

Appendix 2

PUBLIC CONSULTATION - CEMETERY SERVICES - RESULTS SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The public consultation ran for a period of 45 days: 28 June 2021 - 12 August 2021 inclusive.

Responses received - 255

The launch of the consultation was publicised as follows:

- Press release
- RBC Policy and Voluntary Sector Manager issued a formal launch email to all the relevant contacts both within RBC and externally requesting they forward the launch email to all groups within their network. The emails went to
Kiar Greyfaulk - contact for Traveller community contacts
Nina Crispin - contact for 'older people' and PDSN community groups
Nisa Unis - contact for religious, faith and diverse ethnic and cultural communities
Helen Bryant - contact for ADWG
Victor Koroma - ACRE
- Reminder requests were issued to the above within 14 days of the consultation close date.
- Posters, complete with website link & QR code were displayed across Henley Road cemetery and at the gates to Caversham Cemetery and Reading Old.
- Posters were also displayed in local library windows.
- A reminder / prompt message was issued using RBC Twitter & Facebook accounts within 4 days of the consultation closer date.

In addition, two presentations were delivered to the Muslim Community. One on 22 July 2021 to mosques leaders and representatives from the Pakistani Community Committee and one on the 28 July 2021 to general members of the Muslim community previously invited to the original meetings in March 2021.

A presentation opportunity was offered to the Chair of ACRE for other BAME communities.

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

Please note:

All % figures in the following tables have been rounded so may not add up to 100%

Respondents: 251 responses in total - shown below in descending order:

Option	Total	Percent %
Resident	152	60
Service user	59	23
Family or friends of service users	27	11
Other * (see below)	8	3
Employee of RBC	4	2
Business	1	1
Total	251	
Not Answered	4	2

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **OTHER** to the question.

Comments would indicate a misunderstanding of the term 'Service User'. Except for 2 respondents, all 'Others' would sit within Service user or family/friend of service user categories.

Age of Respondents: 248 responses in total - shown in descending order:

Option	Total	Percent %
55-64	59	23
45-54	50	20
65-74	47	18
35-44	47	18
25-34	22	9
75+	19	7
17-24	4	2
Under 16	0	0
Total	248	
Not Answered	7	3

Disability - 248 responses in total - shown in descending order

Option	Total	Percent %
No	213	60
Yes	35	23
Total	248	
Not Answered	7	3

Ethnicity - 245 responses in total - shown below in descending order:

Option	Total	Percent %
White British	148	58
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	57	22
Prefer Not Say	15	6
White - Any other White background*	6	2
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4	2
Other ethnic group - Arab	3	1
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	2	1
Black or Black British - Caribbean	2	1
White - Irish	1	1
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	1	1
Mixed - White & Black African	1	1
Mixed - Any other Mixed background*	1	1
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	1	1
Asian or Asian British - Any other Asian background*	1	1
Black or Black British - African	1	1
Black or Black British - Any other black background*	1	1
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0	0
Mixed - White & Asian	0	0
Other ethnic group - Any other ethnic group	0	0
Don't know	0	0
Total	245	
Not Answered	10	4

* Respondents were asked to specify their ethnicity if they select “Any other background”
9 people provided more information. 1 person chose not to leave a comment

White English (1)	White Viking (1)	White English/Spanish (1)
British European (1)	European (1)	American (1)
Mixed (1)	Sri Lankan (1)	Turkish (1)

Religion - 246 responses

Option	Total	Percent %
Christian	99	39
Muslim	75	29
No Religion	49	19
Prefer not to say	16	6
Other*	5	2
Buddhist	2	1
Hindu	0	0
Jewish**	0	0
Sikh	0	0
Total	246	0
Not Answered	9	4

* Respondents were asked to specify their religion where the response was 'OTHER'

Jehovah's Witness (1)	Quaker (1)	Seven Day Adventist (1)
Wiccan (1)	Secular (1)	

**Please note,

The Secretary of the Reading Hebrew Congregation thanked us for the invitation but confirmed it was not appropriate to contribute to the consultation as the community used the Jewish Cemetery in North London.

