

# *Kilkenny County Council*

Internal Audit Report [REDACTED] Review of Administration of St. Kieran's Cemetery

**Date:** 4<sup>th</sup> February 2019

## **Report Distribution**

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Audit Committee Members

Local Government Auditor

## **Objectives**

The objective of the audit is to provide reasonable assurance that adequate controls and procedures are in place in relation to the administration of St. Kieran's Cemetery.

## **Approach**

Internal Audit spoke with staff who work in the area. The plot ledger and burials ledger were examined. Internal audit physically visited the cemetery.

## **Scope & Limitations of scope**

The scope of the review was limited purchases and burials from Jan 2017 to June 2018.

## **Audit Risk**

- Accurate records not being kept.
- Potential fraud
- Loss of income to council
- No clear policy or procedures.

## **Co-operation of Management and staff**

Internal Audit received full co-operation from Council Management and staff throughout the course of this review and would like to thank them for their assistance.

## Detailed Findings & Recommendations

<i><b>Finding</b></i>	<i><b>Implication</b></i>	<i><b>Recommendation</b></i>	<i><b>Management Action Plan</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In 2017, €56,725 was received in relation to plot purchases and burials.</li> <li>• Maintenance of cemetery is a significant drain on the council resources. Expenditure in 2017 was over €132k. This is a net cost of €76k to the council.</li> <li>• There were 91 internments in 2017 and 57 plots were sold.</li> <li>• Cemetery charges have not been reviewed since 2009 (Appendix A). Internal audit checked costs in other authorities and St. Kieran's is significantly lower.</li> <li>• Unlike other local authorities, Kilkenny County Council has no official bye laws relating to St. Kieran's cemetery. There is a document in relation to rules and regulations of the cemetery on the council website. This is dated 23<sup>rd</sup> January 1932.</li> </ul> <div data-bbox="293 1078 356 1139" data-label="Image"> </div> <p>St-Kierans-Cemetery -Regulations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Loss of revenue to the council.</li> <li>• Not achieving value for money.</li> <li>• Information provided to public outdated.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cemetery charges should be reviewed. Charges should reflect the level of expenditure required to maintain the cemetery. A review of expenditure should also be undertaken to ascertain where efficiencies can be achieved.</li> <li>• Policy and procedures should be updated on council website.</li> </ul>	<p>Reviewed to be carried out by Senior Engineer, Kilkenny Area.</p> <p>Website to be updated by Kilkenny Area Office.</p>

<i><b>Finding</b></i>	<i><b>Implication</b></i>	<i><b>Recommendation</b></i>	<i><b>Management Action Plan</b></i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Payments for plots are taken at the cash office and burials are paid for by undertakers in arrears. A small amount of cash is collected by the cemetery foreman in relation to cremations.</li> <li>• The two main undertakers pay for plot purchases and burials in arrears. Receipts were identified for all purchases and burials and regular payments are received from both undertakers. However, there are considerable delays in payment. In some cases, the council is waiting up to 18 months for payment.</li> <li>• The undertakers are not recorded as debtors in agresso and therefore are not included in the AFS. There was an amount outstanding of over €28k at the end of 2017 for the two main undertakers.</li> <li>• The overall outstanding debt on plot purchases and internments amounted to €31,600 at end of 2017. €2,600 of this debt is over 6 years old.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Potential misappropriation of funds.</li> <li>• Inaccurate debtors figures in accounts.</li> <li>• Negative impact on councils cashflow.</li> <li>• Non compliance with councils procedures.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All payments should be received in the cash office in County Hall only. No cash should be accepted by cemetery staff.</li> <li>• Undertakers should be set up as debtors on agresso and issued with an invoice. Regular statements should also be issued.</li> <li>• Burial permits should be received for all internments and charges applied as per cemetery regulations.</li> <li>• Council should consider striking off balances over 6 years old as they are now statute barred. Focus should be on collecting recent debts.</li> </ul>	<p>Cemetery staff to be instructed not to accepted cash.</p> <p>Staff to be trained on how to generate invoices on Agresso.</p> <p>This is currently the procedure. The Caretakers would prepare a burial permit for each interment.</p> <p>Delegated Officers order to be prepared for the strike off of balances over 6 years old.</p>

