section 3.2 above, the principles of Primary and Home Authority relate to Health and Safety Enforcement as well as Food Safety. For the same reasons as above, ECDC does not have a primary authority agreement with a business but Officers will use primary authority plans where they exist.

4.3. Targeting inspections

The Team uses HSE Guidance as its framework for its daily activities and work plans. Notified incidents and complaints are investigated as stated above. Sources to help target the team come from working relationships with other regulators such as fire, ambulance, police; building control, licensing etc. allowing intelligence to be shared at SAG meetings and at other times. The Team receives alerts from the fire service and HSE. In this small local authority, officers liaise with colleagues directly in areas such as building control and licensing.

Other sources of work and intelligence include officers hazard spotting at food inspections, regional meetings with other LAs and the HSE local principal inspector, social media, local press, and on-line resources.

Across 2026/2027, the Team will:

- Investigate all fatalities and major accidents where ECDC is the enforcing authority.
- Investigate other accidents reported under RIDDOR* having regard to the HSE incident selection criteria.

Appendix 1

- Investigate allegations of poor health and safety standards/complaints, having regard to the HSE incident selection guidance.
- Continuing to raise health and safety standards in businesses as part of other inspections and visits such as food hygiene inspections.
- Investigate adverse lift reports sent in by engineers.
- Offer advisory visits to skin piercing premises in relation to the maintenance of autoclaves and management of infection control. This is in addition to the routine offer of support and guidance to skin piercing establishments at the time of registration applications.
- Update the Council's Health and Safety web pages.
- Host a relevant training course for ECDC and external LA officers using an external trainer.
- Continue to attend SAG, the Council's internal health and safety committee meetings and the Cambridgeshire Food Health and Safety Group.
- Refer emerging safety issues to the HSE.

4.4. Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act

The purpose of this legislation is to ensure the public is better protected from terrorism by requiring certain public premises and events to be prepared and ready to keep people safe in the event of an attack. A tiered approach is established according to the number of individuals it is reasonable to expect may be present.

Standard Tier Premises where 200 – 800 people may be present

Enhanced Tier Premises and Events where 800 or more people may be present

Whilst the regulator of the legislation will be the Security Industry Authority (SIA), the council, through the Safety Advisory Group, will be involved in disseminating the statutory guidelines and any other information

4.5. Competencies and procedures

Officers are responsible for maintaining their competency by way of personal study, taking part in online training and webinars. Where external training is undertaken, officers share this with other Team members, normally at monthly team meetings.

Officers often work in pairs during accident and complaint investigations, both to improve investigatory work and to help maintain knowledge and practical skills. Officers have targets for maintaining competencies that are reviewed regularly through one to one meetings and at annual appraisals.

Health and Safety Notices are issued having regard to the Enforcement Policy and for health and safety, the HSE Enforcement Management Model (EMM). Health and Safety, and food Safety Notices are reviewed by the SEHO before service.

5. RESOURCES**5.1. Staffing Allocation**

As explained above, the work of the Team is carried out by the officers and a part-time administrator, supported as needed by the Council's wider internal services. In the event of an extreme or complex event or outbreak, the Team can seek additional resources from elsewhere in the council, and other councils.

All officers carrying out official controls for both food and health and safety, as well as any enforcement duties are registered with the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health itself or its Registration Board (EHRB). Each enforcement officer is authorised in accordance with the standards and requirements of the respective legislation, FSA Food Law Code of Practice, and the Constitution of the Council.

5.2. Staff Development Plan

All officers are appropriately qualified according to the Food Law Code of Practice. To maintain their competencies Officers, undertake personal study and there is a culture of sharing knowledge and "buddying" colleagues at more important interventions within the Team. Maintaining competencies in Approved establishments is not only by "buddying" in the district but maybe sought via neighbouring authorities.

Each officer is responsible for the maintenance of their personal Continual Professional Development (CPD) records, subject to the requirements of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health and FSA.

Staff development for the service includes:

- Undertaking in-house or external competency-based training. This includes webinars and other on-line training. Officers undertaking external training are required to feed this back to the team members after the event.
- The undertaking of "buddying" or mentoring with qualified or officer with different experience in food or health and safety.

6. QUALITY ASSESSMENT**6.1. Consistency**

The Team's work is monitored for consistency by the Lead Food Officer and is subject to Peer Review by the Regional Food Group. The following monitoring arrangements are currently in place to assist in the quality assessment of the work carried out by the food team: -

- sample accompanied interventions
- sample audits of food files and associated paperwork
- sample review of post intervention enforcement action being taken
- performance and development reviews
- performance monitoring of target response times
- team meetings

7. REVIEW**7.1. Review of Service Plans**

The process of review typically commences in March each year with a focus on the yearly figures in comparison with the output from previous years. Using an average of the workload demands from the previous year, a judgement is made on the expected demand for the next 12 months.

Regular reviews of the overall objectives of this Service Plan will be undertaken based on:-

- performance and resources available over the previous 12 months,
- responses to feedback from local businesses and the community,
- observations from Members and the Environmental Health Commercial Team itself,
- relevant changes in legislation, advice and guidance issued by government
- Changes in accepted best practice, and local working, via discussions with service and senior managers, including the impacts of major changes coming from LGR.

**TITLE: Application for ICCM Charter for the Bereaved
Accreditation – Lake View Bereavement Centre**

Committee: Operational Services Committee

Date: 14 September 2026

Author: Crematorium and Bereavement Services Manager

Report number: AB62

Contact officer: Marisa Rogers-Jones

marisa.rogers-jones@eastcambs.gov.uk , 01353 665240, Lake View Bereavement Centre, Mepal, Near Ely.

Issue

1. To seek Committee approval for Lake View Bereavement Centre to commence the process of achieving the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Committee:

2. Approves Lake View Bereavement Centre working towards ICCM Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation – detailed within Appendix 1.
3. Delegates authority to the Bereavement Services Manager, in consultation with the Director of Operations, to undertake the work required to achieve accreditation.
4. Approve the Lake View Bereavement Centre Proposed Action Plan – detailed within Appendix 2.

Background/Options

5. Lake View Bereavement Centre has been designed to provide compassionate, modern and environmentally sensitive bereavement services for residents across East Cambridgeshire and the wider area.
6. The ICCM Charter for the Bereaved is nationally recognised as a benchmark for excellence within cemetery, crematorium and bereavement services. It establishes measurable service standards and places the needs, rights and experiences of bereaved people at the centre of service delivery.
7. The Charter covers a broad range of service areas, including:
 - customer care and service delivery;
 - communication with bereaved families;
 - equality, dignity and inclusion;
 - environmental responsibility;
 - memorialisation services;

- complaints handling;
 - governance and accountability;
 - staff competence and professional development; and
 - continuous review and improvement.
8. Successful accreditation requires the Council to demonstrate, through appropriate evidence, that its policies, procedures and operational practices consistently meet the standards set out within the Charter.
9. Many of the principles required for Charter accreditation have already been incorporated into the design, development and mobilisation of Lake View Bereavement Centre. These include welcoming family spaces, accessible facilities, sustainable landscaping, clear service standards and a strong commitment to compassionate and dignified care.
10. Lake View Bereavement Centre has been developed with quality, compassion and continuous improvement at its core. Significant work has already been completed that aligns with the principles of the Charter, including:
- the development and adoption of comprehensive Rules and Regulations governing cremation, burial and memorial services;
 - the creation of customer-focused policies, procedures and guidance documents designed to support
 - bereaved families with dignity, compassion and respect;
 - the implementation of a three-stage complaints procedure focused on early resolution, accountability and continuous learning;
 - the development of data protection-compliant privacy notices and information governance procedures;
 - the establishment of accessible customer information and clearly defined service standards for families, funeral directors and visitors;
 - the introduction of a comprehensive memorialisation framework providing meaningful and environmentally sustainable choices for families;
 - the incorporation of equality, diversity and inclusion throughout the design and operation of the Centre, ensuring that services are accessible to people of all faiths, beliefs, cultures and backgrounds;
 - the development of environmentally sustainable operating practices, including natural burial provision, biodiversity enhancement and habitat restoration across the County Wildlife Site;
 - the establishment of governance arrangements, operational procedures and quality assurance processes to support safe, compliant and consistent service delivery; and
 - investment in staff recruitment, training and continuing professional development to support the highest standards of bereavement care.
11. The Council has the option either to commence the accreditation process or to continue operating without seeking formal Charter recognition.
12. Continuing without accreditation would not prevent the Centre from delivering high-quality services. However, it would reduce the opportunity to obtain independent assurance that the service meets nationally recognised standards and to demonstrate publicly the Council's commitment to excellence and continuous improvement.

13. Commencing the Charter process would provide a structured framework against which existing arrangements could be reviewed, areas for further development identified and progress monitored.
14. It is therefore proposed that Lake View Bereavement Centre begins working towards accreditation and that authority is delegated to the Crematorium and Bereavement Service Manager, in consultation with the Director of Operations, to manage the process.

Arguments/Conclusions

15. Charter accreditation would provide independent recognition of the quality of services delivered by Lake View Bereavement Centre and demonstrate that bereaved families are placed at the heart of service planning and delivery.
16. The principal benefits of achieving accreditation include:
- independent recognition and external validation of service quality;
 - increased confidence among bereaved families, funeral directors and other stakeholders;
 - assurance that services are delivered fairly, consistently and transparently;
 - regular review and continuous improvement of operational practices;
 - enhanced staff development, competence and professional standards;
 - demonstration of the Council's commitment to high-quality public services;
 - strengthening the reputation of Lake View Bereavement Centre as a leading bereavement facility; and
 - supporting future service development, innovation and partnership working.
17. Working towards accreditation supports the Council's strategic priorities by:
- delivering high-quality and responsive public services;
 - supporting residents during some of the most difficult periods of their lives;
 - promoting wellbeing and community resilience;
 - demonstrating effective governance, accountability and continuous improvement; and
 - enhancing environmental stewardship through sustainable bereavement services.
18. The Charter places equality, diversity, dignity and inclusion at the centre of bereavement service provision. Accreditation would assist the Council in ensuring that services continue to be accessible and responsive to people of all faiths, beliefs,

cultures and backgrounds while recognising the individual needs and wishes of each bereaved family.

19. The Charter also complements the environmental aspirations of Lake View Bereavement Centre. The Centre has been designed with sustainability and biodiversity at its core, incorporating natural burial provision, habitat restoration, sensitive landscaping and environmentally responsible operating practices.
20. Working towards accreditation would reinforce the Council's commitment to balancing exceptional bereavement care with environmental responsibility.
21. The proposal has been developed in consultation with officers involved in the establishment and mobilisation of Lake View Bereavement Centre and reflects nationally recognised good practice within the bereavement sector.
22. Lake View Bereavement Centre has been created with a clear vision of providing compassionate, dignified and professional bereavement services within a peaceful natural environment.
23. Achieving the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved represents an important next step in realising that vision. It would provide independent assurance that the Council is delivering services in accordance with nationally recognised standards while demonstrating a commitment to transparency, accountability and continuous improvement.
24. Approval is therefore sought to commence the accreditation process and work towards achieving ICCM Charter for the Bereaved status.

Additional Implications Assessment

25. The implications arising from this report are identified below:

Financial Implications Yes	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Financial implications

26. There is an annual cost of £320.00 with the Charter accreditation process. This covers the relevant application or accreditation fee, together with the officer time required to review existing arrangements, prepare supporting evidence and participate in any assessment process.
27. It is anticipated that much of the work can be undertaken using existing resources, as many of the policies, procedures and service standards required have already been developed as part of establishing Lake View Bereavement Centre.

28. Accreditation costs will be met from the approved Bereavement Services budget, where sufficient provision is available. Any expenditure that cannot be accommodated within existing budgets will be brought forward through the Council's normal financial planning and approval processes.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Proposed Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation

Appendix 2 – Action Plan Proposed Action Plan

Appendix 3 – Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management – Charter for the Bereaved

Background documents

ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation

Lake View Bereavement Centre Rules and Regulations

Lake View Bereavement Centre Memorialisation Framework

Lake View Bereavement Centre Complaints Policy

APPLICATION FORM
(Please retain attached sheets for future reference)

Details Of The Charter Member

Applicant.....Local authority / company / joint comm.

Address.....

..... **Email address**.....

Signed.....**Full Name**.....

Position.....**Date**.....

BEST VALUE ASSESSMENT PROCESS QUESTIONNAIRE
What month of the year would you like to receive the BVAPQ?

.....

Service: **Burial and Cremation** **Burial Only** **Cremation Only**

Approximate number of funerals you accept each year **Burial**.....

Cremation.....

Date from which you will offer Charter Rights.....

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

Do you propose to use the Guiding Principles printed in the Reference copy of the Charter
Yes / No

Please list the employee(s) who are currently member(s) of the Institute

.....
.....

Please list the employee(s) whom you propose to become member(s) of the Institute

.....
.....

Please list below the names and addresses of each location under your control

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

(use additional sheet if necessary)

INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY & CREMATORIUM MANAGEMENT

CHARTER FOR THE BEREAVED

CONFIRMATION OF CHARTER ADOPTION

In this document the following abbreviations are used:-

- The “Institute” means the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management
The “Charter - the Charter for the Bereaved produced and published by the institute and amended from time to time by the Institute.
“Charter Adoptee” - means the local authority, joint board, company or other organisation which has completed the application form at end of this document and adopted the Charter.
“Member of the Institute” - means a life member, fellow, member or student of the Institute.

The Undersigned formally notifies the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management, hereafter called the “Institute”, that from the date indicated below the services offered to the bereaved by the undersigned will comply with the requirements of the Charter for the Bereaved.

In confirming adoption and becoming a “Charter Adoptee” the following conditions are accepted by the undersigned:-

1. The thirty five “Rights” identified in the Charter for the Bereaved shall be available at all times where the service provided includes burial and cremation. Where only cremation is provided, Rights 1 to 10 shall not apply. Where only burial is provided, Rights 11, 12 and 13 shall not apply.
2. That the “targets” identified in the Charter for the Bereaved will be progressively introduced.
3. That all Charter members undertake the Charter Best Value Assessment Process on an annual basis with payment of the appropriate annual fee being applicable (Currently £295).
4. That at least one employee of the undersigned shall be maintained in membership of the Institute throughout the adoption period. The name(s) of the existing employee(s) are as entered below.
5. That at least one copy of the Reference copy of the Charter shall be purchased and made available to the public to view by request. Although copyright of the Charter is held by the Institute, the adoptee can copy and distribute pages or sections as they see fit, provided suitable acknowledgement is made.
6. That all Reference copies of the Charter for the Bereaved will be purchased from the Institute and distributed as printed and without alteration, deletion or addition whatsoever. The 8 page public copy of the Charter for the Bereaved can be downloaded from the Institute’s website and can be printed verbatim by the adoptee, perhaps under corporate cover, without payment of any fee to the Institute.
7. The Charter Adoptee can revoke the adoption of the Charter for the Bereaved at any time, without giving any reason, and upon due notice being given to the Institute.
8. The Charter Rights must be available at a minimum one location within the services provided by the Charter Adoptee. For instance, if facilities such as Baby and Infant graves (Right 8 & 9) are available at one cemetery, they do not have to be provided at other cemetery locations, provided travel and access are reasonable for the bereaved. This apart, there should always be a defensible reason why the Rights should not be available at all locations.
9. The standard of the service provided under Charter topics i.e. communication, environmental issues, social & community aspects, etc., must be uniform at all the locations operated by the Charter Adoptee.

January 2007

In respect of being registered as a Charter Adoptee, it is accepted that:

- ⇒ The Institute reserves the right to revoke adoption where it is evident that the Charter Adoptee is not offering the specified Charter Rights and/or is failing to operate within the spirit of the Charter. Such revocation may occur as a result of the Adoptee failing to meet the requirements of Charter Right 31 related to the grievance procedure. In the event of the withdrawal of Charter adoption, the Institute reserves the right to notify the media in the locality of the adoptee about the circumstances leading to withdrawal.
- ⇒ The Institute reserves the right to make new requirements or provisions about adoption wherever this appears necessary and in the best interests of promoting the Charter for the Bereaved and improving services to the community.
- ⇒ The Institute reserves the right to issue adoption certificates to local authorities and companies adopting the Charter. Only these certificates shall be displayed as proof of adoption and they shall not be amended or altered without the approval of the Institute. The adoption certificate remains in the ownership of the Institute and where Charter Adoption is surrendered or withdrawn, the certificate(s) shall be returned to the Institute.
- ⇒ The Institute utilises Charter Adoption as a interrelated part of the ICCM Continuous Improvement Toolkit. In this regard the Institute reserves the right to inspect facilities and review the service offered by Charter members in order to assess compliance with the Charter rights and targets.
- ⇒ The Institute will periodically review the Charter in response to the best interests of the bereaved and the community.
- ⇒ The Charter Adoptee may be represented regarding Charter matters through their employee(s) who are members of the Institute. They may act through Forum meetings or by direct contact with any Director. Alternatively, the Charter Adoptee may act through the National Secretary or Charter Organiser.

**Appendix 2 – Proposed Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation Action Plan
September 2026 to September 2027**

Phase	Action	Lead Officer	Target Timescales	Outcome
1. Project Initiation	Committee approval to commence the accreditation process and register with the ICCM.	Bereavement Services Manager	Month 1 - September 2025	Project formally established
2. Gap Analysis	Review existing policies, procedures and customer standards against the Charter for the Bereaved requirements to identify any areas requiring development.	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 1–2	Improvement plan produced.
3. Policy Review	Review and update policies, procedures and operational documentation to ensure compliance with Charter standards and current legislation.	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 2–4	Governance documentation aligned with best practice.
4. Staff Engagement	Deliver awareness sessions and training to ensure all staff understand the Charter standards and their role in delivering	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 3–5	Staff fully engaged in the accreditation process.

	exceptional bereavement care.			
5. Evidence Collection	Compile documentary evidence demonstrating compliance with the Charter, including policies, procedures, customer information, audits and examples of service delivery.	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 4–8	Evidence portfolio completed.
6. Customer Feedback	Gather and review customer satisfaction surveys, compliments and complaints to evidence continuous improvement and identify opportunities for enhancement.	Bereavement Services Manager	Ongoing	Customer feedback embedded within service improvement.
7. Internal Review	Undertake an internal assessment against the Charter standards and address any outstanding actions.	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 8–9	Service ready for external assessment.
8. External Assessment	Submit the application and participate in the ICCM	Bereavement Services Manager	Months 9–12	Independent assessment completed.

	Charter for the Bereaved assessment process.			
9. Accreditation	Achieve Charter for the Bereaved accreditation and promote the achievement to residents, funeral directors and stakeholders.	Bereavement Services Manager	Month 12	Nationally recognised accreditation achieved.
10. Continuous Improvement	Develop an annual action plan to monitor performance, review customer feedback and maintain Charter standards.	Bereavement Services Manager	Ongoing	Continuous service improvement and compliance maintained.
11. Success Measures	The project will be considered successful when: • Charter for the Bereaved Accreditation has been awarded • Customer satisfaction remains consistently high • Policies and procedures reflect current legislation and best practice • Staff demonstrate confidence and consistency in delivering bereavement services • Feedback from families and funeral directors' evidence of high-quality and compassionate service • Lake View Bereavement Centre is recognised as a centre of excellence for bereavement care			

Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management



Charter for the Bereaved

November 2014

CONTENTS

<u>Preface</u>	
<u>How the Charter affects you</u>	
<u>How you can use the Charter</u>	
<u>Who has adopted the Charter?</u>	
<u>What do you do when somebody dies?</u>	
<u>Burial procedure</u>	
<u>Grave choice</u>	
<u>Cemetery Memorials</u>	
<u>Baby and Infant Funerals</u>	
<u>Burials in Private Land</u>	
<u>Cremation procedure</u>	
<u>Cremated remains and memorialisation</u>	
<u>Ceremonies and belief</u>	
<u>Coffins and alternatives</u>	
<u>Communication</u>	
<u>Dignity, death and you</u>	
<u>Environmental issues</u>	
<u>Social and community aspects</u>	
<u>Funerals without a Funeral Director</u>	
<u>Maintenance of grounds and grave digging</u>	
<u>Health & Safety</u>	
<u>Regulations</u>	
<u>Staff and expertise</u>	
<u>Inspection and guiding principles</u>	
<u>Grievance procedure</u>	
<u>Information on using a Funeral Director</u>	
<u>Information on using a Memorial Mason</u>	
<u>Information of embalming</u>	
<u>Useful addresses</u>	
<u>Information about the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management</u>	
<u>The laws and regulations involved with bereavement</u>	
<u>Tell us what you think</u>	

Preface

- The Rights and standards set out in this document form the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved. The Charter is intended to provide the bereaved with information and assistance regarding decisions that they may need to make when arranging a funeral and to improve and update cemetery and crematoria services and related aspects of bereavement.
- The Charter seeks to generate interest in and educate people about bereavement. It also helps to influence the expansion of services and clarify the various roles and responsibilities of those involved.
- Adoption of the Charter is a commitment by burial and cremation authorities and companies that adopt it to improving the service by confronting rather than disguising or ignoring death.
- The Charter is intended to define the Rights of every individual who experiences bereavement. In achieving this aim, it also sets standards of service related to burial, cremation and funerals. It is a written statement of what can be expected and enables people to judge the quality of the service received.

How the Charter affects you – The Bereaved

- The Charter acknowledges that your views and needs should be given much greater recognition than in the past.
- The Charter enables you to recognise a responsive service, one that meets your expectations and one that is delivered with the right attitude and with a genuine desire to be helpful. Where these human qualities are combined with the requirements of the Charter, the highest standards will be achieved.
- The Charter enables you to recognise that bereavement services are critical to the health of the nation. The therapeutic benefits of accepting and handling bereavement are immeasurable, influencing both the physical and mental well being of us all.
- The Charter will help you realise that ignoring death can increase stress for your relatives and friends. It leaves the problem of your death, as well as your estate, to another person, usually your partner or children. As a consequence, the crisis is made worse for these people, whom we call the bereaved.
- The Charter will increase your awareness of “interest” groups and how they influence the bereavement process. These include local authority staff, the clergy, Funeral Directors, embalmers, monumental masons, hospital staff and others.
- The Charter will give you greater influence over the arrangements of funerals thereby controlling costs and obtaining greater satisfaction in arranging a funeral service that is more meaningful to you, your relatives and friends.

How the Charter affects you – Burial and Cremation Authorities and Companies

- Adoption of the Charter is a clear statement to the bereaved that your authority or company intends to continually review and improve its services. This will be demonstrated via the annual self assessment process (and any subsequent validation) and the attainment of higher awards. The results obtained from the self assessment process are used to place your service(s) in either a Bronze, Silver or Gold award category with an appropriate certificate provided for display in a public area. The process is not designed to be used as a means of competing with other service providers but to give clear evidence to service users and elected members that the particular service is continually moving forward.

How you can use the Charter – The Bereaved

The Charter is set out in sections covering individual issues related to bereavement. Each section is divided into three parts: INFORMATION, RIGHTS and TARGETS. The RIGHTS identify a minimum standard that should be expected by the bereaved that Charter members must offer. The TARGETS relate to additional services that raise the overall level of services of Charter members.

Should you require the services of a cemetery or crematorium it is worth checking to see if the particular service is a Charter member. Each Charter member undergoes annual assessment and is awarded either a bronze, silver or gold standard. In order to adopt the Charter a cemetery or crematorium must provide the basic RIGHTS to the bereaved and on achieving this it is awarded a bronze standard. The cemetery or crematorium then looks to provide the additional services identified through the TARGETS and as these are introduced the cemetery or crematorium can gain either silver or gold standards hence the Charter is a tool for continual improvement.

The INFORMATION, RIGHTS and TARGETS offer you the following benefits:

1. INFORMATION

The effectiveness of you, as a customer or bereaved person, depends on how much you know, both about your local services and the alternatives that are available elsewhere. Bereavement is surrounded by cultural taboo, rumour and misinformation, the things you can supposedly do, or not do! There is also a wide difference in the provision of services across the UK as a whole.

The information is of a general nature, which may be of interest to you and which you have a right to know, as a means of empowerment. This gives you the knowledge to bring about change, where you feel it is necessary, or simply gives you an improved base on which to make decisions. Ultimately, you are given the opportunity to make an “informed choice” and not to suffer from ignorance. Information contained in this Charter will also enable you to organise a funeral that meets with your specific needs and those of your family and friends.

In some cases, the information is given as a means of advancing the public interest, even though the information may not directly involve the provision of a burial or cremation service. An example is the environmental aspects of both burial and cremation. Also, a burial or cremation authority or company has limited control over other companies that might be used e.g. Funeral Directors and Memorial Masons, however information is contained that will assist you in making decisions on the purchase of goods and services from these companies.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

This section sets out your specific rights, where these have been clearly identified. These rights will be promised to you by Charter members.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

Due to various reasons, some services are not nationally available and cannot be placed under Charter Rights. Because of this, these services are outlined under Charter Targets for future consideration. This gives you the opportunity to recognise that such services may be provided elsewhere, and your Charter contact will be able to advise accordingly. With this information, you will be able to lobby for the provision of these services.

In order to promote continuous improvement this Charter will be reviewed periodically. Through the assessment process the Institute will be able to monitor increases in service provision by Charter members and where appropriate a TARGET can be made a RIGHT. New targets will be introduced during reviews in order to promote continuous improvement. The requirements for achieving bronze, silver or gold standards will also be extended via the assessment process as this will assist in ensuring that services provided by Charter members do not stagnate. A gold service that carries out no further improvements could drop back to either silver or bronze.

Who has adopted the Charter?

The Charter has been adopted by local authorities, private companies and others providing burial and cremation facilities throughout the United Kingdom. A list of Charter Members can be obtained from the ICCM National Office (contact details are contained in Appendix C). These are defined as follows:

BURIAL

Most cemeteries are provided by the larger authorities or parish/community Councils. The district cemetery serves the wider area with the parish cemetery usually reserved only for the use of parishioners. In London, borough councils or the Common Council for the City of London provide cemeteries. In addition a number of privately owned cemeteries and woodland burial sites exist around the UK, a small number operated by a Trust or a “Friends” group.

CREMATION

Many of the burial authorities mentioned above, with the exception of parish councils, extend their service by providing a crematorium. There are currently over 250 crematoria operating in the UK provided by both the public and private sectors.

It is important to note that the range of services offered by individual Charter members does vary. Some will offer burial **and** cremation facilities, whilst others may offer **only** cremation or burial. You can write to a Charter member to comment or complain about the service you receive or any aspect related to the Charter. Your views on increasing rights and improving standards are welcomed. If you remain dissatisfied about any aspect of the Charter or the response of a Charter member, you can contact the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) through the Chief Executive (see Appendix C).

Your comments and/or complaints, whether to Charter members or the Chief Executive, will be recorded and analysed on a nation-wide basis. This feedback will be seen as an integral part of the Charter relationship with yourself. Complaints will be seen as part of the learning process leading to a continuous improvement of the Charter.

The Charter complies with all legal requirements. These are outlined in Appendix E.

What do you do when somebody dies?

A Message to the Bereaved

This Charter sets out many details about death and funerals, as individual topics. As it may be difficult for those with no experience of a death to understand how everything interrelates, this section describes what occurs in the period before a funeral.

Death at home

When a person dies at home, the next of kin or executor and the family doctor should be informed. The doctor who cared for the person during the last illness will complete a free Certificate of the Cause of Death. If cremation is intended, this doctor will complete cremation Form 4 (Form B in Scotland) and will arrange for another doctor to complete the confirmatory Form 5 (Form C in Scotland). The second doctor will need to view the body at some stage. The two doctors completing these forms will require payment with this cost being included in your Funeral Directors account. If you are arranging the funeral without the use of a Funeral Director you will be required to pay these charges directly. These forms are not required if the death is taken over by the Coroner “(see “Coroner” below).

The Certificate of the Cause of Death must be taken to the Registrar of Births and Deaths for the District in which the death occurred within five days. (At the time of writing, a review of death certification was underway. It might transpire that a more flexible approach is taken to death certification in the future and your Charter member will be able to advise of any changes). In Scotland, you can visit any Registrar of Births and Deaths within eight days. Ensure you visit the correct office and check opening times, as they may operate limited hours. The doctor may send the Certificate of the Cause of Death direct to the Registrar, and not give it to you to take.

Death in hospital

If someone dies in hospital, the certificate of the cause of death will be issued there. The next of kin may be requested to authorise a post-mortem. If cremation is intended, the hospital will arrange the necessary documentation.