Gender - 247 responses

Option	Total	Percent %
Female	130	51
Male	105	41
Prefer not to say	11	4
Prefer to self-describe	1	1
Total	247	
Not Answered	8	3

Sexuality - 242 responses

Option	Total	Percent %
Heterosexual/straight	201	79
Prefer not to say	33	13
Bisexual	4	2
Gay or Lesbian	3	1
Other	1	1
Total	242	
Not Answered	13	5

This information was collected, but as per the Equality Impact Assessment states, an individual's gender or sexuality is not relevant to any decision making in this instance.

RESPONSES TO THE KEY AREAS OF THE CONSULTATION

The consultation focused on four key areas. This summary report will predominantly focus on these four topics:

- 1) Amendments to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations
- 2) Grave types
- 3) Opening hours and resources
- 4) Accessibility on site

INTRO: Amendments to the Cemetery Rules and Regulations

It is a legal requirement for all local authority cemeteries to have Rules and Regulations. The Rules and Regulations set out our service offer and requirements in respect of:

- The size and types of graves and memorials permitted
- Opening hours for the grounds, the office and times available for burials
- The type of adornments / planting allowed on graves
- General health and safety requirements and key operating practices
- The way we enforce our Rules and Regulations

These Rules and Regulations are designed to:

- Ensure the safety of the customers, visitors and staff
- Ensure the cemetery is a pleasant and peaceful environment for customers and visitors Ensure fair treatment for all
- Provide the cemetery staff with the authority to enforce compliance with the Rules and Regulations where necessary

The full Rules & regulations were provided within the consultation web link. The report provided to the Policy Committee in June highlighting the key changes was also available.

WE ASKED: Are the Rules & Regulations easy to understand?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	214	84
No	27	11
Total	241	
Not Answered	20	8

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **NO** to the question. By the nature of the question, comments will be predominantly negative. However, some positive comments made.

29 additional comments were made. Key messages are:

Topic
Layout - <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 8 respondents had not read them,• 3 respondents stated they are too wordy / lengthy• 2 respondents stated they looked clear & comprehensive• 1 respondent commented on too much legislation detail• 1 respondent commented on too many complicated words• 1 respondent did not like the font used

Enforcement:

- 2 respondents commented on lack of enforcement:
 - People aren't following them, and no-one is enforcing them
 - It's become a free for all - people with bigger headstones than they should have.

Communication:

- 5 respondents did not know where the Rules & Regulations can be found or displayed*
- 3 respondents commented they need to be communicated into the community**
- 2 respondents stated they are too complicated to understand
- 1 respondent stated they should be issued in every language (no language specified)
- 1 respondent commented they are confusing unless you speak to someone face to face

* The Rules & Regulations were included in the consultation link

** These referenced the Muslim community

WE ASKED: Are the Rules & Regulations balanced & fair?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	198	78
No	37	15
Total	235	
No Answer	20	8

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **NO** to the question. By the nature of the question, comments will be predominantly negative. However, some positive comments were made.

Related comments: 34 additional comments were made. Key messages are:

General:

- 12 respondents stated they had not read them

Faith & Religion: Several people stated:

9 comments related to faith/religion/culture - The 3 main messages were:

- The focus is more on meeting the needs for the wider community (white) than the minority community (middle eastern/Asian)
- More consideration needs to be given to the Muslim faith & beliefs
- Different cultures should be able to express themselves

Enforcement & Consistency:

3 respondents referred to enforcement & consistency:

- Only if they are followed enforced / only if adhered to with no exceptions for whatever reason.
- The Rules & Regulations are fair, but inconsistency in enforcement is not.
- There is discrimination on what can and cannot be allowed in terms of grave types

Memorials:

- 3 respondents stated there should be no restrictions regarding memorabilia or memorials and families should be able to plant/decorate a grave in which ever manner they see fit.
- 2 respondents made reference to cost and the restriction of using an approved stone mason.

WE ASKED: Are there any additional Rules & Regulations to propose?

