



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Development
Date:	9 February 2012
Reporting Officer:	Andrew Hassard, Director of Parks and Leisure
Contact Officer:	Emer Boyle, Policy and Business Development Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

1.	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Over the last number of years officers have been working on a phased approach to cemetery and crematorium development in the city based on an analysis of data gathered, trend information and the development of a plan to meet current and future service requirements.
1.2	As part of the approach a process has been undertaken in an effort to identify a site for development of a new cemetery with the shortlisted options at Nutts Corner and Lisleen both being subsequently discounted. The committee has also agreed to develop options for additional cremation provision in the city.

2.	Key Issues
2.1	<u>Potential Site at Dundrod for cemetery development</u> Members will be aware of the ongoing project to select a site for a new cemetery for Belfast and that a site at Dundrod was identified following a council run expression of interest exercise as part of expanding the search for suitable lands. Following a site visit on 31 January 2011 Members agreed that initial tests should be undertaken at the site to determine its potential suitability for development as a cemetery.
2.2	A site visit for Members who were not on the committee at the time of the previous visit has been organised for 13 February 2012.
2.3	The initial site tests have now been completed and these indicate that the site could potentially be developed as a cemetery, but that further, more detailed hydro-geological tests (tier 2 tests) would be required to ensure suitability and to obtain planning consent. This process would take approximately 12 months to complete.

2.4	Officers have written to the representative of the landowner to inform him of the findings and to request a meeting in order to discuss options for going forward. This meeting will also be attended by representatives from Legal Services and Estates who are keen to verify ownership boundaries and “title” of the site in question.
2.5	Following agreement the next steps in the process would be to undertake a planning assessment of the site to identify any other issues that could potentially impact on the ability to get planning and other consents for the site as a cemetery.
2.6	Once the meeting with the landowners’ representatives has taken place and the planning assessment completed a report will be presented to committee on the options on how to proceed. Both Estates and Legal Services opinions will inform this report.
2.7	<u>New Provision for Cremation</u> Members will also be aware that officers have been exploring options for the provision of additional cremation facilities. A meeting was hosted by the Chief Executive in December 2011 of the relevant officers from the neighbouring councils to discuss cemetery and crematorium provision in their areas and the possibility of exploring a sub-regional approach to future provision.
2.8	Following this meeting Newtownabbey Borough Council has confirmed that they are proposing to commence investigations into the development of a crematorium at a site on the Doagh Road. They have written to the council asking for confirmation of its interest in contributing to the development of such an approach. A copy of the letter is attached as Appendix 1.
2.9	Members may also be aware that the DOE Minister recently granted outline planning approval for a new crematorium on the Lisburn Road in Moira. In addition at the beginning of January a planning application was submitted for a new crematorium in Omagh.
2.10	Given the changing circumstances it is proposed that committee agree to commission jointly with Newtownabbey Borough Council a feasibility study on the development of a sub regional approach to the development of a new crematorium with particular emphasis on the site identified in the Newtownabbey area. This study will include an analysis of the potential impact of the recent announcements on crematorium provision.

3.	Resource Implications
3.1	<u>Financial</u> There is provision of £13.9m in the council’s capital programme for new cemetery provision for Belfast City Council. The proposed cost of the feasibility study will be approximately £20k.

3.2	<u>Human Resources</u> There are no human resource implications at this stage.
3.3	<u>Asset and Other Implications</u> None at this stage although the final phases of the project will inevitably increase the council's land ownership and associated liabilities.

4.	Equality and Good Relations Implications
4.1	There are currently no equality or good relation implications however this will continue to be reviewed as the project is developed.

5.	Recommendations
	Members are asked to: (i) agree that officers proceed with discussions regarding the Dundrod site and present a report on options to a future meeting of the committee; and (ii) agree to work with Newtownabbey Borough council on developing a feasibility study on a sub-regional approach to crematorium facilities.

6.	Decision Tracking
	Update reports will be taken to committee by the Policy and Business Development Manager on a regular basis.

7.	Key to Abbreviations
	None.

8.	Documents Attached
	Appendix 1: Letter from Jacqui Dixon, Chief Executive, Newtownabbey Borough Council