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BEREAVEMENT SERVICES

SERVICE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

2009 – 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 What is a Service Asset Management Plan?

It is fundamental that the Bereavement Services should occupy property which enables it to deliver the service in the best possible way, meeting the needs and expectations of customers and staff. It is recognised that the Council has limited resources and so sources of funding also need to be identified and are an important factor in service delivery.

The Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) is a document which can enable this to happen by:-

- Identifying the property needs of the service to enable it to deliver its 'vision'
- Auditing the current portfolio of properties and looking at their suitability to deliver the future service
- Appraising the options and priorities to close that gap between future needs and current provision
- Mapping a way forward to deliver the changes needed which takes into account cost, funding streams and opportunities.

1.2 It is the intention that the SAMP should always be a 'live' document and therefore needs to be regularly reviewed to take into account:-

- Review of progress made
- New opportunities to close 'the gap'
- Changing priorities and initiatives for Bereavement Services
- Opportunities to work cross service and with other parties
- Significant events or yearly whichever is sooner

1.3 This SAMP is one of a number being developed for council services using the principles of Asset Management Planning as contained in the council's Corporate Asset Management Plan (AMP). Whilst it is important for each service to have their own SAMP it is also vital that there are links between these plans and with the Corporate AMP to ensure the council obtains Best Value for the property assets it

occupies and gets maximum return from these assets in terms of meeting service and corporate objectives.

2. SERVICE VISION

2.1 Introduction

- 2.11 Bereavement Services provides a professional and dignified service for the residents of York and surrounding districts. We are able to offer impartial advice on either burial or cremation at York Crematorium or Dringhouses Cemetery.

Working closely with all users and stakeholders we are able to provide support and training for our colleagues in the funeral industry as well as being able to accommodate group visits and behind the scenes tours for schools, colleges and hospitals.

- 2.12 York Crematorium offers the choice of fourteen service times, five days a week in two chapels. Unfortunately, no new interments can be accommodated at Dringhouses Cemetery although there are facilities for cremated remains.

Cremations are carried out in accordance with the statutory requirements under the relevant Cremation Acts and the Births and Deaths Registration Acts.

The Code of Cremation Practice agreed with the [Federation of British Cremation Authorities \(FBCA\)](#) will be observed at all times.



- 2.13 During 2008/09 a computerised management and funeral booking system was installed. This allows Funeral directors to make service bookings at any time of the day or night. It has also enabled us to be more proactive when it comes to requests from the public and has improved staff efficiency.

We have improved and modernised the public toilets within the Crematorium building.

We have looked at and improved on the internal decoration of the foyer and chapels by providing floral arrangements.

We have increased the range of after – cremation memorials within the grounds.

We have looked at and identified areas for improvement with regard to ground maintenance at York and Dringhouses Cemetery.

We have continued to assist in providing work experience opportunities for a variety of organisations.

- 2.14 The Crematorium at Bishopthorpe opened in 1962. During the first year of opening it carried out 530 cremation services. It is estimated that over 100,000 people have passed through the chapel doors. This figure does not include those who visit the grounds and Gardens of Remembrance to view a specific memorial.

It goes without saying that it is impossible to have 100% satisfaction but on our most recent survey we achieved a satisfaction baseline of 80%. It is proposed in future to have a more comprehensive customer survey which will include all our stakeholders.

2.15 **Service improvements for 2009/10**

Improve information provided to clients on choice of memorials available

Improve general facilities within building & grounds

Provide alternative way of payment

Develop crematorium web page & marketing strategy

2.16 **Staffing**

6 (full time equivalent) members of staff provide the council's bereavement services.

2.17 **Cost of the Service**

The operation of bereavement services created a net income for the council in 2008/09 of £845,500.

2.2 **Service Vision**

- 2.21 Provide a high quality sympathetic bereavement service giving choice and access to all customers and users.

- 2.22 To minimize the impact on the environment from the activities of the service.

