

	Executive 8th March 2017	Agenda Item No. 7
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Title	
For further information about this report please contact	Bereavement Services – enhanced service provision
Wards of the District directly affected	All
Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?	No
Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number	NA
Background Papers	None

Contrary to the policy framework:	No
Contrary to the budgetary framework:	No
Key Decision?	No
Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)	No
Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken	No
Not applicable	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	15/2/2017	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	3/2/2017	Rob Hoof
CMT	9/2/2017	
Section 151 Officer	15/02/2017	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	9/2/2017	Andy Jones
Finance	3/2/2017	Jenny Clayton
Portfolio Holder(s)	3/2/2017	Councillor Shilton
Consultation & Community Engagement		
All staff affected have been consulted and discussion held with the Trade Union		
Final Decision?		No
Employment Committee 22nd March 2016.		

1. **Summary**

- 1.1 The Council agreed to an extensive programme of capital expenditure to improve the crematorium which was completed during 2015/16. This report sets out proposals to build on this investment by improving current service provision through a significant increase in the opening hours of the crematorium and revisions to the staffing establishment to ensure that the longer term needs of the district are catered for in regards to cemetery and crematoria capacity.

2. **Recommendations**

- 2.1 That Executive agrees to extend the operation of the crematorium from five to six days a week.
- 2.2 That, subject to agreement of recommendation 2.1 and the subsequent approval by Employment Committee on 22nd March 2017 of the revised establishment, the Executive agrees to increase the 2017/18 staffing budget by £36,321, as set out in section 5, and note that these costs will be met through the increased fee income that the enhanced service will generate.
- 2.3 That Executive notes the work required in developing a long term strategy for the provision of bereavement services.

3. **Reasons for the Recommendations**

- 3.1 To improve the flexibility of the service by increasing the number of days Oakley Wood Crematorium operates from five to six days a week. This enables the facility to better meet the demands on the service, to give customers more choice, to increase income and to remain competitive.
- 3.2 Whilst capital building works were being carried out to alleviate waiting times, occasional Saturdays were worked during peak times. It was noted that on those particular Saturdays some of the services taking place would have been booked in at another crematorium but families chose to use Oakley Wood instead because of the convenience of having a Saturday service
- 3.3 There is already an established demand for some services to be provided at weekends. Cremated remains are laid to rest at weekends, however due to the limited hours available families often have to book several weeks in advance. Special events, for example Memorial services, which are usually scheduled for weekends can only be facilitated by voluntary overtime. There is an existing service requirement for the page to be turned to "todays" date 365 days to fulfil established expectations and historical agreements with customers who have paid a premium to have their loved-ones' name entered into the book of remembrance which is displayed on the anniversary each year.
- 3.4 When the cremators were replaced in 2009, holding over services was approved. However as Saturday is not currently a normal working day, any services taking place on Friday must be cremated before staff can go home on Friday. This has led to restrictions on the number of services that can be accommodated on what is the most frequently asked for day; in addition afternoon slots are generally favoured so there is still a burden on staff having to work voluntary overtime, usually in lone working conditions, beyond their normal hours to complete the cremations

- 3.5 The nearby crematoria already offer the extra convenience of Saturday services, but are reliant upon staff goodwill and overtime to provide those services. Being conveniently near to motorway links makes Oakley Wood an ideal choice for people who have family and friends with great distances to travel
- 3.6 In order to operate over a six day week and to provide capacity to enable development work the staff resource will need to be increased.
- 3.7 The existing structure is very flat with all members of staff reporting directly to the Bereavement Services Manager. Creating an operational team leader post will give staff better support and opportunities for development. Creating a development manager post will improve resilience and business continuity and give increased scope to improve services for the bereaved families.
- 3.8 Subject to Executive approval of this report, and Employment Committee approving establishment changes on 22nd March the six day working rota will commence as soon as possible following job matching for employees in deleted posts and recruitment for newly deleted and created posts.
- 3.9 The changes will maximise the opportunity to generate additional income following the recent capital investment.
- 3.10 The new management structure will allow development of a long term strategic plan to anticipate the future needs for cemetery and crematoria capacity by projecting the impact of changing demographics in the district and surrounding areas. This will include reviewing opportunities to further enhance service provision for customers, improve efficiency and increase income generating potential.