Option	Total	Percent %
No	195	76
Yes	33	13
Total	228	
Not Answered	27	11

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **YES** to the question.

Related comments: 33 additional comments were made. 12 responses did not relate to the question.

Key messages are:

Faith & Religion:

- 4 comments related to grave types based on faith needs.
- 3 respondents stated:
 - The Rules & Regulations should be based on Islamic faith
 - The Muslim Community should be involved in any decision making.
 - The family of the deceased should be allowed to decline a post-mortem on the body.

Enforcement & Consistency:

- 7 respondents specifically requested tighter enforcement in respect of items left on or around memorials - for example:
 - Additional authority allowing staff to automatically remove items from graves e.g dead flowers, faded silk flowers, balloons, old toys etc.
 - Stricter enforcement - act if rules are ignored e.g fines imposed
 - No helium balloons should be allowed / plastic covered tributes - Not environmentally friendly
 - Rules & Regulations quoted are ok but only if they are followed, enforced and adhered to with no exceptions for whatever reason.
 - The Rules & Regulations are fair, but inconsistency in enforcement.
- 3 respondents require tighter car parking restrictions and controls.
- 2 respondents referred to more respect needed by other visitors: specific reference was made to the use of mobile phones near graves/memorials, loud music, BBQ's and children left to play in and around memorials.

Opening Hours:

- 5 comments related to opening hours. All comments were in relation to Muslim burials and the request to have weekend and Bank Holiday burials. For example:
 - Opening Hours and Resource (We ask for the council to provide services over the weekend and bank holidays)
- These comments will be focused on in the sections dedicated to the subject.

Memorials:

- 2 respondents stated they should be allowed to do whatever they want on or around a grave
- 1 respondent feels they should be able to get memorials and headstones from anywhere.
- 3 respondents stated there should be no fees to the Council for providing permits to stonemasons or remedial work to fix memorials

WE ASKED: Additional feedback and comments

Respondents were provided the opportunity to give general feedback and comments in respect to the Rules & Regulations. By the nature of the question, a mixture of positive, neutral and negative comments was expected.

42 additional comments - 11 responses did not relate to the topic and the remaining 31 comments were repeats of the comments given in respect of the previous question. For the purpose of this summary, they are not included.

Section 2 Grave Types

It is proposed a new ‘Mounded’ grave option is introduced, specifically to meet the needs of our Muslim Communities. This will mean there are three grave type options available: Traditional, Lawn and Mounded. Not all grave types will be permitted in all areas of the cemetery.

The location of the grave within the cemetery will determine the type of grave available. Making this change will marginally reduce the amount of land available for burials across the site.

The burial ground capacity is limited at our Henley Road cemetery, with approximately 8 years of burial space remaining. Therefore, burial plots adjacent to each other will no longer be available for reservation or pre-purchase.

A family can still choose to be buried together, but the only option will be for a single grave plot to be prepared for burials at double or treble depth. The choice to have a double or treble depth grave will need to be made at the time of the first burial into the plot.

Additional Information regarding the proposed grave types was made available for all respondents to access.

WE ASKED: If you or a family member have chosen a burial, does the cemetery provide a grave type to meet the requirements of your need, faith, or religious beliefs?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	139	55
Not Applicable	60	24
No	36	14
Total	235	
Not Answered	20	8

The vast majority of respondents stated that the grave types did meet their requirements (55%) or that this was not applicable (24%). Additional scrutiny of the data shows the split of the answers by religion:

Option	Yes		Not Applicable		No		Not Answered	
	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %
Christian	62	63	25	25	3	2	9	9
Muslim	35	47	8	11	27	36	5	7
No Religion	25	51	19	39	1	2	4	8

Prefer not to say	6	38	5	31	4	25	1	6
Other	5	100						
Buddhist	1	50	1	50				
Total	134		57		35		19	

- Notably 51% of those specifying ‘no religion’ stated the service met their needs and 39% stated it was not applicable.
- The majority of Christian religion (63%) stated the service met their needs and 25% stated it was not applicable.
- For those specifying Muslim religion, the picture was mixed with 47% stating the proposal did meet their needs, 36% stating it did not meet their needs and a further 11% stating it was not applicable. Of those stating NO it did not meet their needs, the comments provided appear to restate that mound or traditional graves would meet their needs.