2.3 Key Drivers

2.31 External drivers

- Statutory Regulations – The Cremation Regulations 2008 – Births & Deaths Registration Act 1953
- New requirement to control mercury emissions from the Crematorium – The Environmental Permitting (England & Wales) Regulations 2007 – The Environmental Protection (England) (Crematoria Mercury Emissions) Direction 2008
- Declining Death Rate until circa 2016
- Possible Swine Flu or other pandemics
- New Cremation regulations
- Customer Service Excellence Award (replacement for Charter Mark)

2.32 Corporate drivers

- Corporate Strategy
- Equality impact assessments
- E Government
- Need to maximize income

2.33 Directorate drivers

- Improving health and safety culture
- Improving staff absence
- Staff Development

2.34 Service drivers

- Continue to improve service delivery following significant staff changes
- Developing maturity in new team
- Improve marketing & branding of memorialisation & crematorium
- Embedding new ways of working resulting from purchase of new supporting software.
- Improve site & presence for Dringhouses Cemetery

2.3 Service objectives and aims.

- 2.41 Provide a high quality sympathetic bereavement service giving choice & access to all customers & users
- 2.42 Maintain & develop the grounds & buildings to give comfort & consolation in a landscape setting
- 2.43 Provide efficient arrangements for funeral directors and clergy which meets the needs of the service users at a reasonable cost
- 2.44 Provide expert guidance on all aspects of cremation and ancillary services

3. PROPERTY AUDIT

3.1 Introduction

The principal property of the service is the York Crematorium. The building is of single storey traditional construction erected in 1962. In addition a 3 bedroom detached house was constructed at the entrance to the grounds. This house is currently let to a member of the crematorium staff on a service tenancy. The site extends to 3.35 hectares (8.28 acres) and is mainly landscaped to provide grounds for a memorial garden, interment of cremated remains and access to and egress from the Crematorium. The western side of the site comprises the former Bishopthorpe Road prior to the construction of the York Bypass. This has been marked out to form an extensive car park. The whole site is owned freehold. Detailed information concerning the Crematorium building and the use of it has been collected for several years and the latest Asset Management Report is included at Annex A. The location of the Crematorium and Dringhouses Cemetery in the Authority area are shown at Annex B.

In addition work has also been done on the suitability of the crematorium building to deliver the service. This has been done by completing a questionnaire with the manager and staff, and the results are contained at Annex C.

3.2 Summary of Results (see also Annexes A and D)

3.2.1 Running Costs

The average net running cost of the crematorium over the last three financial years is £262/m² p.a. The range is from £279/m² p.a. to £234/m². The net running cost for all council buildings is

£44.02/m² p.a. and it can be seen therefore that, on average, the Crematorium is more expensive to run. This is mainly due to the consumption of utilities as shown by the performance indicators in paragraph 3.2.4.

3.2.2 Outstanding Repairs

A condition survey has recently been carried out on the buildings including the technicians house. The total outstanding repairs is estimated at around £39,000 of which around £5,000 is considered as work which is urgent and essential, and required within the next two years. However, there is an additional £10,000 worth of work to the roofs, which it would be prudent to carry out as soon as funds permit.

Limited Corporate funding has been obtained to deal with the council's total maintenance backlog. A programme of works has already commenced and some work has already been carried out.

Asbestos surveys have been carried out on all buildings and although asbestos is present it is only minor and considered to be low risk.

3.2.3 Suitability

The result of the suitability audit showed generally the suitability of the current buildings to deliver the service was good. The property is situated in the right location for service delivery. Attached at Appendix C are the results of the survey in more detail.

The main areas of weakness were:-

- Image

Could be improved as the general image is somewhat dated and slightly 'industrial' in appearance. Cracked and broken flagstones at the front of the building require replacement.
New signage is needed for the Cemetery.
Public reception areas are in need of improvement.

- Environment

Externally, generally good apart from proximity to the river which does flood into the garden area used for 'strewing' cremated remains.
Internally, the cremators do not comply with current emissions regulations.

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available are for 2008/09 and the average costs over the last three financial years are:-

2A Energy Costs/m²

Electricity

£4.92 for whole authority
£13.24 for the crematorium

Gas

£5.05 for whole authority
£60 for the crematorium

2B Water costs/m²

£1.34 for whole authority
£0.82 for the crematorium

2C CO₂ emissions (tonnes/m²)

0.036 for whole authority
0.1 for the crematorium

As the Crematorium buildings and Cremators are updated and/or replaced it should be a prime objective to reduce all these figures.

