

**STRATEGIC CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of Meeting of 24th August, 2022

Members Present: Aldermen Rodgers and Sandford; and
Councillors Bower, Matthew Collins, Corr and Flynn.

In Attendance: Mr. S. McBride, City Protection Manager;
Mr. M. Patterson, Bereavement Services Manager;
Mr. D. Bone, City Services Manager;
Mr. D. Logan, Project Manager;
Ms. K. Kennedy, Project Manager;
Mr. N. Brennan, Assistant Project Manager;
Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Election of Chairperson

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was

Moved by Alderman Rodgers,
Seconded by Councillor Corr, and

Resolved – That Alderman Sandford be appointed to the position of
Chairperson for the period to end on the date of the Local Government
Elections in May, 2023.

Alderman Sandford accepted the appointment and thanked the Members for his
nomination.

(Alderman Sandford in the Chair.)

Message of Gratitude

The Chairperson, on behalf of the Working Group, thanked the outgoing
Chairperson, Councillor Corr, for his work during the previous year and the valuable
contribution he had made to the Working Group during his period of office.

Apologies

An apology was reported on behalf of Councillor Hutchinson.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 26th May, 2022 were taken as read and signed as
correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were reported.

Update on New Crematorium

The Project Sponsor submitted the undernoted update report in regard to the new Crematorium development project.

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group with an update on the Roselawn Crematorium Development Project.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 It is recommended that the Working Group notes the update.

3.0 Main report

3.1 Crematorium Development

As reported previously the Planning Application for the new crematorium has been submitted to LCCC in June 2022 and validated. The application included the very extensive Environmental Statement that contains of 22 chapters; a hard copy (four lever arch files and a spiral bound Non-Technical Summary) can be accessed by the public at Roselawn Cemetery’s Public Office.

RIBA Stage 4 Technical designs are being developed currently.

Visuals of the latest design of the new building was presented at the meeting.

The revised programme reflects the later planning submission date but keeps the dates for ITT for contractor appointment as the same as the previous version. This will be reviewed once feedback from the planners have been received.

To show the extensive work that is required with a project of this size and nature, Members are asked to take note of the key dates below showing the main work steps been undertaken so far as well as next steps:

March 2017	Economic Appraisal – identification of preferred option
	Consideration of alternative uses for existing crematorium building
September 2017	Financial review of commercial options/financial modelling
December 2017	Elected Members’ Workshop

January 2018	Project moved to Stage 3 – committed; allocation of budget of up to £18million
Spring 2019	Appointment of Project Manager
August 2019	Planning Case for Overriding Need report
June 2020	Following a tender process, the Integrated Design Team was appointed
July 2020	Request for additional equality assessment in relation to location
September 2020	PAD (Pre Application Discussion) meeting with LCCC Planners and consultees: Rivers Agency, Environmental Health, Historic Environment Division, DfI Roads, Water Management Unit, Natural Environment Division Land and Ground Water Team.
October 2020	GPR (Ground Penetration Radar) survey carried out
February 2021	BREEAM (Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Methodology) assessment
April 2021	EIA (Environmental Impact Assessment) Screening Determination Report submitted to LCCC Planning
June 2021	RIBA Stage 2 Concept Design and Cost Plan commenced
July 2021	LCCC Planning determined proposal as an EIA development
August – Oct. 2021	Pre-application community consultation for LCCC Planning
September 2021	Equality Impact Assessment and Rural Needs Impact Assessment carried out
October 2021	Presentation to LCCC Environment Committee
May 2022	RIBA Stage 3 Developed Design and Cost Plan
May 2022	Environmental Impact Assessment carried out and Environmental Statement completed (22 chapters)
June 2022	Planning application submitted
July 2022	Appointment of crematorium specialist to explore alternative uses for existing building and pricing structure for new crematorium
July 2022	RIBA Stage 4 Technical Design and Cost Plan commenced
Next steps	

April 2023	Anticipated Planning Approval
May – July 2023	New road entrance construction
Feb – July 2023	PQQ and ITT procurement of Main Contractor
August 2023	Appointment of Main Contractor
September 2023	Start construction
December 2024	Completion New Build
2025	Completion Refurbishment Existing Building

**3.3 Equality or Good Relations Implications/
Rural Needs Assessment**

An Equality Screening has been carried out and concluded that no EQIA is necessary; a Rural Needs Assessment has been carried out.

3.4 Financial or resource implications

The project is on the Capital Programme at Stage 3 Committed.”

A Member raised a question in regard to the estimated completion cost of the development proposal, given the inflationary pressures which the economy was experiencing currently and suggested that some of the additional costs might be attributed to the delays in progressing the development proposal. The Member enquired also that, should any additional costs exceed the original estimate, where the additional funds might be sourced to deal with the potential shortfall in funding.

