

Meeting Executive Committee
Portfolio Area Environment & Regeneration
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LAUNCH OF STEVENAGE CEMETERY POLICY

KEY DECISION

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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To provide Members with a new policy for how the cemetery service in Stevenage will be delivered for the benefit of all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one, or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Executive approves the Stevenage Cemetery Policy 2021, as set out at Appendix A.

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1 The Council currently operates two cemeteries in Stevenage:

- Almonds Lane
- Weston Road

These sites are freely open to the public throughout the year.

In addition the Council also manages the closed churchyards of St Nicholas, Rectory Lane, and St Mary's, Shephall Green.

- 3.2 The burial grounds in Stevenage provide attractive, peaceful green spaces for all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.
- 3.3 The Council currently has a set of regulations in place for the two cemeteries, but does not have a policy that sets out or acts as the approved foundation for the specification of the services, and decisions that are made regarding their operation. A clear policy document will help manage expectations and set out clear service standards.

4 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED COURSE OF ACTION AND OTHER OPTIONS

- 4.1 The cemeteries team work hard to support the bereaved and to accommodate requests from families and visitors.
- 4.2 However, the lack of a formal policy for cemeteries has, on occasion, created conflict and upset between visitors wishing to remember their loved one in their own personal way, and the Council who are responsible for the safe and sustainable management of the site.
- 4.3 This policy enables the future management of the cemeteries to be more clearly defined, helping to ensure a considered and consistent approach which will also help to manage expectations.
- 4.4 The Cemetery Policy (the Policy) sets out the principles of how the Council will manage the cemeteries to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable, and the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders with an interest in the sites.
- 4.5 The Policy seeks to provide a balance between respecting the rights and choices of the individual, while also meeting the need for the providing safe and tidy cemeteries.
- 4.6 A summary of the changes from the current regulations is available in Appendix B, and includes:
- definitions of some of the legal terms and processes;
 - the Council will purchase and maintain memorial benches and provide opportunity for family / loved ones to purchase a plaque for 10 years, with the option for renewal of this agreement. This arrangement will make the option of a memorial bench more affordable for families;

- opportunity to sponsor a memorial tree chosen from a select list of species appropriate to the sites;
- clear guidance on who is considered a Stevenage resident, for the purposes of fees and charges;
- clarity on placement of flowers and other tributes;
- opportunity for Saturday burials / interments.

4.7 Officers are currently developing information to help raise awareness of the range of services available at Stevenage cemeteries, and to support residents / visitors in planning a funeral for themselves or a loved one.

4.8 Consultation on the new policy has been undertaken with:

- Legal services;
- Councillor Sharon Taylor, Leader of the Council
- Councillor John Gardner, Executive Member for Environment & Regeneration;
- the Portfolio Holders Advisory Group;
- Public consultation, via the Council's webpages (promoted via social media) during November / December 2020

All comments and feedback from the consultation has been considered and the draft policy amended as indicated.

4.9 Officers will implement the approved policy fully with all new internments and requests, but will provide a six month grace period for existing arrangements that do not meet the terms of the policy. This will help to avoid unnecessary anxiety for recently grieving families or friends during a sensitive time. It also provides a reasonable period of time for those that are not able to visit the cemetery on a regular or frequent basis.

4.10 The final policy will be made available on the Council's website and will be publicised on social media and within the cemeteries, to help to raise awareness. Updated information will be sent out with all correspondence regarding existing interments and burials at the sites.

5 IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

5.1 The cemeteries service costs the General Fund £199K per year to run based on the 2020/21 Original budget. The net cost of £199K includes £390K of expenditure

budget which is partly offset by £191K of budgeted income. In terms of the implementing the cemeteries policy, this can be delivered within current budgets.

Legal Implications

- 5.2 The policy is in accordance with the legislation which applies to burials and the management of cemeteries, i.e.:
- Local Government Act 1972
 - Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977
 - Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
 - Environmental Protection Act 1990
- 5.3 Benchmarking through the Association for Public Service Excellence (APSE), The Institute for Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and liaison with other local authorities has been used to inform this policy.

Equalities Implications

- 5.4 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached in Appendix C.

Risk Implications

- 5.5 In providing support to the bereaved officers want to ensure that there is a transparent and consistent approach to the placement of items on and around grave spaces. This will avoid:
- disrupting routine maintenance operations – for example plant pots, windmills and other ornaments placed over the grave space therefore preventing grass cutting operations, or risking damage to those items;
 - setting a precedent that is not sustainable – for example wind chimes in the trees, man-made items that break down on site but cannot be recycled;
 - causing litter within the site and the wider environs – full cans of alcohol, plastic ornaments that break up and scatter in the wind as they deteriorate for example.
- 5.6 The implementation of this policy may generate negative feedback from some visitors to the site.
- 5.7 Officers propose to implement the approved policy fully with all new internments and requests, but to provide a six month grace period for existing arrangements that do not meet the terms of the policy. In this way there is no expectation that recently grieving families or friends have to deal with further upset at a delicate time for them. It also provides reasonable time for implementation by those that are not able to visit the cemetery on a regular basis.

Staffing and Accommodation Implications

- 5.8 The policy states that a Saturday burial service will be offered subject to availability of staff, and subject to an additional fee.

Service Delivery Implications

- 5.9 The cemeteries team work hard to support the bereaved and to accommodate requests from family and visitors.
- 5.10 However, the lack of a formal policy for cemeteries has, on occasion, created conflict and upset between visitors wishing to remember their loved one in their own unique way, and the Council who are responsible for the safe and sustainable management of the site.
- 5.11 This policy enables the future management of the cemeteries to be clearly defined for all, ensuring a considered and consistent approach which will also help to manage expectations.