3.3 Conclusion

The information collected as a result of this audit shows that

- For obvious reasons the Crematorium consumes a far greater amount of gas and electricity than the Council average, with a consequent knock on effect on CO₂ emissions. Water consumption is below the Council average .
- Repairs are needed to the crematorium although the amount of urgent and essential repairs is low. Due to the age of the buildings this is likely to increase in the future.
- Suitability is generally good, although there are areas of weakness in terms of image, environment and space.

This audit will be reviewed on a regular basis so that the future plans can be informed and, wherever necessary, influenced.

4 JOINT APPRAISAL

4.1 Introduction

The purpose of this section is to make an assessment of how the Crematorium fits in with the structure as described in Section 2 and then begin to identify the options and a way forward. It is recognised that resources and other constraints could be a limiting factor but each situation should be assessed using the principles established in this plan and then, when opportunities from whatever source arise, they can be considered against the proposals set out here.

Therefore, after detailed consultation between the Bereavement Services and Property Services, the following comments can be made.

4.2 Assessment of Current Buildings

4.2.1 The Crematorium

The property is well located in terms of providing the service required. Its setting in substantial grounds provides an ideal atmosphere for customers and users. There are improvements that can be made to the building which are identified below, and avenues to be explored as far as enhancing the customer experience is concerned.

4.2.2 Technicians House

Generally this building provides a good level of accommodation and is well utilised. In addition its image has been improved in recent years. Whilst in reasonable condition there are concerns regarding the internal fixtures and fittings and resultant damage to floors. However, funding has been identified to address this and work is underway. Following this work which includes replacement of the bathroom and kitchen, the property will come up to, if not, exceed, the government's decent homes standard.

4.2.3 Dringhouses Cemetery

The cemetery is a gently sloping triangular site shaped site bordered on the NE side by Tesco supermarket, the former Sim Hills tip and railway on the W side and Tadcaster Road in the SE side. The cemetery is mainly grassed with a variety of stone memorials, a tarmac and hardcore surfaced access road and main paths of concrete slabs.

A variety of broad leaved deciduous trees surround the site along with Yew trees within the cemetery grounds.

In the North corner of the site is a brick and tile built garage. In addition a notice board is provided along with timber benches.

The Cemetery is a closed burial ground apart from occasional re-interments. It is, however, frequently visited and the cremated remains plot is used 10-15 times per year.

The Cemetery overall receives a low level of maintenance, due to limited staff resources and the fact that it attracts very little income. However, attention is now required to the roadways, paths and the brick built garage. In addition the monuments require checking for safety, one in particular was noted to be of imminent danger of falling over and has been made safe. Problems with litter were also noted.

4.3 Current and Future Opportunities

The following projects have been identified to 'close the gap' between current and future service provision.

4.3.1 Mercury Abatement

York Crematorium at present has three cremators, two are operational dealing with over 2000 cremations per year. Emissions legislation will be significantly tightened, with the result that by 2012, DEFRA require that at least 50% of all cremations are subject to abatement of increased proportions of emissions, specifically Mercury (Hg).

Abatement of flue gases means removing much of the potentially harmful chemical content including Mercury, Dioxins and acid gases; in simple terms, abated emissions are 'cleaner' than unabated.

DEFRA has stated that the cremation industry must abate 50% of cremations by 2012 and 100% by 2020.

Notwithstanding the legislative imperative above, there exists a more significant issue; that of the operation and increasingly expensive maintenance of the current cremators in the short to medium term. The cremators have been in situ since 1994 and when 'new' had a maximum life expectancy of 15 years with maintenance and repair costs rising as the cremators get older and will additionally be frustrated by the obsolescence of spare parts for the same.

4.3.2 Refurbishment of the accommodation

Complete the refurbishment works to the building following installation of new cremators.