The deceased will be transferred to a mortuary. Arrangements to deliver the certificate of the cause of death to the Registrar of Births and Deaths and to register the death are as above, under “Death at Home”. The Registrar will be the one covering the Hospital area, which may be different to the home address of the deceased.

If the death occurs in a residential or nursing home, they may follow a similar routine as for that in hospital. In addition, they may have an arrangement with a Funeral Director for the removal of the deceased to a mortuary or a Chapel of Rest. This Funeral Director does not necessarily have to undertake the funeral for you. You may select any Funeral Director, or you can organise the funeral yourself.

Coroner

(Note: In Scotland the Procurator Fiscal has jurisdiction over the body of a person who has died unexpectedly. Throughout this Charter any reference to the Coroner will relate to the Procurator Fiscal in Scotland)

If the death was sudden or due to an accident, or no doctor had attended for some time, the Coroner must be informed. On some occasions the Registrar of Births and Deaths may also report the death to the Coroner. The Coroner will decide whether to hold a post-mortem and/or an inquest. As most cases are found to be due to natural causes, inquests are rarely required. The Coroner will then notify the Registrar that the death can be registered. The person registering the death will need to visit the Registrar to do this. The Coroner's Office will keep this person informed about what to do. As these arrangements may cause delay, you should not arrange the funeral until authorised by the Coroner's Officer. The Coroner will issue an Order for Burial (white certificate in England & Wales and magnolia certificate in Scotland)) or for Cremation (yellow certificate) without charge. The certificate should be given to your Funeral Director or sent to the cemetery or crematorium as soon as possible.

Again, you may select any Funeral Director, or you can organise the funeral yourself.

Registrar of Births and Deaths

The Registrar can register the death only if he/she is given or has obtained the certificate of the cause of death or has received notification from the Coroner. He or she will need to know the following details about the deceased:

1. FULL NAME – including any other names by which they were known.
2. MAIDEN SURNAME – if the deceased is a married woman.
3. DATE AND PLACE OF BIRTH
4. OCCUPATION – and their husband's full name and occupation, if the deceased is a married woman or a widow.

You will need to confirm the date and place of death. Other questions will be asked about the date of birth of the surviving spouse and information about the state pensions and allowances the person was receiving, including war pensions. The NHS number will be requested and the medical card of the deceased should be surrendered to the Registrar, if it is available. If the number is not known, and the medical card is unavailable, you can still register the death.

The Registrar will issue a free social security form to ensure that benefits are being paid correctly. If the Coroner is not issuing an Order for Burial or Cremation, the Registrar will issue a free certificate for this purpose. This should be given to your Funeral Director or sent to the cemetery or crematorium as soon as possible.

The Registrar will issue the Death Certificate and advise you over any further certificate copies you require and the cost involved. These will be for obtaining Grant of Probate or Letter of Administration, to show banks, social security or building societies, and to claim insurance. The Registrar will also issue a disposal certificate where a Coroner is not involved. This disposal certificate should be given to your Funeral Director or to the cemetery or crematorium office if you are arranging the funeral directly yourself.

The Deceased

While the above procedures are taking place, it is essential that the deceased is cared for. With death at home, if you are using a Funeral Director, he or she should be called as soon as possible. They will remove the deceased and complete laying-out and possibly embalming. The deceased may remain at their Chapel of Rest or may be returned home, should you so wish. If the death was in hospital, the staff usually complete laying-out and your Funeral Director will collect the deceased and carry out your instructions.

If you are not using a Funeral Director, and the death occurs at home, you may complete laying-out, or have this done by a district nurse or some other person. The deceased can remain at home and must be kept as cool as possible. For obvious reasons it is necessary to make arrangements for the burial or cremation to take place as soon as is possible as in some cases deterioration of the body may become rapid with the obvious consequences occurring. Your local mortuary, cemetery or crematorium may have facilities to hold the deceased pending the funeral. If the death was in hospital, the deceased will be taken to the hospital mortuary. You can collect the deceased yourself, provided you have a coffin and suitable transport. You can keep the deceased at home, or you may be able to use the mortuary until the day of the funeral.

These arrangements are not mandatory and can be varied in accordance with ethnic or other needs.

Death Abroad

Refer to your Charter member for further advice.

Conclusion

It is assumed that whoever arranges the funeral is aware of the wishes of the deceased, whether a will exists and who the executor(s) is. It is important to note that executors have the right to choose burial or cremation when they organise the funeral, whether it accords with the wishes of the deceased or not. If there is no will, and therefore no executors, someone (usually the next of kin) will make these decisions. With a greater number of people taking out funeral plans and insurance, it is important to check whether the deceased subscribed to a scheme or policy. The personal effects of the deceased should be checked to see if Rights to a family grave already exist.

The Charter sections on "BURIAL PROCEDURE" and "CREMATION PROCEDURE" will describe what happens next, as the arrangements for either type of funeral proceeds. The remaining sections of the Charter enlarge upon specific topics, to enable you to consider all the issues involved with a funeral.

Burial procedure

Information for the Bereaved

1. INFORMATION

This Charter item considers burial in cemeteries, which has changed little since Victorian times. Churchyards and denominational burial grounds not controlled by local authorities and burial at sea are outside the remit of the Charter. Your Charter member may be able to advise you about these options. As Charter members are often the only local source of advice about burials on private land, this topic is included in the Charter.

In the earlier Charter item, "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES?" the arrangements immediately following a death and up to Registration were considered. This item outlines all the subsequent arrangements of a funeral, where burial is intended. The procedure is described in the sequence that a Funeral Director or anybody organising a funeral without a Funeral Director would routinely follow.

PROVISIONAL FUNERAL BOOKING

As soon as the death has been certified and the availability of the minister of religion (if needed) is confirmed, the cemetery is telephoned and a provisional funeral booking is arranged. The cemetery office should be available for booking during normal office hours and, ideally, over weekends. The following information will be required:

- Cemetery location – the office may control a number of cemeteries and the precise one chosen by you should be identified.
- Funeral date and time – this will be when the funeral arrives at the cemetery gates. Normally, a minimum two days notice is required, although sufficient time must be available to Register the death and obtain all certificates.
- Name and address of the deceased.
- Grave number – if Rights to a grave already exist, i.e. if you or a member of your family has previously purchased a grave in the cemetery and wish for this burial to take place in the same grave, the number will be shown on the grave Deed. The cemetery will confirm whether sufficient space exists for a further burial. If a new grave is required it will be necessary to define the maximum number of burials required so as to ensure that this future use is secured. It may be possible to select the location of the grave. The Charter item "GRAVE CHOICE" gives you information on this subject.
- The name and telephone number of the Funeral Director or the person arranging the funeral, who will also pay the required fees. A table of fees is available upon request. Note that if you have appointed a

Funeral Director he/she will make arrangements with the cemetery office on your behalf. Make sure that you inform your Funeral Director of all of your specific requirements prior to the funeral taking place as he/she will be responsible for passing these on to the cemetery office. For example, some community groups require that they backfill the grave themselves therefore the cemetery office needs to be pre-warned of this so that appropriate arrangements can be prepared in advance and your wishes met.

The details above are the minimum necessary for a provisional booking. These will be sufficient to enable cemetery staff to locate an existing grave or allocate a new one, and to prepare for the excavation. If a memorial is present upon an existing grave, it may have to be removed for the burial.

The details below can be given by telephone at this early stage, or sometime later, or entered on the "Notice of Burial" (see below).

- Coffin or container size – this is the overall size, including handles. See the Charter item on "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES" for details.
- Funeral type – this will depend upon how the funeral is organised. If a service is held before the arrival at the cemetery, you may go "straight to grave" when you arrive. The grave will be dressed with grass mats; and a "committal" service, or any other ceremony you may prefer, can take place at the graveside. Bearers will be necessary to carry the coffin from the vehicle to the grave, and to lower the coffin. Your Funeral Director will provide bearers or alternatively, if you are arranging the funeral yourself, some cemeteries may provide bearers for a fee. If a cemetery chapel is available, for which a fee may be payable, the funeral service can be held there first. Information about the service is given in the Charter item "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS".
- Religion of deceased – this is to enable the cemetery staff to anticipate the style and length of service and ensure the correct plot is used. For example, some religions require dry soil to be made available to sprinkle upon the coffin at the committal stage or, as previously mentioned, backfill the grave themselves.

NOTICE OF BURIAL

A formal notification of the burial must be delivered to the burial authority as soon as possible. A regulation requiring a minimum 24 hours notice is often specified for the receipt of this form. It is issued free of charge, by post if requested. The completed form is regarded as a binding contract over the work and costs involved, which may be payable even if the funeral is cancelled or transferred to another cemetery.

The Notice of Burial should be accompanied by a Coroner's Order for Burial or a Registrar's Certificate, which is obtained as outlined in the Charter item "WHAT TO DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES". Some authorities may accept the Order or Certificate when the funeral arrives at the cemetery. Where a certificate is mislaid, the burial authority can accept a written declaration

(called Form 18 in England & Wales and Form 15 in Scotland) in a prescribed form to that effect. This applies when it is believed the Certificate or Order has been issued but not delivered prior to the funeral. Charter members will have a copy of this declaration and will assist in its completion.

The funeral cannot proceed until an Order or Certificate is given to the burial authority or the declaration completed (if for instance the certificate or Order has been forgotten). Alternative arrangements apply when the death occurred outside the country and your Charter member can advise in these situations.

This completes the formal arrangements that involve the bereaved. Other sections of the Charter offer further information about organising and holding a funeral, although the provision of funeral wreaths and obituaries in newspapers are not considered. These sections also ignore what the burial authority actually undertakes behind the scenes and these operations are now described.

INTERNAL OPERATIONS

When the provisional booking is made for a burial to take place in an existing family grave (often referred to as a reopened grave), the registers are checked to locate the correct grave, to check ownership of the Grave Rights and a site visit may be carried out to check the memorial on the grave. When necessary, the burial authority will advise about transfer of ownership of the Grave Rights should the original owner be deceased. Transfer of rights is required in certain circumstances where the registered owner of the grave rights is deceased. The transfer of rights is a legal process and will be carried out by your Charter Member. You will be required to produce a grant of probate or letters of administration. If these were not issued, a statutory declaration will be prepared for you that takes the place of the aforementioned legal documents.

If a new grave is required, one will be allocated. As soon as confirmation is received, an order to excavate the grave will be issued; this may involve using a contractor. A grave for two burials will normally be excavated to a depth of at least 1.83m (6ft 0in) and shored. This will leave sufficient depth for the burial of the second coffin without disturbing the previous burial. The grave will be covered by boards and will be regularly checked by cemetery staff during the time between excavation and the funeral taking place in case of collapse and/or water build-up.

The soil excavated from the grave is usually placed to one side in either a large box-like structure or in a mound. Whichever method is used the turf beneath the box or mound will have been protected as will adjacent memorials. It should be noted that in the future graves adjacent to the one owned by yourself might be excavated for further burial therefore a box or mound could be placed over your grave. Whilst this might appear as an intrusion and prevent a visit it should be remembered that the box or mound is only likely to be present for a day or two and will be removed following the burial. Should you meet with this in the future you are asked to be patient and considerate and bear in mind that to remove all excavated soil only to bring it all back after the burial is time consuming and expensive and can add pressure to

increasing burial fees. Also, running wheelbarrows or dumper trucks up and down a burial section to remove and bring back soil can reduce the area to a muddy quagmire very quickly which will have implications for both repairs and access over a longer period notwithstanding the distressing state of the ground.

Before the funeral the grave will have planks and boards placed around the edge to support bearers who will lower the coffin, and mourners and provide a safe and secure platform from which dignified lowering of the coffin can take place. The grave will be dressed with artificial grass mats unless otherwise requested. These should be in good condition and should cover all the soil removed from the grave as well as the previously mentioned platform around the grave. A suitably dressed cemetery employee should meet and guide the funeral during the whole of the period in the cemetery. At no time should the funeral be attended by employees dressed in overalls, donkey jackets, etc. nor should machinery and equipment be in sight.

A member of the cemetery staff will guide the funeral to the correct grave and will direct the bearers. They must place the coffin, with the head at the correct end, on two wooden spars. These are placed adjacent to two or three tapes or webbing, across the grave. With the coffin resting on the two spars, often called putlogs, the tapes or webbing are folded around the coffin, often through the handles, with an end being taken by each of four or six bearers. At a given signal or point in the service, they lift the coffin, the member of the cemetery staff (or member of the Funeral Director's staff) removes the putlogs, and the coffin is lowered slowly into the grave with due regard to dignity and respect. The bearers then stand back and the service continues. The cortege will leave the cemetery as soon as the mourners are ready. Where possible, access by vehicles should be allowed in cemeteries. Where roads are restricted in size or lead into cul-de-sacs, or are steep, this may not be possible.

The method of using putlogs and lowering the coffin varies in different parts of the country; and this aspect should be confirmed. In Scotland it is traditional to attach tassels (these being long cords with a tasselled end) to the coffin so that main members of the family can symbolically assist the bearers lower the coffin. At the end of the service the tassels are cut from their cords and given to the family.

Cemetery staff overseeing the burial will stay at the graveside until all the family and mourners have left the site. The grave backfilling staff, who should be available in case of occurrence of any unforeseen circumstances, will stay out of sight until called forward. Unless specifically requested to do so the cemetery staff will not commence backfilling the grave until all mourners have left the cemetery. As previously mentioned some ethnic and religious groups require that they assist in backfilling the grave themselves. In these circumstances the cemetery staff overseeing the burial will seek cooperation of those taking part in the backfilling in order that the safety is maintained and to allow cemetery operatives to remove shoring equipment as backfilling proceeds. They will backfill the grave, leaving the site neat and tidy, with the wreaths and flowers carefully placed. It is preferable that the backfilled soil is compacted every six inches in depth by treading, to reduce the need for

excessive re-instatements. Nonetheless, the grave soil will sink as compaction occurs, and particularly after heavy rainfall. Sinkage should be topped up regularly by cemetery staff free of charge as a sunken grave could upset bereaved relatives.

Any memorial removed for the burial may be inscribed by a mason, providing the bereaved or executor instructs one, and re-fixed as soon as the backfilled soil is sufficiently settled. Whenever a memorial is re-fixed it should be stipulated that it is re-installed in accordance with British Standard 8415. The BRAMM Blue Book issued by the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons tells mason and the burial authority how to achieve compliance with the British Standard. (See the section headed Cemetery Memorials for more details of how to ensure that your memorial is installed properly).

During periods of inclement weather, difficulties may be experienced. The inability to drain a grave and enable pedestrian access to graves through deep snow are two particular problems. It must also be realised that pouring rain and extreme cold are uncomfortable for mourners, increasing haste and preventing the calm, reflective mood generally desired at a graveside service.

The cemetery office will maintain contact with the Funeral Director or person arranging the funeral. This is to accommodate any changes requested by the bereaved.

After the burial, the cemetery's statutory registers and records will be completed. The Registrar or staff will record the burial in the Burial Register, and in the index to this record. An entry will also be made in the Record of Graves alongside the appropriate grave number. An entry for a new grave will be made in the Register of Grants, recording the purchase of the Right of Burial and the period that this covers. Any transfers of ownership are also recorded in the Register of Grants. A Grant of Right of Burial will be prepared and posted to the grave purchaser. New purchased graves will be "marked off" the cemetery grave plans. Since 1986, when legal approval was given, many authorities now maintain burial records on computer. These records, whether in books or on a computer, must be maintained forever (in perpetuity) and are available for enquiries and research.

Within 96 hours of the burial, the detachable portion of the Coroner's or Registrar's Certificate, must be sent by the Cemetery Registrar to the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages indicating the date and place of burial. It is important to note that the place of burial is not actually recorded by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages, and subsequently locating the place of burial through the Registration Service is not possible. The burial is recorded only at the appropriate cemetery office.

The cemetery office remains the focal point for any further concern with the grave or burial. After the first burial in the grave, a memorial may be ordered. The memorial mason involved will send the relevant application to the cemetery office. The application will be checked to ensure the memorial design accords with any regulations and the precise names and dates in the inscription will be checked against the burial record. If approved, and upon

payment of any fee, the mason will be given permission to erect the memorial. The design and erection of the memorial must be safe and a member of the cemetery staff will verify correct location. Further information concerning the proper installation of memorials and safeguards that are afforded to you are contained in the section headed Cemetery Memorials.

Subsequently, the mason will apply to place additional inscriptions on the memorial, upon payment of any fee, as further burials take place.

AVOIDING ERRORS

Burials must take place in the correct grave and proper administrative procedures are an essential component of this. In some instances the most serious errors can occur and errors take longer to identify when the administrative office is separate from the actual burial site. This situation can only be avoided if office staff make regular visits to burial sites for the purposes of undertaking checking procedures i.e. ensuring that correct graves are prepared, memorials are erected on correct graves and installed in accordance with British Standard 8415 etc. For example, this can result in the burial being allocated a grave by the office staff, without any confirmation that the burial actually took place in that grave. In some instances, the grave plans in the administrative office may not be identical to those used at the cemetery. These errors can continue for long periods without being noticed. This can be avoided by appointing a staff member to check the excavation of every grave, to attend the burial service and to check the coffin plate before burial. Where this does not occur, the burial authority should be able to demonstrate that they are ensuring the correct coffin is placed in the correct grave.

Problems can arise over the placing of memorials upon a grave and be overcome by routine, physical checks. Although it is expensive to complete these checks it is a necessary part of the service and costs may be recovered through charges.

The burial authority cannot be held responsible for errors arising from other people involved with a funeral although Charter members will strive to quickly rectify any error from whatever source.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to organise and conduct a burial in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring cemetery staff.
- b) You have a right to inspect the statutory burial register by appointment and free of charge.
- c) Charter Members will continually work towards improving facilities for mourners in cemeteries

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Charter members will develop a framework of national service standards regarding the reception and handling of funerals.
- (b) Charter members will consider how to improve protection against inclement weather at burial ceremonies.

Grave choice

1. INFORMATION

In the past, cemeteries offered a wide choice of grave types, with an associated variety of memorials. Due to various reasons, some cemeteries fell into disrepair. Consequently, 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. Added to this was a concentration on grounds' maintenance costs. The result: 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. Perhaps such persons who attempt to personalise the grave by the placing of unauthorised objects would prefer a more traditional type of grave and memorial where greater scope exists to personalise through design thus removing the need to place unauthorised objects in the first instance. Where a choice between lawn and traditional type graves is given it is vital that purchasers of new graves fully understand what can and cannot be done on each section before a final decision is made. Charter members are encouraged to provide good information to the bereaved and Funeral Directors in order to assist the decision making process and so prevent disappointment or possible disputes. As Funeral Directors are appointed to undertake the funeral arrangements on behalf of the client it should be expected that you will receive appropriate professional advice and information when making your choices and decisions.

(In recent years the re-introduction of traditional type graves has gathered pace, as guidance on the future management of memorials is now available. The responsibility for the maintenance of a memorial rests with the grave owner and burial authorities and cemetery companies will underpin this understanding in regulations and via correspondence when an application to erect a memorial is received. In order to reduce your liabilities and responsibilities you are advised to insist that your memorial is installed in accordance with BS 8415 and that you consider insuring your memorial as it is your property).

The lawn type grave design is perceived as offering the cheapest maintenance regime, allowing easy and unimpeded mowing of grass between parallel rows of identical headstones. The loss of individuality, artistic skill and any element of choice are evident, and this type of grave can be seen as regimented and boring. However, the lawn type grave reduces the many disadvantages of the traditional grave including the need for a more expensive memorial, the removal/replacement of the memorial for a burial and higher maintenance costs. The initial purchase cost and long-term maintenance cost should be considered in relation to the type of grave preferred.

The absence of full grave memorials and/or kerb surrounds enables people to walk unimpeded over the lawn grave. This upsets some and is disliked by certain religious groups. In reality, the grass on lawn graves is intensively mown, which is relatively expensive and wastes fossil fuel, thereby harming the environment.

This restriction on burial choice has occurred in parallel with the increasing adoption of cremation. Today, approximately 72% of deaths involve a cremation-based funeral. This increase has not occurred without adverse criticism. This is focused on the effect of cremation on the environment, and the accusations that a “production line” system has developed. These issues are detailed elsewhere in the Charter. It must be said however that the fact that 72% of deaths in the UK involve a cremation based funeral would indicate public acceptance and a preference for this form of funeral.

The extensive focus on the provision of cremation facilities is evident, even though there is now an increasing emphasis on burial provision. This is concentrating on offering a wider choice of graves, including a “green” or natural form of burial and, generally, to widen memorial choice. The latter aspect is detailed under “CEMETERY MEMORIALS”.

The green burial option is increasingly available as woodland or meadowland burial grounds are opening in many parts of the country. This involves burial followed by the planting of a tree although subsequent thinning of trees is required in order to allow normal growth or, in the case of meadowland burial, managing the meadowland to encourage native wild flowers to grow. Subsequently, the “return to nature” concept allows the graves to form a woodland nature reserve or natural meadowland, without routine maintenance or the use of chemicals. Some woodland burial grounds have been established on existing forest land where burial take place in between the existing trees. Restrictions on the use of embalming and a requirement to use biodegradable coffins might apply. Schemes and costs do vary, particularly if you are not resident in the vicinity. Some private, farm-based schemes are now developing and variations on environmental burial, such as meadowland burial, may begin to arise. Such schemes may deny your right to place any memorial on the grave. It is worth enquiring as to what future protection has been afforded to the natural burial ground should it go into liquidation or the owner simply ceases to provide this service.

Most graves are “bought”, thereby reserving them for the burial of specific persons. The reference to buying a grave is not strictly correct. The “Exclusive Right of Burial” is purchased, giving the owner control over the burials in the grave, and the right to place a memorial. The ground itself is still in the ownership of the landowner. By law, the right cannot be purchased for a period in excess of 100 years in a local authority owned burial ground and much shorter periods are usually offered, although the right to renew the lease should be offered to you or your successors provided that you inform the cemetery office of any change of address or a transfer of ownership is arranged following the death of the owner(s). You should check the period of ownership when purchasing a grave in a woodland/meadowland burial ground or other private cemetery. You may be able to reserve the right in advance, if

you wish to secure a grave close to other deceased relatives, in a certain area or if you wish to reduce the burden of cost on your family when you die. Most graves allow for two burials, however in areas where ground conditions are favourable this may be increased to three or four, one above the other. As each burial takes place you will be charged an additional interment fee to excavate and backfill the grave.

Some local authority and private cemeteries now provide vaults which are underground compartments covered with a sealed cover slab on which the memorial is erected. These graves do not require excavation or backfilling and are preferred by some ethnic and religious groups. Fees for these may be higher than for earth graves due to the initial construction. Some cemeteries will also permit the construction of brick graves. Your Charter member will be able to advise on the availability of these.

In the past, unpurchased graves, usually called common or public graves, were used for many burials. These graves are still available in most areas and, as no Right of Burial is given, are relatively inexpensive. They are used for the burial of unrelated people and normally no right to place a memorial is given however some authorities do allow for the provision of a small memorial. Nowadays, authorities use these graves in order to fulfil their statutory duties and make funeral arrangements where it is apparent that no other person is making such arrangements.

Most cemeteries (and crematoria) provide specific sections for the burial of cremated remains (ashes). These are usually smaller graves however they are administered and recorded in exactly the same way as full sized graves. For further information see the section headed Cremated Remains and Memorialisation.

The choice of graves is limited to areas covered by detailed grave plans and a precise grave numbering system. Nonetheless, if you are concerned about the precise position, you should arrange to visit the cemetery and be shown the available unused graves.

In London only burial authorities have the powers to cancel and reclaim burial rights previously granted in perpetuity and re-use such graves for new burials. (Outside of London right in pre-purchased graves that have not been used for burial may be cancelled at a time that is 75 years after the date on which the rights were granted). It should be stressed that the law requires that a notification procedure is undertaken and any relatives coming forward can re-register an interest in the grave following which the rights will remain with the particular family. It is therefore important that owners of burial rights inform the cemetery office of any change of address or arrange for the ownership to be transferred following the death of the owner(s). Apart from London, at the present time, the law does not allow the disturbance of previously buried remains although the re-use of graves as for London has been under consideration by the government for introduction throughout the country. This is in response to the absence of new ground for graves in some areas. In addition, it would also address the high annual cost of maintaining many acres of old graves. New legislation would be required and this scheme will not be

introduced without extensive consultation. It would involve only graves that are no longer visited and in which the last burial was over 100 years ago. This would take place only where local consultation has been undertaken and there are no objections from relatives.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) You have the right to purchase the “Right of Burial” in a grave for a period not exceeding 100 years. (This Right sometimes includes placing a memorial).
- (b) You have the right to purchase the “Right to Erect and Maintain a Memorial” on a grave for a period not exceeding 100 years. (If not included in Right of Burial).
- (c) You have the right to be buried in an unpurchased grave.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Carter members should expand grave choice to enable the bereaved to obtain individuality and some element of choice. The standard should include a minimum of three graves types, e.g. lawn, traditional and a natural option, such as woodland burial.
- (b) Charter members should consider the provision of a “traditional grave”. This should allow the placing of a full grave-size memorial, or kerbs around the grave. To reduce the maintenance liability, the grave should be entirely covered by stone or hard landscaping. The burial authority has no responsibility for maintenance of memorials and will act to make any memorial safe which becomes a hazard. The purchasers of this grave type must be made aware of the increased cost of such memorials and that additional costs arise when the memorial requires maintenance or is moved to allow further burials.
- (c) Charter members should consider the provision of a natural burial choice such as woodland burial. This should be designed and used in a manner that offers environmental benefits, including habitats for wildlife. Long term, the area may form community woodland, a country park or similar. The long-term economic and environmental benefits of well-managed schemes are considerable.
- (d) Charter members should be supportive of the re-use of old abandoned graves.
- (e) Charter members should consider the maintenance period when grave rights are sold in order to reassess periodically the rising costs of maintaining graves. The historical transfer of maintenance to future generations creates a severe financial burden.
- (f) Charter members should consider the provision of graves specifically for the burial of cremated remains, in all cemeteries.
- (g) Charter members who combine Rights of Burial with Rights to Erect and Maintain a Memorial should consider separating these rights in order to retain more control over the future safety of memorials (see section headed Health & Safety)

Cemetery Memorials

1. INFORMATION

A funeral experience falls into two distinct phases. The first phase is the time of the funeral, often using a Funeral Director. This is attended by speed and precision. The second phase is the period following the funeral, which is very different as the emotions adjust to the death. Speed is no longer imperative during this time of reflection and adjustment. The decision over a memorial should not be made hastily and should be delayed until after the funeral. The memorial will become a focal point that will remain for many years and as such careful thought is required as to the type and design of the memorial in order to avoid the disappointment of a hasty decision. You are advised to obtain several quotations for the provision of a memorial. Ideally, you should inspect examples of the work supplied through the monumental mason or Funeral Director involved. When purchasing a memorial you should insist on, and request in writing, that the memorial will be installed in compliance with British Standard 8415. Further safeguards can be obtained by using a memorial mason that is registered to the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM). Further information on the BRAMM scheme can be found at www.bramm-uk.org. Over recent years, changes in the design and source of memorials have taken place that have almost destroyed local craftsmen being employed in sculpture. This can be partly attributable to the lawn type grave, upon which is typically placed a three-foot high headstone inscribed on the front face. Lines of headstones replicate the design of war graves, offering a neat though often visually boring appearance. As a consequence, the rich heritage of hand carved memorials is declining. Having said this, it is still possible to obtain a sculpted memorial via an organisation called Memorial by Artists that is a network of sculptors and from other craftspeople around the country, your burial authority may be able to provide you with details of such artists. These memorials are handmade therefore will be more expensive than ordinary lawn type memorials however they are unique.

The stone used in memorials is now imported from all over the world, giving a wide range of colour and texture. These non-native stones, however, do not exist harmoniously with churchyards or other environments, nor are they readily colonised by native lichens. (It should be noted that coloured stone imported from abroad is not permitted in all churchyards therefore it is best to check with your memorial mason or sculptor prior to placing an order). You may wish to consider the Carbon footprint of such a memorial. Computerised machines, creating an immaculate neatness but lacking in the human touch, generally complete the inscribing of the stone. Whilst the aforementioned may be viewed as disadvantages of imported material some might argue that such material tends to be cheaper and thus make a memorial more affordable.