Climate Change Implications

- 5.12 The policy supports the Council's climate emergency through avoidance of the use of man-made materials on grave spaces that can deteriorate and contribute to littering.

APPENDICES

- A Draft Cemetery Policy
- B Summary of Changes and Additions to Current Practice
- C Equality Impact Assessment

Cemetery Policy

(Pictures to add)

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1. Introduction

The burial grounds in Stevenage provide attractive and peaceful green spaces for all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.

All visitors are welcome to our cemeteries and we ask that everyone respects the peace, dignity and reverence of these facilities, as well as other users, and we thank you in advance for your consideration.

This policy sets out the principles of how Stevenage Borough Council (the 'Council') will manage the cemeteries to ensure that they are safe, accessible and sustainable.

This policy seeks to provide a balance between respecting the rights and choices of the individual, while also meeting the need for providing safe and tidy cemeteries that everyone can enjoy.

2. Background

2.1 Cemeteries and Churchyards

The Council's cemeteries are open to the public 365 days a year.

The sites to which this policy relates are:

- Almond Lane Cemetery,
- Weston Road Cemetery,

2.1.1 Almond Lane Cemetery

This cemetery has both a traditional layout with full kerb-sets and lawn sections, which are divided into Established Church, Roman Catholic, and Dissenter or Non-conformist.

Almond Lane Cemetery also has:

- a natural burial ground for both burials and ashes interments
- Sanctums
- Garden of Rest
- Rose Gardens
- Shrub Gardens.

The Sanctums, Garden of Rest, Rose and Shrub Gardens are for ashes interments only.

2.1.2 Weston Road Cemetery

This is a lawn cemetery with sections divided into Established Church, Dissenter or Non-conformist.

Weston Road Cemetery also has:

- A Muslim section
- Children's section
- Gardens of Rest
- Rose Gardens
- Shrub Gardens
- Lawn Birches - an ashes scattering area.

The Garden of Rest, Rose and Shrub Gardens are for ashes interments only.

2.1.3 The Council also manage and maintain two churchyards in Stevenage:

- St Nicholas Churchyard
The Churchyard is immediately adjacent to the Weston Road Cemetery. It is a closed churchyard, meaning that there are no further grave spaces available for new burials.

St Nicholas Churchyard is designated as a Local Wildlife Site and the Council manages the grounds sympathetically to its status.

- St Mary's Churchyard
This is a closed churchyard, meaning that there are no further grave spaces available for new burials.

2.2 Legislation

There is a range of legislation which apply to burials and the management of cemeteries. The Cemetery Regulations, and this policy, are based upon legislation including:

- Local Government Act 1972
- Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977
- Health & Safety at Work Act 1974
- Environmental Protection Act 1990

2.3 Cemetery Records

All the statutory burial records for Almonds Lane and Weston Road Cemeteries are held at:

Weston Road Cemetery	and	Stevenage Borough Council
Weston Road		Cavendish Road
Stevenage		Stevenage
Herts.		Herts.
SG1 3RP		SG1 2ET

A map is available to help in locating a grave or ashes plot.

3. Cemetery Etiquette

- 3.1 The burial grounds in Stevenage provide attractive, peaceful green spaces for all visitors to enjoy, whether for remembering a loved one or to simply take some time for quiet reflection.
- 3.2 All visitors are welcome to our cemeteries and we ask that everyone behaves in an appropriate manner:
- All visitors shall behave in a quiet, orderly and respectful manner
 - Visitors shall not cause a nuisance or interfere with any burial taking place or any grave or memorial
 - All visitors shall make full and appropriate use of the recycling facilities provided on site
 - No sports or games or discharge of firearms (unless at a military funeral) are permitted
 - Any person, who damages, defaces or destroys any property or causes a nuisance in the cemeteries may be prosecuted
 - Dogs are permitted in the cemetery grounds provided they are kept on a suitable lead and under control at all times. Owners, or handlers, must take full responsibility for their animal and must observe appropriate standards of behaviour and cleanliness
 - Dogs, with the exception of assistance dogs, or any other animals are not permitted in the cemetery buildings without the prior agreement of the Cemetery Officer.
 - Vehicles must not exceed 10 miles an hour and must use the one way system
 - Vehicles must not park on any grassed area
 - Vehicles may be prevented from entering the cemeteries during maintenance work
 - Children under 11 years of age must be accompanied by a responsible person
 - No demonstrations of any kind are allowed
 - Drinking of alcohol is prohibited within the cemetery buildings and grounds

4. Definitions

Making arrangements for the interment of a loved one can be highly emotional and stressful. In addition to the personal bereavement there are lots of legal terms and processes that need to be followed. Here we will try and provide some simple explanations of common terminology associated with interments.

4.1 Deed of Grant

The Deed of Grant is an important legal document and this should be stored in a safe place. It confirms that you are the current legal owner of the Right of Burial in a named grave.

The Deed of Grant (the 'Deed') needs to be produced when an interment takes place. Where this is not reasonably possible, any person whom the Council considers to be entitled to request that the grave may be opened may do so by making a Statutory Declaration and giving indemnity to the Council.

The Deed can be purchased at the time of arranging an interment or, in the case of a child's grave, it can be purchased after the burial has taken place.

The Council currently grants a Deed for a period of 50 years for graves and 50 years for ashes interments in the Garden of Rest.

It is the responsibility of the Deed of Grant holder to keep the cemetery office informed of any changes to contact details.

4.2 Exclusive Right of Burial

The Deed of Grant holder has the exclusive right to determine who can be buried in the grave space for which they hold the Deed.

Only the owner of the Exclusive Rights of burial, or their personal representative, can authorise the reopening of the grave space. This authorisation must be received in writing.

