
SUBJECT: Statement of Response - Compulsory Redundancy of Cemetery Superintendant

DATE: 11th October 2012

RECIPIENT: Overview and Management Scrutiny Committee

The Petition states:

The aim of this petition is for Southampton City Council to re-evaluate its decision in regard to the redundancy and subsequent eviction of Jim Emery”

The redundancy of the Cemetery Superintendants post was agreed by Full Council on 15th February 2012 with a saving to the council of £13,000 in 2012/13 and then an ongoing annual saving of £25,000 in future years.

The redundancy proposal was put forward as a service reduction. With the use of new technology and the necessary presence of other council staff at every burial and at other times to maintain the grounds, it was decided that a satisfactory level of customer service could be maintained in the absence of a Cemetery Superintendant. This difficult decision was taken against an urgent need for the council to save money.

The formal consultation process for the redundancy proposal commenced with a meeting on 14th October 2011. The main concern raised by Mr Emery at this time was his housing situation, having lived in the Hollybrook Cemetery Lodge as a service tenant for 25 years.

The council's procedure for dealing with compulsory redundancies was followed and a Hearing held on 11th July set a dismissal date of 5th October 2012. No appeal against the dismissal decision was received from Mr Emery.

Mr Emery was placed on the councils redeployment register but declined as unsuitable the alternative employment offered.

Mr Emery signed a service tenancy to occupy Hollybrook Lodge on 14th December 1987. The tenancy agreement was clear that occupation of the Lodge was a condition of employment and that the right to occupy would cease upon termination of that employment.

Allowing a former employee to remain in occupation of a service property would go against council housing policy in relation to service tenants. In certain circumstances service tenants are re-housed, but they are not permitted to remain in the original service property. This is because those individuals would continue to be a point of contact for queries when they no longer work for the council and are not privy to updated information, policies and procedures.

Although the council had no obligation to do so alternative council accommodation has been offered to Mr Emery. The council has done and will continue to do everything it can to support Mr Emery in finding suitable alternative accommodation at what has been an extremely difficult time for him and his family.