If these issues concern you, discuss them with your monumental mason. You still find that, in some parts of the country, artists create memorials to individual design, although these may prove expensive. At present, many cemeteries will accept only standard lawn-type headstones and you should check these details before you order a memorial. The type of grave you choose may also

restrict the design of memorial you may have. These aspects are discussed under the section on “GRAVE CHOICE”.

Every memorial and inscription placed in a cemetery is checked and approved by the burial authority against the registered details of the burial. Subsequently, the actual placement is confirmed to ensure it is located on the correct grave. A fee may be charged for this work, which will normally be paid by the monumental mason and re-charged to the client.

A requirement of the Charter is that colloquial words such as “mum” and “dad” will be acceptable to members. A flexible and supportive attitude will also be taken over the use of nicknames and other familiar terms. The wording of the inscription should be meaningful to the bereaved. Inscriptions should not be subject to rigid or insupportable controls.

Some restrictions, however, are necessary, such as the placing of glass vases, jam jars or bottles, for safety reasons. Similarly, plastic or wire railings placed around graves both impede maintenance and access to other graves and, as they degrade, become safety hazards.

Should the memorial be vandalised, or storm damaged the grave owner is responsible for any necessary repairs and not the owner or operator of the cemetery. It is advisable to discuss insurance arrangements with your monumental mason. Conversely, if the memorial is damaged during mowing, grave digging or other grounds work, the cemetery owner or operator must accept responsibility.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) You have the right to place and maintain a memorial within the constraints of regulations in force or to leave the grave unmarked.
- (b) You have the right and responsibility to maintain the memorial upon the grave during the period of memorial rights granted to you, or any extension made to this period. The memorial cannot be disturbed or moved during this period, without your permission, unless it poses a safety hazard. The safe erection and maintenance of the memorial is your responsibility.
- (c) Except where Charter members are the sole supplier of memorials, you have the right to use any memorial mason of your choice, provided that the Charter member does not prohibit them.

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- a Charter members should, where possible, extend the range and variety of memorial options. Offering grave types that allow more extensive designs with increased opportunity to personalise the memorial through its design can do this. It can also be achieved by relaxing existing regulations in designated areas. Where regulations specify precise headstone heights, say three feet, these can readily be changed to “a maximum of three feet”. This then allows the bereaved to place an inexpensive vase, through a variety of designs up to the standard

headstone. This widens choice and gives the bereaved greater control over costs and design.

- b Charter members should encourage greater artistic input into memorials. A memorial should reflect individuality and the spirit of the community. This could create local employment and help monumental masons to utilise locally sourced stone, creating memorials that harmonise with their surroundings. Regulations should be flexible, allowing for artistic use of both natural and artificial materials. Members may consider a flexible fee structure to encourage locally sourced stone and local stonemasons.
- c Charter members should allow for the use of wood as a memorial. Wooden crosses were a notable feature of cemeteries in the past and are readily made by the bereaved family or can be purchased commercially. The aesthetic appearance of such items is not within the remit of this Charter and must be determined locally. More extensive memorials in wood should not be dismissed.
- d Charter members should promote the benefits of using registered monumental masons (such as those registered with BRAMM) or artists to advise the bereaved over the design and installation of a memorial. This arrangement also allows a greater amount of time to pass between the funeral and the purchase of a memorial. It also enables the bereaved to recover from their initial emotional distress and make a more meaningful purchase.
- e. Charter members will issue a free leaflet, upon request, offering guidance over the purchase of a memorial and the completion of inscriptions.
- f. Charter members will issue a free leaflet, upon request, offering guidance over the choice of graves available.
- g. Charter members will separate rights to erect and maintain memorials from exclusive rights of burial (if this is not already done). The length of the lease for erecting and maintaining a memorial should be issued for the same period as any guarantee given by the memorial mason. Rights can be renewed at the end of the period subject to an inspection and repair of any defects and further guarantee given by the memorial mason.
- h. Charter members will advise grave owners on the subjects of BS8415, BRAMM and memorial insurance.
- i. Charter members shall develop strategies to conserve the heritage value of established cemeteries ensuring that any changes in regulations to permit greater choice do not undermine such strategies.

Baby and Infant Funerals

Introduction

This policy and guidance has been designed to assist bereaved parents with making decisions that are right for them and to further assist burial and cremation authorities in providing suitable and acceptable services. It was formulated with the kind assistance of Sands (the stillbirth and neonatal death charity) during the review of the ICCM Charter for the Bereaved with the intention of providing information to parents and burial authorities and ultimately raise the level of services provided.

1. INFORMATION FOR PARENTS

A message to bereaved parents:

We are so sorry that your baby has died. We hope that the information in this policy will explain your options and help you to make decisions about your baby's funeral. Remember, it is your right to arrange a private funeral that meets with your requirements and wishes at the cemetery or crematorium of your choice. Alternatively, most hospitals will make arrangements for shared funeral services (that is, for more than one baby) at their local cemetery and/or crematorium.

The information below will help you make decisions about your preferred choice and the options available, however remember that further help is also available through your Charter member, funeral director and hospital patient affairs/bereavement officer¹.

Remember, you do not have to make any rushed decisions and should take time to consider the options available.

Sands is a well known national organisation that provides help and support to bereaved parents via a network of local groups. Some local groups have assisted burial and cremation authorities with developing their services to bereaved parents. The Sands website (<http://www.uk-sands.org/>) contains a wealth of advice and information that might help you make decisions on the funeral that meets with your needs. The Sands Helpline on 020 7436 5881 is available if you would like to speak to someone or be put in touch with your nearest Sands group. Sands also has a booklet for parents *Deciding about a funeral for your baby* which can be ordered free from the Sands Shop or read online on the Sands website (from December 2014)

¹ The title of the person at the hospital may vary between hospitals.

Your Choices

Many NHS hospitals offer to organise and pay for a funeral for a baby who dies at any stage of pregnancy or shortly after birth. Parents can usually attend the funeral and can also usually make some decisions about the kind of service and how they will participate. Alternatively you can take full control and arrange a private funeral.

Burial or Cremation

It is your right to decide whether a burial or cremation service is provided for your baby.

(a) HOSPITAL ARRANGEMENTS

The hospital authorities generally do not charge for making burial or cremation arrangements. They also pay any necessary cemetery or crematorium fees, although many local authorities offer their cemetery and/or crematorium service free of charge in these cases. Some hospitals offer burial as well as cremation whilst others offer cremation only. Where your preference is burial and the hospital only offers cremation, you will need to consider making a private arrangement as discussed below.

Some hospitals will arrange a burial or cremation where a number of babies are remembered at the funeral service. Some parents can draw comfort from knowing that their baby has been laid to rest with others.

If you prefer the hospital to make arrangements it is important that you speak to the appropriate officer at the hospital so that you are aware of the date and time of the funeral. In most places you can attend if you wish. You can also visit and speak to the manager of the cemetery or crematorium who will explain how and where shared burial takes place in the cemetery, or if a crematorium, the area of the garden of remembrance where cremation memorials can be provided. It is important that you are satisfied with what will happen to your baby prior to the funeral as your decision may not be reversible after the funeral.

The hospital should be able to inform you of what happens to the ashes resulting from a shared cremation, and that the location where they are buried or scattered is registered and can be identified by the crematorium after the cremation has taken place.

Most crematoria maximise the recovery of ashes from the cremations of babies. You might wish to contact the crematorium of your choice before the cremation takes place to enquire about their policy regarding the recovery of ashes. If you are not satisfied you can take control and choose an alternative crematorium.

Irrespective of who makes the arrangements the cemetery or crematorium will have options for remembrance and memorials if you wish to arrange a form of commemoration. An increasing number of cemeteries and crematoria are

including children's burial sections and children's gardens of remembrance within their services where shared funerals are conducted in exactly the same manner as private funerals. Some bereaved parents gain comfort from knowing that their baby was laid to rest with others.

(b) PRIVATE ARRANGEMENTS

You can make your own funeral arrangements should you wish. You would then have full control of the arrangements, including where and when the funeral is to take place. You would be responsible for any costs associated with the funeral, but many funeral directors and cemeteries or crematoria make either no charge or a reduced charge for babies and children.

Whilst it might be a difficult task you are advised to speak to more than one funeral director before making decisions as where charges are made these can be high in some locations and especially in cities.

Should you wish to make arrangements yourself without using a funeral director the cemetery or crematorium manager will assist you by showing you the available options and giving practical help and advice regarding certificates and forms required. Your detailed requirements for the funeral service can also be made directly.

If you choose a cremation service it is important to ask the crematorium for their success in recovering ashes. If your local crematorium can give no guarantee that ashes will be recovered it is your right to choose one that does. Many crematoria can guarantee the recovery of ashes, even where the baby is of a very low term.

(c) Burial Options

Charter members are encouraged to create a Children's section within their cemetery where either shared or private funerals can be arranged. The graves in this section are small and are only suitable for the burial of babies and children. When considering your options you may want to think about burying your baby in a larger plot in the main area of the cemetery. In this case you would be able to use the same grave for one or two adults at some time in the future, possibly for a grandparent or a parent, without disturbing the baby.

If burial in a private grave is your preferred choice, whether in the main section or the Children's section of the cemetery, a deed will be issued to you giving what is known as the exclusive right to the grave. This means that nothing can be done to the grave without the written permission of the owner of the exclusive right. The owner therefore has total control over the memorial that might be placed on the grave (subject to the cemetery's rules and regulations) and any other matter relating to the grave. You can visit the cemetery prior to the burial and be shown where the burial will take place. If you are not satisfied you can choose an alternative cemetery.

If you choose burial in a shared grave your baby will be buried with others in the same grave. Charter members are encouraged to locate these graves within the same Children's section where private graves are situated. You will not have any rights or control over the grave however some parents take

comfort from knowing that their baby is with others. Should you choose this option it should be noted that it will not be possible to reverse your decision and request an exhumation and reburial in a private grave as the consent of all parents of babies buried there would be required but could not be obtained.

(d) Cremation Options

Cremation can be either via a private funeral service, i.e. one you arrange yourselves for your baby, or a shared cremation service, i.e. one where several babies are remembered together in a service that can be attended by all the families.

If you choose a private cremation you should discuss your requirements for the service directly with your funeral director or with the crematorium.

You may of course, arrange the funeral directly with the crematorium and without using a funeral director. You should be informed of the policy of the crematorium regarding the recovery of ashes resulting from the cremation. Many crematoria can guarantee the return of ashes irrespective of the term of the baby however it is advised to check with your chosen crematorium on its policy. If you are not satisfied you can select an alternative crematorium.

Where ashes are recovered from a private cremation the crematorium will deal directly with the parent(s) regarding the scattering or burial of the ashes and memorial facilities.

Should you choose a shared cremation the ashes of each baby will not be individually identifiable. The ashes will however be scattered or buried in the garden of remembrance, the location recorded and the hospital and/or Funeral Director will also be informed. You can find out if ashes were recovered or not by contacting the hospital, funeral director or crematorium on the day following the funeral service.

Charter members are encouraged to create a children's garden of remembrance within their crematoria where individual memorials may be arranged by the parent(s).

2. Charter Rights

CHARTER RIGHTS FOR PARENTS

- (a) It is your right to decide whether the hospital makes funeral arrangements (if this is offered) or whether you take full control of the funeral for your baby or infant and decide whether a burial or cremation will take place.
- (b) It is your right to be offered a private grave for your baby or infant and be issued with a deed for the exclusive right to the grave. You also have the right to erect a memorial on a private grave that complies with the cemetery rules. These are subject to payment of any appropriate fees.

- (c) It is your right to be able to purchase an adult grave for the burial of your baby or infant, with sufficient depth remaining to allow adult burials, and be issued with a deed for the exclusive right to the grave. You also have the right to erect a memorial on a private grave. These are subject to payment of any appropriate fees.
- (d) It is your right to be able to choose a shared² grave for the burial of your baby. (Should you choose this option it should be noted that it will not be possible to reverse your decision and request an exhumation and reburial in a private grave, as the consent of all parents of babies buried there would be required but could not be obtained). You may not be able to erect a memorial on a shared grave due to space.
- (e) It is your right to be able to choose a private cremation for your baby.
- (f) It is your right to be able to choose a shared cremation for your baby where provided by the hospital.
- (g) It is your right to be able to receive accurate information about the cremation of your baby from the crematorium.
- (h) It is your right to expect the crematorium to have a technique in place designed to maximise the recovery of ashes.
- (i) It is your right to be given all of the ashes resulting from an individual cremation given to you, or they can be buried or scattered with your written consent. All of the ashes is defined as ***'all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process and following the removal of any metal'***.
- (j) It is your right to decide what happens to any metal recovered from a private, individual cremation and the crematorium must inform you of the options available, which could include recycling for charitable purposes, burial within the grounds or return of metal to you.
- (k) It is your right to be able to arrange a memorial for your baby at the crematorium
- (l) When arranging a private burial or cremation it is your right to decide on the type of coffin or container that your baby will be buried in e.g. traditional coffin, wicker, bamboo, biodegradable, shroud.

3. INFORMATION FOR CHARTER MEMBERS

This section of the Charter has been reviewed with the kind assistance of Sands therefore giving a greater insight into the type and level of services that bereaved parents would expect.

² Many bereaved parents find the terms communal grave, communal cremation etc distressing and offensive. For them the word 'communal' carries echoes of paupers' graves, mass graves etc. We would encourage Charter members to use the term 'shared' in all communications with parents and in all documents (as in this document).

Charter members are advised to take note of the Information for Parents and the Charter Rights above when considering new facilities and/or services or making improvements.

The terms 'ashes' and 'cremated remains' are deemed to be one and the same and defined as ***'all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process and following the removal of any metal'***. Cremation authorities are strongly advised to formulate local policy and practice (technique) in respect of baby and infant cremations that will maximise the recovery of ashes.

Parents must be informed of what happens to any metal recovered from a private individual cremation and be informed of options available. Consent should be obtained to dispose of metal.

Charter members are also encouraged to accept and work toward providing the services and facilities contained in the Charter Targets below in order to improve their services to bereaved parents to way above a minimum level.

Where a local hospital does not provide the shared option to parents for burial and cremation Charter members will encourage them to do so via the use of the shared facilities provided at your cemetery and/or crematorium.

CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Children's burial sections should be developed to accommodate private individual graves on which a memorial can be erected. A deed of grant of the exclusive right must be provided to the parent(s).
- (b) Children's burial sections should be specifically designed to meet the needs of bereaved parents with input provided by the nearest local Sands group. The use of undesirable areas, such as old public graves and narrow verges should be avoided. Where space is limited the use of areas previously used for public burial could be suitably enhanced to accommodate a specifically designed Children's section.
- (c) Children's burial sections mentioned above should be developed to accommodate shared burials of babies (irrespective of gestation period) and infants, delivered by local midwifery and gynaecology services. These facilities may be free of charge to parents, allow for an individual grave and burial and the placing of a memorial.
- (d) Backfill a shared grave immediately after a burial and not leave the grave open pending a further burial. Where this might not be possible a secure lockable cover should be used. Parents have the right to know that their baby is secure in the care of the burial authority.
- (e) Crematoria should have a written local policy on baby and infant cremations that contains a commitment to a technique that will maximise the recovery of ashes.

- (f) A memorial facility should be provided within a children's section for parents that choose shared burial.
- (g) Old individual adult public graves for shared/hospital burials should not be used. These old graves are often in less well maintained areas that can appear bleak and unfriendly.
- (h) A specific Children's Garden of Remembrance area should be developed within the crematorium garden of remembrance where suitable memorial facilities should be provided.
- (i) Charter members often correspond with the parents during or after the burial when the parents are shocked and numbed. It is important that letters or printed materials are written with warmth and without any bureaucratic tone. The baby's name should be used wherever possible, rather than reference to the "body" and the "burial".
- (j) Charter members must ensure that informative literature on the above is readily available to parents. Such literature should be provided to all local hospitals in the area served by the burial and/or cremation authority.
- (k) Ashes recovered from shared cremations will be scattered or buried in the garden of remembrance, the location recorded and the hospital and/or Funeral Director will also be informed. Charter members are advised to also provide this information to local hospitals and funeral directors with the addition that should ashes be recovered the aforementioned, or the parents directly, will be informed.

APPENDIX

Reproduced with the kind permission of Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity

Shared graves – Sands position statement May 2010

When a baby dies at any stage of pregnancy or shortly after birth, it is common practice for Trusts and Health Boards to offer to arrange a funeral service, followed by burial or cremation.

Some Trusts and Health Boards that offer burial, use shared graves. This is particularly likely in areas of the UK where burial ground is scarce and burial costs are high.

Sands strongly believes that burial must continue to be an option for all parents. Wherever possible each baby should be buried in a single grave. However, if the cost of single graves is prohibitive, then shared graves must remain an option so that Trusts and Health Boards can continue to offer burial.

Shared graves must always be protected by lockable grave covers to ensure that the grave cannot be disturbed until it is full and the ground can be re-constituted. (A

lockable grave cover consists of a metal frame bolted into the ground, covered with a strong polypropylene cover that is padlocked to the frame.)

Parents whose baby has died are extremely shocked and grief-stricken. It is therefore essential that they receive clear and sensitive explanations of all their options. They should also be informed about what each option involves. In addition parents should be given written information about the choices they can make. They can then decide if they would like the hospital to organise their baby's funeral, or if they would prefer to arrange it themselves.

Some parents who want the hospital to arrange the funeral may, for religious, cultural or personal reasons choose burial. If the grave is to be shared with other babies, parents should always be told this in advance. They should be told how many babies will be in the grave and given an estimate of how long it is likely to be before the grave is closed and the ground properly reinstated.

Parents should also be informed in advance of any restrictions there may be. For example, that they may not be allowed to place any kind of memorial on a shared grave and that they will not (in most cases) be able to move their baby's body to another location at a later date should they wish to. This information should also be included in writing for all parents.

Some parents find the idea of a shared grave upsetting. Others find it comforting to know that their baby will not be alone.

It is paramount that babies' bodies and remains are always handled with respect and that parents wishes are always respected.

Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity
28 Portland Place London W1B 1LY
info@uk-sands.org
Enquiries 020 7436 7940
Support 020 7436 5881
www.uk-sands.org

Burials in Private Land

1. INFORMATION

Although burial principally occurs in purpose designed cemeteries or churchyards, there are some exceptions. Families with large estates have routinely built a mausoleum or similar building on their land, for the burial of family members. Some individuals have been buried in farmland and others in gardens, without this becoming generally known. More recently, this form of burial has obtained media coverage and numbers have significantly increased. Much of this has been due to the Natural Death Centre, a charity formed to support a less formalised routine for funerals, as well as a better approach to death generally. They have issued a handbook and a further publication called "Green Burial", which explains how to arrange these burials within legal and planning requirements.

There are several advantages of this form of burial. It allows you to organise a very personal funeral, in which you maintain total control. You are able to reduce costs significantly by not having to purchase a grave in a cemetery. Some families may make their own coffin and undertake the whole funeral themselves whilst others may use a Funeral Director. It is essential that you obtain permission to complete a burial, where you are not the landowner of the ground involved. You are also advised to notify any individual or mortgage company that has an interest in the property. Access to the grave may be denied or restricted by change of ownership.

The difficulties are also significant, although these vary according to the location. Most locations fall into two categories, on farmland and in a garden.

(a) FARMLAND

These locations are rarely overlooked and will not offend neighbours or the public at large. The gravesite should be on land with a deep water table and be sufficient distance from watercourses so as not to pose a pollution threat. Electrical or other services must obviously be avoided. A limited number of burials over a period of time may not constitute a "change of use" and no planning approval is thereby necessary. Information submitted by the Natural Death Centre states "Recent local authority Certificates of Lawfulness have decided that planning permission is not required for the non-commercial burial on private land of a limited number of family, friends or those living in the house. These decisions have not been tested in the courts. The Department of the Environment are more cautious, and accept merely that planning permission is not required for the burial of one or two persons in back gardens".

Exceeding a "limited" number of burials may require planning approval for use as a cemetery or for "mixed use" if farming is also to continue.

Safe grave excavation would be a further consideration, as well as leaving sufficient depth of soil (three feet) over the body. If it is intended to fence or mark the grave(s) with a memorial, planning permission may be required. In

effect, a single burial in a farm situation can proceed without an approach to, or the approval of, any council or other official organisation.

(b) **GARDEN**

The situation in a garden is complicated by the proximity of neighbours. They may oppose a burial nearby and may be offended by the sight of a coffin or body. Although these may not pose legal objections, it may not be conducive to good relationships. Otherwise, the aspects outlined under farm burials above are broadly similar. The particular difficulty in these locations is the reduction of the property value due to the presence of a grave. Although figures of 20% are mentioned, this has yet to be proven. Undoubtedly, a significant fall will occur although the fact that many buyers would not even consider the purchase at all seems more relevant.

Two major concerns influence this choice of burial. Firstly, the body could be exhumed by any new property purchaser, and re-buried in a cemetery. This reason for obtaining an exhumation licence has yet to be tested, neither has the need to obtain consent from the near relatives. There are legal means (restrictive covenant) by which you can ensure the grave remains untouched, but this will involve costs and other uncertainties. Secondly, details of the burial will not be officially recorded, as they would be in a cemetery.

It would seem that the Registration of Burials Act 1864 would apply to both back garden and farmland burial and that an appropriate register should be kept. This register could be in the form of a notebook containing the necessary details of the burial(s). It would also seem appropriate to mark the precise location of the burial(s) on the plans of the property and retain these with the deeds.

A certificate for burial issued by a Coroner or Registrar of Births and Deaths will have to be obtained. The detachable section of this is to be completed and returned to the Registrar by the person arranging burial. It is important to note that, as explained above, the Registrar does not record the details of the burial, including the burial location. The Registrar is appointed to record population data and is not able to record the place of burial.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- (a) It is your right to receive factual information on burial in private land from your Charter member.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- (a) Charter members are encouraged to provide a green or natural burial option as an alternative to burial in private land.

Cremation procedure

1 INFORMATION

Cremation in modern times began at Woking, Surrey in 1885 and has consistently developed with over 250 crematoria now operating in the UK. The cremation rate is now approximately 72% of all deaths in the UK. All cremations *must* take place in a crematorium approved for that purpose.

In the earlier Charter item “WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES?” the arrangements immediately following a death and up to Registration were considered. This item outlines all the subsequent arrangement of a funeral, where cremation is intended. The procedure is described in the order that would be routinely followed by a Funeral Director or anybody organising a funeral without a Funeral Director.

PROVISIONAL FUNERAL BOOKING

As soon as the death has been certified and the availability of the minister (if needed) is confirmed, the crematorium is telephoned and a provisional funeral booking is arranged. The crematorium office should be available for booking during normal office hours, and preferably over weekends. The following information will be required:

- Funeral date and time. This will be when the funeral arrives at the crematorium chapel and will be met by a member of staff. Normally, a minimum three days notice will be given, but this is dependent on the time needed to obtain the cremation medical certificates and the Registrar’s Certificate or Coroner’s certificate. Periods of high death rate may cause delay, however an increasing number of cemeteries and crematoria will provide additional service times during weekdays and possibly open at weekends in an attempt to reduce delays. The bereaved should not have to wait beyond a specified number of days for the cremation service. This issue is considered in the Charter item “COMMUNICATION”. Services may be booked at fixed times and, dependent upon the crematorium, may be from 20 to 45 minutes apart. The time chosen is optional but will be limited to those available. It may be possible to book extra time if it is needed.
- Name and address of the deceased.
- The name and telephone number of the Funeral Director or the person arranging the funeral, who will also pay the required fees. A table of fees is available upon request.

The details above are the minimum necessary for a provisional booking. This enables the Funeral Director or person arranging the funeral to notify everybody involved, and ensures that they work within the timescales.

The arrangements that follow involve far more forms and bureaucracy than that which applies to burial. This is because cremation destroys the body, which, unlike after burial, cannot subsequently be recovered for investigation if

crime or some other problem arises. The procedure appears complex, but is easily followed with the guidance of crematoria staff.

NOTICE OF CREMATION / PRELIMINARY APPLICATION

This form provides notice of the cremation and forms a binding contract regarding the payment of fees to the cremation authority. The following details will be required:

- The full name and address of the deceased, age and occupation.
- Whether a coffin or casket is being used. See Charter item on "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES" for information.
- Service date and time. A time must be booked, even when a service is not being held. This is because every coffin is formally received through the chapel, without exception and cannot be accepted through the "back door".
- Service details, including minister's name, if attending, religion and music or other requests. See Charter item "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS" for information.
- Details on the placement of cremated remains. The applicant for cremation will indicate what is to happen to these and sign the form. An immediate decision is not required as the cremated remains can be retained at the crematorium thus giving the bereaved time to consider options and make the best possible decision for themselves.

Other information may be requested on this form including:

- What you would like to happen to the cremated remains e.g. scattered in the crematorium gardens, buried in a grave, collected by yourself or your Funeral Director. Various options are available therefore do not feel you need to make an immediate decision. If you need time to consider this virtually all crematoria will have an option to retain the cremated remains pending a decision.
- Whether or not you consent to metal residues being recycled (see the section headed Environmental Issues)
- Whether or not you consent to the coffin and deceased being held over and not cremated on the same day (See the section headed Environmental Issues)
- Your choice of container for the cremated remains
- Whether the Chapel of Rest is to be used

Some crematoria offer bearers or other facilities at extra costs, which need to be indicated. If the cremated remains are being buried in a churchyard, cemetery or some other crematorium, a Cremation Certificate can be requested. A small fee may apply, and the certificate is evidence that the death has been registered and the Cremation Authority that completed the cremation has the necessary certification on file..

APPLICATION FOR CREMATION (FORM 1 in England & Wales, Form A in Scotland)

This is a statutory form issued under the Cremation Regulations. It must be completed by the executor or nearest surviving relative. If not, a reason why some other person has applied must be given. The details required are quite straightforward however your Funeral Director will provide this form and assist in its completion. If you are arranging the funeral yourself, without a Funeral Director, your Charter member will assist you in completing this form. .

MEDICAL FORMS 4, 5 AND 10 (Forms B, C and F in Scotland)

These are statutory forms, with forms 4 and 5 (Forms B and C in Scotland) being subject to a payment upon completion to the doctors involved (the fees for these forms will either be included in your account from your Funeral Director or will be required to be paid directly by yourself if you are arranging a funeral without the use of a Funeral Director). Form 4 is completed by the doctor who attended the deceased before death and Form 5 by a doctor who confirms the cause of death. The Form 5 is not required if the doctor who completes Form 4 is aware of the results of any post mortem before he/she completes the Form 4. In this situation, no payment will be required for Form 5. Questions will also be asked about whether radio active implants or a cardiac pacemaker are present in the body, as these must be removed before cremation.

Form 10 (Form F in Scotland) is completed by a doctor appointed as the Medical Referee to the Cremation Authority. He or she will sign the form, if satisfied that the statutory requirements are complied with, the cause of death has been definitely ascertained and there exists no reason for further enquiry or examination. The cremation will only take place after this form has been signed.

Forms 1, 4 and 5 must be submitted to the crematorium office together with the certificate issued by the Registrar, as outlined in the Charter item "WHAT DO YOU DO WHEN SOMEBODY DIES".

Should the Coroner (or Procurator Fiscal in Scotland) investigate the death then he/she may either order a post mortem examination or open an inquest on the deceased person. Once the Coroner is satisfied that further examination of the body is not required he/she will issue a certificate called Form 6 (Form E in Scotland) which takes the place of the previously mentioned Forms 4 and 5. This form is free, which benefits the bereaved as it saves the cost of doctors' fees for Forms 4 and 5.

The Cremation Regulations 2008 covering England and Wales also cover the cremation of body parts removed during post mortem examinations. This piece of legislation includes specific forms for the cremation of body parts i.e. Form 2 – Application, Form 8 – certificate on release of body parts, Form 12 – Authority of the Medical Referee to cremate body parts.

In Scotland the cremation of body parts is covered by the Cremation (Scotland) Amendment Regulations 2003. These regulations are the same as those for England and Wales however the Forms have different titles with these being:

Form AA - Application for the cremation of body parts

Form DD – Certificate of release of body parts

Form FF – Authority of the Medical Referee to cremate body parts

Charter Members will be able to advise bereaved persons which forms will be required / forthcoming in relation to particular circumstances.

The above procedure applies to all deaths, including a baby that might die a short time after birth. The procedure is altered slightly for the cremation of a stillborn child with the Cremation Regulations 2008 for England and Wales introducing special forms for this purpose. It should be noted that fetal remains can also be cremated (It should also be noted that cremated remains may not be recovered following the cremation of fetal remains and, in some instances, stillborn children).