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Included in schedule of charges are burial permits for single and double headstones. The charges are €13.50 and €27 respectively. These charges are not being applied in all cases. The burial permits also provide measurements of the proposed headstones. The permits should be examined by the council engineer to ensure specifications of headstone are in line with cemetery policy. Out of the 91 internments in 2017, only 1 burial permit was received and charged for.</li> <li>• The council provide a 100% waiver of plot purchases and internment costs for people on social welfare payments. 4 waivers were approved in 2017. Waiver is issued on receipt of letter from Community Welfare Officer. Applicants are not requested to complete a waiver form or produce evidence of income. There is no mention of a waiver system in the councils procedures or on the council website. Internal audit checked with other local authorities in the area and none provide a waiver.</li> <li>• Internal Audit found some anomalies in the recording of the plot purchases and burials during the audit. These are listed in Appendix B. These have since been corrected in an end of year reconciliation.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inequitable applying of charges.</li> <li>• Inconsistency in operation of cemetery's in the county.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is a worthwhile exercise inputting the data from the manual ledgers to an excel spreadsheet. This enables easy searches of the data and also provides security in the event of the ledgers being accidentally destroyed or damaged. Given the importance of the accuracy of record keeping, I would recommend that a regular reconciliation be carried out to ensure data has been entered correctly.</li> <li>• Given the costs incurred in maintaining the cemetery, the council should review its policy on giving 100% waivers. If continuing to provide waivers, this should be included in the regulations. It should also be advertised so that people are aware that a waiver is available for those who qualify.</li> </ul>	<p>The headstone permits are being recorded in a spreadsheet.</p> <p>Caretakers to be instructed that headstones should not be erected in the graveyard without the necessary permit being acquired from City Hall.</p> <p>Waiver has been applied for many years on request from the Community Welfare Officer. In recent years, the burial costs only are waived.</p>

## ***Appendix A – Anomalies In Registers***

### ***REVISED BURIAL CHARGES - EFFECTIVE FROM 1ST JANUARY, 2009***

*PURCHASE OF SINGLE PLOT: € 375.00*

*PURCHASE OF DOUBLE PLOT: € 750.00*

*CHARGE FOR BURIAL: € 435.00*

*CREMATION: € 21.00*

*BURIAL PERMIT (SINGLE HEADSTONES) € 13.50*

*BURIAL PERMIT (DOUBLE HEADSTONES) € 27.00*

## *Appendix B – Anomalies In Registers*

- Plot no. [REDACTED] appears to be unpaid on the ledger - Plot no [REDACTED] & [REDACTED] was purchased by [REDACTED] on behalf of the deceased Mr. [REDACTED]. Mr. [REDACTED] was interred on the 23/06/2018 - €810 (Purchase and Burial) remains due on the Purchase ledger, however the sum of €375 for the 2nd plot no. [REDACTED] is not accounted for. **Rectified at End of Year Balancing.**
- There is no record of payment being received for Plot [REDACTED] - 2 plots were purchased [REDACTED] and [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] was interred on the 22/05/2017 (payment of €810 received (Burial €435 and plot €375). [REDACTED] was interred on the 05/04/2018 (Burial charge remains due €435). However it appears that the cost (€375) related to the 2nd plot has been overlooked. **Rectified at End of Year Balancing.**
- On the ledger Plot Book plot no [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] are shown to be purchased by the one family. Plot [REDACTED] to [REDACTED] are shown to be paid in full by receipt no. 325282 of €1,125 - 3/08/2018 against the 3 plots. However receipt no. 325282 is for the purchase of one plot for the sum of €375. Therefore, the remaining plots are outstanding. **Error corrected at End of Year Balancing.**
- In the excel purchasing ledger, [REDACTED] is shown to have been buried in plot [REDACTED]. This should have been [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] is shown to be buried in [REDACTED]. This should be CC46. The correct plots are recorded in the excel burials ledger. **See attached burial permit showing [REDACTED].**
- In the excel burials ledger, [REDACTED] is shown to be buried in [REDACTED]. This should be [REDACTED]. **Rectified at End of Year Balancing.**
- [REDACTED] is included in the excel purchasing ledger as having been buried in plot [REDACTED]. This is not recorded in the excel burials ledger. **Corrected at End of Year Balancing.**