4. **Policy Framework**

- 4.1 The provision of high quality Bereavement Services, which support the grieving process, is part of the health and wellbeing agenda and contributes to making Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit

4.2 **Fit for the Future**

- 4.2.1 The principles of Fit For the Future have been considered in the formation of the proposals and are aligned to the 3 key strands.
 - a) **Service** – The choice and level of service available to customers will be enhanced.
 - b) **People** – Staff have been fully involved and consulted about the proposed changes and new job descriptions have been subject to negotiations with staff and trade unions.
 - c) **Money** – The proposals will generate additional income to deliver key front line services to customers and additional income that will support the requirements of the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

5. **Budgetary Framework**

- 5.1 A revised staffing structure, deleting 1 full time and 2 part time posts and creating 2 full time posts, which support the new management structure and provide the additional capacity needed to operate on Saturdays, will be

presented to Employment Committee on 22nd March and that subject to approval the additional salary cost will be £36,261 for 2017/18.

- 5.2 It is anticipated that additional income in the region of £100k per annum can be generated by operating the crematorium on Saturdays, which is based on the following assumptions.
- 5.3 That at least two services that currently take place in the week will move to a Saturday, resulting in additional income of £15k per annum.
- 5.4 The ability to offer services on a Saturday is likely to result in new requests, and based on only attracting two additional services each week gives an additional income of £80k per annum.
- 5.5 In addition to the income identified in 5.3 and 5.4 it is likely that other ancillary income of £5k will be generated, from additions to the book of remembrance or from sales of garden memorials.
- 5.6 The revised staffing structure would also enable a saving on overtime payments of £2k per annum, which has been accounted for in the figure shown in 5.1.
- 5.7 There will be growth in contracted cleaning services of £2K per annum, to ensure the chapel facilities are suitably presented for services taking place on Saturdays.
- 5.8 The net additional income resulting from these proposals is, therefore, approximately £60k per annum.

6. Risks

- 6.1 Staff will be unhappy with the new working arrangements and may leave or become de-motivated. To mitigate this all staff and trade unions have been consulted to agree the best possible working conditions whilst still providing the desired service improvements. In addition enhanced service resilience is being built into job descriptions.
- 6.2 The service may not be used to the extent predicted and the projected additional income may not cover the costs of the additional post. To mitigate this realistic estimates based on proven previous experience have been used. Strict budget management processes between finance and the service area are already in place.
- 6.3 Not making these changes would dilute any opportunities for generating additional income and not provide the extra officer time required to devote to service improvements. The recommendations made in this report are offered to mitigate this.
- 6.4 Not making these changes could result in fewer families choosing to use Oakley Wood because other crematoria offer more convenience. The recommendations made in this report are offered to mitigate this.
- 6.5 The new posts of Bereavement Service Development Manager and Bereavement Operational Team Leader require a significant amount of specific technical knowledge and may be difficult to recruit to. To mitigate this job descriptions have been carefully written to provide development opportunities

for either internal or external candidates and improve prospects for career progression.

- 6.6 The deletion and creation of posts is subject to Employment Committee approval and may not be granted.

7. Alternative Option(s) considered

- 7.1 Do nothing, this option has been discounted because maintaining the status quo would not provide opportunities for improvements in service to customers, would not provide additional income for the Council and would not enable future planning to ensure burial provision is available, and would see the service being left behind by increased competition from neighbouring crematoria.
- 7.2 Operate the Saturday service by using overtime. This option has been discounted because it would rely entirely on good will and it may not be possible to consistently offer services, it would worsen the work life balance of staff by expecting extra hours to be worked on a regular basis and may cost more because enhanced overtime rates of pay would be required.
- 7.3 Not develop a long term strategy. Cemeteries are a finite resource; once all the grave spaces have been used the Council would be left with a statutory and ongoing maintenance liability and no opportunity to generate income to offset that liability. There would be no choice for residents living in the District to choose between burial and cremation of their loved ones, which may infringe upon their ability to practice their particular religious beliefs.

8. Background

- 8.1 To enhance business resilience and in line with recommendations from the industry professional bodies (Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities, and Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Managers) incorporating the cremator operators certificate qualifications into all jobs across the service area improves the Councils status in relation to the Charter for the Bereaved award

- 8.2 Bereavement services has two budget cost centres; cemeteries and the crematorium and delivers an income in the region of £1.5million per annum.

Anticipated service provision is:

Cremation	1800
Burial	180
Burial/scattering cremated remains	250
Cemetery memorial applications	250
Book of Remembrance entries	180
Genealogical research	200
General funeral planning advice	50
Transfer ownership of Exclusive Right of Burial	125
Other events	15