

**STRATEGIC CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of Meeting of 5th December, 2016**

Members Present	The High Sheriff, Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson) and Alderman Sandford.
In Attendance	Mr. R. Cregan, Director of Finance and Resources; Mr. N. Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services; Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director; Mr. N. Brennan, Assistant Project Manager; Mrs. J. Wilson, Business Manager; Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer; Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor; and Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

**Apologies**

An apology for inability to attend was reported on behalf of Councillor O'Neill.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd November, 2016 were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Interest were reported.

**Economic Appraisal of Future Cremation Facilities**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Working Group with an update on the progress which had been made to date in regard to the provision of future cremation facilities. He informed the Group that a draft economic appraisal had been received by the Council on 28th November, 2016 and was being assessed currently in accordance with the Council's process for the authorisation of major capital projects.

The Director acknowledged the concerns of the Working Group in respect of the delay associated with the provision of a new cremation facility for the City. He highlighted however the requirement for the Council to undertake a rigorous and comprehensive evaluation process to consider all options available, including the associated cost implications for the Council's capital programme. After completion of this exercise, he stated that the results from the process would be presented to the Working Group for its consideration. In this regard, the Members were provided with a range of options to meet demands for future cremation facilities, including:

**Option 1** – Do Nothing

**Option 2.1** – Extension and refurbishment of the existing crematorium, including a 100 seat chapel facility and a new extension to the existing building to include an additional 150 seat chapel.

**Option 3.1** – A new 2 chapel crematorium on Roselawn site and reuse of the existing building including the provision of a 2 x 150 seat chapel facility and the refurbishment of the existing listed building for an alternative use.

**Option 3.3** – A new 1 chapel crematorium on the existing site and the refurbishment of the existing crematorium – This option includes the development of a new facility on Roselawn with a 150 seat chapel in addition to the refurbishment of the existing crematorium to include a 100 seat chapel.

**Option 4.1** - The provision of a new 2 chapel crematorium, on a new site, including the provision of 2 x 150 seat chapels and a refurbishment of the existing building.

The Director of Finance and Resources emphasised the importance of undertaking a comprehensive and robust cost evaluation exercise in respect of all the options under consideration. He stated that the proposal was at stage 2 of a 3 stage process and was listed as an uncommitted project within the Council's capital programme. The Working Group was informed that the Finance Oversight Group was required to review the findings of the economic appraisal, including the cost evaluation exercise, before final authority to commit expenditure was authorised by the Strategic Policy and Resources Committee.

He reminded the Members that a detailed economic appraisal in respect of the proposed development had been undertaken and that the People and Communities Committee, at its meeting in October, had granted authority in respect of the commencement of party briefings in the matter which were scheduled to take place in January, 2017. As part of the evaluation process, the Working Group was advised of the need to consider the revenue implications associated with the capital project and of the need to report back to the Group, after all the revenue and operational implications of the project had been considered.

The Working Group, having considered the proposals, expressed its desire that the options include the feasibility of a chapel with a capacity of not less than 250 seats.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and agreed the commissioning of a business plan to look at the revenue implications and the future revenue model for the proposed new crematorium facility.

### **Review of Council Burial Policy**

The Policy and Business Development Officer provided the Working Group with an update on the findings of stage 2 of the review of the burial policy. She reminded Members that stage 1 had been undertaken to review the Council's burial policy and that it had identified a number of strategic conclusions and had recommended a revised policy, which had been agreed by the People and Communities Committee.

She informed the Members that stage 2 of the process had been developed to re-assess the criteria which had been used, to date, as a means to consider potential burial sites and to re-assess the short list of cemetery sites identified. Following a review, it was recommended that the existing nine criteria be reduced to facilitate ease of use and should include:

1. Size of site and potential expansion
2. Accessibility to the site including transport links and unrestricted access
3. Technical suitability

4. Planning and landscape suitability
5. Availability

It was explained to the Working Group that criteria 1, 3 and 4 would be assessed against a pass or fail test and as such, would have no weighting attached to them. It was reported also that criteria 2 and 4 would have an equal weighting. She outlined the recommendations of the report and highlighted the fact that given the issues of accessibility and availability with regard to the existing shortlist of sites, the Council should adopt an expression of interest approach, based on clearly defined parameters which should include a specification that any proposed burial site should be restricted to an area exclusively to service the needs of North and West Belfast. It was recommended also that officers engage with neighbouring Councils to explore/optimize potential joint working opportunities.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and agreed the recommendations as contained within the report.

#### **Update on Loughview Cemetery Planning Application**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided an update in respect of the Loughview Park Cemetery Planning Application. The Working Group was reminded that a planning application had been submitted by Strategic Planning, on behalf of Carston Undertakings Ltd, in respect of a proposed cemetery located in the Dundrod area. It was reported that the planning application was being considered currently by Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council and that Belfast City Council had been given an opportunity to respond. He reported that a response would be drafted on behalf of the Council and would be presented to the Planning Committee, for approval, prior to being submitted through the normal planning process. Members were advised that the response would indicate that, whilst the Council had no specific planning comments in relation to the merits of the application being submitted, it would provide some contextual information in respect of the projected need and demand for burial provision. It was reported that the Council would continue to keep a watching brief in respect of the planning application and would provide the Members with an update on the progress of the application.

Noted.

Chairperson