4.3 Transfer of Ownership

The Transfer of Ownership of a Deed of Grant for Exclusive Right of Burial is a legal process and is usually required when the owner of the grave space has been interred within the grave for which they hold the Deed.

No further burials, interments, memorials or changes to memorials are allowed until ownership has been transferred. The new owner must demonstrate ownership of the grave by producing:

- a will
- grant of probate
- letters of administration or a Statutory Declaration witnessed by an authorised court official, a Commissioner of Oaths, a magistrate or solicitor to prove that they are the next of kin.

A fee is payable for a Transfer of Ownership; if ownership is not transferred on the death of the owner, the grave space will be considered unavailable for further interments.

4.4 Notice of Interment

This is a Council document that is often completed by the funeral director. It sets out the details of the funeral, including date and time, details of the deceased, together with the status and details of the grave space.

The completed form must be returned to the Council at least 2 days (48 hours) prior to the funeral.

5. Management of Grave Spaces

Burials are only allowed in the designated areas.

5.1 Purchased Grave Spaces

Graves are allocated by section consistent with the plan of the cemetery; however there may be a choice regarding the position of the available graves and arrangements can be made to meet a member of staff to view available and appropriate graves.

5.2 Unpurchased Grave Spaces

An unpurchased grave, sometimes also known as a 'public' or 'common' grave, is where the Exclusive Right of Burial Grant has not been purchased and effectively remains with the Council.

More than one interment may take place in the grave, and maybe of unrelated persons.

The Council will place a small plaque on the grave space to identify the person(s) interred there. No memorials of any kind (including, but not limited to, planting, flowers, vases, crosses, pictures, kerbings) are permitted on non-purchased grave spaces and any such item may be removed without prior notice.

5.3 Flowers

Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers once they have withered, and will dispose of them through recycling.

6. INTERMENTS

6.1 Hours of Interments

6.1.1 Interments can take place between the following hours:

April – September	Monday to Friday	9.30am – 2.30pm
October – March	Monday to Thursday	9.30am – 2.00pm
	Friday	9.30am – 11.00am

6.1.2 Burials may also be possible on a Saturday, subject to availability of cemeteries staff, and will incur an additional charge.

6.1.3 The appointed times for funerals must be strictly observed to prevent inconvenience to other funerals.

Late arrivals may incur additional charges and the funeral may have to be postponed or rearranged. Any funeral arriving at a time other than that appointed, must act under the Council's directions.

6.2 Funeral Directors

6.2.1 Funeral directors must observe the "Instructions to Funeral Directors" issued by the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, or other authorised instruction.

6.2.2 Funeral directors are responsible for arranging sufficient bearers to carry and lower the coffin in a dignified and reverent manner. The Council is unable to supply additional bearers.

We understand that family members, and friends often wish to assist with this and we respect that decision. Any mourners who do assist with the bearing or lowering of the coffin do so at their own risk.

6.3 Certificates

6.3.1 A Registrar's / Coroner's Certificate (for burials) or Certificate of Cremation (for ashes) must be presented, by hand, to the overseeing Council Officer in advance of the interment taking place.

The certificate should not be sent through the postal system, and the Council will not accept any liability for certificates sent by post and subsequently lost.

- 6.3.2 No burial will be permitted within the cemetery grounds without the Registrar's / Coroner's Certificate (for burials) or Certificate of Cremation (for ashes).

6.4 Notice of Interment

- 6.4.1 A completed Notice of Interment (the 'Notice') must be received not less than two working days before the day the burial is due to take place.
- 6.4.2 The Notice must be signed by the grave owner or their personal representative. The Council will not accept responsibility for the accuracy of the details contained in the Notice of Interment.
- 6.4.3 The Council will not accept verbal instructions.
- 6.4.4 Once the Notice has been accepted no alteration to the arrangements will be allowed, with the exception of the time of the burial. In this case, notice should be given to the Council at least 24 hours before the original time of burial is due to take place.

6.5 Interment Vessels

- 6.5.1 The Council will only accept coffins or caskets for interments; shroud burials are not permitted.
- 6.5.2 A nameplate should be fixed to each coffin or casket.

6.6 Attendance at Interments by Officials

- 6.6.1 An interment can take place with or without a religious service. It is the responsibility of the bereaved family or the funeral director to arrange for an appropriate authorised person to officiate at the burial.
- 6.6.2 The Cemeteries Team will accommodate all faiths, and their beliefs / needs, where possible and practical to do so.
- 6.6.3 Weston Road Cemetery provides a dedicated Muslim section. Where possible there should be a nominated Muslim community representative present to ensure the smooth running of all Muslim burials.

6.6.4 There will be a Council officer present at every funeral to oversee the delivery of the interment. They will maintain a discreet presence to ensure that everything is in place.

7. BURIALS

7.1 Pre-Burial Preparation

- 7.1.1 A grave space subject to an Exclusive Right of Burial would usually be expected to allow up to three interments.

It is traditional to have one burial interment in each Muslim grave and the Council will respect this tradition. If the family would prefer a deeper grave for two or three burial interments this must be made clear at the time of booking the first interment.

Occasionally soil or ground conditions may necessitate a reduction in the numbers of interments. The Council will not accept liability or responsibility in these circumstances.

More than one burial at any one time in a grave will need to be authorised by the Council, and authorisation is required for each interment.

- 7.1.2 When any grave is re-opened for another burial, no person shall disturb or remove any human remains already interred.

- 7.1.3 Graves can only be excavated by someone appointed to do so by the Council.

- 7.1.4 Prior to a funeral the grave will be excavated and dressed with artificial matting.

The excess soil may be placed on the nearest adjacent area. Space restrictions sometimes mean this may be another grave space. Where this is the case, grave adornments will be removed, the grave covered prior to placement of the soil, and the area reinstated following the burial. The grave owner or the family will be informed wherever possible.

