

## Report of the Strategic Director of Place to the meeting of the Executive to be held on 11 June 2019

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**Subject:**

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**Bereavement Services Strategy – Delivery Plan Update**

### **Summary statement:**

A progress update on delivery of the adopted Bereavement Services Strategy covering:-

- Refurbishment of Oakworth Crematorium
- Architectural Concept Design for new crematoria
- Site options and land acquisition for new crematoria
- Extension of Muslim burial ground at Scholemoor cemetery

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**Overview & Scrutiny Area:**

Regeneration and Environment

## 1 SUMMARY

A progress update on delivery of the adopted Bereavement Services Strategy covering:-

- Refurbishment of Oakworth Crematorium
- Architectural Concept Design for new crematoria
- Site options and land acquisition for new crematoria
- Extension of Muslim burial ground at Scholemoor cemetery

## 2 BACKGROUND

### 2.1 Governance

The Executive adopted a strategy for the Bereavement Service in November 2016 covering future development of the Council's cemeteries and crematoria with an indicative capital requirement of £17m. An initial progress report on delivery of the adopted Bereavement Services Strategy was received by the Executive on 10 July 2018 including the following resolutions:-

*(1) That the procurement of external specialist resources to complete the feasibility stage for all 5 identified sites and, subject to further approval, deliver progress to RIBA stage 3 for the design and build of two new crematoria be approved.*

*(4) The Strategic Director Place be given delegated approval of spend in consultation with the S151 officer for the extension of Scholemoor Cemetery to create additional burial space at the earliest opportunity.*

*(5) The Strategic Director Place be given delegated approval of spend in consultation with the S151 officer to upgrade the crematory at Oakworth Crematorium, to include mercury abatement, at the earliest opportunity*

At its meeting on January 8<sup>th</sup> 2019, Executive further approved the following resolutions:-

*(1) That the recommendation made by the Strategic Director Place to remove Northcliffe Park from the list of potential sites for a new crematorium be approved*

*(3) That the Strategic Director Corporate Services be instructed to commence land acquisition negotiations for the two sites specified within Not for Publication Appendix 2 of Document "AL" up to the option to buy stage*

*(4) That the procurement of external specialist resources to complete the feasibility stage for the remaining 4 identified sites and subject to further approval, deliver progress to RIBA stage 3 for the design and build of two new crematoria be noted and welcomed.*

*(5) That the Strategic Director Place be instructed to submit a report recommending the two sites to be approved for the construction of new crematoria and the estimated costs at the earliest opportunity.*

## **2.2 Crematoria**

Some 80% of the Bereavement Service's funeral activity relates to cremation (circa 3000 annually) through the 3 existing crematoria all of which are aged with all cremators 5/6 years beyond their recommended life span. The cremators fail to comply with DEFRA's current air quality emission requirements as they are not fitted with mercury abatement equipment.

The delivery of improved and sustainable crematoria services is now not only business critical due to the condition and age of the existing facilities and cremators but also central to the Council's aspirations to provide the best level of service to its residents

The key recommendations within the bereavement strategy therefore relate to the provision of sustainable, modern, fit for purpose crematoria to enhance the service provision for the District's residents. The preferred delivery method is to build two new crematoria to replace the Scholemoor and Nab Wood facilities, whilst Oakworth will be refurbished.

There are two sites under consideration for the replacement of Nab Wood crematorium, both being within 2 miles of this busiest of all the existing facilities. The two potential 'southern' sites to replace Scholemoor crematorium are an area of privately owned land, central to the target area, and Littlemoor Park.

Three of the 4 sites identified for possible new facilities are located on privately owned land and remain the preferred sites for the development of the new facilities.

## **2.3 Cemeteries**

Sufficient space exists within the Council's cemeteries to cover current levels of burial activity for some 30 years, with the exception of Muslim burials at Scholemoor, for which there is currently 2 to 3 years of burial space remaining.

The delivery plan proposes conversion of further land at Scholemoor to increase this provision to 8-10 years. The need for new cemetery provision beyond 10 years is recognised for both Muslim burial and more generally within the Shipley/Keighley corridor.

