Belfast City Council

Report to:	Parks and Leisure Committee
Subject:	Update in relation to Online Cemetery Records Project
Date:	14 June 2012
Reporting Officer:	Rose Crozier, Assistant Director of Parks and Leisure
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1	Relevant Background Information
	In October 2010 committee approved a phased approached to the project delivering the availability of an online cemetery records search facility. Follow up reports have been tabled, the most recent in December 2011, confirming the introduction, in January 2012, of an enhanced search facility, and detailing the planned approach to phase 2 of the project. Phase 2 began in March 2012 and is divided into two stages. As reported in December 2011, step 1 consists of the identification of records to be redacted, developing and introducing a charging framework for personal requests, and the development of an online payment option for records prior to 1936. Step 2 consists of the physical redaction of records, uploading to the online search facility, and the introduction of a charging mechanism for online payment of searches for records post 1936.

2	Key Issues
	Step 1 of Phase 2 is almost complete, in that records to be redacted have been identified and a mechanism for charging for personal requests has been agreed. The agreed charge for personal searches is £15 and this will apply to "request for grave" searches or confirmation of grave details. Personal requests for grave section and number only or grave location will be provided free of charge. Online records will be available for download from 1st June. This consists of a print quality grave record which can be downloaded via the existing online search facility. The charge for online

records will be £1.50 per search. Both charges will be applicable from 1st June 2012.

The final stage of Step 1 is the identification and introduction of an effective process for uploading new burial records. This is currently being developed as part of the introduction of a new cemeteries electronic management system, planned for rollout in June. There are some sensitivities around how soon we make new records available and this will be factored into new business processes arising from the introduction of the new system.

Work on Step 2, physical redaction of records, will begin in June 2012. As previously reported, the physical redaction process could take up to 2 years although records will be uploaded in stages rather than in one go at the end of the process. Specific software, to assist in this task, has been purchased and the relevant staff trained.

3	**Resource Implications**
	Financial It is difficult to quantify potential income from chargeable downloads and / or physical searches. Income generation, however, is not a key driver of stage 2 of the project. The department has identified a potential income generation stream for future strands of the project, notably around access to records by professional genealogists. Human Resources Staff from ISB and Bereavement Administration will undertake delivery of Phase 2. Asset and Other Implications None

4	**Equality and Good Relations Implications**
	None

5	**Recommendations**
	Committee is asked to note progress of the online cemeteries records project

6	**Decision Tracking**
	A review will be carried out in October 2012 in relation to delivery of key milestones of Phase 2 and a progress report will be tabled at committee in

	December 2012. This will report will include a breakdown of income received from physical and online searches.

7	**Key to Abbreviations**
	ISB – Information Services Belfast

8	**Documents Attached**
	None