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **NOT APPLICABLE** or **NO** to the question. By the nature of the question, neutral or negative comments were expected.

86 respondents left comments. Additional information shows the comments split by religion/non religion:

Christian:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 30 (approx.) comments state cremation as the preferred choice. • 2 comments referred to the lack of a natural burial option
Muslim:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 19 comments referred to the need for a choice of either mounded* or traditional graves. 11 of these specifically requested mounded graves. • 5 comments specifically mentioned traditional graves only • 4 comments specifically mentioned a Vault grave option. ** • 3 comments stated lawn graves were not acceptable but did not state a preference. • 9 comments referred to the need for services which meets the religious needs but did not state a specific requirement such as mounded or vault grave. • 4 comments stated a Muslim area only is required *** • 1 respondent requested a Muslim cemetery
Buddhist:
No comments
No Religion:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2 comments - Burials are not sustainable. Land should be used for economic development not burials. • 3 comments - Cremation / Not decided / no natural option

* Mounded graves are proposed as the new grave type

** Vault graves are available; however, they cannot be built individually on request.

*** There is a Muslim section in the area known as Westfield.

WE ASKED: Does the change to adjacent plots impact your decision to use Henley Road Cemetery for your burial or the burial of a loved one?

Option	Total	Percent
No	137	54
Not Applicable	71	28
Yes	29	11
Total	237	
Not Answered	18	7

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **YES** to the question. By the nature of the question, negative comments were expected.

29 respondents left comments:

- 8 comments were relevant to the question.
- 2 comments stated adjacent plots had already been purchased and the family would wish to keep them*
- 5 comments stated an adjacent plot would be preferable
- 1 comment stated adjacent graves were required.

*Any plots which have previously been reserved will remain so. The change applies to new requests only.

WE ASKED: Please provide any other information about grave types to help inform our proposals

64 respondents chose to provide additional comments. 26 of which were not relevant to the question as the majority referred to cremations.

The key messages are:

- 9 comments stated mounded graves were required
- 9 comments stated mounded or traditional & vaults were required
- 5 comments specifically stated traditional graves only
- 2 comments stated segregation between all faith groups should be in place
- 2 comments referred to a natural burial option

SECTION 3 Opening Hours

It is proposed that the hours of opening will be extended to include Saturdays all year round and a late-night opening on a Thursday evening in the summer months. This will provide customers with the option of a Saturday service and access to the office staff during these additional hours.

A table showing the proposed opening times for both grounds and office was included in the Rules & Regulations provided in the consultation web link. The report provided to the Policy Committee in June 2021 highlighting the key changes was also available.

WE ASKED: Do the revised opening hours offer a flexible service?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	200	78
No	34	13
Not applicable	14	5
Total	248	
Not Answered	7	3

Additional scrutiny of the data shows the split of the answers by religion:

Option	Yes		Not Applicable		No		Not Answered	
	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %
Christian	93	94	3	3	1	1	2	2
No Religion	43	88	4	8	1	2	1	2
Muslim	40	53	4	5	29	39	2	3

Prefer not to say	6	38	5	31	4	25	1	6
Other	5	100						
Buddhist	1	50	1	50				
Total	188		17		35		6	

Whilst the majority of Christian or those with non-religion stated the opening times met their requirements ((94% and 88% respectively), there was a significant minority (39%) of those specifying they were Muslim that stated the opening times did not meet their requirements.

Respondents were invited to explain if they answered **NOT APPLICABLE** or **NO** to the question. By the nature of the question, neutral or negative comments were expected.

51 respondents left comments however 11 responses did not correspond to the question.

Some responses indicated a possible misunderstanding between the proposed opening hours for the office/services v the grounds. For example: *'We require access to visit during weekends'* would indicate the respondent has taken the closing of the office on a Sunday to mean the grounds are also closed.