Existing infrastructure within the Council's 23 cemeteries requires investment and the strategy identifies the use of Better Use of Budgets (BUB) bids to carry forward elements of Service revenue surplus to fund a programme of priority projects.

## **3.0 Progress Update**

The Phase 1 report from the external specialists has recently been received after an extension was agreed to reflect the significant design brief change for Oakworth crematorium. The client brief required concept design and provisional high level cost estimates to be provided at this stage and the following update is based on this information.

### **3.1 Refurbishment of Oakworth Crematorium**

Following receipt of standard dimension details from cremator manufacturers it became clear at an early stage that ceiling heights within the existing crematory/office space were inadequate to house new cremators. Analysis of the required structural change to lift both ceiling and roof heights determined that demolition and rebuilding of the crematory would be more cost efficient as well as reducing the area of surrounding land to be incorporated to house the new equipment. However, the extent of this additional building work has increased the project costs.

The existing meeting room and service hall/chapel will remain in place.

A further advantage of this approach lies in the opportunity to offer significant improvements to the visitor experience through the provision of a separate exit to the service hall and the relocation of the catafalque to a more central position without the loss of any seating. Mourners will exit into a glazed 'winter garden' space, similar in look to that of the waiting room, but located at the opposite side of the service hall. This new layout also allows for a viewing window to be incorporated into this exit room for use as required.

Redesign of traffic movement, car parking and landscaping has allowed for a new green/flower area linking the 'winter garden' to the parking area on a separate pathway from that used to approach the waiting room. A new vehicular exit from the crematorium is planned to further improve the flow of traffic currently required to enter and exit using the same somewhat inadequate gateway.

The replacement building will allow a new public reception facility and limited work space remote from the service hall to secure a contact point and office presence within the Keighley area should the decision be made to relocate all office staff to one of the new crematoria.

The crematory will be built to house a replacement cremator but future proofed to an extent for the provision of a second cremator should activity levels demand; it is generally acknowledged that one cremator is adequate for up to 1000 cremations a year and the existing level is between 600 and 650.

Planning submission is due in May as required by the contract with the external consultants. It is acknowledged that changes may not only be required following this process but also after consideration of the detailed costing. The latest high level estimate for this significantly enhanced project stands at £2.75m compared to the base estimate of £2m in 2016.

Work has commenced on preparing a tender for the staged procurement of the necessary cremator equipment across all sites based on the significant lead time for manufacture and the anticipated build programme for the Oakworth refurbishment.

### **3.2 New Crematoria**

A significant amount of work has been undertaken to arrive at an architectural concept design for the new crematoria including outline proposals for structural design and mechanical/electrical services to allow high level cost estimates.

The adopted design allows for a separate waiting room to one side of the port-cochere with the main service hall on the other. The unique service hall design allows for small funerals (up to 30) and larger ones up to 250/300 to use the same catafalque which is positioned along the same axis as the main entrance and the cremator equipment.

The service hall has 150 seats with an open aspect to one side for views over the surrounding countryside through glazed panels which can be opened to allow under-cover standing for mourners outside the hall.

The crematory is attached to the service hall and will house two cremators together with coffin storage areas with a service yard to the rear for maintenance and future cremator replacement. Office accommodation with public access is positioned at the other side of the crematory alongside the exit route from the service hall leading to the flower garden and car park.

The current design incorporates the vast majority of the aspirational list of features included in national guidelines together with those drawn up by existing staff with local funeral directors. The potential threefold increase in capacity of the new service halls together with the provision of separate rooms for viewing of the deceased and witness charging reflect major elements of local consultation outcomes with Hindu and Sikh representatives.

Subject to ground conditions and detailed design/specification, the high level cost of the building infrastructure for one new facility is in the region of £5.2m of which £1.5m is currently allowed for two new cremators.

The cost for the complementary provision of on-site access roads, car parking, landscaping and gas/electric/water alterations ranges from £2.5m to £3.8m giving total on-site building costs between £7.7m and £9m.

The more detailed feasibility study undertaken as part of Phase 1 has not discovered any unique severe constraints involving potentially insurmountable issues relating to any of the four sites although one site does have overhead power distribution cables requiring an element of diversion.

