

SUBJECT:	LINCOLN CREMATORIUM – A STRATEGY FOR INVESTMENT
DIRECTORATE:	COMMUNITIES AND ENVIRONMENT
REPORT AUTHOR:	SIMON WALTERS STRATEGIC DIRECTOR

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Members on the outline concept stage design work to enhance the facilities at Lincoln Crematorium. To further seek Executive approval to progress the next stage of work to finalise these designs and hence crystallise the level of capital investment required. The proposed scheme of changes to the building and surrounding grounds is designed to further enhance the compassionate, sympathetic service we offer to the bereaved choosing our crematorium to say goodbye to their loved ones.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 This report offers a strategy for maintaining the high standards of service the Lincoln crematorium offers residents of the city and surrounding areas, and for growing the service to meet developing customer needs both now and for the future.

The strategy consists of three strands:

- i) Options for capital Investment in the existing crematorium site to enable it to continue to maintain its unique compassionate and professional offer and to increase its capacity to meet the future demands of a fast growing city and surrounding area
- ii) Pursue options for the development of new service offerings – some of which will be the subject of a further detailed report in the spring of 2019
- iii) Continue discussions with funeral directors to explore joint relationships, ensuring we continue to deliver their requirements now and in the future so that together we can continue to deliver exactly what our service users need at such a difficult emotional time for them.

3. Background – Key Drivers for this next stage of development

- 3.1 The Lincoln Crematorium recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. It is a very well established service, with staff who have extensive experience of dealing with the sensitive nature of this service and beautiful, mature grounds for bereaved friends and families to use. The service maintains time-honoured relationships with the funeral directors in the local area.

The users of Lincoln crematorium are very complimentary about the service offered during such a difficult time for them, however, the City Council is never complacent about such a sensitive service and is always looking to enhance further the facilities on offer to the bereaved. Keeping the facility up to date and in touch with changing trends, to meet the needs of our users, is the council's primary aim.

Following internal renovations started in 2016 and completed in 2018, we have now identified key areas for investment in order to build capacity for future growth in the city and enhance the grounds within which the crematorium is located.

This development will concentrate on the following three strands:

- **Strand 1:** Further investment in the existing crematorium facilities in a way that transforms provision and future proofs the service - There are two phases to be considered
 1. **Phase 1:** Replace the existing two cremators, with consideration to leaving one of these in situ (as additional capacity), extending the rear of the building for this purpose and incorporating enhancements to staff areas. In addition, develop new hard standing car parking spaces (up to 87 extra spaces) to cater for additional mourners at the larger services we now experience
 2. **Phase 2:** Investment in the grounds and external look and feel of the buildings by making extensive enhancements to the aesthetic appearance, refining the movement through the crematorium site for the bereaved, ensure individual funeral services retain separation and further develop the external facilities of the crematorium to enhance its modern and welcoming feel
- **Strand 2:** To explore the possibility of extending the existing range of services to cover new complimentary options that the bereaved are increasingly requesting.
- **Strand 3:** To work directly with Funeral Directors to understand whether there are additional opportunities for further joint arrangements

Together these three strands will ensure the sustainable delivery of our exemplar services for the benefit of the bereaved and at the same time deliver options demanded as part of a modern 21st century facility.

3.2 Population Growth in and around Lincoln

The growth in the city, both now and projected over the period of the Local Plan, is notable, with sustainable urban extensions on Western Growth Corridor (up to 3200 houses), South East quadrant (up to 6,000 houses), North East Quadrant (up to 1,400 houses), and ultimately the South West quadrant (up to 2,000 houses), all serving to increase the population of the city and surrounding areas and hence demand for a range of services.

If RAF Scampton were to become another significant housing development in the future on the outskirts of the city (especially with the Eastern Bypass being constructed) this could significantly add to housing numbers.

Without doubt the market for all services is expanding.