- 7.1.5 The cemetery staff will have a discreet presence at the burial to ensure that everything is in place.

7.2 Post Burial Arrangements

- 7.2.1 Once the mourners have left the graveside the grave will be back-filled. The Council's cemetery staff will return the soil to the grave.

7.2.2 We understand that families and mourners may wish to return the soil to the grave themselves and spades will be provided to support this.

Great care should be taken to ensure that mourners are not injured whilst returning the soil to the grave, and therefore up to four people may do this at any one time.

7.2.3 Once the soil has reached the appropriate level within the grave the cemetery staff are required to remove the support shoring from around the top of the grave. At this time the family and mourners will be politely asked to step back from the area momentarily whilst this is carried out. They will be advised when they are able to continue the back-fill safely.

7.2.4 The soil on the grave will be left mounded to allow for natural settlement in the weeks following the interment. When settlement is complete, the Council will level the soil and grass seed the grave space.

7.2.5 On completion of the back-filling, the cemetery staff will tidy the area and remove any excess soil.

7.3 Grave Space Maintenance

7.3.1 The Council will maintain the lawn area of all graves. However, the owner (with the Deed of Grant) is responsible for the management and maintenance of any memorial on the grave.

7.3.2 In order to ensure access for ease of maintenance, grave space owners are permitted to place fresh, seasonal plants and flowers within 150mm (6 inches) of the front edge on the memorial foundation at the head of the grave. Owners are encouraged to maintain this area themselves in order that the Council's cemetery staff does not have to disturb any items in the course of their maintenance activities.

No other items are allowed on and around the grave space.

7.3.3 Fresh floral arrangements will be removed from all graves when they have withered, and these will be disposed through recycling.

7.3.4 Any item(s) placed outside the permitted area will be removed without prior notice.

7.3.5 Any items left on a grave, are left at the owners risk; the Council does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage to those items.

- 7.3.6 The Council may remove any material or inscription on the grounds of taste, decency or possible offence to any person, faith or community.

7.4 Children's Section

- 7.4.1 The Children's Section at Weston Road Cemetery is available for interments of children aged up to 16 years.
- 7.4.2 Memorials in the children's area will be subject to approval, and permanent memorials may only be erected where the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.

7.5 Natural Burial Glade

- 7.5.1 The Council manages (the Glade) to provide an alternative to the more traditional style of burial spaces. The grass within this space will not be kept short at all times, and may therefore appear more wild and natural at times.
- 7.5.2 We understand that families may wish to plant a tree on each grave or ashes plot. However, this is not appropriate as trees need a space to establish and grow to their full potential.
- 7.5.3 Any new tree planting will be undertaken at the discretion of the cemetery team, and the species will be chosen to suit the location.

In accordance with best practice, trees will be planted during the winter months, when the trees are dormant.

- 7.5.4 Only single depth interments are available within the Glade.
- 7.5.5 Biodegradable coffins, caskets, and their linings, including, but not limited to, cardboard, wicker or soft woods, shall be accepted in this burial space.

Ashes may be buried within this area, or scattered loose.

- 7.5.6 The Council requests that bodies are not embalmed due to the possible pollution caused by introducing formaldehyde to the soil. We understand that this may sometimes be unavoidable but request that Funeral Directors inform the cemetery team in advance so that due consideration can be given.

- 7.5.7 The only items that may be placed on the burial spaces in the Glade are fresh cut flowers. All cellophane, ribbons and non-biodegradable wrapping must be removed.
- 7.5.8 Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered, and will dispose of them through recycling.
- 7.5.9 No other items (including, but not restricted to, vases, crosses, wind chimes and trinkets) are permitted to be placed on or around the trees or burial spaces. The Council reserves the right to remove any items, without prior notice.
- 7.5.10 Any items left on the graves and ashes plots are left at the owners risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.
- 7.5.11 The Council reserves the right to remove any trees that are not flourishing in order to allow others to develop to their full potential.

8. ASHES

8.1 Pre-Interment Preparation

8.1.1 A grave space subject to an Exclusive Right of Burial would usually be expected to allow up to a maximum of six interments of ashes within each grave space.

A Children's section grave will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Garden of Rest plot will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Memorial Rose or Shrub Garden plot will hold up to two interments of ashes.

A Sanctum will hold up to two ashes interments.

Occasionally soil or ground conditions may necessitate a reduction in the numbers of interments. The Council will not accept liability or responsibility in these circumstances.

More than one interment at any one time will need to be authorised by the Council, and authorisation is required for each interment.

8.1.2 When any grave is re-opened for another burial no person shall disturb or remove any human remains already interred.

8.1.3 Graves can only be excavated by someone appointed to do so by the Council.

8.2 Garden of Rest

8.2.1 The Garden of Rest is an area set aside solely for the interment of cremated remains. A maximum of two interments, and one memorial, are permitted to each plot.

8.2.2 The memorial will be affixed to the base slab provided by the Council.

8.2.3 No other items are permitted in the Garden of Rest, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.

- 8.2.4 Memorials in the Garden of Rest will be subject to approval and permanent memorials may only be erected where the Grant of Exclusive Right of Burial has been purchased.
- 8.2.5 Any items placed in the Garden of Rest are left at the owners risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.

8.3 Memorial Rose & Shrub Gardens

- 8.3.1 These Gardens are set aside solely for the interment of cremated remains. A maximum of two interments, one rose or shrub, and one name plaque are permitted to each plot.
- 8.3.2 A list of available roses and shrubs, and a list of plaque inscriptions, will be provided for the families to choose from. The Council will determine the planting position in the gardens.
- 8.3.3 No other items are permitted in the Memorial Rose & Shrub Gardens, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.
- 8.3.4 A replacement rose, shrub or plaque can be provided on request. A fee may be payable for this service.

