



West Lothian
Council



CITIZEN LED INSPECTION

‘LOOK SEE’

FEEDBACK REPORT

NETs, Land & Countryside Services

Cemeteries

August & September 2017

INSPECTION TEAM:

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REPORT SUBMITTED TO:

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Introduction

The 'Look See' customer experience inspection is designed to bring a depth of insight through a "lighter" version of the council's Citizen Led Inspection. The inspection forms a short, concentrated, specific activity to allow customer inspectors to bring their training and knowledge to bear on a focused area of service provision.

Inspectors will score the service based on the set criteria established prior to the inspection and will use a rating scale of Excellent, Good, Adequate, Poor and Very Poor.

This is designed to involve customers in reviewing and making changes to services. It is a particularly valuable during periods of change to ensure that service standards and performance is maintained.

Background to the Inspection

West Lothian Council manages and maintains 32 different cemeteries and churchyards as well as 18 war memorials across West Lothian. In addition to this the service manages and holds all of the council's burial records, provides a family heritage service and administers lairs, interments and headstones for all the cemeteries. This is a frontline, customer facing service aimed at dealing with a customer's range of enquiries, particular during sensitive and challenging times.

The Inspectors met with the service management team prior to undertaking their inspection to allow them to find out more information about the service and if there were any particular issues for them to be aware of or to concentrate on during the inspection. In this instance the inspectors were asked to carry out a general review of all aspects the maintenance of a range of cemeteries- including operational and non-operational. The service highlighted an interest in finding out the inspector's views on the difference between the new cemeteries at Almondell and Hermand and some of the council's older cemeteries and churchyards. Inspectors were also asked to provide feedback upon the display and accessibility of the council's Cemetery Management Rules within the venues that they visited.

As well as this the inspection team were asked to review the information available on the services provided to buy lairs, arrange interments, erect headstones and how to go about accessing the family history and burial records element of the service.

Part of the inspection included a visit to the office at Whitehill House to view the back office part of the service and how the process relating to burial records, family history and the buying of lairs are carried out. This was followed by a guided tour of a selection of cemeteries including observing staff preparing lairs for upcoming burials.

Inspectors were asked to review the councils cemeteries service, using set guidance and criteria but with the scope to expand on this as they saw fit depending on their findings. The inspectors agreed to carry out their inspection throughout the month of August and September and were free to visit as many cemeteries on as many different occasions as they saw fit.

The inspection team comprised of:

Carole Mulholland	Bill Vallely
Almondell, East Calder	Almondell, East Calder
Burngrange, West Calder	Blaeberry, Whitburn
Hermand, West Calder	St Michaels, Linlithgow

Summary of Findings

The Inspectors rated the service as follows:

Category - Cemeteries		Almondell (AD)	Blaeberry (BB)	Burngrange (BG)	Hermand (HM)	St Michaels (StM)
1	Information available prior to inspection	Poor	Very Poor	Poor	Poor	Very Poor
2	Cemetery Visit	Adequate	Good	Good	Good	Good
3	Cemetery Management Rules	Poor	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
4	Staff Interaction	Excellent	Excellent	N/A	N/A	N/A
Overall Findings		Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate	Adequate

Category – Burial Records		Rating
5	Information Available	Good
6	Using the Service	Good
7	Staff Interaction	Excellent
Overall Findings		Good

Category – Interments/Lairs/Headstones		Rating
8	Information Available	Good
9	Staff Interaction	Excellent
Overall Findings		Excellent

Findings

The table below highlights the key findings, areas of good practice and recommendations for areas for improvement.