In response, the Project Sponsor confirmed that the project costs were monitored, over the whole lifetime of the project and that the development proposal was within the estimated budget currently. Mr. D. Logan, Project Manager, reminded the Members that the cost issues associated with the new Crematorium was not solely relevant to that specific capital project and that many of the Council’s capital investment projects faced similar financial pressures. The Project Manager reported that the issues of rising costs, associated with the Council’s capital investment programme, had been raised at previous meetings of the Finance Oversight Group and was an issue also for some of the Council’s externally funded projects, including Urban Villages.

The Members were informed that it would be necessary to work through the next stage of the cost-plan to ascertain the level of additional costs which might be required and, in so doing, develop a comprehensive cost profile to manage those costs. The Project Manager stated that the markets were extremely volatile presently and that prices under current circumstances could change between the pre-tender estimate stage and receipt of the formal tender submission.

In terms of the issues raised by the Member in regard to the time factor associated with the development proposal, the Project Manager stated that the development would not have been completed, in a more-timely fashion, by a private contractor, given that the major contributory factor, on the development time-line, was the protracted planning

process. He reported that, the new Crematorium development proposal was a major planning application, requiring an extensive environmental statement, and had necessitated a detailed and complex assessment.

The Project Manager informed the Working Group that Council officers had been working closely with Quantity Surveyors, the Finance Working Group and the Finance Oversight Board, to ensure that the Council had the sufficient financial capacity to deliver the project within available resources. In response to a further question from a Member, in regard to how often the Project Development team had met with the Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council planning authority, the Project Sponsor stated that meetings had taken place, on a regular basis, and that a case officer had been appointed, within that City Council, which had proved beneficial in strengthening the communication links between both authorities.

The Project Sponsor provided the Members with a detailed presentation, which included design proposals for the new crematorium, with some amendments which had been made to improve the appearance and aesthetic value of the site. She referred specifically to the new car parking arrangements which provided car parking, at both the front and rear of the building, and which would facilitate improved throughput for mourners and visitors. She stated that, as part of amendments to new development project, it had been possible to undertake some landscaping work which had been made possible by the fact that a retaining wall was no longer required.

The Members were informed that the new roads entrance to the Crematorium would serve the new Crematorium alone and would not permit direct access to the cemetery grounds. She reported that separation of circulation between the new Crematorium and the rest of the cemetery was required. The Project Sponsor explained that Council officers were required to complete a visual impact statement, within the environmental statement, specifically in regard to traffic management on the Ballygowan road. The Project Sponsor confirmed that specific signage would be required, within the confines of the site, to ensure that mourners were directed to the relevant car parks servicing the two ceremony rooms.

The Project Sponsor reported that the building and its positioning had been undertaken to allow mourners to visit and leave the facility in such a way that there would be no crossover between mourners arriving for individual cremation services. A part of the planning consultation, at which, concerns had been raised in regard to the new Crematorium building, she confirmed that the height of the new building, sitting in the surrounding landscape, was lower than the present structure.

A Member raised a question in regard to the installation of solar panels in a part of the new building to provide renewable green energy. In response, the Project Sponsor reported that consideration was being given to the provision of a green roof, in part of the building, and that she would be happy to consider, also, the use of solar panels.

The Working Group noted the update report in regard to the new Crematorium development project and thanked the Project Sponsor for her detailed and informative presentation.

Update on City Cemetery Visitor Centre

Mr. D. Logan, Project Manager, provided the Working Group with an update on the capital work involved with the new visitor centre, situated at the City Cemetery. He stated that all capital works were nearing completion and that some restoration work was

ongoing, including repairs to the Victorian Fountain. He stated that it was anticipated that the capital works would be completed within the next four weeks and referred to additional ongoing dual language signage which was required, following a decision of the Strategic Policy and Resource Committee, in June. He stated that once the capital and restoration work, including the erection of the dual language signage was completed, there would be an official launch.

The City Protection Manager confirmed that local community engagement was ongoing, including engagement linkages to the Strategic Policy and Resource decision, in June, regarding dual language signage and work on a tour offering package.

The Working Group noted the information provided on the capital and restoration work being undertaken at the City Cemetery, including the new visitor centre.

Update on Bereavement Services - Operational

The City Protection Manager submitted the undernoted report in regard to the operation of Bereavement Services:

“1.0 Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an operational update on Bereavement Services.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- **Note the updates in the main body of the report.**
- **This update will be summarised in a report to the next People and Communities meeting in September.**

3.0 Main report

3.1 City of Belfast Crematorium Update

The Reflections Café reopened at the City of Belfast Crematorium on 4th July. Bereavement Services are continuing to liaise with the café franchisee on numbers using the café since reopening.

On 26th July the Federation of Burial and Crematorium Authority conducted an inspection at the City of Belfast Crematorium. This inspection is completed once every 5 years and focused on 6 separate key areas of service delivery including:

- 1. Cremation Administration**
- 2. Ceremony Facilities**
- 3. Cremation Facilities**
- 4. Premises and Facilities**
- 5. Grounds and Memorialisation**
- 6. Service and Staff**

These areas were scrutinised and reviewed more than 80 points of interest. The inspection found an excellent level of service provision and did not feel it necessary to make any recommendations. The report is split into two sections with a score of 98.7% awarded for the Compliance section and 91% for the Environmental Awareness Score.

A charity presentation to a local bereavement related charity, Lighthouse is being arranged in October. This presentation is in recognition of a metal recycling scheme which the City of Belfast Crematorium is involved in through the Institute of Cemeteries and Crematorium Management. A total of £12,000 has been raised which will be presented to Lighthouse.

Scheduled servicing of the cremators is due to take place by the contractor from 16th – 21st September 2022.

3.2 Roselawn Green Flag Status

Roselawn cemetery was successfully awarded Green Flag status once again this year following an inspection by the judges in June 2022. The awards were announced recently by environmental charity, Keep Northern Ireland Beautiful, and are an internationally recognised certification for environmental quality management for parks and open spaces.

3.3 Coronavirus Act Provisions

Members may recall that the Coronavirus Act 2020 contained provisions which have allowed the following workarounds for the transfer of statutory documents relating to burials and cremations.

- 1. Certifying Doctors could email Medical Certificates of Cause of Death (MCCD) directly to the General Registry Office (GRO)**
- 2. The GRO could conduct an interview with next of kin by phone**
- 3. The GRO could then email the MCCD to the Bereavement Services Office**
- 4. The Doctor who completed cremation Form B did not have to have seen the deceased within 28 days**
- 5. The requirement was suspended for a second doctor to complete cremation Form C.**

Council has received communication from the General Registry Office advising that these provisions may cease on 24th September due to the relevant legislation expiring. Should this be the case it will impact on Bereavement Services Administration and on Funeral Directors as the relevant statutory forms will be required to be completed and lodged in hard copy. Bereavement Services are continuing to

communicate with the Funeral Directors forum on this potential change from electronic submission back to hard copy documentation. The issue has been escalated to the Cross Departmental Covid Recovery Group including central government Departments to find a workable solution.

Bereavement Services continues to plan for these provisions ceasing on 24th September and are exploring options including an appointment-based system for Funeral Directors which is used by other services within Council including Registration Services.

3.4 Bereavement Services Review Update

The Bereavement Services review is ongoing based on the principles of service design and is focusing on service delivery, the customer experience and resources as well as future service needs such as the new Crematorium. As part of the Bereavement Services review various workshops have been facilitated with all teams across the service as well as Funeral Directors and central government Departments. A further workshop will be arranged with the Strategic Crematorium & Cemeteries Working Group Members in September.

4.0 Financial and Resource Implications

4.1 No financial implications. All items within this report being delivered within existing budgets.

4.2 Equality or Good Relations Implications

None.”

In response to a question from a Member in relation to the termination of the Coronavirus Act Provisions and the impact for Bereavement Services, the City Protection Manager confirmed that the electronic process put in place had been well received, by both staff and Funeral Directors, and was due to end on 24th September 2022. In terms of the benefits associated with the regulations, the Working Group requested that a letter be forwarded the Department of Finance, requesting that it provide a workable solution, allowing the current arrangements, for Bereavement Services, to continue, on a permanent basis, under a new statutory framework, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee

Ms. K. Kennedy, Project Manager, provided the Working Group with an update on the work being undertaken, currently, in regard to Bereavement Services and its service provision. She referred to the need to examine how the Council delivers the service in the most efficient way to meet the needs of its service users. The Members were informed that the improvement programme formed part of the “City Services Transition Improvement Programme” within City and Neighbourhood Services and that stage one, examining functional and Management levels within City Services, had been completed in the previous year. She stated that stage two, exploring improvements within each section of City Services, was ongoing. To that end, she reported that Continuous Improvement was undertaking a service design approach, which would focus on how the

Council could meet the needs and expectations of bereaved families and Funeral Directors.

The Project Manager highlighted the need to examine processes, procedures and technologies in the future delivery of Bereavement Services. She stated that Corporate Improvement would be adopting a user-centered approach and would examine the relationship between Bereavement Services and relevant stakeholders, including the Department of Health and the Department of Finance. The Members were informed that the review of Bereavement Services was at the discovery stage and that a future workshop was planned with Members to ascertain their needs within the delivery of Bereavement Services.

The Project Manager explained that it was essential to determine the cost baseline associated with delivery of the service, including the clarification of rules and responsibilities between Bereavement Services and its stakeholders. In terms of current and emerging technologies, the Project Manager reported that it was important to develop a digital strategy, including an extended use of the "Plot-Box" system and that a review of Bereavement Services charges would also require further analysis.

The Working Group noted the update on the operational proposals in regard to the delivery of Bereavement Services, thanked the Project Manager for her informative presentation and offered its congratulations to both the management and staff of Bereavement Services on the findings of the recent inspection by the Federation of Cremation and Burial Authority, in addition to Roselawn successfully retaining Green Flag status.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 5th October at 5.15 p.m.

Chairperson