8.4 Sanctums

- 8.4.1 Sanctums (above-ground ashes vaults) may be leased from the Council for a period of 15 years.
- 8.4.2 The lease holder has the right for their ashes to be placed within the ashes vault, space permitting, during the period of the lease.
- 8.4.3 All caskets / containers shall be of a non-biodegradable material and must not exceed 305mm (12 inches) in height.
- 8.4.4 A floral tribute of freshly cut flowers may be placed in the flower vase provided.
Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered and will dispose of them through recycling.
- 8.4.5 No other items are permitted on, or around, the ashes vault and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.

- 8.4.6 Unauthorised items placed on or around the ashes vault may cause damage or staining to the stone work. Should any unauthorised items cause damage or staining, the lease holder will be responsible for the cost of cleaning or replacing the memorial vault.
- 8.4.7 The lease of the ashes vault may be renewed for an additional 15 years. The Council will contact the lease holder prior to the lease period ending, using the contact details on file. The renewed lease will be payable at the fees appropriate at the date of renewal.
- 8.4.8 If the lease is not renewed, the lease holder may arrange for the ashes to be collected from the Cemetery Office, or elect for them to be scattered within the Lawn Birches area at Weston Road Cemetery. The inscribed tablet can be collected from the Cemetery Office at Weston Road.
- 8.4.10 Six months prior to the end of the lease period the Council will endeavour to make contact with the lease holder to establish future arrangements. However, if the Council is unable to make contact, or in the absence of any instructions, both the cremated remains and the inscribed tablet will be removed, and the cremated remains will be scattered within the Lawn Birches area at Weston Road cemetery. The inscribed tablet will be removed and disposed of.
- 8.4.11 While the Council will make all reasonable efforts to make contact with the lease holder(s) from the details provided, it is the responsibility of the lease holder(s) to ensure the lease is renewed. The Council will accept no responsibility for action taken in the absence of ownership.
- 8.4.12 Where the lease is held in joint names, on the death of one owner, the Rights automatically transfer to the surviving named lease holder.
- 8.4.13 Upon the death of the sole lease holder, the person who has been nominated to assume responsibility must inform the Council giving their full details including contact information.

8.5 Lawn Birches

- 8.5.1 This area, at Weston Road Cemetery, is set aside solely for the scattering of cremated remains.
- 8.5.2 Scattering is only permitted from the original crematorium container, or from a scattering urn provided by the Council. For the latter, the ashes shall be given

to the Cemeteries Officer in advance of the booking date so that they can be transferred into the scattering urn.

8.5.3 Fresh cut flowers are permitted within this area, but any cellophane, ribbons and non-biodegradable wrapping must be removed.

8.5.4 Cemetery staff will remove all fresh flowers when they have withered, and will dispose of them through recycling.

8.5.5 No other items are permitted within the Lawn Birches, and any item placed there may be removed without prior notice.

8.5.6 Once the ashes have been scattered an exhumation is not possible.

9. Memorials

Memorials are only permitted on purchased grave spaces. No memorial is permitted on an un-purchased area without the Council's written consent.

Kerbstones, border stones, fencing, and marble, glass or stone clippings are not permitted in the lawn sections of the cemeteries.

The following items are not permitted to be left anywhere within the cemetery grounds:

- glass vases or any other glass item
- food and drink, including alcohol
- fencing, edging or borders of any kind
- any item deemed, by the Cemeteries Team, to be offensive or dangerous
- any item placed in or on trees

Temporary wooden markers or crosses can be placed at the head of a purchased grave until such time as a permanent memorial is erected. The marker must not exceed 914mm (3 foot) in height and 456mm (1 foot 6 inches) in width and can be inscribed with the name of the deceased and their birth and death dates.

9.1 Installation of Memorials

9.1.1 Before any monument or stone is erected, repaired or any inscription is cut or altered, an application must be made to the Council, a permit received and approval granted. Memorial masons will not be permitted to work in the Council's cemeteries without the necessary approvals being in place.

9.1.2 Fixing or removing memorials is only permitted Monday to Friday 7:30am – 4.00pm.

9.1.3 Only Memorial and Stone Masons registered with, and meeting the standards of, the British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons (BRAMM) or the National Association of Memorial Masons (NAMM) are permitted to erect memorials within the Stevenage cemeteries. This also applies to memorials being reinstated after their removal to permit an interment or to allow for additional inscriptions.

- 9.1.4 As a minimum standard all memorial work, including fixing, shall be carried out in accordance with the Code of Practice of the BRAMM Blue Book, NAMM Code of Working Practice and British Standards, BS 8415, current at the time of fixing.
- 9.1.5 Any new memorial must have the grave number and section clearly and conspicuously engraved upon the base in figures not more than 20mm high. Only the name of the stonemason may be cut in a similar position in letters not more than 15mm high. The Council will arrange for any memorial not inscribed in this way to be removed, and the costs recharged to the holder of the Deed of Grant.
- 9.1.6 Masons are required to liaise with the Cemeteries Officer prior to undertaking any works on site.
- 9.1.7 Masons are requested to remove all spare soil or other materials and leave the ground to the Council's satisfaction. They will be responsible for any damage done by them or their workmen. All work must be completed in a timely way without disturbance to other graves, and the mason may not leave the site until the installation of the memorial is completed.
- 9.1.8 The Council reserves the right to refuse any inscription on the grounds of taste, decency, or possible offence to any person, faith or community.

9.2 Memorial Safety and Upkeep

- 9.2.1 The maintenance and upkeep of all monuments and headstones is the responsibility of the Deed of Grant holder. The Council requires that monuments and headstones be kept in good and safe repair at all times.