Category - Cemeteries	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating	
1.Information available prior to inspection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Location ▪ Opening times ▪ On-site facilities ▪ Accessibility ▪ Available parking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The website contains some information on where each cemetery in West Lothian is. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A link to a map showing the location of each cemetery would be a useful tool for customers. ▪ The inspectors found it difficult to find information online regarding all the cemeteries they visited. 	Poor	
Recommendation(s)	1.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Review the accuracy and the depth of the current content made available regarding cemeteries location and other related information. 			
2.Cemetery Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage ▪ Accessibility ▪ Maintenance ▪ Appearance ▪ Ambience ▪ On-site facilities ▪ Information Available 	AD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspectors found the parking to be well laid out, with plenty of space and appreciated disable spaces being close to the burial area. ▪ They found the actual setting of the cemetery to be “lovely and peaceful” and it is well laid out. ▪ The grounds are well maintained and pathways and access clear. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is limited, visible, signage on the main road to direct you to the cemetery with the only clear sign on the entrance. ▪ The signs on the main road for the cemetery are only visible if coming through East Calder, with nothing if approaching from the A71 (this lead to 1 inspector getting lost on their way to the cemetery). ▪ Within the cemetery there is no visible information regarding the opening and closing times or the cemetery management rules. ▪ There are no visible signs or information on the building and it is not clear within the cemetery where the designated children’s area is. 	Good
		BB	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The cemetery was very well maintained and the inspector thought the appearance and ambience was 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The signage from the road and at the cemetery gate were considered very poor by the inspector. ▪ The baby area within the cemetery was thought to 	Good

Category - Cemeteries	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
		<p>excellent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parking and accessibility were both considered to be excellent by the inspector who visited. 	<p>be very small and “not ideal looking” by the inspector.</p>	
		<p>BG</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There is visible signage for visitors regarding dog fouling, using the skip and the use of CCTV. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Signage to indicate inspectors to the location of the cemetery is displayed at the cemetery entrance and is only visible when traveling through West Calder – nothing is visible if travelling from the Brieck end. ▪ There is no visible information regarding the opening/closing hours of the cemetery or regarding the cemetery management rules. ▪ The parking area has no marked spaces and the marked disabled spaces are fading. ▪ The inspector raised a concern that within the new part of the cemetery there were at least 2 stones that looked in real danger of falling over (BG698). 	<p>Good</p>
		<p>HM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspector considered the ambiance of Hermand to be “lovely”. ▪ The grounds within the cemetery are well maintained and pathways and access clear. ▪ Parking within the cemetery is well laid out. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The signs on the A71 in West Calder and the main road leading to the cemetery are obscured by trees and bushes. ▪ The inspector could find no visible information regarding the opening/closing hours of the cemetery or regarding the cemetery management rules. ▪ Disabled parking within the car park appeared to be some distance from the burial ground. ▪ There were other paths and walking trails around the cemetery but no signage to indicate where these lead. 	<p>Good</p>
		<p>StM</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The cemetery and churchyard are well maintained and the war memorial is very well kept. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors. 	<p>Good</p>

Category - Cemeteries	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a good selection of [parking available and the cemetery is very accessible. 		
Recommendation(s)	2.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the signage on the approach roads to Almondell and within the cemetery itself. 		
	2.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the trees and shrub areas around the road signage to Hermand Cemetery 		
	2.3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reconsider the location of the disabled parking within Hermand Cemetery 		
	2.4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider introducing signage around the cemetery to highlight walking trails and pathways 		
	2.5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the car park set up at Burngrange and consider marking spaces and re-marking the disabled spaces. 		
	2.6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the exterior and road signage directing visitors to Burngrange cemetery. 		
	2.7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review the signage on approach and at the entrance gate for Blaeberry cemetery. 		
3.Cemetery Management Rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display Understanding Implementation Fairness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Cemetery Management Rules were easily accessible on the council's website. There were of accessible bins around the cemetery. The inspector found the grounds to be well maintained. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information on cemetery management rules is only available on the general web page relating to funerals and cremations – not on the page relating to cemeteries. There was no information on the rules availed or clearly visible within any of the cemeteries visited by the inspectors. It was not clear to the inspectors what the rules regarding ornaments at graves were as there appeared to be no consistent approach to this through the cemeteries visited. 	Poor
Recommendation(s)	3.1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review how and where the Cemetery Management Rules are displayed on the council's web pages 		
	3.2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review how and where the Cemetery Management Rules are made available to visitors and displayed within all cemeteries. 		