Due to the above, it is not possible to provide a definitive indication of how many respondents are requesting the office and related services to be available all weekend and on bank holidays. However, based on the split by religion below and response to previous questions, we can assume at least 24 of the respondents do require different opening hours.

Christian: 1 Comment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prefer to keep the late opening on all weeknights. Thought it was open all Saturday anyway?
No Religion:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 comment was made but it did not relate to the question.
Muslim: 24 Comments
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 9 respondents stated services should be available on a Sunday. 12 comments stated services should be available on a Sunday & Bank Holidays 2 comments did not indicate a preference
Prefer Not to Say:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please provide services over the weekend and bank holidays
Other:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No Comments
Buddhist:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 respondent stated opening hours should be all weekend as this is when people are free from work

WE ASKED: Do these revised hours provide you with more access to the services you require?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	193	76
No	30	12
Not applicable	25	10
Total	248	
Not Answered	7	3

Additional scrutiny of the data shows the split of the answers by religion:

Option	Yes		Not Applicable		No		Not Answered	
	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %	Total	Percent %
Christian	85	86	9	9	4	4	1	1
Muslim	46	61	5	7	22	29	2	3
No Religion	38	78	8	16	1	2	2	4
Prefer not to say	12	75	1	6	2	13	1	6
Other	5	100						
Buddhist	2	100						
Total	188		23		29		6	

Respondents were invited to explain if they answered **NOT APPLICABLE** or **NO** to the question. By the nature of the question, neutral or negative comments were expected.

49 respondents left comments, 31 of the comments predominantly related to the **NOT APPLICABLE** section or did not relate to the question.

The majority of the remaining comments were repeats of the comments given in response to the previous question. There were 3 new comments, and these are shown below:

Muslim: 16 Comments in total - 3 new comments

- The Community should be allowed certain individuals to undertake burials instead of staff to reduce cost*
- The proposed hours are an improvement
- The longer Thursday evening in the summer and Saturday all year around is excellent.

*This is not legally permitted.

SECTION 4 - Accessibility

It is proposed that for all NEW areas of the cemetery, more space will be provided at the foot of grave plots to allow better wheelchair and pushchair access. The pathways will still remain as grassed walkways.

Making this change will marginally reduce the amount of land available for burials across the site.

The details regarding accessibility changes were provided within the report provided to the Policy Committee in June 2021. This report was available within the consultation web link.

WE ASKED: *Would you find this change beneficial?*

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	179	70
Not applicable	38	15
No	32	13
Total	249	
Not Answered	6	2

Respondents were invited to add comments if they answered **NO** or **Not Applicable** to the question. By the nature of the question, neutral or negative comments were expected, however several positive comments were also received.

Related comments: 56 additional comments were made.

The split between positive/neutral and negative was evenly split. Although it was not possible to identify if the comments received were made by respondents who specifically had accessible challenges, some of the key messages are shown below:

Positive:

Several comments confirming the existing provision was adequate - for example:

- My family can access the current walkways with both wheelchairs and baby buggies.
- Seating on benches close to graves is adequate.
- Family members in wheelchairs can visit family buried
- I find the current access to my parents grave suitable for my requirements
- I believe there is good accessibility, and this should not be at the expense of reduced capacity.
- Plenty of room for wheelchairs anyway

Additional comments supporting the change included:

- Obviously for people in wheelchairs this is good.
- I will be taking my new baby boy to visit his older brother's plot, so pram access is useful.
- I believe it makes sense in current environment
- Although not disabled myself I think the proposal is a good one although I wonder if the walkways remaining as grassed areas will facilitate easy access for wheelchair users and those with pushchairs.
- I think any improvement in accessibility would be welcome
- I think it is a good idea.