Land costs or 'compensation' payments are expected to be similar across the four sites.

The high level cost estimates and viability assessments currently support the previously held view of the two preferred sites for the new crematoria, subject to land negotiations.

### **3.3 Land Acquisition & Disposal**

Initial discussions were held late 2018 between the Councils Estates Service and landowners for each of the three private sites identified for potential new crematoria; all have expressed an initial interest in possible disposal.

The two preferred sites identified in January are both privately owned and further meetings have been held with the respective land owners to commence negotiations. In order to facilitate the process, independent valuations of both sites have been instructed with the results due in the middle of May.

Further meetings with the landowners have been arranged immediately following receipt of the valuation information. There has been no further work carried out to date on possible acquisition of the third private site.

Disposal of a small strip of land to the Gate Lodge owners at Oakworth Crematorium has been agreed to provide a more realistic and better defined buffer zone between the property and the proposed new access road for hearses. The owners have no objection to the proposed improvements at this site and there are no other interested parties in terms of the legal requirements covering living distances from crematoria.

Work on identifying possible future burial sites continues, particularly land for continuation of the existing agreement with the Bradford Council for Mosques after the new extension at Scholemoor is exhausted.

### **3.4 Extension of Muslim burial ground at Scholemoor cemetery**

The reclaiming of this land for burials, recently used as allotments, will offer a further 5/6 years of provision for Muslim burial.

Significant site clearance work has been necessary to allow access to this derelict and overgrown allotment site in order to carry out the ground surveys required to inform the proposed design and subsequent planning application.

Discussions with the Forestry Commission were completed in February to allow clearance work as the site had been classified as woodland cover due to the number of self-seeded trees. The Council's trees & woodlands service has now completed the above ground clearance and the site survey has been completed.

Change of use planning permission is expected to be submitted within the next 6 weeks with construction work planned to start in late autumn 2019.

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## **4. FINANCIAL & RESOURCE APPRAISAL**

The adopted Bereavement Services Strategy identified a compelling case for significant and immediate capital investment in the Council's Crematoria to ensure that the residents of 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 pressure on the quality of service delivered.

The indicative capital requirement to deliver the Strategy was agreed by Executive in November 2016 at £16m for the crematoria projects below and £1m to extend the Muslim Burial Ground:-

- Refurbishment of Oakworth Crematory
- Two new crematoria to replace Scholemoor and Nab Wood

This figure for crematoria investment, based on 2016 costs, did not include for the increasing complexity of the project, particularly in terms of identifying suitable sites for new facilities and the potential acquisition costs. Furthermore, there was no allowance made to cover the additional specialist resources required to deliver the programme.

The high level indicative cost for the refurbishment of Oakworth is £2.75m, which is £750,000 greater than the estimated figure in November 2016. The cost for entering Phase II works with Rex Proctor is £501,000 together with an estimated £75,000 required for internal specialist resources and fees during the next phase.

Financial analysis has been undertaken for crematoria investment (as a whole) to ensure the following:

- That where service prudential borrowing is required (where total costs exceed £16m) it be managed within the service, without creating pressure on existing revenue budgets.
- That the project in its entirety does not place additional strain on the Council finances (specifically capital financing costs) as a whole.

The outcome of this analysis, based on the current information available, demonstrates that the entire crematoria programme will generate a net cash flow surplus of £380k (£289k in discounted terms), over a 30 year period.

The financial modelling base case underpinning this analysis makes the following assumptions:-

- There will be a moderate increase in service users based on approximately 50% of funerals returning within the district from residents currently choosing to use neighbouring council facilities.
- Funding included for replacement of all 5 cremators in 20 years
- Cremation prices will rise above inflation from 01/04/2020 for a period of 10 years

Whilst not currently included within the financial models it should also be noted that:-

- The current facilities are at increasing risk of failure, should this happen there will be significant revenue pressure to the Council.
- The costs for the current facilities do not include backlog maintenance which is significant at all three existing sites.
- The capital costs do not include any decommissioning costs for existing facilities.