3.3 **Lincoln Crematorium today**

As noted above the crematorium has completed investment to improve the seating capacity of the chapel and improve the front of house experience for the bereaved. This significant investment delivered:

- i) New entrance to waiting room and office
- ii) Extension of the size of the chapel, new chairs and carpet
- iii) New office design to include reception area
- iv) Extension to overspill car park area
- v) New Book of Remembrance cabinets
- vi) Decoration of waiting room and corridor
- vii) New signage throughout the crematorium and grounds

This has enabled the council to continue to meet service user's expectations and those of funeral directors by improving the internal facilities in the public areas.

Following this investment, the City Council now needs to consider the less visible but equally important aspects of the back room workings of the crematorium as well as some new additional external facilities of direct benefit to service users.

The two existing cremators are approaching an age where they need to be replaced as part of prudent asset management.

Additionally, it is proposed that a new extended area of permanent parking is developed on the area of ground behind the existing car park – leaving the current overflow as additional parking for occasional use when needed.

This will enhance our service provision to match the demand for the increasingly larger number of mourners attending some funerals.

4. **The proposed next phase investment in the crematorium service**

This section investigates in more detail the options summarised in section 3.1

The council has engaged the services of an architect, landscape architect and quantity surveyor for the design and cost options in respect of the various refurbishments.

Some of their concept visuals are attached to this report in **Appendix A**.

Officers are now in a position to present two phases for improving the sustainability, capacity, flow and look of the crematorium, depending upon the capital investment available.

4.1 Phase 1 - Crematorium facility improvements

- One existing cremator removed and two modern cremators installed. Both of the new cremators will handle the larger coffins that are becoming more commonplace. This will also provide energy efficiency benefits.
- The initial design team's drawings indicate that a reconfiguration of the rear space will allow for one of the existing cremators to remain, whilst housing the two new cremators in a bespoke extension to the rear area.
- Phase 1 would also include the creation of a new car parking area behind the existing hard surface car park to enable the crematorium to manage increasing attendance sizes. The proposed surface is 'gravel cell' which has a superior surface for walking on. It is also more in keeping with the look and feel of the crematorium providing a more natural green environment finish to the parking provision. The existing overflow parking area would remain in place for use for very large funerals.
- This option also includes works to enhance staffing and washroom facilities in the existing building. These facilities will also be used by funeral director staff cementing further our relationships with FDs.

In summary, this phase future proofs the crematorium service in terms of modernising the technology and equipment and increases capacity of cremators to accommodate growth in the city's population.

If, in the future, the housing growth around the city expands as predicted, then a second chapel could be added at that time to develop significant capacity increases.

4.2 Phase 2 – facility and aesthetic improvements

This phase will have a dramatic impact on the look and feel of the crematorium as:

- It enhances the aesthetic appeal for users with a modern refresh of the grounds and buildings
- It refines the natural flow of service users from the car park to a well-designed congregating point (with facilities provided at that point including an extended waiting room for the bereaved)
- It facilitates a clear separation of incoming and outgoing funeral parties

The full list of options are described and pictured in **Appendix A** however, the key proposals currently include:

- Oak and stone cladding to key external walls of the crematorium to give it a contemporary but quality look and feel. Visitors will be drawn to the attractive building, which will emphasise the respectful, quality service to be received inside.

- Changes to the way visitors exit the crematorium after the service. They will move into a newly designed covered area. The walls of the crematorium in that area will be clad in wood to soften the building and provide a tactile surface. In addition, there will be a new water garden to animate the space and naturally take people from the courtyard garden through to a new memorial flower garden area. This again will offer space for reflection, contemplation and celebration of the loved one's life and will then naturally lead back to the car park. Throughout, mourners leaving the crematorium will be screened (through landscaping and natural wood partitions) from those arriving for the next funeral so both parties can appropriately remember loved ones within their own groups.
- Enhancements to gateways throughout the site through new landscaping. These gateways, created through revised planting schemes and repainting the hard infrastructure elements at entrances, will ensure the bereaved arrive to calm, green, and attractive facilities.
- The canopy above the main entrance will be refreshed with a modern equivalent in keeping with the other proposed external cladding works around the building
- A completely reconfigured Book of Remembrance building opposite the main entrance. Extended internally to provide an inside waiting area, washrooms and a small refreshment offer and externally a canopy erected around the building to allow mourners to congregate externally in good weather, this option represents significant investment for the future. A new rose garden adjacent to the building will complement this area to offer a space for peaceful additional reflection, both for funeral attendees and those who come to remember loved ones at other times.