Neutral

16 comments confirmed the change would not impact them or their family. For example:

- I do not use a wheelchair
- I don't have anyone in my family that uses either a wheelchair or pushchair.
- Nobody in my family is disabled so this would not affect us

Negative

Several of the negative comments referred to the proposal taking up more land and therefore reducing valuable burial space. For example:

- Space is at a premium - is there another way around this? But obviously we need to consider these needs Is the current space not enough for access?
- It is more important to leave as much space as possible for burials, as land is at a premium around Reading Centre. When a different area of land has to be used in the future, it will probably be on the outskirts of town and more difficult for some residents to access easily.
- Too much space been made for the foot of the Graves will mean less land for grave plots. Which in turn means there's a much lesser chance of having your loved ones buried next to each other.
- The main concern is soft ground for manually pushed wheelchairs rather than restricted space.

Other comments generally highlighted the misconception that the concrete plinths between rows of graves are paths. For example:

- There is paved access in my parent's plot, but it no longer has wheelchair access after you moved the headstones to the path. The headstones belong on the plot not on the path

WE ASKED: Please provide details of any additional improvements you would like to see to improve accessibility

Respondents were provided the opportunity to give additional feedback and comments. By the nature of the question, a mixture of positive, neutral and negative comments was expected.

49 additional comments were received.

21 responses did not correspond to the question, as most referred to opening hours as opposed to the physical accessibility requirements. These comments have not been considered against this question but have been considered in the section dedicated to opening hours.

Relevant key messages are:

- 2 respondents made a request for dropped kerbs at the roadside as not all wheelchair users can manage kerbs, and some power chairs cannot get up them at all.
- 1 respondent proposed extending the current Henley Road bus service so it would drop/pick up inside the cemetery - useful for people who do not have access to their own transport and elderly or disabled people who may find it difficult to walk to/from the existing bus stops.
- Electric assisted doors (into the cemetery office) for wheelchairs

Section 5 GENERAL FEEDBACK

In addition to the questions which focused on the 4 key areas, more research-based questions were included which will assist with the ongoing development of the service provision in general.

The questions were categorised as follows:

- 1) Your Experience
- 2) Your Choices
- 3) Additional Services

WE ASKED: General feedback about your experience - Do you have a family member or friend buried at any of the Council-run cemeteries?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	210	82
No	36	14
Don't know	7	3
Total	253	
Not Answered	2	1

Respondents were requested to state which cemetery if they answered YES to the above question.

Option	Total	Percent %
Henley Road Cemetery & Crematorium	192	75
Reading Cemetery	26	10
Caversham Cemetery	26	10
Don't know	9	4
Total	219	
Not Answered	36	14

WE ASKED: *Thinking about the cemetery your family or friend is buried in, can you please provide feedback about your experience of using the cemetery. Consider the cemetery grounds, staff or the burial process.*

187 responses were received:

- 11 responses did not relate to the question
- 98 comments were positive about the staff/service provision and grounds

- 27 comments were neutral or negative about the staff/service provision
- 24 comments were neutral or negative about the grounds
- 3 comments referenced the need for better chapel facilities due to size, décor and accessibility for people with disabilities.
- 2 comments relate to fees & expense.

By the nature of the question, a mixture of positive, neutral and negative comments was expected. Example of key comments are:

Staff & service provision

Positive

- I have found the burial service to be excellent.
- Overall, very helpful. Staff were lovely and helpful during the difficult times. Everything was organised very promptly and efficiently to ensure our wishes were met.
- Staff are always helpful and polite
- Staff in the office have been helpful and considerate
- I could not fault the staff one little bit. They are all kind and considerate and compassionate.
- Good experiences so far
- The building that houses the memory book and flowers is lovely as is the hall where the services are held. I know there are areas where it needs improvement being old etc. But am glad my visits are pleasant.
- My family have memorial plaques in place at this Henley Road Cemetery. I visit several times a year and enjoy the beautiful surrounding area and sense of peace.

Negative

- Found the cemetery staff so rude and unhelpful. Only wanted to find out a grave number and location painful experience and gave up in the end
- Found the rigmarole around adding my mother's ashes to her parents' grave site bewildering. First clarifying ownership, then getting permission to add memorial to headstone. Worst disappointment was learning we could not have a private (4 family members, one of whom was a lay preacher to say prayers) assembly as ashes interred but official had to be present. Whole thing put us off the plan completely.
- Following the death of my mother, the transfer of ownership of my parent's grave to me and my sister was hard to arrange
- I would have appreciated spreading ashes myself rather than the member of staff just walking to the area and doing this. Families need to be involved.