Category - Cemeteries	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
4. Staff Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge ▪ Polite & Friendly ▪ Helpful ▪ Respectful ▪ Recognisable ▪ Accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff were very professional, helpful and respectful and were knowledgeable about the service. ▪ Staff were all very recognisable as WLC employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Excellent
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
Overall Findings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspectors found the all the cemeteries they visited to be maintained and looked after to a high standard. ▪ The general feeling and ambience with the cemeteries was appreciated by the inspectors. ▪ Staff they interacted with friendly, knowledgeable and respectful and all fully recognisable as WLC employees. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The information about cemeteries on the council's website was considered poor and needs to be reviewed and updated, particularly regarding locations. ▪ Directional signage on main roads could be improved to assist visitors in location sites, particularly for the first time ▪ Information within the cemeteries on opening times and cemetery management rules needs to be reviewed and made available to visitors. ▪ Whilst the inspectors were able to find the management rules online there were unable to find any information on them within the cemeteries they visited. ▪ The cemetery rules appear to be confusing, particularly with regards to ornaments, as there appeared to be no consistent approach to this. 	Adequate

Category – Burial Records	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
5.Information available on the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessing the Service ▪ Services on offer ▪ Contact Information 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspectors found comprehensive information available through the council's website on the services offered and how to access them including how to make an appointment at the cemeteries office. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Good
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
6.Using the Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Accessible ▪ Opening Times ▪ Available Parking ▪ Privacy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Inspectors did not use the service directly but were advised by officers from the how the service operates and what is offered to customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Good
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
7.Staff Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge ▪ Polite & Friendly ▪ Helpful ▪ Respectful ▪ Recognisable ▪ Accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspectors found the staff to excellent in every aspect of customer service. They were knowledgeable, polite, helpful and respectful as well as being easily recognisable. ▪ All staff kept an appropriate low profile when providing help and spoke highly of the service they provide. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Excellent
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
Overall Findings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whilst the inspectors did not experience first-hand using these services directly they found the information available to customer to be comprehensive, including all relevant contact details. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Good

Category – Burial Records	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The service delivered by the staff that the inspectors interacted with was praised highly with staff all showing an excellent knowledge of the service. 		

Category – Interments / Lairs / Headstones	Sub Categories of Inspection	Areas of Good Practice	Areas for Improvement	Overall Rating
8.Information available on the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Purchasing Options ▪ Costs & Fees ▪ Process ▪ Availability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Comprehensive information on the service, including costs, was available through the council's website. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Good
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
9.Staff Interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Knowledge ▪ Polite & Friendly ▪ Helpful ▪ Recognisable ▪ Accessible 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The inspectors found the staff to excellent in every aspect of customer service. They were knowledgeable, polite, helpful and respectful as well as being easily recognisable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Excellent
Recommendation(s)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No recommendations were made regarding this section of the inspection 			
Overall Findings		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Whilst the inspectors did not experience first-hand using these services directly they found the information available to customer to be comprehensive, including all relevant contact details. ▪ The service delivered by the staff that the inspectors interacted with was praised highly with staff all showing an excellent knowledge of the service. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ No areas for improvement were identified by the inspectors 	Excellent

Conclusions & Next Steps

The 2 inspectors visited 5 different cemeteries between them throughout the inspection and their feedback on each was very consistent. The cemeteries are all well looked after and maintained which helps create a peaceful ambience and feeling within each. West Lothian Council staff were found to excellent – knowledgeable, helpful and friendly – and were considered by the inspectors to be a credit to the service.

With regard to the other areas of the service – Burial Records and Lairs, Headstones & interments – whilst the inspectors to not experience these service first hand they were given the opportunity to meet with staff who took them through the processes involved. For this the inspectors praised the knowledge and experience of staff and found that the information available on the website backed up what had been explained to them by the staff.

Areas for improvement and recommendations have been identified, by the inspection team, across the offices which were visited and the service offered as a whole. The main area for improvement highlighted by all of the team was the quality of the directional signage on main roads leading to cemeteries and the information available within the cemeteries themselves. The Cemetery Management Rules are not clearly visible or made available to visitors and this appears to have led to an inconsistent approach to how they are implemented.

The service should now review the findings of the inspector; take note of the recommendations made and devise an improvement plan to action these. Planned improvements will then be fed back to the inspectors and followed up with the service by the Business Improvement Officers.

For further information please contact Katherine McLaughlin or Daniel Matonti, Performance and Improvement Service.

Date: 22nd September 2017

Appendices

Appendix 1: Inspection Evaluation Forms

Appendix 2: Improvement Plan