

Report of the Director of Environment & Sport to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 8 November 2016.

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Subject:

The Bereavement Services Strategy

Summary statement:

The report presents the Bereavement Strategy which lays out the existing and future challenges and gives a strategic way forward for future provision of the Service.

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Overview & Scrutiny Area:

Regeneration and Economy



1. SUMMARY

The report presents the Bereavement Strategy which lays out the existing and future challenges and gives a strategic way forward for future provision of the Service.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1 The Bereavement Strategy (attached in full as an Appendix)

The Bereavement Strategy has been produced in response to a number of major concerns facing the Service that provide a significant risk to both the continued scope and quality of service delivery. The Strategy identifies the existing and future challenges facing the Service and provides clear direction to enable the council to efficiently focus its resources, both capital and revenue, to deliver a sustainable service over a 15-20 year period.

The Strategy is focussed upon improvements in service delivery to the public and will include, at its core, the need for infrastructure investment to prevent potential service failure.

Key points from each area of the strategy are summarised in sections 2.2 – 2.5 below whilst the individual strategies proposed to address the identified issues are included at section 3. Section 4 below includes projects for funding through the capital investment plan that would be required to deliver the Strategy.

2.2 The Bereavement Service

The Bereavement Service facilitates some 3800 funerals annually through its 3 crematoria and 24 cemeteries. The Service aims to provide a professional, caring and flexible approach to the thousands of bereaved residents that use the service each year.

Section one of the Strategy gives more detail of the current service including:-

- An outline of the applicable legislation covering its operations
- The resources employed to deliver the range of services provided
- Typical annual levels of activity for burial and cremation
- A brief financial overview

2.3 Challenges and Opportunities

The strategy raises the key issues relating to cremation activity, both in terms of the individual cremators and also the buildings in which they are housed.

The districts existing six cremators, three at Scholemoor, two at Nab Wood and one at Oakworth together with the ancillary equipment are almost 20 years old and are operating 4 years beyond the manufacturer's stated working life. None of the cremators have mercury filtration equipment fitted.



The districts crematoria buildings are all over 100 years old with Scholemoor built in 1905 as the only purpose built crematorium. All the existing sites have limited facilities and capacity, particularly within the chapels, whilst access to both Nab Wood and Scholemoor is less than satisfactory.

In terms of cemetery provision, the Strategy highlights a growing problem with the repair and maintenance of the infrastructure, much of which was designed for horse drawn vehicles and pedestrians whilst being held in far more regard than presently by some sections of society. There is adequate burial space within the District for over 20 years at current rates of demand although such capacity is based mainly within 3 cemeteries. Investment is required, however to prepare identified land for continuation of the Muslim Burial Ground for a further 5 years beyond 2021.

The Strategy identifies the problem of ensuring public safety from potentially dangerous headstones and other memorials. The issue of unauthorised memorials detracting from the appearance of memorial gardens and other sensitive sites is also raised, a subject that causes understandable upset to visitors. Both issues are proposed to be addressed through introduction of a revised Memorials Policy

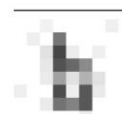
2.4 Influencing Factors

The strategy considers a number of areas that influence the decision making process to identify solutions to the challenges contained within the strategy.

- **Prices Charged**
The most recent comparative data on pricing across West Yorkshire demonstrates that Bradford's current charges are below the average, particularly for burials. However, it should be noted that almost all of the surrounding Councils have not only fully abated their crematoria but also invested in their buildings and range of facilities offered.
- **Demographics**
Bradford's rich mixture of BME communities and cultures is predicted to continue and grow as an overall percentage of the population. The needs of the accompanying wide range of religious beliefs will need to be accommodated. It is predicted that the number of deaths within the District will increase by 2030 as the district's population grows.
- **Exclusive Right of Burial**
The rights to bury in a grave are currently offered for a period of 100 years. The majority of neighbouring authorities have reduced this period to a level below 75.

2.5 Emerging National Developments

The strategy also provides a limited briefing on a number of developments taking place nationally and is intended for information only at the present time.



- Alternative Disposal Methods to Cremation
- Natural Burial
- On Line History and Genealogical Searches
- Holding Coffins Over For Cremation

3. STRATEGIES PROPOSED FOR ADOPTION

The Strategy proposes a number of individual strategies to deal with the identified challenges within crematoria, cemeteries and memorials as follows:-

Strategy for Crematoria

- **Immediate. 2-3 years. Replace Scholemoor Crematorium with a new purpose built facility at a new location preferably within the communities making the greatest use.**
- **Medium Term. 3-5 years. Replace Nab Wood Crematorium with a new purpose built facility at a new location**
- **Medium Term. 5 years plus. Replace the existing Cremator at Oakworth Crematorium with a mercury abated cremator subject to review after commissioning of the two new crematoria**