Grounds

Positive:

- The grounds are peaceful, well maintained and easily accessible.
- Access and parking are good. Grounds and paths good. A peaceful place.
- Very good kept very well.
- I would just like to praise you for putting in extra water taps and watering cans that has made such a difference
- My son is buried in the Baby Garden. I've never had any issues with using the cemetery grounds and have always felt treated with respect.
- Very pleased with everything. A beautiful area well looked after. Always a pleasure to visit our grave.
- Reading cemetery is an ideal cemetery. I like it as it is. All Hallows Road is a mixture.

Negative

- Lack of grass cutting is a common theme for example: Grass cutting seems a thing of the past. I visit my parent's plot every fortnight and have to take a strimmer to tidy up.
- Always looks good from a distance, but on closer encounters it becomes plain that more work could be done to keep plants etc looking nicer
- Reading Cemetery - access to cars limited, concerned that the sale of the gatehouse will further reduce access.
- The concrete paths* have some headstones on and some not looks a right mess also no consideration for the disabled to travel on the paths
- The roads can be potholed and uneven.
- There are a lot of tilting headstones tied up with string etc.

Memorials / Memorabilia

- More authority given to staff to remove unsightly items from graves and memorials e.g
 - Too many really old clearly dead flowers in vases, deflated balloons in trees, cards, etc all around the place - I would like to be written in any updated regulations is that items that are clearly dead or an eyesore can and will be removed by staff please.
 - My only complaint is the state of the grounds to be honest. The abundance of artificial floral tributes and photos that keep over spilling to the rest of the Mayfield plot on windy days
 - People should not hang things in the trees too.....they are trees not Christmas trees!
 - But often looks tatty and tacky with faded fake/silk flowers and faded Christmas decorations in July

Suggestions

- I have mobility issues that are helped by the disabled parking however the seating arrangements in the service rooms are unsuitable for those that struggle to get up and down from pews/benches. Dedicated seating, with arms to help people rise would be a great help
- We need a bigger chapel It is appalling that a near-city cannot cope with large services where attendees currently have to stand outside

Fees

- Admin fees and costs for transferal of grave ownership were quite high for what appeared to amount to a relatively trivial amount of paperwork.
- Costs should be more transparent
- Fees are too expensive
- Expensive. I have to pay for a permit to carry out any remedial work to the memorial.

Behaviour of visitors

- The feedback included 2 complaints regarding the behaviour of other visitors to the cemetery, stating it was unacceptable and distressing. The behaviour includes driving on the grass, being rude to other visitors, playing loud music, having BBQ's and allowing children to play around and on other memorials. Visitors leave the cemetery when these people are present.

*The 'paths' are not paths; they are plinths on which the memorial stones are securely placed.

WE ASKED: General feedback and comments about your choices Have you or your family considered where you or they want to be laid to rest when you or they die?

237 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by You'

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	151	59
No	86	34
Total	237	
Not Answered	18	7

216 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by your family'

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	118	46
No	98	38
Total	216	
Not Answered	39	15

WE ASKED: Have you or your family chosen a burial?

236 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by You'

Option	Total	Percent %
No	151	59
Yes	77	30
Not Applicable	8	3
Total	236	
Not Answered	19	7.45

214 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by your family'

Option	Total	Percent %
No	125	49
Yes	73	29
Not Applicable	16	6
Total	214	
Not Answered	41	16

WE ASKED: Have you or your family chosen a cremation?

235 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by You'

Option	Total	Percent %
No	118	46
Yes	105	41
Not Applicable	12	5
Total	235	
Not Answered	20	8

214 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by your family'

Option	Total	Percent %
No	117	46
Yes	77	30
Not Applicable	20	8
Total	214	
Not Answered	41	16

WE ASKED: Have you or your family considered Henley Road Cemetery / Reading Crematorium?