4.3 In order to move forward the design, provide further cost certainty as well as enabling a submission to planning submission in early summer, the Council has, through the Scape Procurement framework engaged a contractor to work alongside the design team to deliver its aspirations. At this stage any costs associated with this appointment will be contained within the budget allocation detailed in paragraph 8.1. However as designs are finalised there may be a requirement for enabling works to be undertaken prior to approval of the final scheme. Officers will provide a report to committee prior to commencement should this be the case.

5 Options for developing new customer interaction and service enhancements

This section details a number of additional activities that are to be considered as part of the overall plan to enhance service provision for our users

5.1 Updating interaction with bereaved families and Funeral Directors

One of the key proposals is to install new service specific IT software. This will enable a live feed onto a dedicated website so not only FDs but also the bereaved will be able to see slots available for services. This will directly counter the inaccurate perception that there are occasions where families have to wait extended periods for a funeral due to availability of slots. This system will make it

very transparent where slots exist and enable the bereaved to negotiate funeral services with their chosen FD.

In addition, this software offers many features in other aspects of management such as performance figure collation

The team is currently mid-way through sourcing a suitable system. It is proposed that this will be funded through additional service income that is received during 2018/19 and hence represents a direct reinvestment in the service.

5.2 Memorials

A myriad of additional options may be considered that would support families to commemorate loved ones.

- Plaques – kerb or bench plaques;
- Garden benches for lease for a memorial plaque; Marble plaques; Planter marble plaques
- Urns – various types
- Individual or family record miniature remembrance books
- Jewellery to contain small amounts of ashes
- Glass remembrance ornaments
- Living memorials (trees or shrubs where plaques can be placed)

5.3 Use of crematorium staff as bearers

There exists an option to offer one or two members of the Bereavement Services team as additional pallbearers to assist the Funeral Directors during staffing shortages. As some FD's have asked for this facility in the past, there is a clear potential service enhancement here.

5.4 Additional opening hours

Although Funeral Directors have in the past suggested there is limited demand for weekend funerals, we will once again revisit this question with them to ensure that a complete package of services exists for the bereaved.

5.5 As covered in the introduction to this report, there are other options for enhanced service delivery currently being developed which will be reported to Members in Spring 2019.

6 Building a stronger relationship with funeral directors

6.1 Whilst the City Council has an excellent working relationship with local FD's, this is not a contractual relationship. In practice, this means that any funeral director is able to arrange funerals with any crematorium they or the family of the deceased prefers. Most come to the City Council's crematorium because it is the local option and to travel further afield would (in reality) mean an FD could undertake fewer funerals per day due to increased travelling time.

The wishes of the deceased and the bereaved family should take precedence in deciding the location of the funeral.

- 6.2 The project team will continue to work directly with FD's to understand whether there are other opportunities for partnership/joint working that would enhance service delivery.

A key factor in this will be the proposed enhancements to the facilities identified earlier, which will enable FD's to continue to see CoLC as the preferred service provider.

- 6.3 Officers have had exploratory discussions with some of the FDs who use our crematorium to ascertain their views on the further investment proposals at the crematorium. In summary the views obtained so far are:

- Extremely supportive of the City of Lincoln Council cremation services
- Impressed with the proposal to develop a new external waiting area to help separate funeral parties and increase covered waiting space
- In favour of the idea to redesign and extend the floral tribute area
- Mixed views expressed over the use of crematorium staff as bearers
- Compliments on the quality of the service from the Crematorium staff

7. Strategic Priorities

7.1 Let's drive economic growth

A consequence of economic growth is that additional demand is placed on council services. In relation to the crematorium, the service needs to invest to ensure it continues to meet the demand, both in the short and long term. An increasing population means we must have a service that can cope with the anticipated increase in demand.