Strategy for Cemeteries

- **Current. 6 months. Renew the burial lease agreement with the Bradford Council for Mosques**
- **Medium Term. 2-3 years. Extend Scholemoor Cemetery for Muslim Burial Provision**
- **Medium/Long Term. 5-15 years. Identify land in locations across the district for future proofing general Cemetery provision particularly within Shipley/Keighley**
- **Produce an infrastructure investment plan to provide a sustainable maintenance regime.**

Strategy for Memorials

- **Revise the memorial policy to limit future liabilities on memorial safety**
- **Revise the memorial policy on unauthorised memorials in line with that adopted by the Council for the parks and countryside services.**



4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL

The Strategy identifies a compelling case for significant and immediate capital investment in the Councils Crematoria to ensure that the residents of the Bradford District retain a service that is fit for purpose. A planned and phased approach to such investment is required to mitigate against the possibility of partial service failure causing further significant pressures on the Council's revenue budgets.

The following projects requiring capital investment are taken from the action plan contained within the Strategy. A business case will be developed to test that the estimated capital investment of £17m is cost neutral over a 15-20 year period when set against the projected annual financial revenues. Each of the financial proposals included within the plan will also be subject to a detailed financial appraisal and the development of a business plan prior to implementation.

Capital Investment Projects

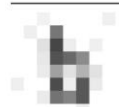
Year	Activity
2017	Identify site for new build crematorium in south Bradford
	Procure contract for new crematorium in south Bradford
2018	Complete & commission new crematorium in south Bradford
	Construct infrastructure for Muslim Burial ground extension
2019	Identify site for new build crematorium to replace Nab Wood
	Procure contract for new crematorium to replace Nab Wood
2020	Complete & commission build of new crematorium to replace Nab Wood
2021	Upgrade Oakworth Crematorium

5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES

- 5.1 Any significant and lengthy failure in the provision of a cremation service would cause reputational damage to the Council. Adoption of the indicative investment programme would mitigate such risk but not remove it entirely.
- 5.2 The allocation of estimated costs for new buildings at different locations does provide an element of financial risk

6. LEGAL APPRAISAL

- 6.1 The Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 (LACO77) urges that cremators be kept in good order to ensure compliance with environmental legislation. The proposed capital investment in the Council's crematoria will satisfy this on-going requirement.



- 6.2 All procurement activity proposed within the Strategy will need to be carried out in line with internal governance requirements to ensure best value is achieved.

7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY

The proposed Bereavement Strategy builds on the existing initiatives currently in place to deliver equality of opportunity to a range of different protected characteristic groups particularly those related to race, religion or belief.

7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS

The strategy seeks to deliver the most sustainable service achievable over a 15-20 year period and beyond through a programme of capital investment

7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS

The proposed new crematoria will be designed to include energy reduction and recovery systems together with more efficient cremators to reduce both fuel use and carbon footprint. Mercury emission filters will also be installed to further reduce emissions.

7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

There are no Community Safety Implications arising from this report.

7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT

There are no Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

7.6 TRADE UNION

There are no Trade Union implications arising from this report.

8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS

None

9. OPTIONS

The options presented are based upon investment in crematoria, the key issue identified within the Strategy

9.1 Retain Status Quo

The Service would continue to carry out necessary repairs to the cremators and buildings, utilising increasing revenue funds until a major failure occurs requiring



complete replacement of one or more cremators. At this point, operations would then cease at one crematorium for an extended period, causing increased pressure upon the other two and increasing the likelihood of a major failure at a further crematorium. The Council would not only receive reduced income for a significant time but also receive some criticism for not having a structured plan in place for continuity of the service to the public. The same levels of investment will be required at some point in the future but planning will become reactive rather than proactive in nature, increasing the possibility of a major service failure.

9.2 Refurbish Existing Facilities

Refurbishment of existing facilities including the replacement of cremators is possible for Oakworth and Scholemoor. However, the location of Scholemoor remains a key issue and the refurbishment of the two facilities is estimated at £3m due to the amount of building work required. There would also be a likely significant downturn in income during the closures and added pressure on Nab Wood, increasing the likelihood of premature failure. The Council would not only receive reduced income for a significant time but also run the risk of losing operations at two crematoria and causing a major service failure for the public.

9.3 Build New Facilities

The Strategy proposes an immediate new build in a new location to the south of Bradford prior to the decommissioning of Scholemoor crematorium. A similar process would then follow to build a replacement for Nab Wood. Whilst this proposal requires the highest level of investment, it is the one most likely to ensure service continuity in the short term and improved operational performance to deliver a long term cost neutral financial return on investment.

10. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive:-

- 10.1 Approve and adopt the Bereavement Strategy as presented including the proposal to build two new replacement crematoria (option 9.3)
- 10.2 Instruct the Director of Environment & Sport, in consultation with the Director of Finance, to develop a business plan for implementation of the Bereavement Strategy including the necessary capital investment plan up to and including 2018
- 10.3 Authorise the Director of Finance to ensure the financial requirements of the Bereavement Strategy are incorporated in the Council's future capital investment plan

11. APPENDICES

The Bereavement Strategy