The Council will undertake a survey of every memorial to ensure that they are in a stable condition and do not pose any immediate danger to visitors and staff working in the cemeteries.

- 9.2.2 At least every five years a visual and stability check will be undertaken. If significant movement of a memorial is detected, or it is deemed unsafe, the memorial will be laid down for safety reasons and we will endeavour to contact the grave owner to inform them.
- 9.2.3 The Council will not be held responsible for memorials damaged through any cause whatsoever, nor for any injury or damage caused by them. Adequate insurance cover should be taken out by the grave owner at the time of purchase and current at all times.

9.3 Types of Memorials

9.3.1 Lawn Sections

All memorials in the grave sections of Weston Road Cemetery and the lawn sections of Almond Lane cemetery (Sections - BB, H, G and K) must be a headstone or cross-type memorial, of marble, granite or nebresina, not exceeding 914mm (3 foot) in height (including the base), 761mm (2 foot 6 inches) and 101mm (4 inches) deep.

9.3.2 Almond Lane

Headstones and Kerbstones in Sections A, B, C, D, E, F, FF, G and R must be a maximum area of 2,135mm (7 foot) x 915mm (3 foot) for an adult grave space, and 1,220mm (4 foot) x 610mm (2 foot) for a child's grave space.

Planting is permitted within these graves.

9.3.3 Garden of Rest

A base slab, approximately 510mm (20 inches) x 455mm (18 inches), will be provided by the Council. One memorial is permitted. The memorial will not exceed 455mm (18 inches) high x 405mm (16 inches) wide x 75mm (3 inches) deep

The base stone will not exceed the dimensions of the base slab and should be no more than 50mm (2 inches) thick. 510mm (20 inches) x 457mm (18 inches) x 50mm (2 inches) thick.

9.3.4 Memorial Walls

The memorial walls are placed around the rose and shrub gardens where memorial plaques and flower vases can be placed in memory of loved ones.

The plaque and flower vase will be placed on the wall for a period of 5 years with the option to renew for a further period.

The Council may remove any material or inscription which is deemed to have fallen into disrepair.

Any items left on the memorial walls are left at the owners risk and the Council does not accept any responsibility.

9.3.5 Memorial Benches

The Council will purchase and locate memorial benches and these will be maintained by the Council.

Plaques may be purchased and installed to a memorial bench for a period of 10 years, with the ongoing option to renew the agreement.

No items are to be placed on or around the memorial benches and any such item may be removed without prior notice.

Maintenance of memorial benches privately purchased, through historical permissions, are the responsibility of the purchaser. When staining the bench the purchaser must use a dark oak stain, and warning notices must be in place until such time as the stain / treatment has completely dried.

The Council will undertake regular inspections of all memorial benches, and any that are deemed unsafe will be removed. All reasonable efforts will be made to inform the purchaser if a bench is removed.

9.3.6 Memorial Trees

Families can sponsor a tree to be planted in either of our cemeteries and a list of appropriate species and suitable locations will be provided.

Cemeteries staff will liaise with the sponsor to agree the location of the tree, but due to the layout and ongoing management of the cemeteries, it may not be possible to deliver the preferred location of the sponsor.

The cost of a memorial tree includes the supply of the chosen tree, planting and the first year's maintenance, including watering. Families are encouraged to water the tree when they are on site to assist with the trees establishment and health.

In accordance with best practice, trees will be planted during the winter months when the trees are dormant.

The Council will not accept responsibility or liability in the case of a tree being damaged or dying, unless this is shown to be due to negligence by the Council.

Damaged memorial trees we will be replaced during the next planting season. This may require a further payment to cover cost and maintenance of the new tree.

Dedication of a memorial tree does not give the donor any right to determine or influence the future management of the specific tree in any way. Should the memorial tree become a risk to property or people, removal will be considered, although all options will be explored to avoid this.

No items are to be placed on or around the memorial tree other than the authorised memorial plaque. Any item(s) placed there may be removed without prior notice.

9.3.7 Memorial Plaques - Trees

Plaques dedicated to a loved one shall be purchased from the Council either in conjunction with a Memorial Tree or to be placed at the foot of an existing tree in either of the cemeteries.

The price of the plaque will be given upon application, as the price may vary due to the length of the inscription.

If the plaque should deteriorate the cemetery team can arrange for a replacement, and a fee may be charged.

9.3.8 Book of Remembrance

There is a Book of Remembrance at both the Weston Road and Almond Lane cemeteries.

The current day's entries will be on display at all times.

The inscription will be the full name of the deceased and the date of their birth and death, and may be entered on any date requested.

In addition to the standard inscription it is possible to include an entry of short verse. The verse can be up to four lines in length, with a maximum of 32 letters per line.

10. Climate Change

- 10.1 On 12 June 2019, the Council declared a climate emergency and reconfirmed its long standing commitment to tackling climate change.
- 10.2 As part of the climate emergency, the Council has set a target to be net carbon neutral by 2030.
- 10.3 The cemeteries team already make use of electric hand tools in their maintenance of the sites.
- 10.4 Future operations and provision of replacement tools, plant and equipment will seek to deliver a carbon neutral service by 2030.

11. Chapel Services

- 11.1 The chapel is situated at the Weston Road Cemetery and comfortably seats forty (40) people.
- 11.2 Chapel services are booked for the duration of one hour, exceeding this time may result in additional charges.
- 11.3 The Council provides a CD player and a docking station, but families or ministers are welcome to bring their own sound systems if they prefer.
- 11.4 Families should make contact with the Cemeteries Officer, in advance, if the Council provided music systems are required, to enable to the testing of the music in advance of the service.
- 11.5 There is also a selection of hymn music available on CD, and copies of hymn books can be made available for the congregation.