4.3.3 Alterations to the building

Expand the chapel of remembrance to include the former chauffeur's room and existing courtyard, which would then create more room for new books of remembrance.

Development of purpose built reception, meeting room and interview room facilities, particularly to allow private conversations to take place in a sensitive environment.

As part of the above and replacement of the cremators consideration will be given to the incorporation of sustainability measures such as heat recovery from the cremators, rainwater harvesting and smart metering.

4.3.3 Tree Management Plan

It is felt that there are too many trees in the Crematorium grounds. Many of them require pruning, crown reduction, and branches lifting. A tree survey is needed by the tree conservation officer to ascertain the work required and costings. In addition there is the potential for the development of a woodland walk and wildlife garden on the land between the car park and Bishopthorpe Road.

4.3.4 Land to the North of the main site

This comprises 4.6 hectares of land between the main site and the York By-Bass. It is currently comprised of rough pasture and marshland and was acquired in 2002 for incorporation into the grounds of the Crematorium. Due to lack of funds this has never happened. It is now proposed to include this in the Strays and Agricultural Land Asset Management Plan to be carried out by our specialist agricultural framework partners in consultation with the Council's Countryside Officer.

4.4 Available and Potential Funds

4.4.1 Internal budgets

Funds are available from within the Asset and Property Management Capital repair and maintenance budget to cover the estimated cost of the urgent and essential repairs and repairs to ensure the building remains wind and watertight.

Bereavement Services revenue budgets are very limited.

4.4.2 Capital receipts/CRAM

As a result of requirements highlighted by this plan CRAM bids have been made in the forthcoming round to fund further repairs and

improvements, and the replacement of the Cremators to comply with the new emissions regulations.

4.4.3 External Funds

No external funding has yet been identified.

4.5 Other Factors

4.5.1 Current and Future Opportunities

Provision of an on-site catering facility providing refreshment facilities and flowers, initially by way of a temporary building on the edge of the car park. A similar facility has been provided by Middlesbrough Borough Council at the entrance to Acklam Cemetery and Crematorium. Apparently the venture has so far been successful although it is early days. The operators of the facility have a three year licence, terminable on the giving of 3 months written notice. They are responsible for providing the portakabin and the payment of all outgoings relating to the operation. The licensees currently pay £2,600 per annum.

4.5.2 Consideration of flood prevention measures to stop flooding in the garden where cremated remains are strewn.

4.5.3 The former Sim Hills household refuse site adjacent to Dringhouses Cemetery is due for development as a new Park and Ride facility in 2011 and the Cemetery could form part of the environmental management of the whole site. This will be investigated further.

5 ACTION PLAN

5.1 Carry out urgent and essential repairs

5.2 Replace Cremators to comply with emissions regulations

5.3 Extend the book of remembrance room to accommodate additional books

5.4 Include the land to the North of the main site in the Strays and Agricultural Land Asset Management Plan.

5.5 Carry out tree surveys

5.6 Investigate further the provision of refreshment facilities on site

5.7 Carry out repairs necessary at Dringhouses Cemetery

5.8 Development of purpose-built reception/meeting/interview rooms either within existing building or by way of extension.

5.9 Include the Crematorium buildings in the carbon management programme

6 TIMETABLE

6.1 2009/10

- 6.1.1 Urgent and essential repairs.
- 6.1.2 Land to the north – Strays and Agricultural Land Asset Management Plan
- 6.1.3 Carbon management programme

6.2 2010/2011

- 6.2.1 Repairs and maintenance at Dringhouses Cemetery
- 6.2.2 Investigate the provision of refreshment facilities
- 6.2.3 Tree surveys

6.3 2011/2012

- 6.3.1 Replacement of the Cremators
- 6.3.2 Complete refurbishment of public areas
- 6.3.3 Extension of book of remembrance room – if finance available
- 6.3.4 Investigate feasibility of creating Reception meeting room and interview room facilities.

7 REVIEW

- 7.1 This plan will be reviewed on an annual basis and in the light of the outcome of the Area Asset Management Plans being implemented prepared.
- 7.2 As and when new funding opportunities and buildings become available the plan will be updated as necessary.

8 ANNEXES