## **5. RISK MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE ISSUES**

- 5.1 Any significant and lengthy failure in the provision of a cremation service would cause both reputational and also financial damage to the Council.
- 5.2 Land acquisition had not yet been agreed for either new site and costs included to date may be inadequate. The instigation of compulsory purchase is being actively considered to run in parallel with the land negotiations to ensure the required outcomes.
- 5.3 The scheme has been referred to the Council's taxation advisor in order for VAT and the council's VAT partial exemption risks to be accounted for in the forward programme.
- 5.4 Before the Council legally commits to each build stage of the project, a

further report, including a full review of the cost modelling together with all risks and the actions proposed to mitigate these risks, will be brought to the Council's Project Appraisal Group (PAG) for consideration.

## **6. LEGAL APPRAISAL**

- 6.1 Under the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 a local authority may provide and maintain cemeteries.
- 6.2 Section 4 of the Cremation Act 1902 provides that a Burial Authority's powers to provide and maintain burial grounds or cemeteries or anything ancillary or incidental to the provision of cemeteries shall be deemed to extend to the provision and maintenance of crematoria. This legislation provides for a local authority to own and operate cemeteries and crematoria and charge such fees as they see fit. In addition to this, the legislation extends to statutory requirements for keeping registers for burial and cremation together with site plans.
- 6.3 The Cremation (England & Wales) Regulations 2008 also requires that a cremation authority must ensure that a crematorium is maintained in good working order.
- 6.4 Further, the cremation of human remains is also governed by the Environmental Protection legislation with regard to emissions from cremator operation. The level of emissions must be recorded to allow annual certification by the local Environmental Health office. Crematoria across England & Wales have been required to abate emissions of Mercury by 50% (of 2003 levels) since 31 December 2012.
- 6.5 A full feasibility analysis including title and deed investigation, consultation with any interested parties and confirmation that planning and environmental health are satisfied in policy and regulatory terms is required before any new sites for the crematoria can be recommended for approval. .
- 6.6 All procurement activity must be undertaken in accordance with Council's Contract Standing Orders and in line with internal governance requirements.

## **7. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

### **7.1 EQUALITY & DIVERSITY**

The Bereavement Services Strategy aims to deliver the objectives of the Council's Organisational Equalities Culture by ensuring services are well run, fit for purpose, and fair and inclusive in their approach.

The Strategy recognises and supports equality of opportunity between different groups, particularly religious in nature, through provision of relevant, accessible and in some cases bespoke services.

An Equality Impact Assessment is included at Appendix 1

## **7.2 SUSTAINABILITY IMPLICATIONS**

The strategy seeks to deliver the most sustainable service achievable over a 30-40 year period and beyond through a programme of capital investment.

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.

## **7.3 GREENHOUSE GAS EMISSIONS IMPACTS**

The Council's 6 cremators currently fail to comply with DEFRA's air quality emission requirements as they are not fitted with mercury abatement equipment. The strategy, when implemented in full, will include filtration equipment to all cremators in line with these regulations which aim to abate emissions of Mercury by 50% (of 2003 levels).

## **7.4 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

There are no known Community Safety Implications arising from this report.

## **7.5 HUMAN RIGHTS ACT**

There are no known Human Rights Implications arising from this report.

## **7.6 TRADE UNION**

There are no significant staffing implications arising from this report although the Trade Unions will be consulted as required through the Council's IR Framework.

## **7.7 IMPLICATIONS FOR CORPORATE PARENTING**

There are no known corporate parenting implications arising from this report.

## **7.8 ISSUES ARISING FROM PRIVACY IMPACT ASSESMENT**

Implementation of the Bereavement Service strategy will not affect the current and compliant processes in place to ensure privacy of personal data in accordance with the legislation in place.