The above details describe the forms involved. The procedure in the office and then at the crematorium is now described. (NOTE: While this Charter was being revised a review of death certification was underway in England & Wales and Scotland. Advice on any alterations to the current requirements as detailed above that might be made as a result of the review can be obtained from your Charter member. This Charter will be revised in light of any change in legislation).

OFFICE PROCEDURE

Following the booking of the cremation date and time, the cremation forms arrive at the office, either together or individually. These are collated by the crematorium office staff and passed to the Medical Referee who will check for errors and unanswered questions and, if complete, the Medical Referee will sign Form 10 (Form F in Scotland). This enables an identity card to be issued for each cremation and these, together with a list of daily service details and any special instructions or requirements, are passed to the crematorium staff early each morning. After the cremation, the details about the deceased, the applicant for cremation and the doctors involved, are entered under a sequential number in a statutory Register of Cremations, which is retained forever as a book or on a computer.

An alphabetical index of those cremated is maintained, to facilitate searches in the future. These occur often as time passes, mainly to identify the position of the cremated remains, particularly when those of a partner are to be placed in the same location. The manager of the facility will send details of memorials available to the Applicant for Cremation. If the cremated remains are retained pending a decision, then details of the options available for the final placement will also be sent. Many crematoria retain cremated remains automatically, for a defined period, to allow the bereaved to consider the options available and make a change of mind.

Finally, and within 96 hours of the cremation, the detachable portion of the Coroner's or Registrar's Certificate, will be sent to the Registrar indicating the date and place of cremation.

CREMATION PROCEDURE

The crematorium staff will place a list of all cremations that day, outside the crematorium chapel. The supervisor and/or chapel attendant will meet each funeral and, using information on the daily list issued by the office, will ensure that services run smoothly. This involves close liaison with ministers, organists and Funeral Directors. The removal of Christian symbols for secular services and playing recorded music will be completed as required. See the Charter item on "CEREMONIES AND BELIEFS" for further details.

Where families are arranging funerals without a Funeral Director, the staff will advise and help. If a Chapel of Rest is available, where coffins can be kept between death and the service, the staff may help move the coffin to the chapel at the agreed start time. Staff may also act as bearers, using a wheeled bier or physically carrying the coffin and placing it on the catafalque, where it rests during the service. They will also control car parking and may monitor activities using camera surveillance.

The wreaths brought to funerals will be placed on the "flower terrace" or equivalent, and should be identified by a card or sign indicating the name of the deceased. The staff will also meet families wanting to preview the chapel(s) and facilities prior to a cremation service. Throughout the day, staff will help visitors considering or searching for memorials, cremated remains locations or any other enquiries. They may complete cleaning duties and care of floral tributes during quieter periods.

THE CREMATION PROCESS

The crematorium staff should all be qualified Cremator Technicians. Modern cremators cost a six figure sum each for a single unit, which will complete 800 – 1000 cremations per year. A busy crematorium might have three such cremators installed. The modern cremator must conform to the requirements of the Secretary of State's Guidance Note PG5/2 made under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, with strict limits on emissions. The Secretary of State's Process Guidance Note for Crematoria issued under this Act prescribes the limits for emissions of harmful substances to the atmosphere. During the last review of this document the requirement for 50% of the national total of cremations to be abated/filtered to remove mercury emissions was introduced with a deadline for compliance set at 31st December 2012. This means that cremation authorities and companies can decide whether or not to install abatement equipment and any that do not must share the burden of cost with those that do install the equipment. If you have strong environmental concerns you might wish to use a crematorium where abatement plant is fitted.

The Guidance Note requires that the secondary zone of the cremator should not fall below a temperature of 800 degrees C for an abated cremator Or 850 degrees C in an unabated cremator. The lowering of this temperature for an

abated cremator and subsequent reduction in gas consumption further indicates that the abated cremator is environmentally beneficial. It also requires that qualified cremator technicians operate the cremators.

The cremator Technician will transfer coffins, at the finish of each service, from the catafalque and through to the crematory. The nameplate on the coffin will be checked against the identity card prior to cremation. If there are identity anomalies, checks will be completed to ascertain why. The most common reason is that people use different names or nicknames and these can be entered on coffin nameplates. The coffin, if cremated on the same day, will be retained until a cremator is available. An increasing number of crematoria will hold over coffins from a less busy day to the next day so as to ensure efficient use of cremators and minimise gas usage. It should be noted that all coffins are cremated separately. The reasons for occasionally holding over coffins is based on environmental principles and the saving of fossil fuel, a finite resource (see the Environmental Issues section). A coffin is only held over with the consent of the applicant for cremation. When a cremator is ready the coffin will be placed on a charging bier or charging machine, from which it enters the cremator. Relatives, if desired can witness this charging process and it is common for those of the Sikh and Hindu faiths to do so. If the cremated remains are to be collected on the same day and perhaps buried in the afternoon, the cremation will be programmed early. The cremator will have been pre-heated to 800 °C (or 850°C if unabated) prior to this stage and, using various gas and air jets, the cremation will be completed. In modern cremators, the process will be microprocessor controlled and little operator attention is necessary. The principal aim is to maintain temperatures and reduce emissions, with no emission of smoke.

Each cremation will take about 1 hour 20 minutes and may attain temperatures in excess of 1000°C. At the completion of the process, the cremated remains will be manually raked out, cooled and processed through a machine that reduces them to a fine, granular state. Metal residues such as orthopaedic implants and screws and nails used in coffin construction and some precious metal will be removed. Approximately 50% of UK crematoria have joined the ICCM metals recycling scheme where consent to recycle residual metal is obtained from the applicant for cremation. All proceeds from the scheme are donated to charities (further information on the ICCM Metal Recycling Scheme is available at www.iccm-uk.com/iccm).

The identity card, which has followed through the process, will be placed with the cremated remains. These will be dealt with according to the instructions of the Applicant for Cremation. The choices available are described in the Charter item "CREMATED REMAINS AND MEMORIALISATION". When the remains are either buried or taken away, the identity card will be signed and returned to the office. The location will be recorded in the Cremation Register and the card filed with the other cremation forms. The receipt of the signed card signifies the completion of the process. There are slight variations on the actual process designed to ensure maintenance of identity between crematoria but basically this process is of paramount importance in the operation of crematoria.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR BURIAL AND CREMATION SERVICES

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management has created the Guiding Principles for use by Charter members. They cover the ethical, social and environmental issues relating to both burial and cremation. The Guiding Principles are printed after the Charter item on "INSPECTION".

Your Charter member should operate under the Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation Services.

CODE OF CREMATION PRACTICE

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA) maintains a Code of Cremation Practice, to which members must adhere.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to organise and conduct a cremation in a dignified and orderly manner, supported by competent, professional and caring crematorium staff.
- b) You have the right to inspect the crematorium under normal working conditions.
- c) You have a right to be able to choose to recycle any metals remaining after cremation.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop national standards regarding the reception and handling of funerals whilst present in a crematorium
- b) Charter members will develop national standards for the holding of Memorial Services at crematoria
- c) Charter members will set a minimum period for retaining cremated remains that are not taken away and the period shall not be less than five working days. This is to enable the bereaved to consider the options available and make an informed decision before the final placement is made.
- d) Charter members will promote a reduction in the certification required for cremation and the associated costs of this to the bereaved.

Cremated remains and memorialisation

1 INFORMATION

The need for cremation memorialisation is not universally recognised. Opposition persists from the early days of cremation, when strewing the cremated remains over the Garden of Remembrance lawns and arranging a Book of Remembrance entry was the recommended procedure. In more recent times, the benefits of memorials in the alleviation of grief for some people has been widely recognised and is beyond dispute. In view of this, there should be options available to enable the bereaved to have a memorial if they so wish.

Following a cremation, the cremated remains are placed according to the directions of the “applicant for cremation”. This is the person who applies for and signs the cremation Form “ 1”. The signature or approval by letter of this person will be required whenever any changes of instruction take place.

It is a matter of choice whether the cremated remains are taken away or are left at the crematorium, these two options being considered below. This final location, of course, is closely associated with any form of memorialisation that is required, which is why these subjects are considered together.

CREMATED REMAINS – TAKEN AWAY

Some people wish to place the cremated remains in a favourite spot, perhaps a hill or coastal location. The law offers no restrictions although, in theory, you need the permission of the landowner. The crematorium will place the cremated remains in an inexpensive container, from which you can strew them. These containers might be plastic, aluminium or biodegradable cardboard and will contain the 5lbs – 7lbs (2.2kg – 3.2 kg) of remains from each cremation. Some people strew them, or inter them in a casket, in their garden (Note that if you do not hold the freehold of the property you must obtain the consent of the owner). In this case it is important to consider that you may ultimately leave your house, or die yourself. Also, if the cremated remains are of your partner or child, you may be unable to place your cremated remains together in the same location.

Other people may wish to place the cremated remains in a cemetery, a churchyard or another crematorium, perhaps in an area where the family have their roots. You need to check on the type of container acceptable at the location. Churchyards generally will not accept plastic, metal or wood containers, preferring the cremated remains to be placed in the earth without a container. Biodegradable cardboard caskets are available that might prove acceptable. Most cemeteries will accept a wooden casket. You should note that if a family grave previously used for burial is full, it might still accept a considerable number of cremated remains. Recording these on the memorial on the grave may use up all the inscription space. You may be able to overcome this by adding inscribed vases, or adding flat tablets or similar, in front of the existing memorial.

You will require a Certificate of Cremation, issued by the crematorium either free or for a nominal charge, to give to the person controlling the burial place. This certificate is not a statutory document but informs the person controlling the burial place that the death has been registered. Should you lose this certificate, the death certificate issued by the Registrar of Births and Deaths will suffice. As well as this, you may be required to complete a burial application and pay a fee. You can arrange a religious or secular service at the burial of the cremated remains, should you so wish. Many crematoria and cemeteries will complete a burial without your attendance, accepting the cremated remains via a secure carrier or Registered Letter post, and completing administrative arrangements by post.

CREMATED REMAINS – LEFT AT THE CREMATORIUM

The applicant for the cremation will be given details of where the cremated remains can be placed and of the memorial options available. This may be sent through the post or passed via the Funeral Director involved. The cremated remains may be automatically retained for a period, or may be retained upon request, whilst a decision is pending. In these circumstances and in the event of no decision being forthcoming after the initial period, the cremation authority may write to the applicant for the cremation seeking a decision. Where no decision is forthcoming the cremation authority are empowered by law to strew or inter the cremated remains in the garden of remembrance with due regard to respect and decency and record the location in the cremation register for future reference.

STREWING AND INTERMENT OF CREMATED REMAINS

Some people prefer to have the cremated remains strewn or interred in the grounds of the crematorium where the cremation took place. This ensures that the remains are placed in a secure, purpose built environment, which enables the bereaved to use the memorial facilities that are available.

The grounds of the crematorium are usually called the Garden of Remembrance, which is dedicated to the dead of all religions and non-believers. It is important that the grounds are attractive and welcoming, offering solace and solitude, to meet the special needs of the bereaved. Logically, exposed areas with very little planting would not meet these needs. The Garden of Remembrance is a memorial in itself and when cremated remains are placed in the grounds, it is your decision as to whether you need a personal memorial of your own. This may be available in the Garden of Remembrance or elsewhere. Some bereaved people benefit from a feeling of attachment and ownership of the grounds where the cremated remains of their loved ones lie. A memorial in the form of a tree or shrub-planting scheme may offer this. This feeling of attachment can be so great that people leave bequests in their wills to the crematorium.

A bereaved person may want to feel that the crematorium management cares, and has credibility and integrity. Formal gardens, bedding, manicured lawns, ecology areas and wildlife pools are evidence of care and competence. A theme for the grounds seems popular, including monthly gardens, heather gardens, cherry groves and such like. These all offer a sense of place and well-being to those who use the grounds. Visiting the crematorium, placing

flowers and remembering anniversaries can be therapeutic following bereavement.

Cremated remains can usually be either strewn or interred in the Garden of Remembrance. These placements are usually free of charge, if the cremation took place at that crematorium. Strewn often results in the remains being visible on the surface, which can distress some visitors. If you wish to attend the placing of the cremated remains, check that this is possible. Generally, a burial or strewn of cremated remains in the gardens does not offer the bereaved a specific location, only the approximate position in which they are placed. You are unable to put a vase on or otherwise mark the position, and you cannot recover the cremated remains. This is not satisfactory for some people, who might need a memorial on which they can see an inscription on every occasion they visit. They may feel that having the cremated remains where they can be recovered, rather than "lost" over a lawn is important. Undoubtedly, where the cremated remains are retained with a memorial, and the remains of the widow or widower can ultimately be placed with them, is important to many of the bereaved. Many people also appreciate a vase or other receptacle for the placing of flowers.

Too many memorials can spoil the natural appearance of grounds, look untidy and suggest to visitors that memorial income is the main objective of the crematorium management. Ideally, memorials are better contained in specific areas so that they do not intrude on those people who do not favour them

MEMORIAL TYPES

The range of memorials available varies greatly between crematoria and these should be considered carefully before a decision is made. Some crematoria do not allow any form of memorial to be placed with cremated remains and they have to be strewn or buried separately in the grounds. Any memorial will normally be an additional expense and is not covered by the fees paid for cremation. The traditional form of cremation memorial is the Book of Remembrance. Copies of the entry, in the form of Memorial Cards, may also be available for keeping at home or sending to absent relatives. The Book of Remembrance can only be viewed on the anniversary date, although some schemes, such as the computerised Book of Remembrance, are available that enable you to view every day either at the crematorium or on the internet, the latter being of value to relatives who live abroad. Artists, on high quality paper, complete the entries. Flower emblems, crests, badges and other artwork can be included. This memorial is usually displayed in cabinets in a Hall of Remembrance. A place for displaying floral tributes is usually located close by.

Various other forms of memorials can be seen at all times of the year, not just anniversaries. These may include leather or metal wall plaques in a Hall of Remembrance. Other types of memorial may be available that are placed in the grounds. These may include designs that enable you to place an inscription, as well as placing the cremated remains beneath or by the memorial. A Memorial Wall, Columbarium or Kerb plaque scheme, for example, may give you this facility. These schemes may be ideal for retaining cremated remains until the death of a partner, when both cremated remains

can be placed together. Some schemes include a plaque adjacent to a rose, a tree or placing a plaque on a garden seat.

Most memorials are purchased (endowed) for a period, often 5, 10 or 15 years. This period can be extended, sometimes at a reduced fee from that paid originally, providing you notify the crematorium of any change of address. If cremated remains are placed with the memorial, you should ask what would happen if and when the endowment is not renewed. Should the remains be buried below ground an exhumation licence will be required before removal can take place however the view has been taken that remains that are above ground level can be removed and scattered in the garden of remembrance. The Book of Remembrance is endowed forever and no renewal is required.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be offered a Book of Remembrance memorial, set in a Hall of Remembrance. You must also be offered a designated place for floral tributes.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop standards of memorial provision. It is suggested that every bereaved person should be offered at least one type of inscribed memorial that can be visited daily over a prescribed period.
- b) Charter members will support the provision of memorials, and develop and encourage research into the benefits that memorials offer for the grieving process.
- c) Charter members will be sensitive to the psychological and therapeutic needs of the bereaved when they develop and manage the crematorium grounds. The grounds need to be accorded more significance than is given to a park or open space.

Ceremonies and belief

1 INFORMATION

All crematoria and many cemeteries maintain a chapel for use in holding a burial or cremation service. The form and religious tone of the service is entirely your choice and you do not have to conform to any specific requirements. You are able to hold a non-religious service or dispense entirely with a service, should you so wish. Nonetheless, difficulties do arise where atheists or followers of non-Christian religions use these buildings. Many crematoria and most burial chapels were designed and built when the Christian faith dominated this country. These buildings often look like traditional churches or contain fittings that comply with the traditional church interior. The names used in these buildings are similarly religious, with the term “chapel” or “vestry” in common usage. The chapel “space” is often rectangular and difficult to use. For example, the mourners may be unable to sit around the body and are forced to sit in serried ranks.

Crematoria that undertake cremations of those of the Sikh and Hindu faiths have developed facilities whereby the near relatives can view the coffin being placed into the cremator, this being a specific requirement of these faiths. For some crematoria this is a simple procedure for escorting a number of close relatives behind the scenes however some have gone further by incorporating a viewing gallery whereby additional mourners can view proceedings. Charter members that undertake Sikh and Hindu cremations are encouraged to extend the facilities for viewing above the basic whenever the opportunity arises.

In recent years, a movement away from formal religious services has developed. This has seen the introduction of popular music on entry and/or exit from the chapel and the greater use of poetry, readings or dance. The use of musicians, singers and bands should not be refused. The use of “live” music or singing, rather than recorded, is considered to enhance the ceremony. The recording of services on tape or video is also acceptable, provided it accords with copyright requirements. As a matter of etiquette, the agreement of any minister taking the service should be obtained, as well as notifying the cemetery or crematorium involved. The content of services must not be offensive to people present at a cemetery or crematorium.

An increasing number of crematoria are installing music systems that are linked to a provider via the internet. The provider holds a vast catalogue of music and will attempt to secure even the most obscure piece of music on request. This relatively new facility means that the bereaved do not have to go to the trouble of locating pieces of music and making CDs or tapes for delivery to the crematorium. Check to see if this facility is available at the crematorium of your choice.

Where tape or CD facilities are not provided, you can use your own portable battery powered unit to provide music. In chapels where an organ is not permanently provided, it is often possible to obtain a portable organ for use at an individual service.

The principal limitation in changing and/or extending the format of ceremonies is the amount of time allocated to each service by the cremation or burial authority. In view of this and other reasons, the need to expand the allocated service time is considered important in the long term.

There is much more flexibility over where you hold the service than is generally realised. This could be held at the deceased's home, if space is available. Otherwise, your usual church or a Funeral Director's chapel can be used. In some areas, the entire service, including the committal, is held in the home church of the deceased. Subsequently, the body is sometimes sent to the crematorium for cremation without the attendance of any family or mourners.

Speak to your Charter member if you require more details about these or other aspects of the ceremony. Your Charter member will be able to give you information regarding local ministers and officiants of religious and non-religious organisations. In the past, a "rota" list was maintained of ministers performing services at a crematorium. As these ministers rarely met the families of the deceased until they appeared at the crematorium, the service tended to be formal and systematic. It was also much easier to book the rota minister and bypass the parish minister of the deceased, which meant that pastoral care was not available. In general, unless provisions for personal contact and pastoral care are met, the use of rota ministers should be avoided.

If you have a belief, you should consider whether to contact your minister, priest, elder, etc as soon as a death occurs. As part of their pastoral care, they gain much experience in funerals and can offer valuable advice. This might range from choosing hymns for the service to whether or not to view the body of the deceased. This advice is needed before you commit yourself to a Funeral Director and not afterwards.

Some people consider that the traditional funeral ceremony is morbid and formal, and allows little participation for those attending. As such, it may not be a celebration of the life of the deceased. This observation serves to remind us that everybody develops his or her own, specific community. This community attends the funeral and every person present reflects on their association with the deceased. The ceremony is an important element of the grieving of each person present. Although you are free to influence and enhance the form of service, most people lack the ability to devise and create a ceremony. Guidance can be obtained from some art or community groups, for example in making better use of the space available and introducing artistic features. Speak to your Charter member for further information.

At a burial, you may wish to participate, in a token way, in the backfilling of the grave. It may also be possible to be involved when the grave is excavated. Your Charter member will advise.

You can obtain service sheets for use at a funeral. These can be drawn up only after you have seen your minister and/or you have devised your service format. Hymns and your choice of music or poetry can be included. Printing the name or even a photograph of the deceased on the front of the sheet adds a personal element to the funeral. It may be possible to add an invitation to the

“funeral tea”, if arranged and provide directions to the venue. Specialist printers will produce these before a funeral, at additional cost.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be able to hold a burial or cremation service at a cemetery or crematorium
- b) It is your right to define the type of religious or secular format of the service, within the constraints of time and decency.
- c) It is your right to define the type of music or other ceremony you wish to have at the service.
- d) It is your right to arrange a service of 30 minutes duration with the facility to book a double or extended time if required.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Cemeteries and crematoria will be developed and managed for use in a multi-cultural society.
- b) The permanent placement of any religious symbol should be avoided. Where these exist, the opportunity to remove or obscure them should be available.
- c) Existing religious symbols, which should be provided for all faiths and whether portable or fixed, should be removed or covered for alternative forms of service. This should be done automatically when religious or non-religious requirements are known and not only upon request.
- d) The use of terms that imply religious connections should be reviewed. The introduction of terms such as celebrants' hall (chapel) and celebrants' room (vestry) may be more appropriate.
- e) Charter members should increase the minimum time allocated for funeral services to 40 or 45 minutes wherever possible.
- f) The burial or cremation ceremony should be considered a highly individual and important occasion. Each funeral should ideally arrive and depart without seeing other funerals; neither should they be delayed by the late arrival of other funerals. To help achieve this standard, a minimum service time of 40 or 45 minutes [as in e) above] should be an objective.
- g) Facilities to play tapes and CDs should always be provided.
- h) An organ and organist should be available, upon payment of an additional fee, if required.
- i) Charter members will develop improved design of “chapels” to enable mourners to sit in the round, or vary the seating arrangements.
- j) Charter members will do their utmost to facilitate special requests.

Coffins and alternatives

1 INFORMATION

The dead have been buried in a variety of ways over the centuries. In pre-Christian times, the body may have been naked and laid in a stone “cist”. Progressively, a desire to cover the body and prevent it coming into contact with the soil developed. The wealthy moved towards wood and even metal coffins, leaving the poor to shrouds. For a long period, the government decreed that wool be used in order to help the wool trade. The poor could have their bodies placed in the parish coffin, which was carried to the graveside, where the body was removed and lowered into the grave. The same coffin was re-used in this way for decades.

The Victorian period saw the general use of individual and privately purchased coffins, made in oak and elm and often heavily ornamented. As hardwoods became more expensive cheaper materials superseded them.

The standard coffin currently used by Funeral Directors is made of chipboard with a good quality veneer, which effectively makes the coffin appear that it has been constructed from solid wood. The nameplate, handles and inner linings are all made of artificial materials, mainly plastic. These coffins are used for both burial and cremation. It is evident that many people perceive these coffins as composed of real wood and the plastic handles as metal. Should you wish, you can request wooden coffin handles and nameplate as an environmental consideration as plastic is harmful to the environment especially when cremated.

When used for cremation, chipboard coffins, MDF mouldings and plastic fittings cause the majority of the amount of pollutant emissions that arise. It must also be appreciated that the manufacture of chipboard uses formaldehyde, which is not considered to be environmentally friendly. Coffins of wood and other natural material such as bamboo and wicker are available.

Many comments are made about coffins, which demonstrate that the public are uninformed about these issues. Consequently, it is suggested that crematoria are cremating and thereby wasting, vast quantities of “wood”. As explained above, the majority of the wood is in most cases chipboard.

It has been suggested in some quarters that a “re-usable” coffin could be used for cremation and burial. This is a return to the Parish coffin concept mentioned above but it would now offer important environmental and cost benefits. A product to fulfil this need is currently being developed. This would consist of an attractive outer casket, which would contain a biodegradable cardboard coffin. This coffin would be withdrawn from the outer casket following the funeral ceremony and cremated or buried. At no time would the coffin or the body be disturbed. The outer casket would be repeatedly used in this way.

The reason why a re-usable option has not previously been developed is unclear. In the past, professionals in the funeral business have suggested that

such schemes are undignified; lack commercial viability or that there is no "demand". These comments are rarely substantiated and generally reflect personal opinion.

Charter members will create awareness of the choices of coffins and alternatives available in order that they may make a choice based on their own particular needs and beliefs.

The coffin is probably the most symbolic and central item of the funeral. It can be the final and most telling statement after a person has died. Unless a choice of coffin or alternative is easily available, the deceased and bereaved are unable to express their needs or philosophy. The choice should allow for a range of containers from the ostentatious through to the simple. The ostentatious could include a coffin crafted in the shape of a car for a motor enthusiast, or hand carved in natural wood by a joiner to last a few hundred years in the soil. The bereaved have the right to choose from a selection of coffins ranging from American style and ornate coffins to those made of wicker or cardboard.

The coffin, of any type, can be personalised to reflect personal interests, e.g. a gardener, fisherman or football fan. The artistic options are individual, require skills and time, all elements that are generally missing with the current funeral arrangements. A wider range of coffins is becoming apparent and is indicative of changing attitudes to the needs of the bereaved. Some families decorate the coffin themselves.

Other options have developed in recent years. In 1994, three manufacturers of biodegradable (cardboard) coffins arose and some Funeral Directors, crematoria (and potentially cemeteries) are offering these products. This move was in response to the environmental burial schemes opening around the country, although these coffins were quickly utilised for traditional burial and cremation. Since 1994 many more suppliers of alternatives such as wicker and bamboo coffins have emerged. Little research has been done although findings in Europe suggest that "cardboard" coffins offer a significant reduction in pollutant emissions arising from cremation which could be due to the fact that no plastic is used in the construction. In addition, the cardboard coffin may reduce what many people see as the waste of resources, due to cremating standard coffins. This benefit has yet to be proven, and would probably require evidence of low wood pulp and high recycled paper content in the cardboard used. Nonetheless, the cardboard coffin immediately offered the advantages of wider choice, lower costs and biodegradable benefits when used for burial. Most cardboard coffins are rigid, carry well and retain any potential leakage of body or embalming fluid that may arise. Charter Members are encouraged to avoid a design that could allow a leakage of body fluid.

Some people rapidly labelled the cardboard coffin "cheap" and lacking in "dignity". This, of course, is a matter of opinion and, where a person requires ostentation, the cardboard coffin is not an option. The word dignity is defined as "true worth" and where a person has a belief in protecting the environment, or in having a humble or modest funeral, then the cardboard coffin has true worth to that person and they should be given the choice. An added advantage is that cardboard coffins can be painted attractively, or personalised, by an artist or by the family themselves. Paint can be extremely

flammable and some crematoria may restrict this option, because of flashback when the coffin is charged into the cremator. It is worth noting that water based paint does not pose this problem. Also, where the box shape or cardboard finish is felt to be upsetting visually, it is a simple matter to cover the coffin with a pall. This is a velvet-type cloth, often with gold braid edge, traditionally used in the past to cover coffins. These are often available from Funeral Directors or may be provided by crematoria or cemeteries, for use at a funeral. Alternatively, homemade palls, patchwork quilts or similar could be used, provided they are large enough.

Another recently developed “green” option is the burial shroud. This consists of a board, upon which the body is laid, the whole being wrapped in a large piece of woven, soft, wool cloth. The shroud is sold with black, pure cotton ropes that are attached and used by four or six bearers. The shroud is suitable for all forms of burial, but not for cremation. Wool is not mandatory and any natural material could be used.

If you are arranging a funeral and you are unable to obtain a coffin, your Charter member has a minimum requirement to facilitate the supply of a biodegradable coffin. Suppliers of environmentally friendly coffins are listed on the Bereavement Services Portal at www.iccm-uk.com

If you wish to make your own coffin or container, contact your Charter member for advice over suitable materials, design and dimensions. Other materials that are biodegradable may be ideal for containing a body. Plaited willow, bamboo or straw are possibilities.

As a rule, coffins for burial should be constructed to the smallest size possible, as this reduces the size of the grave excavation and improves safety margins. Smaller and, thereby, lighter coffins also reduce the weight carried by the bearers, which may reduce physical risks posed by manual handling. For cremation, the design, construction and materials used in the coffin must be such that it minimises possible emissions of pollutants and the use of fossil fuels.

It is important to note that the manufacturer of a coffin, whether a commercial concern or a private individual, has a “duty of care” to those who will subsequently be involved with it. Obviously, it is necessary to ensure that it is strong enough to hold the body whilst being carried. Less obviously, if varnishes or oil based paints are used, these could cause a flashback when the coffin is placed into a pre-heated cremator.

The Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA) issued a directive on coffin design. This prohibits the use of materials, such as PVC, pitch or zinc, which pollute the atmosphere. It is important to consider the explosion or pollutant impact of anything placed in a coffin, especially for cremation. Heart pacemakers, implants, batteries, pressurised containers, even coconuts (that have not been punctured), have all caused explosions. A doctor, a mortician or the Funeral Director can remove medical implants. Even clothes made of man-made fibres, shoes or any rubberised materials can cause smoke and pollution. As crematoria have to operate within the Environmental Protection

Act 1990, these can cause serious operational difficulties. Most metals, including jewellery, bolts or screws, artificial joints and bone splints, pass through the cremation cycle without difficulty and are withdrawn at the finish. Jewellery melts and is unrecognisable, forming small pieces of aggregate. The recycling of metallic joints, splints, etc is considered under the Charter item "ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES". The use of balms, scents, flowers and other natural materials should not pose any difficulty. Check with your Charter member if you are in any doubt.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to choose the type and design of coffin, within the constraints of availability, regulations and safe materials.
- b) It is your right to receive information on obtaining a coffin (biodegradable type) via your Charter member.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote greater choice and will offer advice and source of supply over all available coffins, containers and shrouds.
- b) Charter members will have a pall available for use by Funeral Directors or the bereaved.
- c) Charter members will provide a diagram illustrating the construction of a simple, homemade coffin.

Communication

1 INFORMATION

Communication is vital to the bereavement process and where communication fails, the quality of the service declines. Although computers and electronic communication are utilised in bereavement, the value of human contact cannot be over-emphasised. When skilled staff talk to a bereaved person, they quickly recognise doubt or concern in a person's facial or body response.

Staff involved with bereavement often need to be a confidant and teacher to the bereaved. Opening up dialogue is an essential form of communication and creating the right atmosphere is an important element. Staff name badges are valuable in this respect, suggesting an invitation to be approached and a desire to help. Where these are used, a widow or widower will often telephone a member of staff and ask for that person by their name. This opens up informal discussion and, inevitably, problems are solved and better decisions made.

COMMUNICATION ASPECTS

Staff training, which includes communication skills, standard setting, customer care and understanding loss and grief is essential in the bereavement profession. All telephone calls should be answered quickly and efficiently. Enquiries about the time and date of forthcoming services should be immediately answered and staff that can deal with all but the most difficult enquiries should be available. Where there is a need to leave a message, a response should be made within an acceptable period. The telephone service should extend throughout the normal working week, with some means of contact, especially for emergencies, at weekends. Answerphones are helpful, but impersonal. Many people, some of whom will not leave a message, dislike them. Some crematoria, and larger cemeteries, will have a member of staff on duty at weekends that can answer the telephone and personally assist people.

Many people communicating in writing about a burial or cremation matter are agitated and stressed. They can also be aged, perhaps suffering some form of illness. It is essential that a reply is not prolonged and many cemeteries and crematoria reply the same day where some stress is apparent. In general, even routine replies should not take more than one week. A specified response time is part of a good service standard.

Letters, brochures and leaflets also communicate the quality of service. Some authorities use designer paper, which comes in a variety of design, i.e. with a flower border or overlaid with a dove of peace, etc, to show specific concern for bereavement. This paper, allied to a warm, helpful writing style, opposes the bureaucratic letter that might be anticipated, particularly from council departments. Likewise, using re-cycled paper shows concern for the environment.

Communicating about cemeteries, crematoria or any related bereavement service under unsuitable “umbrella” departmental names can be offensive to the bereaved. Letterheads stating Leisure Services, Public Protection, Pest Control or Engineering Services conveys an inappropriate message to those in a grieving situation.

Waiting to receive a service is particularly irritating to any customer and with bereavement it has many implications. For some people, the wait between death and the funeral is particularly stressful, as they feel unable to commence mourning. Some communities also have a need and desire to organise a funeral quickly. It is essential that service standards specify acceptable waiting times. There should be a process for matching supply with demand, to ensure that delays, which currently attain two weeks in some areas, do not occur. These delays also overload mortuary facilities and may require that bodies be embalmed to prevent a body decaying. Should this situation arise the next of kin can make private arrangements for cold storage elsewhere should they not wish the deceased to be embalmed. It is also necessary to explain why delays are occurring, as “explained waits” can reduce distress to the customer.

The use of burial or cremation services is made more difficult for Funeral Directors, masons and the bereaved, due to the variety of forms in use throughout the country.

Although the legally required cremation forms may be identical, they are often laid out in different formats. The non-legal forms, such as the preliminary application for cremation, the notice of burial, permission to erect memorials, etc, all vary considerably. This also makes it more difficult to use forms from one area at a cemetery or crematorium elsewhere.

COMMUNICATING KNOWLEDGE

There is an undoubted need to improve the knowledge of those using bereavement services throughout the country. This Charter represents an important move forward in this respect. Nonetheless, at the local level, it is necessary to issue guidance on the service available and details about how to use the services and what to do if the service does not meet needs.

Educating people to handle bereavement is important, as it creates an “expectation” about the service. If the service fails to meet that expectation, the bereaved person may recognise the failure and may be able to do something about it. Open days at the crematorium help, but these tend to concentrate on practicable parts of the service, i.e. cremators, and often do not address the quality of the experience. More recently, courses on bereavement for professionals and on improving funerals for the general public have become more common. Where Charter members are involved in these courses, their knowledge and experience can be utilised.

It is important to recognise that communication is often dependent upon relationships. If cemetery walks or crematorium garden walks are organised, the relationship between the walk leader and the public creates an informal “leisure” rapport. The leader might be referred to by their forename and people will ask questions that will never arise in a formal setting. This is an important element in improving communication and fostering relationships.

RECOGNISING NEEDS

The sensitivity of bereavement has historically prevented burial and cremation authorities surveying families about their experience of the services provided. In view of this, the provision of services has relied upon the “gut” feeling of staff and reliance upon feedback from Funeral Directors, clergy and suchlike. This process tends to maintain the status quo and discourages innovation and new services. As bereavement appears to be invoking more general interest, the possibility of sensitively surveying families about the quality of their funeral experience is becoming more important. Other information is needed, such as the reasons why people choose cremation as against burial and how they coped with the bereavement after the funeral.

PROMOTION AND ADVERTISING

Cemeteries and crematoria have historically ignored promoting their services, leaving this instead to an intermediary in the form of the Funeral Director. This has resulted in the cemetery or crematorium becoming faceless, tending to shun publicity and being quite naïve about how it is perceived by the community. This results in most people seeing the Funeral Director as the crux of the operation. The community fail to recognise that the funeral process, the cremator, the grave, the forms, the booking system, conforming to legal requirements and long term maintenance are all organised at the cemetery or crematorium.

Marketing and promoting the service communicates more effectively and helps people to make informed choices. Green forms of burial, biodegradable coffins and personalised funerals might only be promoted by the cemetery and /or crematorium providing such services. Promoting services through the media and developing a public profile are necessary so that customers can recognise the value of the cemetery and crematorium.

COMMUNICATING FUNERAL NEEDS

Individuals have a responsibility to communicate their wishes regarding their death and funeral. Otherwise, the widow, widower or children are confronted by two difficulties; firstly the death and, secondly, the need to organise a funeral. This increases stress, apart from often causing family strife over whether “dad wanted burial or cremation”. These issues are considered in the Charter item on “DIGNITY, DEATH AND YOU”. Communicating with the cemetery or crematorium where your funeral will take place is useful and helps everybody to use the service to its full extent.

FEES

Informing people about fees and charges and what they include is vital communication. The fees table lists all the fees charged for the various burial and cremation services, memorials and other ancillary items. The fees list

should be clear and easily understood. For instance, the cremation fee should be inclusive of fees that are not optional, e.g. for the medical referee. The fees must not be combined to the point where they obscure what they actually include and thereby lose their “transparency”. As these fees will form the disbursements paid out by Funeral Directors, the customer must be able to identify them and recognise what elements of the service are included. This will enable them to analyse their funeral account and realistically apportion costs to the cemetery or crematorium and to the Funeral Director involved. The ability to recognise how much or how little each of the parties contribute to the funeral is important in ascertaining value for money. Funeral Directors on behalf of the person paying for the funeral usually routinely pay the cemetery or crematorium fees. The Funeral Director should be given a receipt for all payments and the person paying for the funeral should reasonably expect to be passed the receipt. It is important that Funeral Directors are routinely updated on fee changes and forewarned about impending increases, particularly where the increases exceed inflation.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a prompt response to any form of communication with a Charter member, within published service standards.
- b) It is your right to be given a table of fees upon request.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop strategies for promoting better understanding of bereavement throughout society, which will enable people to identify their needs and communicate these to their family or executor.
- b) Charter members will promote research into attitudes about death and how funeral services can be developed to satisfy identifiable needs.
- c) Charter members will develop standard application forms, which are “user friendly” and can be used at any facility.
- d) Charter members will specify maximum funeral waiting times and will develop strategies for handling high death rates.
- e) Charter members will survey users to ascertain satisfaction levels and will make this information available to the general public.
- f) Charter members will permanently display a table of fees where the public can view it. A user-friendly format for the table of fees should be developed for adoption by all members.
- g) Charter members will adopt a national standard to enable the public to contact them, e.g. a free entry in yellow pages under classification “Cemeteries and Crematoria”.
- h) Charter members will make their services accessible via the internet through e-business strategies.

Dignity, death and you

1 INFORMATION

This Charter has been created in the belief that all individuals have the right to organise their death and funeral in accordance with their wishes during life. In view of medical advances and environmental concern, some people wish to make a statement about their life, through their death and funeral arrangements.

In the past, all deaths were followed by burial in churchyards, adopting the rituals of the established and other churches. The mode of death and the funeral followed traditional and unvarying patterns. In recent decades, this situation has altered considerably. An increasing number of people wish to dispense with traditional patterns; The Charter recognises and accommodates such views.

The way in which we die, indeed, the actual definition of death, has become much more difficult to understand. Life can be prolonged by science for many years and the actual control of our death can be a decision taken by others. This Charter accepts that many people wish to maintain dignity and have greater control. The right to die at home, or not to have your life artificially prolonged, are fundamental considerations. The “Living Will” concept appears to offer greater control in this respect. Readers are referred to the Natural Death Centre for more information.

Subsequently, following death, an increasing number of people now choose secular and/or “green” funerals. These desires are often intended as a positive challenge to established religions or to the way in which we live. In general, the completion of a Will and the appointment of an executor will ensure that your wishes are carried out, apart from many other benefits. It is essential that the Will be read before the funeral takes place. A Will rarely describes in detail how the funeral will proceed and this needs to be considered. If you wish to set out precise details of your funeral, you should make these known to the person who will be arranging it. You are advised to read this Charter and visit your local crematorium or cemetery to discuss and consider your wishes. You may, for instance, wish to purchase a grave in advance and ease the subsequent arrangements when you die.

It is not mandatory to use your local burial or cremation facilities. For instance, you are at liberty to choose any crematorium if it offers facilities not available locally. An additional fee may be charged if you are not resident in the area of the crematorium. For burial, the use of other cemeteries is more restricted. Many local authorities deter residents of other areas using their burial space by charging very high fees, especially if there is a shortage of land.

It is important to note that you cannot leave binding instructions, even through a Will. Your executor or whoever organises the funeral can change your wishes. This is why it is important that your executors are in agreement with and understand the strength of your feelings. Completing an “advance funeral directive” can specify precise funeral details.

The dignity of your funeral and the subsequent arrangements can rely upon you giving instructions during your lifetime. In recent years, an increase in couples living together without marriage, split marriages and divorce, have all influenced funerals. In many cases, funerals are organised and decisions made that are intended to deliberately offend relatives of the deceased. For example, an existing partner may organise the funeral and memorial in order to exclude children of another partnership. Where this occurs it may severely increase the effects of the bereavement. It is, therefore, important to organise a Will and executors in order to minimise these occurrences.

The law is unspecific where an executor does not exist and a variety of people can and do apply for cremation and burial. In general, where an executor has not been appointed in a Will, a person stating they are the “nearest surviving relative” can apply. The law does not require anything more than a statement to this effect, and monitoring the veracity of this statement is neither required nor possible. Disputes about whether the right person applied, i.e. a brother or sister, common-law wife, often arise subsequently and may have to be resolved through legal action, which may be distressing and expensive. In cremation, especially, disputes can have a very profound effect because the applicant for cremation has lawful possession of the cremated remains and takes the ultimate decision over their final placement.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

(No rights are identified in this heading).

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote the completion of a Will and an advance funeral directive, to support the right of each person to organise a funeral in accordance with their wishes.

Environmental issues

1 INFORMATION

Environmental issues have not featured prominently with regard to bereavement, possibly due to the sensitivity of the subject. This view is changing as environmental issues become increasingly important. The inclusion of the cremation process in the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and the revisions of the Secretary of State's Guidance Note made under this Act are the most recent example of this. The services associated with bereavement have more impact on the environment than might be initially considered. Improvements in this area are very relevant to: "Acting locally – thinking globally".

Environmental issues are also covered elsewhere in the Charter under "COFFINS AND ALTERNATIVES", "MAINTENANCE OF GROUNDS AND GRAVEDIGGING" and in Appendix B, "INFORMATION ON EMBALMING".

Environmental concerns are summarised below:

CREMATION

Cremation has progressed from coke fired through to gas and electric cremators over a period of 100 years. Almost all modern cremators use gas. The use of gas, a finite reserve, and the creation of air pollution, are adverse criticisms of this process. To keep this in perspective, the historical factors that support cremation need to be considered. Cremation was introduced in response to the ever-increasing use of land for burial. Using the land for producing food was important, particularly following the last world war. In addition, the clean and clinical impact of cremation was seen as "modern".

The Environmental Protection Act 1990 required that all cremators must comply with specified emission requirements by 1998. Consequently, a massive cremator replacement programme was undertaken, which greatly increased the cost of cremation. The new cremators also require a threefold, or even higher, increase in gas consumption in order to meet the requirements of this Act. The Secretary of State's Guidance Note relating to cremation contains a requirement to introduce mercury filtration as this is a harmful emission caused when dental amalgam is subjected to high temperature. The law requires that 50% of cremations carried out in the UK must be undertaken in cremators fitted with mercury filtration equipment with the deadline for compliance being 31st December 2012. The installation of filtration equipment at crematorium will increase costs further. It should be noted that the previously mentioned guidance note also contains a provision for burden sharing which is basically emission trading. This means that not all crematoria are required to install filtration equipment and those that don't can contribute to the costs of those that do upgrade. This has been referred to as a 'pay to pollute' scheme however you can ask any crematorium if it has mercury filtration equipment fitted or not should you have an environmental concern. In order to reduce emissions and save gas (fossil fuel) an increasing number of crematoria have investigated using cremation equipment more efficiently. The conclusion has been reached that a great deal of gas is required to preheat a

cremator for say 2 cremations when those coffins could be held over and cremated the next day when perhaps two or three other services are taking place. This action saves constant heating and cooling of cremators which takes its toll on gas consumption and subsequently emissions of pollutants. It must be noted that all cremations take place individually. An increasing requirement to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and save fossil fuel has led to the introduction of this practice however a cremation is only held over with the consent of individual families. Crematoria that hold over should have secure and hygienic storage facilities much like funeral directors.

The problem of disposing of metal residue from cremation in the form of orthopaedic implants had become an increasing problem at crematoria. Prior to the introduction of the ICCM scheme to Recycle Metals from Cremation it was normal practice to bury such residue in the grounds of the crematorium (or adjoining cemetery at certain locations) which in itself is not an environmentally friendly action. As such residue is resultant from cremations it is difficult to find an alternative means of disposal. Modern thinking suggests that orthopaedic implants and other metal residue should be recycled. The ICCM scheme operates at approximately half of UK crematoria who recycle metal through the scheme with the consent of the bereaved. Since its inception the scheme, through the bereaved using its member crematoria, has made donations to charities and in 2011 alone it distributed over £250,000 to local charities nominated by scheme members. Further information on this scheme can be found at www.iccm-uk.com/iccm, The ICCM will encourage Charter members to consider becoming involved in this scheme. You can ask your local crematorium if it is in membership of this scheme. It should be noted that you have a right to decide what happens to metals from a cremation that you might organise therefore if your chosen crematorium is not in membership of the ICCM scheme you can ask for the metals to be returned and you can take them to any crematorium in scheme membership for recycling.

The ICCM also promotes a national scheme for recycling faded floral tributes rather than send them to landfill. This scheme is gaining pace with both crematoria and cemeteries. Rather than deposit old floral tributes in skips members of staff separate the flowers from the plastic trays and plastic wrapping, compost the flowers for use in planted areas. The plastic is collected by a company called Agriplass who sells the plastic back into use. Whilst this scheme does not produce a surplus for distribution to charities it does prevent large amounts of plastic going to landfill and, should more crematoria and cemeteries adopt the scheme, a reduction in waste disposal costs will be identified. One or two crematoria have already funded jobs for persons with learning disabilities to break down the tributes into their component and recyclable parts. Plaudits from Scheme members include:

Chelmsford Borough Council *“From using Agriplass we hope to make a nett annual saving of approximately of £2k as well as sending considerably less plastic to landfill”*

South West Middlesex Crematorium *“From our savings we have funded a part-time job for a special needs person and made a further saving of £3000”*

Mortlake Crematorium *"We are working with "The Garden Gang" at Richmond, a centre for people with learning difficulties. We simply put all tributes into containers and the Gang collect on a weekly basis, take to their depot and break down the tributes. Agriplass then collects the plastic directly. We pay our waste disposal budget to the Gang as they do all of the work and this will ensure that they are not closed due to cuts. Once they get it right with us they might offer the service to neighbouring cemeteries. If everyone in the area recycles tributes the price should come down for us all. At the moment we are just not spending any more than we did previously, but plastic is not going to landfill and people are gaining employment"*

"Edinburgh Crematorium Ltd *have been using Agriplass for the last 10 months for the collection of our plastic waste. They are easy to deal with and they run a very efficient service. It is not been a major inconvenience to separate the plastic out from the rest of the floral tributes, and it has lead to a reduction in the frequency of skip uplifts. In summary, using Agriplass has been a simple and cost effective way of reducing the amount of waste that we send to landfill".*

Milford Haven Town Council *'We are able to recycle more plastics than are accepted by the County Council and it has been a great benefit to us, enabling us to cut down on trade waste'.*

Cardiff Cemetery & Crematorium *'We save around £240 per calendar month on Skips and having got rid of 2 x 1100 ltr wheelie bins. We spend in the region of £75 per calendar month with Agriplas. This gives a net saving of £165 per month or £1980 per year as well as helping the environment'.*

The greatest beneficiary for the scheme is the environment however savings made on the cost of waste disposal can also assist in holding back burial and cremation fees or fund service improvements.

BURIAL

Burial is sometimes suggested as a more environmentally acceptable alternative to cremation, as no air pollution is created. Such comments ignore the impact of herbicides and petrol mowers routinely used in cemeteries, often over long periods of time. In addition, the effects of interring chipboard coffins and plastic fittings are unknown. Finally, the pollutant effect of burial on water supplies is generally un-researched. The benefits of the new woodland burial schemes appear to overcome many of these problems, particularly where they are associated with the use of biodegradable coffins and a reduction in embalming. Further research into these issues is urgently required.

The environmental and visual value of cemeteries to the local community has generally been ignored. The older sections often date back to Victorian times. They usually contain the oldest trees in the locality and provide habitats for mammals, wildflowers, insects, bats and birds. The old stone memorials are often the only available habitat for lichens and mosses. Changing mowing regimes, placing bird and bat boxes and replanting herbaceous borders with butterfly plant species, are small yet effective parts of this process. These improvements to the older sections can complement intensive high quality maintenance in current and more recently used burial areas.

The environmental benefits of turning old burial areas into wildlife reserves are twofold. Firstly, there is a reduction in fossil fuel and herbicide usage. Secondly, the increasing number of birds and other wildlife create a valuable resource, offering benefits to the grieving process as well as increasing leisure and educational possibilities for the community. This process does not impact on graves visited by mourners and is generally supported by the majority of those using the grounds.

The value of nature in improving the grieving process is rarely identified and yet is very important. A singing bird, a beautiful tree or a colourful bedding display are all therapeutic and symbolic of new life. The alternative is the cemetery blighted by weed killer, without trees and a true harbinger of death.

More recently, increasing support for burial as opposed to cremation has emerged. This may be partly in response to adverse criticism of the “factory line” process levelled at crematoria. Further support arises from the potential re-use of graves, which precludes the creation of sprawling, Victorian-type cemeteries which when full become a financial burden as income from burials ceases. Many of these cemeteries can then be subjected to a lowering of maintenance standards and take on a neglected appearance. In 2001 a Parliamentary Select Committee commenced an inquiry into the problems facing our cemeteries. This committee acknowledged the benefits to the environment that exist in cemeteries and the fact that these facilities are valuable community assets. The question of sustainability was explored with the recommendation that the reuse of graves is the only way forward in protecting the long-term future and security of cemeteries and the heritage contained within them. The Select Committee also deduced that the public require local and affordable burial provision. Should a burial authority be able to afford the purchase of new land for burial the result may well be an increase in burial fees which would offset the land costs. Also, and particularly in urban areas, the only available new burial land might be some considerable distance away from the population. A change in the law to allow the reuse of graves would enable the reopening of the old Victorian cemeteries for new burials. Thus providing the public with affordable local burial space and producing income for the long-term maintenance. Once neglected cemeteries could be transformed into valuable community assets. The ICCM will continue to lobby for a change in legislation to allow the reuse of graves using the lift and deepen method which is designed to protect those previously deceased persons and provide continuing new burial space.

See details of the plastic recycling scheme under ‘Cremation’ above.

FURTHER INFORMATION

Other environmental issues involved with bereavement have been identified but have not received any specific attention on a national scale. This is due to the sensitivity of the issue and, in some cases, difficulty in identifying the actual owner of the item or materials involved.

The issues include:

- The use of environmentally friendly chemicals to clean memorial stones, as an alternative to caustic acids.

- The use of local stone and wood for memorials as opposed to importing multi coloured stone from overseas.
- Composting a greater amount of mown grass, leaves, flowers and other plant material removed from the grounds.
- A reduction in the use of herbicides/chemicals and peat used in grounds maintenance.
- Retaining cut timber in habitat piles, rather than burning, which release carbon content.
- Increasing tree planting in order to offset carbon dioxide emissions.
- Reducing the use of moss and lichens in the construction of wreaths and other floral tributes.
- Sourcing sustainable alternatives to teak, mahogany and other hardwoods, used in the construction of garden seats, burial caskets, etc.

Other issues have been identified that involve bereavement but are beyond the remit of the Charter, e.g. the environmental damage caused by the production of cut flowers and quarrying of stone in foreign countries, which are then imported into the UK.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have a right to be made aware of all known environmental issues relating to bereavement services. Information will be available through this Charter and by direct contact with your local Charter member.
- b) You have a right to recycle metals resulting from cremation or have the metals returned to you.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members should strive to improve environmental efficiency and understanding, relating to bereavement. Due consideration should be given to the conservation of wildlife and management according to sound ecological principles.
- b) Charter members should establish researched environmental impact data for all aspects of bereavement.
- c) Charter members should co-ordinate their efforts in order to improve the aspects outlined under “Further Information” above.
- d) Charter members should create strategies for enhancing the wildlife value of cemeteries and crematoria grounds. This is particularly important in the creation of new cremation and burial facilities.
- e) Charter members should introduce services that directly enhance the environment, as an integral part of the bereavement experience. Woodland and wildflower graves are an example of such initiatives.
- f) Charter members should contribute to a reduction in global warming by reducing their total energy consumption and carbon emissions.
- g) Charter members should adopt the plastic recycling scheme.
- h) Crematoria in Charter membership should adopt the ICCM metals recycling scheme.

Social and community aspects

1. INFORMATION

Cemeteries and crematoria are important community resources and assets. They become the focus for developing services that enable people to hold funerals that are meaningful to them. As every member of the community has access to the service, it is essential that everybody has a right to expect similar standards. These factors are identified in a leaflet issued by the Local Government Ombudsmen, which states:

EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES

“The Local Government Ombudsmen are committed to providing an equal service to all members of the public and seek to ensure that no complainant receives less favourable treatment than another on grounds of gender, colour, race, nationality, ethnic, regional or national origins, age, marital status, disability, political or religious belief, class or sexual orientation”.

Communities vary greatly in their make-up and have differing needs. Assessing these needs is complex and must rely, to some degree, upon local judgement. Although this Charter sets out a national standard, it cannot be allowed to dictate policy or reduce the flexibility necessary for a more appropriate local response.

The Charter also recognises that the dominant religious or ethnic groups often perceive their needs as the norm and these views tend to dominate. This can leave smaller, less active groups without a voice. Some of these issues are discussed in more detail below.

RELIGIOUS BELIEF

Various religious and non-religious needs can be readily accommodated in crematoria, though greater difficulties may arise in cemeteries. In the crematorium the non-denominational chapel is booked for the duration of the service, which can be religious or secular. The cremated remains, if not taken away, can then be placed in grounds that are not demarked according to belief.

The situation in cemeteries is very different, and developed as a consequence of problems in the parish churchyard. The churchyard was always consecrated, which is a ceremony only performed by the Church of England. It became the legal right, which still exists, of every member of the parish to be buried in the churchyard, if space exists, whether they were Christian or not. Many non-Christians were unhappy with the prospect of being buried in consecrated ground. When cemeteries were developed in the Victorian period, the law decreed that parts of the cemetery must remain unconsecrated. This was recognition that Catholics, Methodists and non-believers had the right to burial outside the rites of the established church. Many cemeteries now have separate Church of England sections, with perhaps adjacent Catholic and Muslim sections. More recently, cemeteries have tended to dedicate land to all religions and they do not have areas formally consecrated by a Bishop.

Reserving sections for individual religions, including the Church of England, creates a precedent. Consequently, other groups, including Catholics, Hebrews, Muslims, Free Church and even Humanists and atheists, are entitled to equal treatment. This would lead to each cemetery having to reserve individual portions to each group, which ties up large parts of the cemetery. In contrast, a single section used for everybody is equal, much easier to administer and much less expensive to operate. Unfortunately, this can create real difficulties for some religions and this should be recognised and considered. For instance, the single section system is generally covered by lawn graves. For those of the Muslim faith, this poses a number of problems. The Koran prohibits anybody sitting or walking upon a person's grave, yet this cannot be prevented on lawn-type graves. Logically, providing the traditional grave choice, which allows that grave to be covered by a memorial or kerbs, overcomes these problems. Muslim graves are required to be orientated with respect to Mecca. The traditional grave offers more choice to people of most religions, particularly if they do not favour the lawn grave. Charter members are encouraged to convene user groups where these issues can be discussed directly with interested parties.

Further details are included in the Charter item on "GRAVE CHOICE".

Most old cemeteries contain a burial chapel for services. These are often built in Gothic or church style and may not be appropriate for secular services or some ethnic groups. Some newer cemeteries have chapels that avoid this church style and are more akin to non-denominational crematoria chapels.

EQUITY

Services should not differentiate between those who can pay and those who cannot. In the UK, only a few decades ago, the poor were put in unmarked graves and the right to place flowers was refused. Even today, in the USA, some of the commercially operated cemeteries maintain the same process. They place these graves near untidy margins, removing all tributes or markers placed by families, leaving the graves to become a visible symbol of social deprivation.

These graves are better called unpurchased or public graves and are a necessary service (the term paupers grave should not be used). There is no need to restrict the placing of markers or tributes upon the grave. These graves should be placed among the purchased "private graves", their presence being indistinguishable, except that a memorial might be absent. By allowing smaller and cheaper memorials in general, the wide variation in memorial types also makes it less easy to identify those who have fewer resources.

Equity can have a social dimension. As an example, the need for equal access, regardless of wealth, to high quality midwifery services has been recognised as a fundamental social right. Yet the social dimension of death has not been accorded the same standard. The free provision of funerals and facilities is not seen as a necessary social service. This may reflect the fact that the only people who worry about death are the old, a group who have little representation in our society.

The government has recognised this problem and the Social Fund contributes towards the cost of approximately 6% of funerals for those who rely upon

certain state benefits. This, of course, leaves a very high proportion of the population above the benefits level who nonetheless, pay the same for a funeral as wealthier members of society. There is a need to widen the choice and enable people to choose a funeral arrangement that is financially acceptable to them.

Many people perceive that dying is expensive, which may then encourage people to buy pre-need funeral plans. It is important to recognise that many people suffer stress as a consequence of worrying about funeral expenses and perhaps feel that obtaining competitive quotes is not appropriate. Whilst recognising that dealing with the death of a relative is a stressful situation the purchase of a funeral can nevertheless be regarded as a purchase and competitive quotations can be obtained. Funeral Directors offer a range of services and it is important for the bereaved to understand that they have control over expenditure and can arrange a funeral that meets with their needs and requirements within the constraints of their own particular budget.

