

**STRATEGIC CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of Meeting of 5th February, 2020**

Members Present: Councillor Corr, Chairperson;  
Aldermen Rodgers and Sandford; and  
Councillors Flynn and Mulholland.

In Attendance: Ms. V. Brown, City Services Manager;  
Mr. M. Patterson, Bereavement Services Manager;  
Mr. A. Charles, Project Sponsor;  
Ms. S. Kalke, Project Sponsor and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 20th November, 2019 were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

**Update on New Crematorium Development**

Ms. Kalke, Project Sponsor, provided the Working Group with an update in regard to the new crematorium development. She reported that a project team had been appointed, including a crematorium specialist team, which was working with the internal project team on the procurement of a design team and a range of professional expertise to manage the project.

The Members were informed that the Crematorium Project Board had met in December 2019 and were provided with an update on the progress to date and had requested to meet with both the Project Management Team and the Crematorium Specialist. She reported that the Project Board had discussed the benefits of the previous site visit to the crematoria in Glasgow and had agreed to undertake a further site visit to a new crematorium facility. The Working Group was informed that the Planning Consultant had been appointed to lead on the PAD process and that a strategy PAD workshop would be held, prior to meeting with the planners from Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and agreed that the Project Management Team be invited to its March meeting in order to provide an update on the progress made in respect of the new crematorium facility. It was agreed also that Members of the Working Group attend a site visit to a new build crematorium and that the Crematorium specialist might be used to provide guidance in respect of which crematorium was most relevant for that purpose, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee. The Chairman, on behalf of the Working Group, requested that the Working Group be provided with regular monthly updates on the progress made in respect of the new crematorium facility.

**Update on Heritage Project – City Cemetery**

The Project Sponsor, Physical Programmes, provided the Working Group with a progress report in regard to the Council's City Cemetery Heritage project. He informed

the Members that permission had been granted by the Heritage Fund to develop the project and that a professional team had been engaged to that end. The Working Group was reminded of the two capital elements to the work, comprising the construction of a new visitor centre and the restoration of key assets within the site.

The Working Group was advised that the procurement exercise in respect of the capital element of the work had been completed and that the work was due to commence in February, 2020. It was anticipated that work in respect of the visitor centre would commence in May, 2020 and would take approximately twelve months to complete. The Members were informed also of a number of non-capital expenditure which was required, including the recruitment of key personnel and the development of a comprehensive activity plan. He stated that it was hoped to engage with the community and local schools throughout the construction phase and that the recent recruitment of a dedicated Engagement Officer would assist with that objective.

The Project Sponsor referred to the genealogy element of the development proposal which would permit the public to interact with the cemeteries burial records and of the requirement to undertake a digital mapping exercise involving the geo-tagging of each grave and monument to facilitate that process. He referred to the need to use a drone to facilitate the aerial photography of the cemetery and of the need to secure authority from the People and Communities Committee to undertake that exercise.

In response to several questions from Members in regard to what the completed project might look like, the Project Sponsor agreed to produce an artist's impression for the Members and agreed that it would be beneficial to undertake a site visit on a date to be agreed, so that the Members could be provided with a visual experience of the work involved to deliver the project. The Working Group was provided with additional information in regard to support of the digital technology which would be incorporated within the Council's burial records system and the project sponsor acknowledged the concerns raised in regard to the catering facilities to facilitate the tours which would be visiting the facility. The Working Group was informed that there would be a charge in respect of the tours undertaken but that schools would be free and that all tours would be controlled by the Council.

Noted.

#### **Update on Expression of Interest for New Cemetery Land**

The Bereavement Services Manager provided the Working Group with an update on the progress in respect of the Expression of Interest into new cemetery land. He reported that three of the ten sites selected remained viable, of which two of the selected sites required physical ground investigation and planning permission. The Working Group was given information on the three burial sites which had been selected and which would serve the needs of North and West Belfast. The Bereavement Services Manager stated that the Council would continue to collaborate with the local authorities within which the selected burial sites were situated and stated also that it might be necessary to undertake a public consultation and equality and/or rural needs assessment.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and agreed to undertake site visits to the three shortlisted burial sites, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

#### **Options for Cremated Remains**

The Bereavement Services Manager provided the Working Group with a number of options in regard to the disposal of cremated remains and predicated on the basis that demand for his form of disposal could be stimulated. It was reported that the Council

currently, in all of its cemeteries, provided burial of cremated remains often in graves which could not accommodate full earth burials. He stated further that it was proposed that the Council would use all available means to promote all current provisions for cremated remains.

The Bereavement Services Manager stated that the Council was in a position currently to release twenty-five graves at Roselawn Cemetery, which had been made available due to the fact that they were of insufficient depth to accommodate full earth burials. He stated that there was potential to develop an additional one hundred and forty graves due to them being of insufficient depth to accommodate full earth burials. He referred to the potential for the Council to proactively design and develop sections of Roselawn Cemetery dedicated to cremated remains.

The Working Group was informed of the success in respect of the Garden of Remembrance at Shankill Cemetery which the Bereavement Services Manager stated the Council might wish that scheme to be replicated on available cemetery land and suitable open spaces providing the provision complied with both Council policy and the Open Spaces strategy and could potentially require planning permission.

The Members were advised that the Garden of Remembrance for babies at Roselawn Cemetery had reached the end of its useful life and that the development of the new crematorium could offer the possibility to identify and design a new garden of remembrance for babies on that site.

In regard to the columbarium at the City of Belfast crematorium, it was reported that it had not proved popular as a means of disposal of cremated remains and that the new crematorium could provide an opportunity to design improvements or replace the current provision at the Roselawn site. The Bereavement Services Manager outlined the commitment of the Council to provide appropriate provision in respect of cremated remains, some of which could involve policy change, planning permission and potential major capital investment. He outlined the potential to stimulate demand for that service and the possibility to recover some of the costs associated with that provision.

The Working Group noted the information which had been provided and stated that they would consider the issues discussed and refer back to their respective parties for further consideration.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Wednesday, 11th March at 4.30 p.m.

Chairperson