12. Exhumation

- 12.1 Exhumation means the removal from the ground of a body or cremated remains. Any disturbance of remains is deemed to be an exhumation. It is unlawful to disturb any human remains (including any cremated remains) without first obtaining the necessary legal authority.
- 12.2 Once a body or ashes remains have been interred, they can only be removed with permission from the Burial Authority and with a licence granted by the Ministry of Justice.
- 12.3 If the remains are in consecrated ground then permission must be obtained from the Diocesan Court.
- 12.4 An Environmental Health Officer and Cemetery Officer shall be present at all exhumations and will supervise the event to ensure that respect for the deceased person is maintained and that public health is protected.
- 12.5 If the conditions of the licence cannot be met, or there are public health or decency concerns, the exhumation may not proceed.

13. Fees and Charges

- 13.1 Fees are set by the Council, and are reviewed and approved annually. Current fees and charges are available on the Council's website at www.stevenage.gov.uk or from the Cemetery Office.
- 13.2 All payments are required in full in advance of the service being provided, unless a funeral director is arranging the funeral.
- 13.3 There is a separate pricing list for non-residents of Stevenage. A resident is considered to be:
- a permanent occupier of a residential property within the borough of Stevenage or a payer of council tax to Stevenage Borough Council at the time of their death.
 - someone who purchased the grave whilst living in the borough or is the spouse of a resident
 - someone who left the borough in the past two years for the purposes of receiving care, nursing or education
 - a person who has no other place of abode and passes away within the borough – in relation to interments to un-purchased graves only.
- 13.4 Only in very exceptional circumstances the Assistant Director, with responsibility for Cemeteries, may approve a request to waive the non-resident fee.
- 13.5 Any coffins or caskets which exceed 1,067mm (42 inches) in width will be charged the equivalent of double burial fees.

APPENDIX B

Summary of Changes and Additions

Current		Future	
1. Weston Road Lawn Cemetery Graves			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> no kerbstones, items of any kind or planting permitted on or within the graves 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There has been an unwritten rule that families could have the first 150mm (6") to place items of their choosing. However, overtime this has allowed unsuitable material and items to be placed not only within the 150mm but beyond this point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are permitted to place fresh, seasonal plants and flowers within 150mm (6") at the front edge of the concrete foundation. Owners will be encouraged to maintain this area themselves so that staff do not need to disturb any items in the course of their maintenance activities 	
2. Grave/ Plot Ownership			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Grant of Exclusive Rights was only briefly mentioned and families were just told you have to have one. This blanket regulation left families unsure of what they were paying for and why 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The policy offers more detail on what a Grant of Exclusive Rights is, what it means for families and their responsibilities, and gives confirmation that it can be transferred 	
3. Memorials & Memorial Masons			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Current explanatory leaflets make no mention that grave/plot numbers should be present on all memorials. This is not best practice and makes Topple Testing (in compliance with the Health & Safety Executive guidance) and finding graves/plot much harder for staff, memorial masons and families which in turn can lead to grave/plot errors. 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All new memorials must have the grave/plot number and section clearly and conspicuously engraved upon the base. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The name of the memorial mason is permitted in letters not more than 15mm high. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We reserve the right to remove any memorial not inscribed in this way and the costs recharged to the holder of the Grant of Exclusive Rights 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the responsibilities of the memorial masons while working within our cemeteries 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Confirmation that the Council will not be held responsible for memorials damaged through any cause whatsoever, nor for any injury or damage caused by them. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Advice regarding adequate insurance cover for memorials 	
4. Memorial Benches			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families are able to purchase a memorial 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Council will purchase all benches 	

	bench and plaque in memory of a loved one		and have full control on their positioning and maintenance.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an over-abundance of benches in the cemeteries, many of which are falling into disrepair and prohibit proper maintenance of the areas. In some instances the benches cause an inability to dig graves due to their position. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Families can purchase a renewable (every 10 years) memorial plaque which can be fixed on a bench. We can facilitate 4-5 plaques on each bench. This makes this option more affordable for everyone, and helps to control the number of benches around the sites. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not all families are able to fund a whole bench themselves, and we no longer have the space available to facilitate benches in such large numbers. This puts many families at a disadvantage, as benches are permitted on a first come, first served basis 		
5. Memorial Trees			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is not an advertised service, but families were given permission to plant a memorial tree if they enquired, and with little guidance from the cemetery team. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offer families the opportunity to sponsor a tree chosen from a select list of appropriate species to be planted at pre-determined locations. 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is now a mixed collection of tree species in the cemeteries and not all are suitable to the ground conditions or the planting location. As the families purchased the trees there is an expectation that they can do as they wish with the tree and memorialisation on the branches has been difficult to manage. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance is provided on how the Council will manage these trees; that sponsorship does not give the donor any right to determine or influence the management; and that other than the supplied memorial plaque no other items are to be placed on or around the tree. 	
6. Fees & Charges			
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-residents are subject to triple fees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No guidance/explanation on what we consider a resident to be, leading to some confusion with the public and Funeral Directors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> the policy sets out the criteria of what/who the Council considers a resident to be 	
7. Behaviour & Legislation			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Guidance as to appropriate behaviour of visitors 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is and is not permitted 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brief details of legislation on which the policy is based. 	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explanation of 'technical' terms in layman's language 	
8. Floral Arrangements/Tributes			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> cemetery staff will remove all flowers once withered and reinforce that they shall be disposed of through recycling 	
9. Saturday Burials and Ashes Interments			
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A new service offer subject to availability of staff, and subject to an 	

			additional fee.
10.	Funeral Directors		
		•	To operate within the guidance of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities
		•	Their responsibilities within our cemeteries
		•	Their responsibilities during a funeral
11.	Burial and Ashes		
		•	Information and guidance relating to each of the burial/interment services we offer
		•	Information regarding pre-burial preparation and post burial arrangements
		•	Clarification that graves can only be excavated by someone appointed by the Council
		•	Advice regarding the number of mourners backfilling a grave at any one time
		•	Information regarding the numbers of burials/ashes that can be placed in the different plots
		•	Guidance on what is and is not permitted on or within the plots
		•	The Council may remove any material or inscription on the grounds of taste, decency or possible offence
		•	Unauthorised/non-permitted items may be removed without prior notice

