

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee

DATE: 25 September 2008

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, Health and Community

SUBJECT: The application of the BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) scheme in Halton's cemeteries

WARDS: Boroughwide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1 To advise members of issues that have arisen during the first twelve months of the operation of the BRAMM (British Register of Accredited Memorial Masons) scheme in Halton's cemeteries. Further, to seek Members' support for the amendment of the Council's cemetery rules to clarify certain matters, including anomalies that have arisen to date.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That

- (1) comments and suggestions from Members be noted, and**
- (2) the Board agrees to the adoption of a local Memorial Mason Registration Scheme, from 1 January 2009, along the lines of the draft attached as Appendix 1, but delegating the finalising of this document and future amendments to the Operational Director, Health & Partnerships, in consultation with the Executive Board Member for Environment.**
- (3) the Board agrees to the amendment of the Cemetery Rules as outlined in Appendix 2 to this report, to take effect on 1 October 2008.**
- (4) the Board agrees a new fee for the right to place on a grave a vase / book / tablet exceeding 18" width x 12" x 12" but not exceeding the width of the grave or 30" (whichever is the least) x 12" x 12", of £65.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The Council adopted the BRAMM scheme for memorial mason work in its cemeteries from 1 October 2007. Since that date only BRAMM accredited memorial mason firms have been allowed to work in the Council's cemeteries and only BRAMM licensed fixers have been allowed to fix (or re-fix) memorial headstones.

- 3.2 Members will recall that the national problem of unsafe headstones in the country's cemeteries led to the setting-up of the British Register of Memorial Masons (BRAMM) in 2004. In adopting the scheme last year, Members were conscious that the primary aims of the scheme were:
- To establish a recognised, uniform standard of workmanship and business practice throughout the UK.
 - To promote BRAMM accredited businesses and registered fixers.
 - To ensure all businesses, fixers and burial authorities on the BRAMM register follow current health & safety guidelines to protect both the public and their employees.
 - To ensure that BRAMM businesses give a guarantee of the stability of their memorial.
 - To ensure the scheme will be effectively policed ensuring that acceptable standards of fixing are maintained.
 - To encourage ongoing training and education within the memorial masonry industry.
 - To promote a closer working relationship between memorial masons and burial authorities.
- 3.3 The advice that we followed last year was that by adopting the BRAMM scheme, there was no need to continue to operate a local memorial mason registration scheme. We now know that this is not the case, albeit that what we need is a different type of local scheme to that which was operated until October last year. The scheme, which should be free on application, will outline what is expected of Memorial Masons together with the administrative arrangements for memorial mason work. It will cover inspection of memorials by the Council, tendering, and it will detail the disciplinary procedures that the Council will operate. The scheme will also introduce the revised headstone permit forms. A draft of the proposed local Memorial Mason Registration Scheme is attached as Appendix 1 for information.
- 3.4 Linked to the new, local memorial mason registration scheme referred to above, memorial headstone permits will be updated and in future will require a name that appears on an existing headstone, in addition to the grave number (to enable cross checking in the cemetery office to minimise the chance of work being carried out on the wrong headstone). In addition, for work that can only be carried out by, or under the direction of a licensed fixer (see below), the details of the licensed fixer that is to / has carried out the work will be required.
- 3.5 Since only BRAMM registered memorial mason firms will be allowed to operate in the Council's cemeteries, it follows that BRAMM registration will be a pre-requisite of the above Memorial Mason Registration Scheme. Further, the new rules will make it clear that the physical work on masonry memorials shall only be carried out by, or under the

direction of, a BRAMM licensed fixer in accordance with the BRAMM scheme, unless the work in question is specifically exempted from this requirement within the cemetery rules. Exemptions will include such things as the removal of headstones and their bases / foundations or the lettering of headstones that are fitted to the latest NAMM standards, including the application of gold leaf etc. to such headstones.

- 3.6 Amending the cemetery rules will be used as an opportunity to clarify that Section 7.0 of the rules, which is intended to govern memorial masons and their work, shall not apply to the Council or its employees, and that the Council will reserve the right to use its discretion in the application of the BRAMM scheme in specific cases, upon request.
- 3.7 On a specific point, presently, there are cemetery fees permitting the placing on a grave a vase / book / tablet of 12" in depth and 12" in height for a fee of £36 if it does not exceed 12" in width or £52 if it does not exceed 18" in width. Such memorials are permitted to be as wide as the grave, but if they exceed 18" in width, the fee jumps to the fee applicable to a headstone permit, of £135. Members are asked to consider the introduction of a new fee of £65 for such memorials exceeding 18" in width but not exceeding the width of the grave or 30" (whichever is the least).
- 3.8 A Memorial Masons Forum was held on 21 July so that the memorial masons could be consulted on the application of the BRAMM scheme in Halton's cemeteries. The Council's Legal Services were present at that forum and have assisted with resolving the various anomalies that have been raised regarding the application of the scheme, and have been involved in the re-drafting of the cemetery rules to address those anomalies.
- 3.9 A similar report to this has been submitted as an agenda item for the Safer Halton Policy and Performance Board meeting, scheduled for 23 September.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 This report does not introduce new policy as such, it is more of a good housekeeping exercise to clarify anomalies that have come to the fore in the operation of the BRAMM scheme, since 1 October last year.

5.0 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no financial implications. The introduction of the new cemetery fee will have minimal impact on income generation.

6.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

6.1 There are no other implications to note in the body of this report.

7.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

7.1 Children and Young People in Halton

None.

7.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton

None.

7.3 A Healthy Halton

None.

7.4 A Safer Halton

The effective application of the BRAMM scheme will have a positive impact on the safety of those who visit or work in Halton's cemeteries.

7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

The effective application of the BRAMM scheme will have a positive impact on the physical environments of Halton's cemeteries.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 Given that the memorial industry has taken the BRAMM scheme on board, there is no perceived risk flowing from this report. On the contrary its effect should be to minimise the future risk of a repetition or prolonging of the unsafe headstone problem.

The proposal is not so significant as to require a full risk assessment.

9.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

9.1 There are no equality and diversity issues.

10.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
BRAMM Application Pack	Rutland House Halton Lea Runcorn, WA7 2GW	John Downes