

**STRATEGIC CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of Meeting of 6th March, 2017**

Members Present     Aldermen Rodgers (Chairperson) and Sandford.

In Attendance        Mrs. R. Crozier, Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods, Mrs. S. Toland, Assistant Director, City Services 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 3rd February, 2017 were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of Interest were reported.

**Update on Memorial Inspection Programme**

The Assistant Director, Neighbourhoods, provided the Working Group with an update on the implementation of the Memorial Management Policy which had been presented to the Members, at a previous meeting, on 6th April, 2016. It was reported that a Memorial Management Team had been established in October, 2015, to develop a business case for the provision of a permanent Memorial Management Service, and that the project timeline had been extended until 31st March, 2017, after which a report in the matter would be presented to the Council's Chief Officers' Management Team.

The Members were provided with an overview of the results, to date, of the Memorial Inspection Survey, which had identified remedial action to be undertaken, across the Council's cemetery portfolio. It was reported that the inspections had commenced in September, 2016, in Balmoral Cemetery, and that surveys had taken place also in Shankill Graveyard and Clifton Street Cemetery. The surveys had resulted in the staking and banding of those memorials which had been found to be unstable. It was reported that the inspections in Roselawn Cemetery had commenced in February, 2017, within Section D, and that a public information leaflet had been produced to inform the public of the remedial action being undertaken to secure the affected headstones. In addition, it was reported that a media programme had been conducted to inform the public of the work being undertaken, including a radio interview with the Memorial Manager.

The Assistant Director highlighted the success of the Council's Memorial Management Policy since its introduction in April, 2016. It was reported that the policy,

designed to control and manage the erection of grave headstones, had been endorsed by monumental sculptors and that a review consultation, with sculptors, had been arranged to take place in the Spring of 2017. She reported that as result of the introduction of the policy, Memorial Management income had increased by £17,221 (30%) for the period from 1st April, 2016 till 31st December, 2016, in comparison to the same period in 2015. The Working Group was advised that the cost associated with the implementation of the policy, to date, had been met within existing resources and that a business case to provide additional staff resources, in the form of a permanent Memorial Management Service, had been submitted to the Chief Officers' Management Team for their consideration and approval.

Noted

### **Update on the Trial use of Shoring to Address Subsidence at Roselawn Cemetery**

The Assistant Director provided the Members with an update on the trial use of shoring, to reduce the risk of grave subsidence, at Roselawn Cemetery. She reminded the Working Group that a previous I.C.C.M. report in the matter had recommended the use of shoring as a preventative measure and, as a result, the Council had purchased two telescopic hydraulic shoring units for that purpose. She reported that shoring had commenced in May, 2016 on the areas within the cemetery most prone to subsidence, and which covered 50 burial plots. A detailed report in the matter, prepared by Mr. G. Quinn, Community Parks Manager, was presented to the Working Group for its consideration.

The Members were advised that, while the use of shoring was an effective remedy for grave subsidence in the majority of cases, it could not be a guaranteed effective remedy in those areas of the cemetery which contained heavy clay soil types. The Working Group was advised of the additional costs to the Council associated with the storage and transportation of the hydraulic storage units which had been estimated at £7,500. It was reported that additional staff resources would be required, in the form of a cemetery operative, the additional post being located at Roselawn Cemetery. The Assistant Director affirmed her anticipation that the resources required to meet the costs of the shoring trial could be met within existing revenues budgets and that this would be kept under review, as the implementation progressed. She stated further, that any additional unforeseen costs, associated with the trial, would be reported back to the Working Group for its consideration.

Noted

### **Charity Nomination for the Distribution of Money Received from the Recycling of Metals**

The Working Group was provided with an update, by the Assistant Director, on the process to nominate a charity for the purpose of distributing money in respect of the recycling of metals, and that Cruise Bereavement Care had been selected as the chosen charity for the first nomination in 2017. The Members were reminded of the process associated with the nomination of a bereavement related charity and of the sensitivity required in conducting the exercise. It was reported that, in the interests of fairness, no charity could be nominated to receive a donation more than once in any two year period.

The Members were informed that, in September, 2016, the Working Group had agreed that a customer survey be conducted twice a year, targeted at those individuals who had used the crematorium in the previous six months and which included a specific question in regard to the recycling of metals. It was reported that in excess of 300 responses had been received, the results of which would be brought back to a future meeting of the Working Group. It was reported that findings of the survey were being analysed currently, prior to a charity nomination being made to the I.C.C.M. by the closing date of 17th March, 2017.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided.

### **Research and Benchmarking into Municipal Funerals**

The Working Group was asked to grant permission in respect of undertaking research, including a benchmark exercise in regard to the provision of municipal funerals. The Members were provided with background information regarding the increasing costs of funeral provision and, in particular, the impact of 'funeral poverty'. It was reported that following research, undertaken by the I.C.C.M., in the matter, 11 local authorities in the U.K. had provided a municipal funeral service, with a further 23 giving consideration to the future provision of municipal funerals. The Working Group granted authority for Council officers to undertake a research and benchmarking exercise around the provision of municipal funerals, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting be held on Monday, 10th April, 2017.

Chairperson