APPENDIX C:

Full Equality Impact Assessment

For a policy, project, service or other decision that is new, changing or under review

What is being assessed?		Cemetery Policy 2021			
Lead Assessor	Claire Skeels			Assessment team	Claire Skeels Lloyd Walker
Start date	January 2021	End date	Open		
When will the EqIA be reviewed?		Annually			

Who may be affected by it?	Stevenage Residents, Mourners, Visitors, Staff, Funeral Directors
What are the key aims of it?	To provide a clear policy to show how the cemetery service in Stevenage will be delivered, our service standards and to inform our residents and customers what they can expect.

What positive measures are in place (if any) to help fulfil our legislative duties to:					
Remove discrimination & harassment	Any and all will be welcome to use and benefit from the burial/ashes/memorial /commemorative options we have available	Promote equal opportunities	Any and all will be able to use and benefit from the burial/ashes/memorial/ commemorative options we have available	Encourage good relations	Any and all will be able to use and benefit from the burial/ashes/memorial /commemorative options we have available

What sources of data / information are you using to inform your assessment?	•
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<p>In assessing the potential impact on people, are there any overall comments that you would like to make?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The aim of the policy is to ensure all grieving families are treated respectfully & equally whilst maintaining individual and cultural beliefs.
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Evidence and impact assessment

Explain the potential impact and opportunities it could have for people in terms of the following characteristics, where applicable:

Age					
Positive impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> designated Children's section for under 16's interment services FOC to all babies/children under the age of 16 if they or their parent/s are residents of Stevenage. Former residents who left the borough within the past two years for the purposes of receiving care, nursing or education will be not be subjected to the non-resident triple fees and charges. 	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 			
What opportunities are there to promote equality	Promote the full range of services available		What do you still need to find out? Include in		

and inclusion?		actions (last page)	
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Disability			
e.g. physical impairment, mental ill health, learning difficulties, long-standing illness			
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents Disabled parking bays are provided at Weston Road Disabled toilets are provided at both cemeteries If the staff are made aware that a wheelchair user is coming to a burial or interment every possible effort will be made to ensure full access is granted where possible e.g. tracks used over grass, obstructions cleared, vehicle access 	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the full range of services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Gender reassignment			
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents 	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Marriage or civil partnership			
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None
Please evidence the data and information		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all 	

you used to support this assessment	Stevenage residents		
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Pregnancy & maternity					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents 				
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Race					
Positive impact		Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All burial intricacies associated with race are honoured where practical and safe to do so 				
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents 				
What opportunities are there to promote equality	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in			

and inclusion?		actions (last page)	
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Religion or belief					
Positive impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Muslim burial section of cemetery is offered, fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents All burial intricacies associated with religions or beliefs are honoured where practical and safe to do so The chapel is non-denomination and available to all 	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the full range of services available through local places of worship	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

Sex					
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents 			

What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	
Sexual orientation e.g. straight, lesbian / gay, bisexual			
Positive impact	None	Negative impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No discrimination, the burial/ashes plots and fees & charges are the same for all Stevenage residents 	
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)	

Socio-economic¹ e.g. low income, unemployed, homelessness, caring responsibilities, access to internet, public transport users					
Positive impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We offer a range of interment options with varying costs Public Health Burials can be arranged for anyone without family or whose family are unable to manage the associated costs 	Negative impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We do not offer a payment plan, all costs must be paid in advance of an interment 	Unequal impact	
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment					
What opportunities are	Promote the services available	What do you still need to			

¹Although non-statutory, the Council has chosen to implement the Socio-Economic Duty and so decision-makers should use their discretion to consider the impact on people with a socio-economic disadvantage.

there to promote equality and inclusion?		find out? Include in actions (last page)	
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Other					
please feel free to consider the potential impact on people in any other contexts					
Positive impact	Any and all are welcome to make use of our interment and commemorative options	Negative impact	Former residents are subject to triple fees regardless of how long they lived in the borough prior to leaving	Unequal impact	None
Please evidence the data and information you used to support this assessment		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We welcome all visitors and anyone may request a burial or ashes interment within our cemeteries, however they will need to pay triple fees if the deceased was not a Stevenage resident when they died unless they are exempt as detailed above. 			
What opportunities are there to promote equality and inclusion?	Promote the services available	What do you still need to find out? Include in actions (last page)			

What are the findings of any consultation with:

Staff?		Residents?	
Voluntary & community sector?		Partners?	
Other stakeholders?			

Overall conclusion & future activity

Explain the overall findings of the assessment and reasons for outcome (please choose one):	
1. No inequality, inclusion issues or opportunities to further improve have been identified	
Negative / unequal impact, barriers to inclusion or improvement opportunities identified	2a. Adjustments made
	2b. Continue as planned
	2c. Stop and remove

Detail the actions that are needed as a result of this assessment and how they will help to remove discrimination & harassment, promote equal opportunities and / or encourage good relations :				
Action	Will this help to remove, promote and / or encourage?	Responsible officer	Deadline	How will this be embedded as business as usual?

Approved by Assistant Director:

Date:

Please send this EqIA to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk