



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Parks and Leisure Improvement Programme - Review of Roselawn Crematorium
Date:	10 March 2011
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Head of Parks and Leisure
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1. Relevant Background Information

The City of Belfast Crematorium currently provides cremation services to both residents and non-residents of Belfast and is the only crematorium in operation in Northern Ireland.

The number of cremations has been steadily increasing for the past number of years with cremations in Northern Ireland now accounting for 18% of total deaths (74% in the rest of the UK).

Currently the crematorium is operating at full capacity and it is anticipated that the number of people choosing cremation will continue to rise in the future.

Accordingly, as part of the Parks and Leisure improvement programme, the HR/Organisational Development unit together with staff and management have undertaken an operational review of the crematorium. The Institute of Cemeteries and Crematoria Management (ICCM) has been used during this review to provide technical advice and assurance.

It is evident as the crematorium has now reached maximum capacity that current working arrangements need to be addressed.

Current operating arrangements

- The crematorium operates Monday to Friday 9.00am to 3.30pm and Saturday 9.00am to 11.30am
- There can be up to an eight day wait for cremation.

Current staffing establishment

The operational strand of the crematorium consists of:

- 1 x Crematorium Supervisor, Scale 5 plus contractual overtime and

<p>weekend enhancement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 x Crematorium Technicians, Scale 4 plus contractual overtime and weekend enhancement. <p>In order to meet current operational requirements, staff are required to work regular overtime and agency staff are used to supplement permanent staffing levels (see table below for historical figures).</p>			
	08/09	09/10	10/11 (projected up to period 12)
Overtime Cost	£20,250	£25,310	£21,135
Agency Cost	£39,725	£32,615	£38,692
Total	£59,975	£57,925	£59,827
<p>In addition, regular operational support is provided by Cemetery Operatives.</p>			

2. Key Issues	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Staff and management have raised concerns that the current working arrangements are inefficient, impractical and risk impacting negatively upon service delivery. Support provided by Cemetery Operatives was initially introduced as a temporary arrangement. However, due to the volume of assistance required, it is now causing a strain on their service delivery and the situation is becoming untenable. A major area of concern is the length of waiting time for cremations. This is largely due to insufficient capacity for any additional cremations based on the current staffing levels and the number of slots available per day. Consideration must also be given to increasing future demand for cremations including the potential increase in revenue. <p><u>Key findings</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> It is evident that the current staffing establishment of four is totally inadequate to meet the demands of the crematorium Analysis of historical information i.e. agency, overtime spend and cemetery operative cover, shows that, if current operating arrangements continue, there is an immediate need to increase staff at technician level. Throughout the review, it became apparent that all major stakeholders, including staff agreed that additional cremation slots should be made available providing an improved service / more choice to customers. Whilst Saturday is not treated as a full working day, it has been clearly established that there is the demand for additional slots on Saturdays. A work study exercise was conducted to assess the impact of extending the opening hours of the crematorium (potential revenue and impact on future staffing levels) Based on current capacity and potential increase in demand, it is anticipated that, if opening hours were to be extended to Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm and Saturday 8.30am to 2.30pm there would be capacity for an additional 1650 cremations per year (an increase of 50%) 	

- Increasing capacity by 50% will bring additional income to the service. There is a need for significant ongoing investment and additional funds will help to offset some of the cost. Prudent estimates anticipate the following increases:

Financial Year	Income
2011/12*	£125,000
2012/13	£300,000
2013/14	£400,000

*Based on changes being implemented by period 6 of the financial year 2011/12 and assuming growth in demand based on current analysis of market.

Proposals

Crematorium Supervisor

- The role of the crematorium supervisor has evolved and should now be revised to fully reflect the day to day operational accountability and responsibility for the crematorium.
- It is the responsibility of the supervisor to ensure the efficient and effective day to day management of the crematorium ensuring that all operational policies and procedures are in place and are adhered to.
- It is therefore proposed that this post be re graded to SO2 to reflect the higher level of duties and responsibilities and is re – titled to crematorium officer.

Crematorium Technician

- The current job descriptions of the crematorium technicians should also be revised to include additional duties and responsibilities associated with the opening and closing of the building, meeting and dealing with the bereaved and funeral directors and making operational decisions as and when required.
- It is therefore proposed that these posts are re graded to Scale 6 and re – titled to senior crematorium technician to better reflect the duties and responsibilities.

Current Staffing establishment

- The crematorium currently has a heavy reliance on agency staff, goodwill from permanent staff to work overtime and also the use of cemetery operatives.
- Furthermore, these current arrangements do not provide a consistency in the level of service being provided.
- It is therefore proposed to increase the number of senior crematorium technician by one thereby eliminating the year on year cost of overtime and agency.

Opening Hours

- Given the bereavement culture in Northern Ireland whereby funerals and cremations generally happen within three days, the current waiting time of up to eight days can cause additional distress to bereaved families.
- It is proposed to extend the opening hours to Monday to Friday 8.30am to 5.30pm and Saturday 8.30am to 2.30 pm to help reduce waiting times and increase choice, resulting in a substantially higher standard of service

delivery.

- If Members agree to extending opening hours the lack of external lighting will be an issue at the site. The Property and Projects department has been asked to assess lighting needs and provide recommendations and estimated costs. Recommendations will be brought to committee at a later date.

Future staffing establishment

- The extension of the operating hours will have a knock on effect on the staffing numbers.
- A detailed analysis of additional cremation slots has indicated that additional staff will be required to ensure the effective and efficient operation of the crematorium, whilst enhancing the level of customer service to all stakeholders, including bereaved families, members of the public and funeral directors. It is therefore proposed that, if the council decides to proceed with an extension to the current opening hours, an additional four technicians will be required.

These proposals will lead to a considerable enhancement to the important front line service that has been under significant pressure in recent times.

3. Financial Implications

Changes to current staffing establishment

The financial impact of :

- Re-designation of the crematorium supervisor and the crematorium technicians is £27,000
- One additional post at Scale 6 is £31,000 (this includes on costs and potential costs of staff working on a shift pattern)
- This will be met by the anticipated reduction in overtime and agency (£59,827 for 2010/11 as stated in overtime and agency table)

Changes to future staffing structures

The cost of increasing the number of crematorium technicians (Scale 4) by four is £100,000. It is anticipated that in the first year of implementation (the last 6 months of 2011/12) revenue will increase by £125,000. This will cover the full year cost of the additional four posts, plus allow for additional reinvestment into the crematorium to further improve the service.

Human Resources

Consultation will continue with all relevant stakeholders including HR, trade unions and staff to develop an implementation plan which is fully in accordance with all HR policies and procedures. **However Committee should note that all parties have been consulted throughout this process to date and are in agreement with the recommendations contained in the review thus presenting a joint agreed position.**

Further work will continue with staff and management to develop appropriate job descriptions and shift patterns. It is acknowledged that all affected post holders will be required to sign and agree amended job descriptions to take account of changes in reporting lines and agree to the a working rota that meets the proposed business needs.

	<p><u>Asset and Other Implications</u> The proposals outlined present an opportunity to contribute to future capital investment in crematoria and cemetery facilities.</p>
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4. Equality and Good Relations Implications	
	There are no equality or good relations implications.

5. Recommendations	
	<p>Committee is asked to approve the following proposals as outlined within the report:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Re-designate the posts of crematorium supervisor to Crematorium Officer (SO 2) and crematorium technicians to Senior Crematorium Technicians (scale 6) to better reflect the additional duties and responsibilities • Increase the establishment of senior crematorium technicians by one to cope with current demand • Extend the hours of opening for the crematorium to 8.30am – 17.30pm Monday to Friday, and Saturday 8.30am to 14.30pm • As a result of the extended opening hours increase the number of crematorium technicians by four.

6. Decision Tracking	
	The Head of Parks and Leisure will be responsible for implementation of structural and operational changes by end of September 2011.

7. Key to Abbreviations	
	ICCM: Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management

8. Documents Attached	
	None.