## **8. NOT FOR PUBLICATION DOCUMENTS**

## **9. OPTIONS**

Oakworth Crematorium

There may be opportunity to reduce the cost by removing elements of the proposed design not related to the crematory/service hall. However, the absolutely essential building and refurbishment works already exceed the original estimate and a second access into the facility together with associated landscape accommodation works is deemed essential.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 10.1 That the revised cost estimate for the refurbishment of Oakworth crematorium at £2.75m be approved
- 10.2 That the implementation of Phase II works by Rex Procter & Partners to administer the refurbishment of Oakworth Crematorium and produce detailed design and tenders for the building of two new crematoria be approved

## **11. APPENDICES**

- 1 Equality Impact Assessment – Bereavement Services

## **12. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS**

Bereavement Services Strategy 2016-2031

## Appendix 1 – Bereavement Services Strategy EIA

Equality Impact Assessment Form

Reference –BerSerStrat

<b>Department</b>	Place	<b>Version no</b>	1.0
<b>Assessed by</b>	John Scholefield	<b>Date created</b>	May 2018
<b>Approved by</b>		<b>Date approved</b>	
<b>Updated by</b>		<b>Date updated</b>	
<b>Final approval</b>		<b>Date signed off</b>	

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council to have due regard to the need to

- eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
- advance equality of opportunity between different groups; and
- foster good relations between different groups

### Section 1: What is being assessed?

#### 1.1 Name of proposal to be assessed.

The Bereavement Services Strategy

#### 1.2 Describe the proposal under assessment and what change it would result in if implemented.

A strategy covering the future provision of burial and cremation services beyond 2030. The main elements of the proposed delivery plan cover improved crematoria facilities, infrastructure repairs to cemeteries, continuation of an improved Muslim burial service and changes to the council's memorial policy.

The level of capital expenditure required to improve crematoria provision may result in above inflation rises in the charge for cremations.

### Section 2: What the impact of the proposal is likely to be

#### 2.1 Will this proposal advance equality of opportunity for people who share a protected characteristic and/or foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those that do not? If yes, please explain further.

Service improvements in the partnership agreement for Muslim Burial Grounds should enhance the existing high level of opportunity for this particular community to receive a burial in line with their faith and customs.

There will be new facilities as a result of the changes proposed which will benefit the whole community and provide for several faith groups, increasing community services

for people with the protected characteristics.

**2.2 Will this proposal have a positive impact and help to eliminate discrimination and harassment against, or the victimisation of people who share a protected characteristic? If yes, please explain further.**

Not applicable

**2.3 Will this proposal potentially have a negative or disproportionate impact on people who share a protected characteristic? If yes, please explain further.**

Yes

**2.4 Please indicate the level of negative impact on each of the protected characteristics?**

(Please indicate high (H), medium (M), low (L), no effect (N) for each)

<b>Protected Characteristics:</b>	<b>Impact (H, M, L, N)</b>
Age	N
Disability	N
Gender reassignment	N
Race	N
Religion/Belief	N
Pregnancy and maternity	N
Sexual Orientation	N
Sex	N
Marriage and civil partnership	N
<b>Additional Consideration:</b>	
Low income/low wage	L

**2.5 How could the disproportionate negative impacts be mitigated or eliminated?**

Bradford’s charges for cremation remain significantly lower than the West Yorkshire Council average and reflect, to an extent, the quality of the existing provision. Any potential future price increases will be determined with due consideration of those of neighbouring facilities to ensure they remain proportionate in terms of the quality of provision and also the comparative affordability of the service to the community.

**Section 3: Dependencies from other proposals**

**3.1 Please consider which other services would need to know about your proposal and the impacts you have identified. Identify below which services you have consulted, and any consequent additional equality impacts that have been identified.**

None

#### **Section 4: What evidence you have used?**

##### **4.1 What evidence do you hold to back up this assessment?**

- Comparative local charges over 5 years
- Knowledge of rationale behind above inflation price changes in recent years

##### **4.2 Do you need further evidence?**

The current level of knowledge is regarded as sufficient to support this analysis

#### **Section 5: Consultation Feedback**

##### **5.1 Results from any previous consultations prior to the proposal development.**

There are no known specific consultation results for the Bereavement Services Strategy although there has been corporate consultation over above inflation price rises over the past 4 years.

##### **5.2 The departmental feedback you provided on the previous consultation (as at 5.1).**

None required

##### **5.3 Feedback from current consultation following the proposal development (e.g. following approval by Executive for budget consultation).**

Awaited

##### **5.4 Your departmental response to the feedback on the current consultation (as at 5.3) – include any changes made to the proposal as a result of the feedback.**

N/A