232 responses were received in respect of 'consideration by You'

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	154	60
No	53	21
Not Applicable	25	10
Total	232	
Not Answered	23	9

218 responses were received in respect of ‘consideration by your family’

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	131	51
No	60	24
Not Applicable	27	11
Total	218	
Not Answered	37	15

WE ASKED: Feedback and comments on additional services

The consultation provided a good opportunity for the Council to identify customer appetite for additional services. These services fell into 4 categories:

- **Community Presentations on:**

- What to do when someone dies

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	197	77
No	51	20
Total	248	
Not Answered	7	3

- The process of arranging a funeral without a funeral director

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	186	73
No	61	24
Total	247	
Not Answered	8	3

- **Informal community sessions:**

Opportunity where people can get together to have an informal, open conversation about death and bereavement, to raise awareness of death and help people prepare?

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	158	62
No	86	34
Total	244	
Not Answered	11	4

- **Additional memorial options**

Memorial options - Memorial bird, butterfly or insect boxes

Option	Total	Percent %
No	129	51
Yes	100	39
Total	229	
Not Answered	26	10

Memorial options - Memorial wall where plaques can be displayed.

Option	Total	Percent %
Yes	145	57
No	89	35
Total	234	
Not Answered	21	8

Memorial options - Memorial key rings

Option	Total	Percent %
No	188	74
Yes	35	14
Total	223	
Not Answered	32	13

Some additional ideas provided by customers include:

- Memorial trees
- Water feature
- More baby options - e.g small cast teddy bears to place in the area or acceptable stones provided so siblings can paint a memorial for their baby brother or sister buried in the area.
- Annual Memorial Service
- Online obituary memorial site - a place where no physical memorial is needed
- **Grave maintenance / care packages**
An annual fee to have your loved one's grave maintained by the cemetery grounds team.

Option	Total	Percent %
No	124	49
Yes	119	47
Total	243	
Not Answered	12	5

Respondents were requested to provide an indication of how much they would be prepared to spend - as an annual fee for this service.

114 responses were received - 29 respondents did not indicate a figure but 25 supported the idea.

Amount £	Total Respondents
5 - 49	23
50 - 100	47
101 - 300	11
Over 300	4

MUSLIM COMMUNITY MEETINGS

In March 2021, two meetings were held to discuss burials for the Muslim Community. One meeting was attended by the Mosque representatives and representatives from the Pakistani Community Committee (PCC). The other by circa 70 members of the wider Muslim Community.

When the formal public consultation was launched, a further two meetings were arranged. The first meeting was held on July 22nd and was attended by representatives from the Mosques and

representatives from the Pakistani Community Committee (PCC). Invitations to the second meeting were issued to all those members of the wider community who had previously attended the meeting in March. This meeting was held on July 28th and approximately 14 people attended, in addition to the RBC team and attending Councillors

At both meetings, a progress update was given on the more general improvements being introduced following the initial sessions with the same groups in March 2021. A presentation was also given highlighting the 4 key areas of the consultation and the changes proposed.

Attendees from both meetings, thanked the Officers for the work being done to engage with the community. The commitment to strengthening the relationship was acknowledged and welcomed.

It was confirmed to the attendees that all comments or feedback would be taken on board and considered as part of the consultation. Any subsequent feedback in email form following the meetings has also been considered.

Attendees at both meetings confirmed they would also be completing the online consultation. The output from the meetings replicates the points raised in the public consultations:

- Grave types
 - Mounded graves are welcomed, but traditional graves in the dedicated Muslim area should still be an option.
 - Vault graves are required
- Opening hours
 - There were concerns that removing on call would be a significant backward step, as this meant the communities could not access services on Sundays or bank holidays. Therefore a 7 day a week service was preferred.

Some additional queries were raised in the meetings, but these were general operational queries, and these have been responded to individually.

As we cannot quantify the output from the meetings, we will take the additional input into account when considering the statistical data provided by the online consultation.

This summary is designed to provide the output from the consultation only. The conclusions drawn from these results are summarised in the Policy Committee report.