It is not equitable when some funerals are delayed. This can be due to insufficient service time being allowed at crematoria, which can routinely cause delays because the preceding funeral ran over the allotted time.

In some areas, particularly in some London Boroughs, residents are denied the option of burial due to the absence of new burial space and have to use the cemetery of a neighbouring authority with an additional fee being applied to those non-residents. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management has proposed a solution to this problem, which involves the re-use of old graves, mostly situated in Victorian cemeteries. This will require public support as well as new legislation. Your Charter member will update you on the current situation and progress of the Ministry of Justice Burial & Cemeteries Advisory Group that was established following the Select Committee Inquiry into Cemeteries that took place in 2001. The work of the advisory group included an overhaul of legislation relating to cemeteries. The reuse of graves was a prominent feature of the work of the Advisory Group however central government has so far not progressed this initiative.

DISCRIMINATION

This word means distinguishing one person from another, so that a person is adversely treated. It is also about ensuring that people who lack mobility or have language difficulties can access the services offered. There should clearly be a will to consider all users and ensure they can make the best use of the services available.

There are a number of issues to be considered, not all of which can be mentioned here. The hard of hearing can participate in a funeral service if an induction "loop" system is installed. Large print and Braille service books should be available for the partially sighted and blind. Service books and leaflets can be provided other than in English, for different communities. Those in wheelchairs should be able to gain easy access to chapels and should be placed amongst mourners and not in a prominent position, such as the aisle. A toilet with access for the disabled must be available for use. Ensuring the wheelchair access is good everywhere also benefits many users

of the facilities, particularly the aged and infirm. A spare wheelchair is useful to have available for the infirm and for people who collapse due to emotional stress. It is also advisable that a member of staff holds a first aid certificate. Car parks must be located as close to chapels as possible. This benefits everybody, particularly during inclement weather and when ice makes paved surfaces dangerous. The desire to lay visually attractive road and path surfaces, such as cobbles and sets, should be opposed if the surfaces are thereby unsuitable for the infirm and the aged.

In cemeteries, unimpeded access to graves may not be possible. The placement of memorials, sloping or wet ground, trees and similar obstructions can create difficulties for everybody. Many authorities employ an Access Officer, whom you can contact about these issues.

Discrimination can occur with other issues. Placing stillbirths in untidy areas or unsuitable plots of the cemetery discriminates against the parents. This fails to recognise that the parents are already isolated to some degree, by being amongst the minority who lose a child. This is a bereavement that cannot be anticipated and one that strikes at a time when family resources are directed at raising children, and not paying for funerals. Society should positively address these issues and offer better facilities than expected to reflect a caring community.

Discrimination may be evident in the current disposal of fetal remains. The majority of these are classified and disposed of as clinical waste, usually by hospital incineration or landfill site. The Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) has campaigned to change the legal status of fetal remains and has produced a policy and guidance document covering the sensitive disposal of fetal remains. The ICCM has also worked with the Royal College of Nursing who has a similar policy dealing with the handling and sensitive disposal of fetal remains. Details about this are included under the Charter item "BABY AND INFANT GRAVES".

Deaths that are AIDS related have been discriminated against in the past. In at least one case, a coffin was sealed into a grave using concrete. Such cases are evidence of ignorance and bias. These deaths pose no additional risks to anyone at a cemetery or crematorium than any other cause of death. A caring service will ensure that no discriminatory requirements are demanded that identify one funeral from another.

The success of cremation has created major difficulties for some groups in the community. In particular, the demand for services is so great that service times can be programmed as short as 20 minutes apart. This can be seen as discriminatory. For example, when a death occurs in a Hindu community, the support for the deceased's family is very strong. This leads to a very large congregation at the service, which cannot assemble, hold a ceremony and leave in only 20 minutes. Consequently, the possibility of delaying subsequent funerals will arise. To overcome this, such funerals are often restricted to the last in the day, thereby allowing more time. Whilst not condoning this practice, it is necessary to recognise that every service should be given sufficient time to fulfil the needs of that community. Any limitation imposed by time restriction

must reduce the essential right of the individual to hold a meaningful funeral. As a minimum a family should be permitted to book additional time for their funeral.

What might be termed cost discrimination is routinely used in bereavement. It can arise as a positive attempt to reduce usage of graves where limited ground is available. Consequently, graves in some London Boroughs are very expensive. It can also be used to obtain more income for the burial or cremation of people who live outside a local authority area. This might be seen as regional discrimination. No evidence exists that this type of discrimination has been successfully challenged.

Political discrimination has arisen on at least one occasion. A cremation authority has been known to refuse a Book of Remembrance application that included the word "communist" in the obituary. This was allowed upon appeal to the Ombudsman.

Discrimination on marital status is not evident, but questions are often posed on this problem. This arises because cemeteries and crematoria routinely accept burial or cremation applications signed by the "wife" of the deceased. No evidence of marriage is required and many applications subsequently prove to be made by a common-law wife.

This can become apparent when the legal wife, or her children make contact, perhaps by a solicitor acting for them. This may be over obtaining possession of the cremated remains or disputing the ownership of grave rights or a memorial.

Following a death, and where no funeral arrangements are made, the Local Authority or Health Authority is required to organise and pay for the funeral. They can recover funeral costs from any money or possessions owned by the deceased, if these exist. It is important that these funerals are organised along traditional lines and are not discriminated against. If money is available, a "private grave" and memorial may be purchased. The burial in an unpurchased grave should allow for the purchase of the grave, should any family approach the authority subsequent to the burial. They are then able to place a memorial without having to exhume the body, which can be very expensive. If the family wish to purchase the grave, it may be necessary to inform the Local Authority or Health Authority who paid for the funeral, as they may require recompense.

THE DEAD CITIZENS' CHARTER

This Charter was launched as a consultative document on 31 January 1996 by the National Funerals College. This Charter calls for the rights of both the dead and the living to be recognised and makes recommendations to improve funerals and care for those left behind. The Charter for the Bereaved implements many of the recommendations suggested and supports this initiative by the National Funerals College.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a service that recognises your needs, without unfairness or discrimination.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will meet representatives of their community, to identify the needs and wants of every individual. Individual needs should be met where this does not impinge upon the majority. The formation of community “user” groups, to consider how the service meets the needs of the bereaved, should be considered.
- b) Charter members will recognise that they have the ability to influence services that will benefit the entire community. Members will be receptive to suggestions that challenge conventions, to improve choice and service delivery.
- c) Charter members will promote cemetery and crematoria design that offers fair and equitable services to all members of the community, and not be excessively influenced by dominant groups.
- d) Charter members will ensure that the service is accessible to all members of the community, regardless of age, infirmity, language, etc.

Funerals without a Funeral Director

1 INFORMATION

It is often assumed, quite wrongly, that funerals can be completed only with the use of a Funeral Director. Although a Funeral Director will be invited to organise the majority of funerals, some people prefer to organise funerals themselves. The details in the individual sections of the Charter give sufficient information to achieve this. Your Charter member will also supply you with a leaflet giving you local information.

The Funeral Director organises the funeral by collecting and moving the body, arranging embalming (if required) and viewing of the deceased, ensuring that statutory certificates and other information is relayed to the cemetery or crematorium office. They provide a coffin, hearse and liaise with the cemetery or crematorium office regarding the service in the chapel or at the graveside. Carrying out these services relieves the bereaved from doing what they may feel are unpleasant and difficult tasks at a difficult time.

Some people do not wish to use a Funeral Director. This can be for a wide variety of reasons. They may feel that passing the body of a loved one over to strangers is wrong. Some feel that personally organising the funeral is their final tribute to the deceased person. Others may simply wish to save money by doing everything themselves.

The bereaved family can handle the entire funeral and Charter members are able to assist in facilitating this. Such a funeral is referred to as "Family Arranged", rather than the possibly offensive term "DIY" funeral.

2. CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to organise a funeral without the use of a Funeral Director.
- b) It is your right, as executor (or next of kin) to be given the body by a mortuary, hospital, etc, in order to carry out a funeral without a Funeral Director.
- c) It is your right to obtain information from your Charter member on how to obtain a coffin (minimum biodegradable type).
- d) It is your right to obtain a Family Arranged Funeral leaflet from your Charter member describing how to arrange such a funeral

3. CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members should ensure that the bereaved are aware of these rights,
- b) Charter members should increase coffin choice wherever possible. Coffins need not be stocked, provided a reliable source is identified. Where green burial options are offered, a biodegradable coffin should be available.

Maintenance of grounds and grave digging

1 INFORMATION

CEMETERIES

The majority of cemeteries are operated by Local Authorities although some privately owned cemeteries do exist. In addition to this there are a number of cemeteries owned by religious groups. The standard of a cemetery depends upon the resources made available by the local council or owner and the level of staff expertise. Unfortunately, cemeteries are often a low priority on the budget of councils and standards can be poor. This ignores their potential benefits. Firstly, the quality of the bereavement experience can be greatly affected by the standard of the grounds. A good standard reflects a good service and aids the grieving process. An attractive combination of trees, shrubs and bedding contributes to a harmonious and peaceful setting at a funeral. Conversely, an absence of planting and row upon row of memorials creates a stark, bleak picture.

Secondly, a cemetery is a major green space in many towns and cities and a valuable community resource. It offers philosophical, psychological, ecological, historical, artistic and social benefits. Interpretation boards, leaflets and guided walks, can enhance these. Skill and planning is needed to combine the needs of the bereaved and the community while overcoming the problems of maintenance.

Few cemeteries attain the ideal. Many are maintained at minimum cost and standard, relying upon chemicals to kill the herbage around headstones, and even grass growth retardants to hold back growth on lawn areas. The excessive use of chemicals offers short-term gain and on environmental grounds, is best avoided. Often, chemical leaching leads to the gradual death of trees and shrubs over many years and can pollute watercourses.

A cemetery is not a park and the compromise between the needs of the bereaved and maintenance costs is important. Cemeteries offer excellent conservation opportunities and these are outline under the charter item on "ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES".

Good conservation and management plans can progressively improve a cemetery. One of the most expensive and problematic areas of maintenance is grass cutting and defining acceptable standards is difficult. The quality of grass cutting is the principal measure of this. The minimum standard would be cutting every four weeks, seven or eight times per year. This is a standard often applied to older, generally unused grave sections. A high standard would be cutting every two weeks, about sixteen to eighteen times per year. This is a standard often used on lawn type graves, on areas used regularly by the bereaved. The mowing operation should not damage memorials, vases or floral tributes left on graves. Vases that impede mowers may need to be moved aside and replaced afterwards. Some authorities will regulate against placing items on the grass.

The problem of grass cutting has led in some cemeteries to the wholesale removal of old memorials. Apart from the environmental damage, these actions place maintenance needs before the needs of the bereaved. Some regulations also do this by limiting memorial design, e.g. lawn graves (refer to the Charter item on "CEMETERY MEMORIALS" for more details).

Maintenance should include the regular removal of litter, usually weekly, and the removal of dead wreaths from recent funerals. Water supplies should be available and located a reasonable distance from graves. It is the responsibility of visitors to collect and dispose of the floral tributes, which they have placed on subsequent visits. Christmas wreaths are normally collected from graves two to six weeks after Christmas, by the burial authority. This is because many of them are placed on grass, which they ultimately kill unless removed. Access to graves should be via clear paths and safe walking surfaces that are suitable for the elderly, infirm and wheelchair bound.

In some cemeteries contractors maintain the grounds. (There is evidence emerging that the contracting situation may not be seen as "Best Value" in the cemetery situation with some authorities taking maintenance back in-house). The contracts require a specification setting out precisely the standard of maintenance. You can obtain details of the standards from your Charter member. Where a contract exists, the staff working on the grounds are not employees of the burial authority, and may be unable to advise or help visitors. It is necessary to direct enquiries, complaints, etc to the cemetery officer, who control the contractors. Sometimes, the staff that operate the cemetery service may not be involved with grounds maintenance. This can lead to liaison difficulties and a problem identifying precisely who the responsible person is. Your Charter member will advise you about this.

Charter members who have in-house maintenance arrangements will be able to provide a statement of service standards, including items such as grass cutting and other maintenance frequencies.

Cemeteries consist of a massive patchwork of graves, the majority of which are "privately" owned. As such, there is no implicit requirement on the cemetery management to maintain these graves, unless a specific maintenance clause was included in the "Rights" sold. Consequently, the burial authority could cease or reduce maintenance whenever they wished. Generally, of course, the community at large would not sanction this. Nonetheless, it is possible that in future, cemetery authorities may specify limited periods of maintenance. For instance, where burial rights are sold for fifty years, the maintenance included could cover the first ten years at a specified level. Subsequently, unless a further maintenance fee was paid, the maintenance level could be reduced to a lower standard.

GRAVEDIGGING

Grave owners may be concerned when graves nearby are excavated. The excavated soil must be placed on adjacent graves, which can prevent access for a day or more. Although there is no easy solution to this problem, it is important to minimise the effect as much as possible. Firstly, the soil should be placed on any unused grave adjacent to the excavation. If this is not possible, the grave surface should be covered by boards and after the funeral,

all soil removed, especially from any memorial. All damaged turf must be repaired, any soiled memorials made clean and the grave left tidy. Care should be taken to avoid damage to the memorial or any floral tributes on the grave.

CREMATORIA

The crematorium service can operate profitably compared to the considerable deficits that arise with the maintenance of most cemeteries. Consequently, more money is spent on the facility to increase usage from rural and other peripheral areas. Often, bedding schemes, planting and grounds maintenance are of a high standard to reflect a better level of service. The credibility of the cremation service can depend on the first impressions gained from viewing the grounds. A high standard of maintenance would include a weekly grass-cutting schedule in prominent areas.

The development of conservation areas in some existing crematoria grounds is difficult. This is because a high standard of maintenance is expected by the bereaved, particularly where this has existed for some years. Changing the standard may deeply upset visitors and generate complaints. New crematoria, with grounds designed from inception to benefit the environment, may arise in the future. More details about crematoria grounds are contained in the Charter item on "CREMATED REMAINS AND MEMORIALISATION". Well-maintained, clear signs are especially important in the crematorium and its grounds. The large number of visitors, principally by car, requires precise road signs, followed by directions to and from chapels and toilets.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be shown a specified standard of grounds maintenance. Where standards fail to meet the specification, you have the right to complain.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop minimum national standards of maintenance.

Health & Safety

INFORMATION

Access and General Site Safety

Burial and cremation authorities as owners and occupiers of their respective sites have a duty under health and safety legislation to do all that is reasonably practicable to protect the health and safety of persons who enter their sites. Authorities control risks through a process of hazard identification and assessment of the associated risks. The results of the risk assessments are used in two ways. Firstly, they are used to formulate procedures for the various tasks that are undertaken by members of staff working on the site. These procedures are not only intended for the protection of the members of staff but will consider the effects of their actions on visitors. Site owners have a duty to consider the effects that their actions will have on others. 'Others' includes visitors, persons attending and officiating at funerals, in fact every person who enters the site. For example, a danger would exist to a member of the public visiting a grave in proximity to grounds staff carrying out strimming of grass. A stone could be thrown out by the strimmer, strike the visitor and cause injury. This fact would be identified during the process of risk assessment with procedures subsequently written to advise staff to cease strimming in an area where a person is attending a grave and not return to the area concerned until the person has left. A sound, considered, common sense approach is all that is required.

Secondly, and through a process of inspection, hazards not associated with work procedures will be identified with associated risks being assessed and actions taken to eliminate or significantly reduce risk. Hazards and risks identified could be associated with buildings, trees, pathways and any other part of the fabric of the site. A loose roof tile, hanging tree branch or unstable memorial could cause serious injury or a fatality should the potential of such a hazard be realised. Regular, formal site inspection will greatly assist in identifying these types of hazard. Inspections will also assist in ensuring that members of staff are adhering to operational procedures. Where discrepancies are identified additional training in procedures may be required. For example, an unattended, open grave presents the risk of a person falling into it. Whenever a grave is left unattended it should be securely covered, ideally with a lockable lid. Regular inspection will identify whether staff are complying with this requirement.

Where a hazard has been identified which cannot be eliminated immediately the placing of a warning sign or cordoning off the danger area may take place. This action is considered a temporary measure with action to remove the hazard being taken as soon as possible.

Gravedigging – Protection of Mourners

During the process of excavation of graves the gravediggers will install shoring equipment designed to support the ground and prevent collapse. Shoring is required to protect the health and safety of the gravediggers and subsequently the mourners, clergy and Funeral Directors staff attending at the burial service. Should no shoring be incorporated into the grave not only is the safety of the gravediggers compromised during excavation but also that of those in attendance at the funeral. Should the grave collapse during the service the possibility exists for people to fall and become

seriously injured. Should a collapse occur at the moment of committal it could cause the pallbearers and/or coffin to drop into the grave. Even if no-one is injured the effect on the bereaved would be devastating. The common sense approach dictates that shoring is installed on every occasion and remains in place until final back-filling of the grave takes place.

It is customary for some ethnic and religious groups to backfill graves themselves. This situation has potential dangers for those back filling the grave and a liability for the burial authority. Some burial authorities have banned mourners from backfilling graves however this conflict between cultural need, customer care and health and safety can be overcome. Should mourners wish to back fill the grave it is essential to seek the cooperation of the Funeral Director, main mourner and member of the clergy. The cemetery official at the commencement of back filling can directly supervise a limited number of mourners at a time and request the cessation of the operation at intervals whilst gravediggers remove shoring. Boards/planks should remain in place on the surface of the ground surrounding the grave in order to prevent mourners treading on unprotected grave edges. With the correct supervision and cooperation the task can be completed safely and to everyone's satisfaction.

Memorial Management

The national problem of unstable and dangerous memorials has been well publicised with reports of falling memorials causing the separate deaths of five children in recent years. Numerous reports of serious injury to people caused by unstable memorials have also received publicity. The ICCM has a policy for the management of memorials and has representation on the British Register of Memorial Masons (BRAMM), an organisation that burial authorities can work with to ensure that memorials are installed in accordance with British Standard BS8415 . If your Charter member has adopted the BRAMM scheme there will be some reassurance that your memorial will be installed properly and if not, your Charter member can take action through BRAMM on your behalf.

Responsibility for the safety and maintenance of the memorial lies in the main with the owner of the memorial however memorial masons have a responsibility to ensure that the memorial is installed and left in a safe condition. The selection of a memorial and memorial mason is dealt with under the section entitled 'Cemetery Memorials' within this Charter. however employing a registered memorial mason (such as one registered with BRAMM) provides some reassurance that you will receive a reliable product.

It is worth noting that product liability law requires that the product should be fit for purpose for at least 6 years therefore should your memorial become unstable within 6 years of purchase you could report the matter to the local Trading Standards office should the memorial mason not correct the defect at his/her expense.

For the vast majority of old memorials in cemeteries the burial authority has the responsibility for safety when the grave owner or his/her heirs cannot be traced. This is part of the authority's duty of care. In such circumstances authorities have acted to remove hazards posed by dangerous, unstable memorials by laying them flat or cordoning them off whilst attempting to trace owners. This action has met with adverse criticism and accusations of management vandalism and desecration. It must

be stressed that burial authorities are duty bound to protect persons visiting their sites and must make memorials safe in order to comply with the law and allow access. The only alternative is to lock the gates and refuse access. This action would be totally unacceptable to the bereaved and in an ideal world memorial owners would be fulfilling their responsibility and maintaining their memorials.

Many burial authorities have commenced the systematic inspection of memorials to identify those that pose a hazard and to take subsequent action to eliminate the risks posed. Immediate action may be to either lay the memorial flat or cordon off the area or applying a temporary support. It must be said that laying a memorial flat will not only remove a hazard but will effectively prevent the memorial falling and becoming broken. Burial authorities carrying out inspections will notify the registered owner of the grave should the memorial require attention. Unfortunately for the majority of older memorials no grave owner is forthcoming with the authority having to decide what further action to take. A few authorities have decided to re-erect certain memorials that are of specific interest and to protect the heritage and aesthetics of the cemetery.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to enter a cemetery or crematorium that is, as far as is reasonably practicable, without risk to your health and safety.
- b) It is your right to be shown a copy of the authority's health and safety policy, risk assessments and procedural documentation on request.
- c) It is your right to be shown a copy of the authority's policy relating to the inspection, testing and making safe of memorials

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will establish local memorial mason's registration schemes (in the absence of a national scheme).
- b) Charter members will insist that all memorials are erected in accordance with the British Standard BS8415.
- c) Charter members will use the ICCM Management of Memorials Guidance document to manage the inspection and installation of memorials. This Document can be obtained from the National Secretary free of charge.
- d) Charter members will manage the burial process by using the ICCM Code of Safe Working Practice for Cemeteries.

Regulations

1 INFORMATION

Regulations have always existed in cemeteries, most of which date from the Victorian period. Modern regulations are based upon the situation that developed about 40 years ago when authorities began to address the problem of derelict cemeteries. Levelling old plots and creating the simpler, lawn type graves dominated cemetery management. In most Local Authorities, regulations were created to support easy maintenance and smaller, safer memorials. The creation and reliance upon regulations has continued since that period.

Regulations are a necessary requirement of managing a burial or cremation facility, and yet they also restrict the rights and choices of the individual. They often become “written in stone” and are subsequently difficult to amend or change. People and especially staff and councillors fear that relaxation means a sudden upsurge in unsuitable actions or materials will occur. This, of course, depends upon the purpose of the regulation and some currently exist that defy logic. For instance, would removing the regulation that “seashells shall not be placed on graves” see a sudden upsurge in this activity take place? If it did, would it really matter?

Regulations can also indicate a bureaucratic organisation, one that prefers to control rather than to consider. Regulations, and their arbitrary application, can be utilised by staff that know little or nothing about the needs of the bereaved. They can mask an unfeeling and uncaring organisation. The essence of bereavement is to allow people the freedom to express the individuality of death and not to conform to some universal idea or “sameness”. Reducing the scope and extent of regulations requires an increase in staffing expertise. The Charter does not call for a completely unrestricted situation, simply that regulations should reflect a more caring and responsive management.

If regulations are sensible, reasonable and serve a purpose, they will be supported and not seen as a limitation on rights. Regulations on the safety of memorials and road use are logical and necessary. It is necessary to regulate for neat, tidy grounds and the safety of people working. The prohibition of glass and plastics in cemeteries is based on these items becoming a hazard when mowers are used. It is not based upon aesthetic considerations.

Other subjects, though, pose greater difficulties. The most sensitive area is where regulations arbitrarily set standards of dignity, decency and artistic quality. Not only do they restrict choice, they can also prevent innovation. A good example is the historical tendency to ban the use of wood for memorials. This seemed sensible when graves were sold in perpetuity and wood could last little longer than 100 years. Now that graves are sold for a maximum of 100 years, it would seem sensibly to allow the use of wood, which will naturally degrade over the period of grave rights. Allowing wood may encourage the employment of a local sculptor who would create a more person and community based memorial heritage. Similarly, regulations for memorial

stones have favoured the commercial, uniform and bland designs that readily fit into a coloured brochure. This has seriously diminished the artistic quality of cemetery memorials. It has also seen the decline in local employment, as both the stone and much of the memorial work is completed outside local communities. It has been said that artistry amongst memorial masons has been lost as most modern lawn memorials are 'off the shelf' with inscriptions being engraved by computerised machines.

Regulations often cover the form and type of inscriptions allowed on memorials, which can be controversial. Recently, a dispute arose about the use of language on a memorial. The application to incorporate "mum" and "dad" in an inscription was refused, causing great distress. This type of situation should not arise under the requirements of the Charter. The language used in inscriptions has historically reflected the colloquial use of words. This has always been valuable for research into the changing use of language. Currently, the use of the deceased's "nickname", or of poetry or extracts from popular songs has become commonplace in cemeteries. This is very important if it allows the deceased's partner to place something meaningful, something which brings the deceased "back to life", through reflection. Restricting this choice, using regulations to formalise every inscription, is not acceptable.

It is worth considering that, in the past, people appear to have passively accepted regulations without question. Currently, people are more aware of their rights and anticipate less, rather than more bureaucracy. It is relatively easy to contest regulations, which cannot be enforced by law. The regulation must be seen as fair and sensible, otherwise the authority or company will experience adverse criticism, particularly from the media. Any media attention about unreasonable regulation tends to reflect poorly on the service provided, and is best avoided.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) You have the right to be given a list of regulations used by your Charter member.
- b) You have a right to be given a written explanation why a particular regulation has been used to restrict or otherwise influence your rights. Where you remain dissatisfied, you can utilise the grievance procedure set out in the Charter.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop a standard list of regulations for use throughout the UK.
- b) Charter members will ensure that regulations allow more artistic and individualistic input, particularly where this may create employment in the community.

Staff and expertise

1 INFORMATION

The involvement of local authorities and private companies in cemetery and crematorium provision dates from the Victorian period. Prior to that date, burial in churchyards was the normal practice. The first cemetery managers were designated as a sexton, which combined manual work with simple administrative duties. Progressively, the post changed to Superintendent and the designation Registrar was subsequently added. The post often expanded to include crematoria as such facilities were opened. The term Manager has gained popularity in recent years and Bereavement Services Manager is the most recent designation. The post has become almost wholly managerial and administrative, except in smaller authorities, where the combined manual/administration post is not unusual.

The staff employed in cemeteries and crematoria vary greatly in ability and competence. A nationwide standard has never been developed and this has created some anomalies. Many authorities still see the post as principally a manual appointment and offer poor salaries. As these staff are neither managers nor administrators, various elements of the work have to be completed by other staff, often situated in civic buildings remote from the facility. Authorities in this situation have experienced incorrect burials and other such serious errors. No less significantly, casual dress and attitudes, poorly drafted letters and a general lack of expertise can profoundly influence those using the services. In more recent times, such staff have been unable to respond to environmental and social needs related to bereavement and, consequently, such issues may be ignored. With cemeteries in particular, the day-to-day operation may not have been changed since Victorian times. This lack of expertise may be recognised by a reliance on bureaucracy, on regulations and in a fear of embracing new ideas. This has resulted in decrepit cemeteries and a poor service in some areas.

The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) recognised this lack of expertise and have developed a professional qualification for its members. The full "Diploma" course, which is accredited by BTEC to HNC standard, includes the following subjects, however the modular system allows members of staff at all levels to obtain a qualification relevant to their position: -

- Management of Financial Resources
- Organisation and Behaviour
- Crematorium Management including horticulture and conservation
- Cemetery Management including horticulture, conservation and closed churchyards
- Management of Human Resources
- Managing Activities
- Law of Burial, Cremation & Exhumation
- Administrative Services

On gaining the Diploma candidates can produce a Thesis to achieve Honours.

This is a distance learning course and attendance at an annual seminar and training events provides extra support to those studying.

Although the Diploma has been an important development, it has not been universally adopted as a pre-requisite for all appointments. This is a major disincentive to improved service provision and the promotion of the Diploma qualifications is a major objective for the Institute. Elements of the Diploma should be the minimum qualification and other higher management qualifications should be a natural progression to develop and maintain wider skills. The cost of such expertise is recouped through improved services, better techniques in grounds maintenance and more efficient financial performance. The ICCM attempts to keep managers fully informed of all matters relating to the service through its education and training programmes. In 2001 a Parliamentary Select Committee recognised the importance of education and training and has suggested the setting of a minimum level of qualification for cemetery and/or crematorium managers.

The ICCM has also established the Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (COTS), which focuses mainly on health and safety but encompasses consideration of the bereaved and customer care in all elements of the courses provided. COTS is City & Guilds accredited and provides a unique qualification for those involved with the practical elements of burial.

Other qualifications have become recognised, such as the BTEC accredited Proficiency Certificate for Cremator Technicians organised by the Crematorium Technicians Training Scheme operated by the ICCM. This qualification is now required under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 and has greatly improved expertise in this field. The Charter supports the development of other management qualifications and training generally in order to introduce innovative and improved standards of service in the bereavement sphere. Each Charter member is required to enrol at least one member of staff as their Charter representative to the ICCM. It is anticipated that this person will possess or will be studying for the Diploma.

Previously, senior staff have been principally male, with a notable small contingent of women. It is evident that this is changing and in 1994 the number of female students in training exceeded that of males for the first time. This may be recognition that bereavement work is no longer seen as “manual” work, and is suitable for caring men and women. It is also possible that the emotional element of the work is attractive to women, who in the past were prominent in caring for the dead.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to receive a quality service provided by trained and/or qualified staff. Where service standards fail, you have a right to question the level of expertise shown and to receive assurances regarding the ability of those involved.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will promote the employment of qualified staff in senior posts.

- b) Charter members will ensure that training programmes are developed and that staff attain a high level of competence.
- c) Charter members will support the employment of members of all ethnic groups, particularly where the community served is composed of various groups.

Inspection and guiding principles

1 INFORMATION

Many aspects of cremation and, to a lesser degree, burial is unseen and little understood by the community. For this reason, doubts arise about the process and these lead to rumours and misinformed, often malicious, comment. Suggestions of impropriety can further upset the bereaved and leave them feeling uneasy about the service.

To disprove rumours and misinformation, Charter members welcome anyone who wishes to inspect the premises and see, at first hand, exactly what occurs.

The cremation process can be viewed in two ways. The first is whilst services are taking place, when coffins may be seen and the cremators may be in operation. If you consider this upsetting, the second option is to arrange a time when services are not taking place and the cremators are not in operation. During periods of high death rate, such as January, you may find that very few quiet periods are available.

You can inspect by making an appointment, by telephone or post. If you are at the crematorium, you can approach any member of staff, who will arrange, at the first convenient time, for somebody to accompany you on the inspection and describe the process. You cannot make the inspection alone, due to the confidentiality that must be maintained. This is in regard to the cremated remains that are being retained and the actual cremations taking place at that time. You can see the entire process, or check specific elements of the process. This may be a desire to see how the correct identity of each cremation is maintained, that all coffins are cremated and not re-used or that each coffin is cremated separately, etc.

If you wish to inspect the crematorium grounds, specialist grounds maintenance staff may be necessary to give you the information you require. This may need more time to arrange.

Burial is a more open operation, with most of the process taking place outdoors and within sight of any person in the cemetery. Nonetheless, aspects of cemetery design, of grave digging, memorial design and suchlike are less obvious and may be of interest to you. An appointment to inspect can be made by contacting your Charter member. As cemetery management staffing is often low, now that remote contractors do much of the grounds maintenance, you may need to wait for an appointment.

Each cremation and burial is required by law to be registered, either by hand or by computer. These records will be maintained forever.

If you are the applicant for the cremation you can be given a certified copy of the entry in the cremation register upon request. A small charge may apply. This must be done during office hours and can be arranged through your Charter member.

The public in general do not have a legal right to inspect cremation forms and certificates however the applicant for a cremation does.

The law relating to the inspection of burial registers and records is different with access being allowed to any person at any reasonable time, free of charge. Should you wish cemetery staff to make searches of registers to assist with research of your family tree then a fee may be applied.

If you have specific enquiry or concern that does not require a formal inspection, you can resolve this by personally visiting your Charter member.

Both burial and cremation facilities can be operated under the Charter “Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation Services”, which are set out on the following pages. Alternatively, your charter member may be operating a cremation facility under the Code of Cremation Practice issued by the Federation of British Cremation Authorities (FBCA). Both the Code and the Guiding Principles are complimentary, except that the latter also relates to environmental issues and extends to burial.

2 CHARTER RIGHTS

- a) It is your right to be offered an inspection of burial or cremation facilities or records at any reasonable time.
- b) It is your right to be given a copy of the “Guiding Principles of Burial and Cremation Services” by your Charter member.
- c) It is your right to inspect burial registers free of charge at any reasonable time.

3 CHARTER TARGETS

- a) Charter members will develop greater community awareness of cremation and burial facilities in order to reduce ignorance about the process.

ICCM Guiding Principles for Burial and Cremation

CARING FOR THE COMMUNITY

All cremation and burial facilities shall be managed with competence and efficiency, to ensure that the entire bereavement experience occurs without error or insensitivity, and meets the religious, secular, ethnic and cultural needs of the bereaved.

The service shall comply with all statutory and Health and Safety requirements.

SERVICE SENSITIVITY

The burial or cremation of a human body, whether the deceased be an adult, infant, child or fetus, is a highly emotional occasion for those taking part. Each cemetery and crematorium must be managed to create and maintain an atmosphere of solace and respect throughout the entire proceedings. This sensitivity must extend to all staff and contractors working at facilities, through the application of bereavement sensitive specifications.

Members will respond sympathetically to individual funeral needs and shall give a justifiable reason for refusing any specific request.

STAFF

All staff should possess qualifications and undergo recognised training specific to their duties. The following should be seen as minimum requirements:

Cemetery Chargehands/Sextons -	Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme (Course 1)
Senior Crematorium Technicians -	Cremation Technicians Training Scheme Certificates
Cemetery Manager -	ICCM Cemetery Management Certificate
Crematorium Manager -	ICCM Crematorium Management Certificate

Senior/Joint Service Managers should be in possession of, or working towards, the full ICCM Diploma.

The appointment of all staff must emphasise the need for proper conduct and demeanour, as well as technical expertise. Staff must act and speak in a manner that recognises the sensitivity of bereavement, both during and outside working hours, and should not accept gratuities.

All staff should be willing to operate flexible working hours to meet the requirements of the service. Pay and conditions of service should be suitably adapted to reflect such flexibility.

All staff should be identified by name badges.

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Every Charter member shall minimise the impact of bereavement upon the environment. This should encourage the greater use of earth friendly materials and environmentally friendly practices, particularly in:

General

- Ensuring the use of suitable coffins and containers used for burial or cremation. The use of plastics should be minimised with natural materials encouraged wherever possible. Zinc or lead lined coffins cannot be cremated.
- Employing the use of the most environmentally friendly materials in the maintenance of grounds
- Recycling of green waste from grounds maintenance works
- Recycling, where law permits, of any other material for which permission of the applicant for cremation or burial has been obtained

Burial

- Ensuring the most effective use of land for burial.
- Where possible providing or partnering a provider of woodland burial
- The use of suitable ground for burial so that water borne pollution shall not occur

Cremation

- Emissions to air are of great concern to the public. All Charter members should actively seek to reduce emissions to the air by the provision of suitable abatement equipment at the earliest possible time.
- Promoting the most effective use of energy within the crematorium. This could include consideration of heat exchange units to capture energy that is currently wasted.
- Ensuring the optimum usage of crematorium plant and equipment including longer operational hours, i.e. holding over cremations.
- Advising that clothing the deceased in clothes made of natural fibre/materials is acceptable whereas plastic, nylon and other synthetic materials are not acceptable due to the impact on the environment via emissions.
- Promoting the recycling of metals resulting from cremation.

INDIVIDUAL DISPOSAL

The importance of human beings as individuals and the manner in which they inter-relate with relatives and friends does not diminish in significance following death. It is important for the bereaved to know that the burial or cremation is individually carried out, unless a bereaved parents chooses a shared burial or cremation and the following requirements must, therefore, be met:-

General conditions

- i) No coffin/container/shroud shall be accepted at a cemetery unless the name of the deceased therein is clearly shown.
- ii) The identity shown on the coffin/container/shroud shall be verified at every funeral.
- iii) If burial is to occur, the body and its coffin/container/shroud shall be placed in the identified grave.
- iv) If cremation is to occur, the body shall be cremated individually and the correct identity shall be maintained throughout the process.
- v) If requested by the Applicant for Cremation or Burial the lid of the coffin or container may be removed for the duration of the chapel service and subsequently replaced prior to the committal (This action cannot be permitted in cases where cause of death is a notifiable disease).
- vi) A number of cremations have taken place where two related deceased persons were within the same coffin. Whilst such requests are rare they are not unlawful therefore the requirements below should be also considered in the plural. The same applies to both burial and cremation.

Requirements relating to burial

- i. After the coffin/container/shroud and body have been committed into the grave, they shall not be removed or otherwise disturbed except for lawful exhumation, by licence and/or faculty or by the order of a Coroner.
- ii. Immediately after the mourners have departed the graveside, the grave shall be entirely backfilled and made tidy. This work will be completed on the day of the burial and must not extend overnight.

Requirements relating to cremation

- i) A body shall not be removed from the crematorium after the service of committal, except by order of a Coroner or for some other valid reason.
- ii) The container and the body shall be placed in a cremator and cremation commenced no later than 72 hours after the service of committal. Where cremation may not be carried out on the same day, the Applicant for Cremation shall be notified.
- iii) The coffin or container with the body inside shall not be opened or otherwise disturbed after the committal other than in exceptional circumstances and then only in the presence of and with the permission of the Applicant for Cremation, or for a lawful purpose as directed by a higher authority.
- iv) Once a coffin or container has been placed in a cremator, it shall not be disturbed until the process of cremation is complete.

- v) On completion, the whole of the cremated remains shall be removed from the cremator and reduced to granular form, except where this is specifically not requested, and shall be disposed of or released according to the instructions of the Applicant for Cremation.
- vi) Ashes placed in the Garden of Remembrance shall be treated with reverence and respect. If strewn, they should be obscured by soil or brushing. Where a local practice of strewing in the form of a cross or other pattern has developed, it is acceptable providing it does not result in the unsightly build-up or prolonged visibility of the cremated remains. Cremated remains must be labelled and released in suitable, unused containers, and where sent by registered post or secure carrier, capable of withstanding transit without damage.
- vii) The terms 'ashes' and 'cremated remains' are one and the same and are defined as '*all that is left in the cremator at the end of the cremation process and following the removal of any metal*'.
- viii) Consent must be obtained from the applicant for cremation to remove any metal from the ashes irrespective of whether the metal is recycled or buried within the grounds at the crematorium.

COMMERCIALISATION OF PRODUCTS OR RESIDUES OF CREMATION

The products or residues of a cremation shall not be used for any commercial purpose

INSPECTION

Everyone has the right to inspect the crematorium or cemetery during normal working hours, upon application to the manager of the facility.

The ICCM Guiding Principles will be regularly reviewed, and updated where appropriate, to ensure that they remain relevant and meet the changing needs of the bereaved, the environment and the society in which we all live.

Grievance procedure

Any form of service failure during a funeral can have a traumatic effect. The Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management recognises this fact and the Charter was conceived as a means of reducing and addressing failures. Sadly, things do go wrong or are misinterpreted, and we recognise the importance of taking these instances seriously. If you have a grievance, we ask you to take the following action:

- *Stage 1*
Always complain “on the spot” if you have the opportunity. If you cannot do this yourself, you may be able to use your minister or Funeral Director as your advocate. If you fail to obtain a satisfactory response, move to the next stage.
- *Stage 2*
Contact your Charter member, either by telephone or in writing, and describe your grievance. If you fail to obtain a satisfactory response, move to the next stage. Most local authorities will have a formal written complaints procedure.
- *Stage 3*
Put your grievance in writing to the Chief Executive (address in Appendix C), who will send an acknowledgement within 7 days. Your grievance will be investigated, by reference to your Charter member or any other relevant person, and a written reply will be sent to you within 4 weeks of the date of acknowledgement. Where the matter is urgent, the response will be immediate, either by telephone or by fax.
- *Stage 4*
If you continue to feel aggrieved, the Chief Executive may offer to refer your complaint to an arbitrator. The arbitrator will be appointed by agreement with you.
- *Stage 5*
Whether or not arbitration is agreed, if the matter relates to a local authority, you have the right to refer your grievance to the Local Government Ombudsman in England Wales and Scotland (address in Appendix C). The Local Government Ombudsman can look into complaints only about actions taken by a local authority and that authority should first have had the opportunity to investigate and respond to the complaint.

Appendix A

Information on using a Funeral Director

This Charter is unable to offer you rights and standards related to the use of a Funeral Director. In view of this, information is included to help you understand how funeral directing operates. It will enable you to ask questions appropriate to your needs when you consider the arrangement of a funeral.

Although Charter members can advise you about funeral arrangements, they are not able to recommend a particular Funeral Director. You can obtain details about contacting your local Funeral Directors in telephone directories, newspapers, via the internet or through your Citizen Advice Bureau or Charter member.

Funeral directing, as a profession, appeared in the latter part of the 1700s. Prior to that date, funerals were organised through individuals, such as a joiner, a gravedigger and the clergy, followed by a churchyard burial. In Victorian times, the commercial involvement in death was developed, and this led to the greater use of the Funeral Director with the hearse, coffin and black attire. The Funeral Director developed the role of organiser, providing the furnishings and the transport to carry out a funeral. A proportion of Funeral Directors are members of professional organisations, who operate a code of conduct, a complaints procedure and provide educational courses relating to their service. The National Association of Funeral Directors (NAFD) and the Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors (SAIF) are examples of these and both have websites (www.nafd.org.uk and www.saif.or.uk)

MUNICIPAL FUNERAL SERVICES

Municipal funeral services are available in some parts of the country. They are formed by local authorities, usually contracting the service out to an existing Funeral Director. They offer fixed price funerals, but otherwise follow traditional patterns. As the funeral is usually sold as a package, price transparency may not be offered. Nonetheless, the cost of the package may be less expensive than with a private Funeral Director. As in all cases, it is essential to obtain quotations before a decision is made.

THE LAW

Common law recognises that funerals consist of a sequence of tasks and events, all of which must be satisfactory. Where even a single element is performed unsatisfactorily by the burial or cremation authority or Funeral Director, the payment of the appropriate part of the funeral account or in fact the whole account may be disputed by the person paying for the funeral.

It would be noted that whoever orders the funeral becomes liable for the funeral costs. In some cases, a friend has organised a funeral only to find that the deceased had no estate or monies. Consequently, they have found themselves liable for the whole cost of the funeral.

PAYING FOR THE FUNERAL

“Which” magazine (February 1995) suggested that most Funeral Directors should be able to supply an estimate of a basic funeral and should not be used if they cannot do so. You should reasonably expect to be given an itemised price list of the components of the funeral, which should include disbursements.

Many people are concerned about their ability to pay for a funeral. Media reports about the high costs of funerals reinforces the perception that funerals are expensive. This worry can be reduced by considering the funeral in advance. This will enable costs to be identified and possibly reduced. The information in this Charter will enable decisions to be made and quotation obtained in advance.

Some people alleviate the worry of paying for a funeral by purchasing a “Funeral Plan”.

If a Funeral Plan is purchased it is necessary to choose a cremation or burial package that meets your needs. These plans need to be considered very carefully, as some of the basic options may not prove sufficient when you actually die. For instance, extra may have to be paid for viewing the body, or embalming if these parts of the funeral were not included in the plan. The plan may also be restricted to the use of a named Funeral Director. The Office of Fair Trading investigated funeral plans in 1994 and recommended a number of safeguards to protect money paid into such schemes. It is necessary to ensure that the funds are held properly and securely.

Funeral Plans may be paid by instalments or by a lump sum payment. This enables the funeral to be paid at current prices, without further worry about escalating funeral costs in the future. Payment can be made through any participating Funeral Director, or direct to “Golden Charter”, “Chosen Heritage” or similar scheme.

The Government has introduced regulations relating to pre-paid funerals with the regulatory authority being the Funeral Planning Authority (FPA). Whilst the FPA is self regulatory it does set a minimum standard for its members and also offers a complaints system. Details of the FPA can be found in Appendix C – useful addresses.

Insurance companies offer policies to cover funeral bills, which you can pay over a number of years. Also, some Funeral Directors will open a joint account with you, or offer other options, to deposit money to pay the funeral account in the future.

If the person responsible for the funeral or their partner is receiving certain benefits, financial help to pay for the funeral may be available from the Social Fund. A priority order has been introduced to establish who should be considered “responsible” for the funeral payments. This may be one or more relatives. No commitment towards paying the funeral should be made until the responsible person (s) has been established.

Good advice on paying for the funeral and about funerals generally can be found in the publications issued by the Benefits Agency or Social Security. These include "help when someone dies" (leaflet FB29) and "What to do after a death" (leaflet D49). Age Concern is prominent regarding funeral advice and offers a fact sheet called "Arranging a funeral". Other organisations offer help and the local Citizens' Advice Bureau are a useful source of information. A grant can be obtained for the next of kin of those who at the time of death were paying full national insurance contributions and were below a pensionable age.

Purchasing some elements in advance can reduce the ultimate cost of a funeral. For a burial, a grave can be purchased and a memorial placed prior to death.

Finally, when a person dies in hospital and there is nobody prepared to arrange and pay for the funeral, the Local Authority or Health Authority will fulfil this obligation. Similarly, local authorities have a duty to arrange a burial or cremation of any person who has died in their area. It must appear to the authority that no suitable arrangements for the disposal of the body have been or are being made otherwise than by the authority. The local authority can reclaim expenses from any estate. If there is no estate, a basic funeral will be arranged which may include the use of an unpurchased grave.

DONATIONS AT FUNERALS

Some people are concerned at the excessive expenditure on wreaths and floral tributes at funerals. This is particularly evident in winter when the flowers may be damaged by frost or inclement weather within hours of the funeral. An alternative course is to organise a collection for a named charity, hospice or other deserving cause. Requesting "family flowers" only or "no flowers by request" usually facilitates this. Your Charter member or Funeral Director can provide further details and assistance.

Information on using a Memorial Mason

To ensure that a good purchase is made it is advisable to obtain competitive quotations and be armed with as much information as possible before making this major purchase.

Charter members are encouraged to adopt the British Register of Memorial Masons Scheme (BRAMM) in order to ensure that only competent and reliable masons carry out work in their cemeteries. Your Charter member should be able to provide you with a list of local Memorial Masons that are registered to the scheme. A registered mason will have signed up to the scheme by making statements of intent to work to nationally accepted standards and to abide by the cemetery regulations etc. A guarantee of conformity to national standards is provided by all BRAMM registered masons.

When you commence obtaining quotations ask the Memorial Masons for details of their guarantee of conformity and obtain a written statement that the

memorial will be installed in accordance with BS8415 and the Code of Working Practice issued by the National Association of Memorial Masons., Not all Memorial Masons are in membership of NAMM however most will be aware of the Code of Practice as an increasing number of burial authorities are adopting the BRAMM scheme and insisting on compliance with this Code through their cemetery regulations.

As a memorial is a major purchase and will commemorate the deceased for many years to come it is important to gain as much information as possible before obtaining quotations. Your Charter member will be able to provide you with a copy of the cemetery regulation, list of registered masons and perhaps a leaflet concerning choosing a memorial. All of this information will assist in selecting the memorial that fits with your needs, complies with cemetery regulations and will remain safe and secure into the future.

Appendix B

Information on embalming

Embalming is defined as the preservation of a body from decay, originally with spices and, more recently, through arterial injection of embalming fluid.

Historically, the process is identified with the Egyptians and the mummification of bodies. In fact this complicated and extreme method was abandoned, although in recent centuries ways of preserving bodies has received considerable attention. Varying levels of success were achieved but probably due to expense, they were utilised by very few people.

The current use of the word “embalming” is misleading. The process is generally referred to as hygienic treatment. It is used to improve the visual appearance of the body and to prevent deterioration in the period leading up to the funeral which would make the viewing of the deceased by relatives a less distressing event. It has no long-term preservative value and cannot be compared with the Egyptian concept of preserving bodies.

The decision as to the merits of embalming must lie with the individual although a number of issues should be considered:

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

The embalming process involves removing the body fluids and replacing them with a solution of formaldehyde, often containing a pink dye. The body fluids are treated and disposed of via the public sewer. The embalming fluid normally consists of a 2% solution of formaldehyde, an irritant, volatile acid.

Those who have concerns that embalming fluid may pollute the environment have a right to stipulate that this is not carried out on their body after death. Similarly, executors or nearest relatives making funeral arrangements can specify that embalming is not carried out on the deceased.

In some burial schemes, such as woodland burial, all chemicals may be prohibited. This restriction may apply to embalming fluid as well as to horticultural chemicals.

DO YOU HAVE A CHOICE?

You should reasonably expect to be informed about the embalming process.

If you are opposed to embalming, it may be advisable to expressly forbid it.

Appendix C

Useful addresses

INSTITUTE OF CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM MANAGEMENT

For any enquires regarding Institute activities or Charter grievance procedure contact:

Chief Executive
ICCM National Office
City of London Cemetery
Aldersbrook Road
Manor Park
London
E12 5DQ

Tel: 020 8989 4661

Fax: 020 8989 6112

email: Julie@iccm.fsnet.co.uk

Web site: iccm-uk.com

To enquire about local services and issues, approach your Charter member.

The Local Government Ombudsmen

Further information can be obtained from www.lgo.org.uk

England

There are three Local Government Ombudsmen in England. Each of them deals with complaints from different parts of the country:

London boroughs north of the river Thames (including Richmond but not including Harrow or Tower Hamlets), Essex, Kent, Surrey, Suffolk, East and West Sussex, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and the City of Coventry: Tony Redmond

Local Government Ombudsman
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP
Phone: 020 7217 4620
Fax: 020 7217 4621

London Borough of Tower Hamlets, City of Birmingham, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire and the north of England (except the Cities of York and Lancaster):

Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
York YO30 5FZ
Tel: 01904 380200
Fax: 01904 380269

**London boroughs south of the river Thames (except Richmond) and Harrow;
the Cities of York and Lancaster; and the rest of England, not included in the
areas of Mr Redmond and Mrs Thomas:**

Local Government Ombudsman

The Oaks No 2

Westwood Way

Westwood Business Park

Coventry CV4 8JB

Phone: 024 7682 0000

Fax: 024 7682 0001

Local Government Ombudsman for Wales

Derwen House

Court Road

Bridgend

CF31 1BN

Tel. No. (01656) 661 325

Fax. No. (01656) 673 279

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

4 Melville Street

Edinburgh

EH3 7NS

Tel: 0800 377 7330

www.spsso.org.uk

Northern Ireland Ombudsman

33 Wellington Place, Belfast BT1 6HN

Tel: 02890 233821

Freephone: 0800 343424

Fax: 02890 234912

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT THE FEDERATION OF BURIAL & CREMATION AUTHORITIES (FBCA)

The Secretary

41 Salisbury Road, Carshalton, Surrey SM5 3HA

Tel / Fax: 020 8669 4521

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT NATURAL STONE MEMORIALS

National Association of Memorial Masons

1 Castle Mews

Rugby

Warwickshire

CV21 2XL

Tel: 01788 542264 Fax: 01788 542276

Website: www.namm.org.uk

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT FUNERAL DIRECTING

The National Society of Allied and Independent Funeral Directors

SAIF Business Centre
3 Bullfields
Sawbridgeworth
Herts
CM21 9DB

Tel: 01279 726777
Fax: 01279 726300
email: mervyn@saif.org.uk
Website: www.saif.org.uk

National Association of Funeral Directors

618 Warwick Road
Solihull
West Midlands
B91 1AA

Tel: 0121 711 1343 or 0845 230 1343
Fax: 0121 711 1351
email: info@nafd.org.uk Website: www.nafd.org.uk

British Institute of Funeral Directors

National Office
140 Leamington Road
Coventry
CV3 6JY

Tel: 024 7669 7160
Fax: 024 7669 7159
Email: [enquiries @bifd.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@bifd.org.uk)

London Association of Funeral Directors

32 Gregories Road
Beaconsfield
Bucks
HP9 1HQ

Tel: 01494 730011
Fax: 01494 680101
email: mkenyon@clara.co.uk

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT EMBALMING

British Institute of Embalmers

Anubis House
21c Station Road
Knowle
Solihull
West Midlands
B93 0HL

Tel: 01564 778991
Fax: 01564 770812
email: enquiries@bioe.co.uk
Website: www.bioe.co.uk

**FOR INFORMATION AND PUBLICATIONS ON DEATH, GREEN BURIAL, FAMILY
ARRANGED FUNDERALS, ETC.**

The Natural Death Centre
In The Hill House, Watley Lane
Twyford
Winchester
SO21 1QX

Helpline: 01962 712 690

FOR NON-RELIGIOUS FUNERALS

British Humanist Association
1 Gower Street
London WC1E 6HD

Tel: 020 7079 3580
Fax: 020 7079 3588
email: info@humanism.org.uk
Web site: www.humanism.org.uk

FOR GENERAL INFORMATION AND ADVICE

(Some counselling services may be available)

Age Concern
Astral House, 1268 London Road
London SW16 4ER

Tel: 020 8765 7200
Fax: 020 8765 7211
email: communicationsunit@ace.org.uk
Web site: www.ace.org.uk

The Samaritans
The Upper Mill
Kingston Road
Ewell
Surrey KT17 2AF

Tel: 020 8394 8300
Fax: 020 8394 8301
email: admin@samaritans.org
Web site: www.samaritans.org

CRUSE Bereavement Care

126 Sheen Road
Richmond
Surrey TW9 1UR

Tel: 020 8939 9534

Fax: 020 8940 7638

email: helpline@crusebereavementcare.org.uk

Web site: www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk (site gives details of local offices)

FOR INFORMATION AND ADVICE FOLLOWING THE DEATH OF A BABY OR CHILD**Sands, the stillbirth and neonatal death charity**

28 Portland Place
London
W1B 1LY

info@uk-sands.org

Enquiries 020 7436 7940

Support 020 7436 5881

www.uk-sands.org

The Compassionate Friends

53 North Street
Bristol BS3 1EN

Tel: 0117 966 5202

Fax: 0117 914 4368

email: info@tcf.org.uk

Web site: www.tcf.org.uk

Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths

Artillery House
11-19 Artillery Row
London SW1P 1RT

Tel: 0870 787 0885

Fax: 0870 787 0725

email: fsid@sids.org.uk

Web site: www.sids.org.uk

For Information on Pre-Paid Funerals

Funeral Planning Authority Limited

Harelands

22 Bentsbrook Park

North Holmwood

Dorking

Surrey

RH5 4JN

Tel/Fax: 01306 740878

email: enquiries@funeralplanningauthority.com

Web site: www.funeralplanningauthority.com

Appendix D

Information about the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

This section outlines the development, structure and purpose of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) who created this Charter.

BACKGROUND

The ICCM was founded in 1913, and still remains the only organisation, for those involved in the specialised services of burial and cremation.

The Institute has now developed such a wealth of specialist knowledge, experience and ability that local authorities, government departments and other organisations regularly seek advice when dealing with matters related to the disposal of the dead. The status and importance of the Institute in the field of public service was recognised in 1958 when the Board of Trade granted a Certificate of Incorporation.

The increasing public recognition of the Institute's work is attributable to the realisation that the proper disposal of the dead is not only a function for preserving the environment but one that greatly contributes to the maintenance of public morale. The public rightly expects that qualified staff should competently manage burial and cremation resources.

The Institute has come a long way since 1913, when a few cemetery superintendents decided there was a need for them to meet regularly to discuss mutual problems and thereby improve the efficiency of their public service. The original intention is still being pursued and developed today, by members from cemeteries and crematoria right across Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

MISSION STATEMENT

- TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT, ADVANCEMENT AND WELFARE OF OUR MEMBERS
- TO FACILITATE THE BETTER PROVISION, OPERATION, ADMINISTRATION AND MANAGEMENT OF CEMETERIES, CREMATORIA AND BEREAVEMENT RELATED SERVICES

PRIMARY PURPOSES :

To promote the improvement of cemeteries, crematoria and public services for the disposal of the dead.

To promote the advancement and welfare of people employed in the above undertakings.

To encourage technical and other studies in relation to the above and to improve and develop the technical and general knowledge of the profession.

To provide education and training, including lectures and conferences.

To provide library facilities

To distribute a journal and papers produced by the Institute.

To undertake investigations.

To engage people to act in a technical and advisory capacity.

To distribute trust funds

To promote, support or oppose initiatives (including proposed legislation) relating to burial, cremation and ancillary public services.

MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE

The principal officers of the Institute are the President, Deputy President, Immediate Past President and an elected Board of Directors. The Institute also employs a number of full time officers.

MEMBERSHIP AND BRANCHES

There are eight branches throughout the UK. Each branch arranges regular meetings when members can discuss their work, listen to addresses and view new equipment and apparatus. These meetings are regarded as an extremely important forum.

Professional membership consists of 3 classifications: Associate, Full Member and Fellow. Professional membership is open to those who are actively employed within a cemetery and/or crematorium service or service ancillary thereto.

Corporate membership consists of 2 classifications: Full Membership is open to the providers of cemeteries crematoria and burial grounds. Associate Corporate membership is open to manufacturers and suppliers to the service.

LEARNING CONVENTION AND SEMINARS

The Institute holds an annual Learning Convention and Exhibition which has been designed as a learning opportunity for members and other interested persons. The annual Convention supplements other seminars and training events arranged by the Institute.

TRAINING

This is the most important function of the Institute. Distance learning courses, regular training weekends leading to the Diploma, are administered for members in partnership with professional educationalists. These qualifications are recognised by the private sector and by the Local Government Management Board, the Local Authorities National Joint Council and the Scottish Vocational Education Council for promotional purposes. The Institute's Diploma is the passport to senior appointment in the burial and cremation service.