7.2 Let's deliver quality housing

An increase in the number of houses built in and around Lincoln to meet the expected growth in population will, over time, result in a higher demand for cremation services as the number of deaths naturally increase in line with the growing population, both in the city and surrounding areas.

7.3 High performing services

The council is committed to providing high quality services; the proposals contained in this report will maintain the quality of an exemplar service.

8. Organisational Impacts

8.1 Finance

- 1) The Phase 1 and Phase 2 proposals contained in this report will require a multi-million pound investment by the council. This report seeks approval for further spend on technical and design work necessary to provide detailed financial costings to Executive in May 2019.

During 2018/19, expenditure of £23,277 has been incurred to date on pre-construction activities in relation to planning, surveys, investigations and design work. Further work on detailed technical design, in order to support a procurement exercise with final designs, final costings and clear project timescales, is required between March and May 2019 to enable the project to proceed should the Executive decide to do so in late May 2019.

This further package of work is forecast to cost £210,000, bringing the overall expenditure on the scheme in to £233,277. At this stage incurred costs have been funded from the Bereavement Services Revenue Budget and additional planned costs will be taken from the estimated figure of ring-fenced surpluses of £100k subject to the outturn of the service as agreed by the Executive at quarter 3 financial monitoring. However as the costs of the additional work required exceeds the £100,000 surplus, further resources of £110,000 will be allocated from the strategic priorities revenue reserve, which currently has an unallocated balance of £183,090.

Although Phase 1 and Phase 2 will ultimately be treated as capital schemes, at this stage the technical and design work will be treated as revenue expenditure and will continue to be so until sufficient assurance exists that the scheme will take place. At such time as this assurance exists it will be determined as to whether the costs incurred to date are subsequently capitalised with the revenue funds replenished, this will be considered as part of report to the Executive in May 2019.

- 2) A new software package will cost £20,000 and will be treated as capital expenditure. This will be funded from the strategic priorities revenue reserve, transferred via Direct Revenue Financing. There is an additional annual revenue costs associated with this new package of £2,600 p.a. which will be met from within the existing bereavement services cash limited budgets.

As part of the Council's project management processes all capital schemes are required to be developed and monitored using the Lincoln Project Management Model, release of funds from the strategic priorities reserve will be dependent on completion and approval by the Project Sponsor of the relevant project brief.

8.2 Legal & procurement Implications

The appointment of the Design Team (architects/quantity surveyors) has been undertaken using the compliant Scape Procure framework. The appointment has been split into the relevant RIBA stages in order to mitigate risk if the project does not move forward.

As detailed in para 4.3 the engagement of a main contractor has been undertaken using the compliant Scape Procure framework. In order to mitigate exposure the Council will not be entering into a formal delivery agreement with the contractor until cost certainty has been established and formal approval granted for the scheme.

8.3 Land, property and accommodation

There are no land changes/requirements for the Phase 1 and 2 improvement projects

9. Risk Implications

9.1 Options Explored

With improvements to the road infrastructure in and around the city, investing in the existing site offers the most environmentally and economically sustainable solution.

Building a new facility outside the city boundary would necessitate building in or near a village which would fail the council's sustainability tests. We believe that investment in the current site will provide all the benefits of the look, feel and operation of a brand new facility without negative environmental impacts.

9.2 Key risks associated with the preferred approach will be detailed as part of the full business case to Exec in May 2019

10. Recommendation

10.1 Executive is asked to:

- i) Give authority to sanction a further budget in 2019/20 of up to £210,000 for design work, survey work and professional fees to conclude RIBA stage 4 to be funded from existing revenue budgets and earmarked reserves.
- ii) Approve the submission of relevant planning permissions as landowner
- iii) Approve the purchase a new software package as proposed and to allocate £20,000 in the General Investment Programme, funded from the strategic priorities reserve.
- iv) Comment on the additional options for developing new or extended service enhancements and building stronger relationships with Funeral Directors

Is this a key decision? No

Do the exempt information categories apply? No

Does Rule 15 of the Scrutiny Procedure Rules apply? No

How many appendices does the report contain? One

List of Background Papers: None

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