The Institute supervises the training of crematorium technicians who, on passing the prescribed examination, are granted a nationally recognised, BTEC accredited Certificate of Proficiency.

It is now a statutory requirement for crematorium technicians to be qualified and this course is recognised for this purpose by the DEFRA.

The Institute also administers the Cemetery Operatives Training Scheme in conjunction with a professional training college. The scheme provides comprehensive City & Guilds accredited training via several courses for gravediggers, mechanical excavator operators and managers. These courses encompass all health and safety requirements and include consideration for the bereaved and customer care in all elements.

In addition to the above the Institute provides regional training days covering a multitude of disciplines and topics all designed to improve services to the bereaved.

THE JOURNAL

Regular contact with the membership and other organisation, and the dissemination of useful information, is maintained through this quarterly magazine published by the Institute. The Journal is free to Institute members but can be purchased by Burial and Cremation Authorities for distribution to elected members (councillors).

CONSULTANCY SERVICE

The Institute has accredited consultants whose services are available to members and their authorities. Site visits can be made and reports requested by contacting the Chief Executive.

ADVERTISING AND RECRUITMENT SERVICE

The Institute offers facilities for advertising within the Journal and also a personal service for circulating vacancies within the profession.

Appendix E

The laws and regulations involved with bereavement

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this section is to give an overview of the legal framework covering burial and cremation. It primarily deals with the law applied to cemeteries and crematoria. For more comprehensive information you are advised to obtain a copy of *Davies' Law of Burial, Cremation and Exhumation (6th edition)* ISBN 0 7129 004 X, which is published by Shaw & Sons Limited, Shaway House, 21 Bourne Park, Crayford, Kent, DA1 4BZ. The book has a useful section on funeral arrangements.

Copies of these publications may be held at your local library. The library should also be able to provide copies of relevant statutes, i.e. Acts of Parliament and rules, regulations and orders made under them.

For general advice on the law and local regulations applied to burial and cremation contact your local Charter member, the Manager of your local cemetery or crematorium or the facility where the funeral is to take place. If you are using the services of a Funeral Director he or she should be able to deal with your queries or concerns.

BURIAL

England & Wales

The vast majority of cemeteries are now provided and managed by Local Authorities. Section 214 and 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 make all Local Authorities in England and Wales "Burial Authorities" and provide the main statutory duties and powers for the provision and maintenance of cemeteries. Under the powers contained in the 1972 Act a statutory instrument known as the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 was introduced. The 1977 Order contains the detailed provision for the management of municipal cemeteries in England and Wales.

Scotland

In Scotland cemeteries are provided and managed in accordance with the Burial Grounds (Scotland) Act 1855. Most churchyards in Scotland are operated and maintained by local authorities under the Church of Scotland (Property and Endowment) Act 1925.

Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland cemeteries are provided and managed under the Public Health (Ireland) Act 1878 and the Burial Grounds Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1992 whilst the provision of crematoria by local authorities is covered by the Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions)(Northern Ireland) Order 1985.

Private cemeteries may operate under a specific Act of Parliament and further information should be sought from the cemetery company. In many cases the provisions contained in the Cemeteries Clauses Act 1847 were incorporated into private Acts of Parliament for new cemeteries built thereafter.

CREMATION

Crematoria are provided by Local Authorities and private companies who operate them under the legal requirements set out in the following key statutes and statutory instruments:

England and Wales

- Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952
- Cremation Regulations 2008

Scotland

- Cremation Acts 1902 and 1952
- The Cremation (Scotland) Regulations 1935 (and subsequent amendments)

Northern Ireland

- Belfast Corporation (General Powers) Act (Northern Ireland), 1948
- New Towns Act (Northern Ireland) 1965
- Cremation (Belfast) Regulations (Northern Ireland), 1961
- Local Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) (Northern Ireland) Order 1985

Appendix F

Tell us what you think

If you are interested in bereavement or wish to comment on any aspect of the Charter, we would like to hear from you:

On the Charter:

- Where you feel the information misleads or needs expanding;
- If you think you are being or are likely to be denied one of your rights;
- Where you feel the targets are poorly defined, or ignored.

On any other bereavement issue:

- We want to know your views so that we can take them into account. We know, from experience, that many people worry about disclosing their feelings on such a personal subject. Also, some people may worry that their complaint or comment may seem too trivial. Others ignore failures that are not of major significance, yet they may be left with a feeling of disquiet. This may relate to a variety of small issues that, when combined, may spoil the experience. If you feel this way, please let your Charter member or the Chief Executive (address in Appendix C) know.

TITLE: Housing Association Performance

Committee: Operational Services

Date: 14 September 2026

Author: Community Infrastructure Manager

Report number: AB66

Contact officer: Lucy Flintham, Community Infrastructure Manager
Lucy.flintham@eastcambs.gov.uk (01353) 616303, room 11, The Grange, Ely

Issue

1. To agree the process for monitoring affordable housing provider performance following the Motion passed by Council on 16 July 2026.

Recommendations

2. Members are requested to approve the draft performance reporting template at appendix 1,
3. Agree a stock threshold of over 100 properties, and
4. Appoint an Affordable Housing Member Champion to undertake the role as set out below.

Background/Options

5. At the meeting held on 16 July 2026 Council passed a Motion which included actions for working with housing associations above an agreed stock threshold to improve transparency, accountability and outcomes for housing association tenants across the district. A copy of the Motion can be found at appendix 1.

Arguments/Conclusions

6. The motion requested that officers work with housing associations to establish a performance reporting framework covering key housing management and maintenance measures. Officers met with representatives from Accent, Havebury Homes and Sanctuary to understand what information they collect and their reporting cycles. The draft reporting framework can be found at appendix 2. This includes questions regarding housing association plans to increase affordable housing in the district.
7. Based on the dwelling stock numbers which can be found in appendix 3 it is recommended that the stock threshold for inclusion in the performance reporting is over 100 properties. This will result in 9 housing associations being asked to participate in the reporting and 91% of affordable housing properties in the district being reported on.

8. Feedback on performance will be presented to Operational Services six-monthly, with the first report scheduled for January 2027. This will report back on the period April to September 2026.
9. It is suggested that this Committee considers the option of appointing an Affordable Housing Member Champion. Member Champions do not have any decision-making powers; the role of the Affordable Housing Member Champion will be to:
 - Act as the key Member contact for matters relating to affordable housing
 - At the request of the Leader of Council represent the Council (where necessary) in external meetings concerning affordable housing
10. Options to strengthen tenant engagement and improve understanding of tenant experience, particularly amongst vulnerable residents and those less likely to raise concerns directly, will be considered following a review of the existing processes housing association have in place, which will be obtained via the reporting framework. Recommendations will be included in the report to committee in January 2027.

Additional Implications Assessment

11. In the table below, please put Yes or No in each box:

Financial Implications No	Legal Implications No	Human Resources (HR) Implications No
Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) No	Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA) No	Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) No

Appendices

Appendix 1 Altered Motion - Conservative Rule 10 Motion - Housing Association Performance

Appendix 2 Draft Performance Reporting Framework

Appendix 3 Registered Providers with Stock Threshold above 100 Properties

Background documents

None.

ALTERED - NOTICE OF MOTION UNDER PROCEDURE RULE 10

a) Social and Affordable Housing

This Council believes that all residents living in social and affordable housing deserve safe, responsive and high-quality housing services, regardless of their landlord.

Council recognises the important role played by housing associations and community land trusts in meeting local housing need across East Cambridgeshire, values strong partnership working with these organisations, and acknowledges the positive contribution made by community-led housing groups across the district.

32 registered providers own housing in East Cambridgeshire, representing 6,524 homes, both general needs and supported living. Sanctuary Housing is by far the biggest provider, owning 4,260 (65%) of these homes, representing around 10% of the entire housing stock in the district. The next largest provider is CHS (Cambridge Housing Society) Group with 554 homes. Flagship Housing owns 231 homes, Clarion 208, and Accent Group 137, with the remaining smaller providers owning around 100 homes or less.

Council is concerned that inconsistent service levels experienced by some housing association tenants may disproportionately affect older and vulnerable residents and recognises the importance of ensuring that all tenants are able to access responsive services and have their voices heard. Whilst the larger providers are subject to regulatory judgement, this does not provide sufficient transparency or granularity about performance at a local level.

Council resolves, with the aim of improving transparency, accountability and outcomes for tenants across the district, to:

1. Request Officers to work with housing associations above an agreed stock threshold within the district to establish a simple six-monthly performance reporting framework covering key housing management and maintenance measures.
2. Refer this reporting to the Operational Services Committee for regular review, enabling Councillors to monitor trends, identify good practice and understand where improvement may be required.
3. Invite representatives of housing associations to attend meetings with the Council to discuss performance, challenges and improvement activity where appropriate.
4. Request Officers to explore options to strengthen tenant engagement and improve understanding of tenant experience, particularly amongst vulnerable residents and those less likely to raise concerns directly.
5. **Commit to continued collaboration with housing providers, with the aim to increase East Cambridgeshire's social housing capacity.**

PROPOSER: Cllr Lee Denney

SECONDER: Cllr Anna Bailey

Appendix 2

Six-Monthly Performance Reporting Framework

Theme	Detailed KPIs	Reporting format	Exception trigger *
Stock profile	1. Total number of homes in East Cambridgeshire. 2. Homes by tenure type, including social rent, affordable rent, shared ownership and supported or specialist housing. 3. Homes by settlement or ward where available. 4. Net increase/decrease in properties during the period. 5. Number and percentage of void homes for <6 months and >6 months at period end. 6. New development pipeline.	Number, percentage, settlement breakdown and six-month movement.	Significant local stock change, increase in voids, loss of affordable rented homes, or lack of settlement-level information.
Repairs > 6 months responsiveness	1. Emergency repairs completed within target timescale. 2. Average time to complete emergency repairs. 3. Non-emergency repairs completed within target timescale. 4. Average time to complete non-emergency repairs. 5. Total number of repairs completed. 6. Number of internal and external repairs outstanding at period end. 7. Number of internal and external repairs overdue against the provider's own target timescale. 8. Percentage of appointments kept by provider or contractor.	Number, percentage, average days or hours, target timescale used, previous period comparison and commentary.	Performance below target, increase in overdue repairs, deterioration from previous period, contractor capacity issues, or repeated resident reports of delayed repairs.
Repairs quality	1. Percentage of tenants satisfied with repairs completed in the period.	Number, percentage, tenant satisfaction result,	Decline in tenant satisfaction, high or rising repeat repairs, or

	2. Repeat repairs within 12 months for the same issue or component. 3. Repairs requiring follow-on works. 4. Complaints relating to repairs quality, workmanship or communication. 5. Number of compensation payments linked to repair failures.	trend and top three repair quality themes.	recurring complaints about workmanship or communication.
Damp, mould and disrepair	1. New damp and mould cases opened during the period. 2. Open damp and mould cases at period end. 3. Cases inspected within target timescale. 4. Cases where works were completed within target timescale. 5. Average time from report to inspection. 6. Average time from report to completion of remedial works. 7. Number of cases involving vulnerable residents or health risk indicators. 8. Number of formal disrepair claims received. 9. Number of repeat damp and mould cases at the same property.	Number, percentage, average days, case age profile, vulnerability flag count and six-month trend.	Cases exceeding target timescales, unresolved high-risk cases, repeat cases, increase in disrepair claims, or lack of evidence of vulnerability consideration.
Planned maintenance	1. Planned works scheduled for East Cambridgeshire homes during the period. 2. Planned works completed against programme. 3. Homes deferred from the programme and reasons for deferral. 4. Stock condition surveys completed or updated.	Number, percentage, programme status, deferral reasons, settlement-level summary and forward programme narrative.	Programme slippage, repeated deferrals, poor tenant communication, incomplete stock condition information, or absence of a forward programme for local homes.

	5. Percentage of homes with up-to-date stock condition data. 6. Tenant satisfaction with planned works where collected. 7. Future works programmed for the next 12 months.		
Building safety and compliance	1. Gas safety checks completed and in date. 2. Electrical safety checks completed and in date. 3. Fire risk assessments completed and actions overdue. 4. Asbestos management checks completed where applicable. 5. Water safety checks completed where applicable. 6. Lift safety checks completed where applicable. 7. Number of overdue compliance actions by risk rating. 8. Number of access failures affecting compliance. 9. Number of serious safety incidents or regulatory notifications relating to local stock.	Percentage compliance, number overdue, risk rating, action status and explanation for any non-compliance.	Any compliance area below 100% where statutory checks are required, overdue high-risk actions, repeated access failures, or lack of clear remedial timescale.
Anti-social behaviour and neighbourhood management	1. ASB cases opened during the period. 2. ASB cases closed during the period. 3. ASB cases open at period end. 4. Average case duration. 5. Cases involving hate incidents. 6. Cases involving safeguarding concerns or vulnerability. 7. Number of joint actions with police, community safety partners or support agencies. 8. Tenant satisfaction with ASB case handling where collected.	Number, percentage, average days, case type, settlement or hotspot summary and partnership action narrative.	Long-running unresolved cases, rise in hate incidents, repeated hotspot issues, lack of partnership action, or poor satisfaction with ASB handling.

	9. Estate or neighbourhood issues reported, including fly-tipping, grounds maintenance, communal repairs or nuisance.		
Local improvement activity	1. Improvement actions agreed in the previous six-month report. 2. Actions completed during the period. 3. Actions delayed or not started, with reasons. 4. New improvement actions identified. 5. Named lead for each action. 6. Target completion date. 7. Evidence of tenant impact or service improvement. 8. Partnership support required from the Council or other agencies.	Action tracker using red, amber or green status, completion date, owner and short progress commentary.	Repeated slippage, no named owner, unclear timescale, lack of measurable tenant benefit, or issue requiring escalation to provider senior management.

*Providers should include an exception note where performance has declined, where targets have not been met, or where there are recurring issues affecting tenants. The exception note should briefly set out the issue, the cause, the impact on tenants, the action being taken, the expected timescale for improvement and the named lead responsible for follow-up.

Appendix 3

Registered Providers with Stock Threshold above 100 properties

Accent Housing Limited	137
Amplius Living	195
Clarion Housing Association Limited	208
Flagship Housing Limited	231
Hastoe Housing Association Limited	118
Hundred Houses Society Limited	118
Sage Rented Limited	103
Sanctuary Housing	4,260
The Cambridge Housing Society Limited	554

BRECKLAND COUNCIL
EAST CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL
EAST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL
FENLAND DISTRICT COUNCIL
WEST SUFFOLK DISTRICT COUNCIL

At a Meeting of the

ANGLIA REVENUES & BENEFITS JOINT COMMITTEE

Held on Tuesday, 9 June 2026 at 10.30 am in the
Room 102, Breckland House, St Nicholas Street, Thetford. IP24 1BT

PRESENT

Cllr Philip Cowen (Chairman)	Cllr Vince Langdon-Morris
Cllr Keith Horgan (Vice-Chairman)	Cllr Jan French
Cllr Diane Hind	

In Attendance

Jude Antony	- Director of Finance & Section 151 Officer
Phil Butler	- Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support)
Alison Chubbock	- Section 151 Officer & Assistant Director Finance
Anna Goodall	- Assistant Director
Lorraine King	- Head of ARP
Theresa Mann	- Head of Billing, Benefits and Business Rates (ARP)
Katey Mills	- Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery (ARP)
Danielle Patterson	- Deputy Chief Finance Officer
Tanya Sturman	- Head of Service - Customer and Digital
Teresa Smith	- Democratic Services Manager & Deputy Monitoring Officer

12/26 CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR

The outgoing Chairman, Councillor Phil Cowen (Breckland), in the Chair.

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Keith Horgan (East Cambridgeshire DC) be appointed as Chairman for the ensuing year.

After being duly proposed and seconded, and with no other nominations being made, it was:

RESOLVED that Councillor Jan French (Fenland DC) be appointed as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

13/26 TREASURER

After being duly proposed and seconded and with no other nominations being made it was:

Action By

Action By

RESOLVED that Breckland Council be appointed as Treasurer for the ensuing year.

14/26 MINUTES

The minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record.

15/26 APOLOGIES

An apology had been received from Lorraine Rogers (East Suffolk) and Danielle Patterson was present as substitute.

16/26 URGENT BUSINESS

Whilst it was not Urgent Business, Councillor Horgan asked for clarity around the fire procedures at Breckland House and suggested that it would be useful, as Chairman, to have reference on what to do in case of an emergency.

17/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

None.

18/26 PERFORMANCE REPORT (STANDING ITEM)

Phil Butler, the Revenues and Benefits Service Manager (Support) provided Members with an update on the Quarter 4 and the full year to 31 March 2026 providing an overview of activity and performance across the partnership.

Overall, year-end performance remained strong:

- Business Rates collection reached £292.3m against a £294.1m target (within tolerance).
- Council Tax collection reached £612.6m against a £615.2m target (within tolerance).
- Electronic forms usage grew significantly to almost 217,000 for the year, well above last year's total.
- Fraud and Compliance exceeded target, identifying £4.84m against a £4.5m target.

Katey Mills, Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery added that Enforcement performance remained strong, with over £6.4m in debt collected by year end, around £300k more than in 2024/25. Fee income totalled £1.573m at the end of Q4, broadly in line with last year and 28% higher than the same period in 2023/24. The team continues to focus on early customer engagement and has introduced a suite of e-forms to support this. Open Banking went live late in Q4, with 30 successful transactions recorded in March 2026.

The team identified over £4.8m in fraud and error by year end. Four successful prosecutions were completed, with a further nine sanctions issued as alternatives to prosecution. Six cases were currently being progressed through the courts, and 52 live investigations remained ongoing. Work continued with external partners, and planning was underway to onboard two Lincolnshire authorities once governance requirements and the Section 113

Action By

agreement had been finalised.

The Further Recovery team collected over £2m in debt from the most challenging Council Tax and Business Rates cases. Performance was lower than in 2024/25, largely due to improved triaging within the Business Rates team, which has resulted in more debt being collected earlier in the recovery process.

Theresa Mann, Head of Billing, Benefits and Business rates informed Members that at the end of Quarter 4, four partner councils were on target or within tolerance for Council Tax collection, with East Suffolk falling below target.

A range of factors continued to affect collection, including the move to 12 instalments, Valuation Office Agency (VOA) delays and the introduction of Council Tax premiums. Benchmarking showed most neighbouring authorities also saw a slight dip in collection in 2025/26, however monitoring would continue throughout 2026/27.

Work volumes within the team remained high. Resource allocation and processes were being reviewed to maintain efficiency, supported by focus days and other performance initiatives.

In terms of Benefits, Council Tax Reduction processing times were within tolerance for all authorities at the end of Q4. Universal Credit migration had significantly reduced the Housing Benefit caseload, leaving more complex cases. The targets for 2026/27 had been adjusted accordingly.

Business Rates collection was above target for East Cambridgeshire, Fenland and West Suffolk, and within tolerance for Breckland at Q4. East Suffolk was below target, partly due to large rateable value amendments. Implementation of the 1 April 2026 Business Rates changes was successful, with customer contact levels similar to previous years. Ongoing monitoring will assess the impact on collection and recovery.

Phil Butler advised Members that Quarter 4 for the ARP systems and Digital and been a busy and successful period. The team delivered annual billing across all partners, including full testing, validation and system upgrades, issuing around 380,000 Council Tax and 30,000 Business Rates bills on time.

E-billing uptake continued to grow, with over 180,000 Council Tax customers and 11,000 businesses receiving bills electronically, supporting channel-shift and reducing print and postage costs.

The Year-end processing was completed, including Housing Benefit payment runs, reconciliations, statutory returns and performance reporting.

Social media activity increased across all partners to support key operational messages, including change-of-circumstances reporting, valuation changes, Renters' Rights reform, penalties, annual billing and e-billing promotion.

Early work had also begun with system supplier MRI to understand technical requirements linked to Local Government Reorganisation.

The Better Customer Experience Programme continued to show strong progress. Online form usage reached 217,000 for the year, an increase of

Action By

39% on last year.

E-billing continued to expand, supported by opt-out campaigns. Since 2024, around 140,000 new paperless sign-ups had been achieved across Council Tax and Business Rates and by the end of Q4, 47% of Council Tax customers and 37% of Business Rates customers were signed up to e-billing.

The Chairman thanked the team for the comprehensive update which had seen a solid year in performance.

Councillor French thanked Katey Mills, Head of Fraud, Enforcement and Recovery for providing a fantastic presentation to the Audit and Risk Committee at Fenland District Council. She asked if there had been further updates on the convictions within the Fenland area.

Members heard that the publications of the successful prosecutions had had an impact, but that further monitoring would be required once the data matching exercise had been completed.

Councillor Langdon-Morris asked if all residents were moving to a 12-month collection period for Council Tax. It was confirmed that as part of the Government changes, everyone would move to a 12-month collection period unless you opted for a 10-month collection period.

Lorraine King, Head of ARP also added that the team had reached out to the software provider to see if the option could be explored to give people the option to remain on 10-months before it automatically transferred to the 12-month period. It was also noted that anyone who changed address from April 2027 would automatically go to the 12-month collection period.

**19/26 JOINT COMMITTEE SERVICE PLAN AND RISK REGISTER UPDATE
REPORT JUNE 2026**

Lorraine King, Head of ARP, explained that the service plan and risk register, as set out in Appendix A of the report, were reviewed every six months, with progress updates also being provided to the ARP Board.

Performance and work volumes were discussed, noting that manual work items had risen to 8.7k, while automated items had increased significantly to 30k in 2025/26 compared with the previous year.

Council Tax Support claims remained more than 30% higher than last year, and all migration notices had now been issued, with only three ARP cases still to move to Universal Credit.

Around 12,000 migration notices were sent over the year for employment support and vulnerable customers. Despite the increased workload, billing volumes remained high, and teams were taking longer to recover from the annual billing peak. Billing, collection and benefits processing performance had already been covered, with a marked improvement in benefits processing over the past year.

Audit and GDPR activity was reviewed, with all audit recommendations from the 24-25 audit completed except one which was in progress, and the 2025/26 audit had recently been received. There were 97 data breaches during the year, compared with 95 the previous year; all were low-risk and

Action By

non-reportable.

The first ARP arrears-reduction campaign, delivered through the LIFT project for West Suffolk, reduced arrears by £49k and will now be extended to other authorities. New vulnerability guidance had been produced, and further work was underway to strengthen the wider approach. Recruitment pages had been reviewed for accessibility compliance, and plans were progressing to introduce bitesize videos supported by social media, with a third-party provider being explored. Online forms now accounted for 80% of digital customer contact.

Partnership working continued to grow, including close collaboration with the DWP, and fraud and enforcement services have expanded, with Maldon Local Authority joining the partnership.

The ARP Senior Management Team had welcomed Phil Butler as the new Revenues and Benefits Service Manager. The All Ideas Matter (AIM) staff suggestion scheme continued to be successful – a member of staff suggested a video was added to the website to show how to upload evidence which had been a great success.

ARP's first apprentice had passed and secured a permanent role, and the leadership programme continued to provide hands-on development and support the one-team culture.

ARP were winners of the IRRV Partnership Award in October and was a finalist for the LGC Public Partnership Award.

All initiatives from the transformation programme had been completed. Automation continued to deliver strong results, including improvements to Direct Debits, refunds and moves.

The introduction of second-home premiums across three partners had reduced the number of properties classified as second homes by 4.1%. and civil penalties were now being used as a preventative tool for failure to declare changes to single occupancy status.

Finally, the risk register for 2025/26 had been reviewed and aligned with the 2026/27 service plan. Work linked to Local Government Reorganisation continued, with all projects under review. Some may need to pause during the transition, while others could progress where quick wins were possible.

Councillor Langdon-Morris said it was good to see benchmarking locally but asked how it feels to benchmark nationally. The Head of ARP said that the team were always looking to improve and would reach out to those who were over-performing to see what lessons could be learned and brought back to the Anglia Revenues Partnership.

The Chairman asked if there was a risk management team who reviewed all the risks within the business. Lorraine King said that the Senior Management Team reviews all risks on a quarterly basis.

The Chairman suggested that it would be helpful to include the date when the risk management report was last reviewed. Members were advised that dates were only updated when a risk had changed, but the feedback was noted and it was agreed that this could be incorporated going forward.

Action By

Members of the Joint Committee noted the progress in respect of the December 2024 Service Delivery Plan at Appendix A and detailed in Appendix B of the report.

20/26 2025-26 ARP FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE OUT-TURN REPORT

Alison Chubbock, Assistant Director Finance (Breckland) presented the ARP full-year outturn report that showed a positive variance of £586k across ARP, largely due to salary savings and higher-than-budgeted income. This was partly offset by additional costs, including investment in email automation. The underspend figure is after allowing for a fixed-term post, which has now closed.

Looking ahead, it was noted that this level of underspend was not expected in 2026/27, as maintaining performance levels and supporting Local Government Reorganisation would require sustained resourcing. This year's position was considered exceptional, and similar savings are not anticipated next year.

Councillor Cowen endorsed the savings given the challenges the team had faced relating to the Local Government Review.

Members noted the contents of the report along with the appendix.

21/26 WELFARE REFORM UPDATE (STANDING ITEM)

Theresa Mann, Head of Billing, Benefits and Business rates provided the latest updates to Members on Welfare Reform.

The Managed migration to Universal Credit scheduled to conclude by March 2026, and was pleased to report that only three claimants across the partnership were still to migrate.

Work continued on the new Crisis Resilience Fund, replacing the Household Support Fund and Discretionary Housing Payments from 1 April, with coordination underway with county councils.

The Housing Benefit Award Accuracy initiative continued, with full case reviews for pensioners expected this year.

Recent welfare changes include removal of the two-child limit for Universal Credit claims and changes to Statutory Sick Pay (removal of the waiting period and lower earnings limit).

The Government remained committed to aligning administration of Pension Credit and Housing Benefit, with a timetable expected in the autumn.

Phase 1 of the Renters Rights Act began on 1 May, introducing the end of no-fault evictions, limits on rent increases and rights for tenants to keep pets. Further phases from 2028 will include a new Ombudsman for the private rented sector.

Councillor Langdon-Morris noted that the Crisis Resilience fund should continue to be considered in a broader, long-term context, recognising that more "ordinary" households may be affected by events such as flooding over

Action By

the next 5–10 years. Members were asked to keep this wider perspective in mind as the fund develops.

Members noted the content of the report.

22/26 FORTHCOMING ISSUES (STANDING ITEM)

Councillor Langdon-Morris said that East Suffolk District Council had developed a mobile phone app which had been well received and wondered if the ARP partnership would see this as an opportunity to link to that.

Lorraine King said that this was something that could be explored and considered in the future.

The Chairman gave his thanks to the previous Chairman, Councillor Philip Cowen.

23/26 NEXT MEETING

The arrangements for the next virtual meeting on Tuesday 22 September 2026 at 10am via Teams were noted.

The meeting closed at 11.30 am

CHAIRMAN

OPERATIONAL SERVICES COMMITTEE
WORKING COPY - ANNUAL AGENDA PLAN

AGENDA ITEM NO 12

LEAD OFFICER: Isabel Edgar, Director Operations
Democratic Services Officer: Patrick Adams

Mon 16 November 2026	4:30pm
Service Delivery Plans – 6-Month Performance Monitoring	Service Leads
Environmental Crime Enforcement Policy	Nick Baker / Karen See
Community Safety Partnership Update	CSP Representative
Budget Monitoring Report	(Senior Accountant)
Street Naming and Numbering Policy	Karen Wright
ARP Joint Committee Minutes	DSO
Forward Agenda Plan	DSO
ECSS Management Accounts [EXEMPT] and Performance KPI's	Nigel Ankers
Mon 25 January 2027	4:30pm
Review of grant to Citizens Advice West Suffolk	
Mon 22 March 2027	4:30pm
End of Year Reports 2024/25 Service Delivery Plans 2025/26	Service Leads
Community Safety Partnership Update	CSP Representative
Budget Monitoring Report	(Senior Accountant)
Long Term Empty Homes Strategy Update	Nick Baker
ARP Joint Committee Minutes	DSO
Forward Agenda Plan	DSO
ECSS Management Accounts [EXEMPT] and Performance KPI's	Nigel Ankers

Notes:

1. Agenda items which are likely to be “urgent” and therefore not subject to call-in are marked *
2. Agenda items in italics are provisional items / possible items for future meetings.