

 <b>Executive 26<sup>th</sup> Sept 2018</b>		<b>Agenda Item No. 7</b>
<b>Title</b>	Update – Bereavement Services Enhanced Service Provision	
<b>For further information about this report please contact</b>	Pam Chilvers Bereavement Services Development Manager 01926 651418 <a href="mailto:Pamela.chilvers@warwickdc.gov.uk">Pamela.chilvers@warwickdc.gov.uk</a>	
<b>Wards of the District directly affected</b>	All	
<b>Is the report private and confidential and not for publication by virtue of a paragraph of schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, following the Local Government (Access to Information) (Variation) Order 2006?</b>	No	
<b>Date and meeting when issue was last considered and relevant minute number</b>	12 <sup>th</sup> Sept 2018 Employment Committee	
<b>Background Papers</b>	As Above & Executive meeting 8 <sup>th</sup> March 2017. Minute number 104	

<b>Contrary to the policy framework:</b>	No
<b>Contrary to the budgetary framework:</b>	No
<b>Key Decision?</b>	Yes
<b>Included within the Forward Plan? (If yes include reference number)</b>	Yes 957
<b>Equality Impact Assessment Undertaken</b>	No
Not relevant to this report	

Officer/Councillor Approval		
Officer Approval	Date	Name
Chief Executive/Deputy Chief Executive	10/09/2018	Bill Hunt
Head of Service	05/09/2018	Rob Hoof
CMT	03/09/2018	
Section 151 Officer	04/09/2018	Mike Snow
Monitoring Officer	31/08/2018	Andrew Jones
Finance	16/08/2018	John Gould
Portfolio Holder(s)	03/09/2018	Cllr Moira-Ann Grainger
Consultation & Community Engagement		
Not relevant to this report.		
Final Decision?		Yes
Suggested next steps (if not final decision please set out below)		

## 1. **Summary**

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposal to increase the staffing budget of the Bereavement Services Team, which forms part of the Neighbourhood Services Portfolio

## 2. **Recommendation**

- 2.1 To increase the Bereavement Services Staffing budget by £36,700 per annum, in order to fund the establishment changes shown below:
- Change in hours for Bereavement Officer (post no WD00662) from 0.8 FTE to 1FTE
  - Creation of an additional FTE Bereavement Officer post.
- 2.2 To agree the reinstatement of the cemeteries caretaker position. This position is self-financing as the rental income is greater than the salary.
- 2.3 To fund the increased staffing budget from £32,500 increased income and £4,200 coming from the Medium Term Financial Strategy.

## 3. **Reasons for the Recommendation**

- 3.1 Changes to the staffing structure of Bereavement Services were made in April 2017 to support a 6 day per week service offering. A significant increase in the number of cremations over the last 12 months (1,997 cremations in 2017/18 compared to an average of 1,836) has prompted a review of the team resources to ensure an excellent standard of service provision can be maintained, and further increases in demand accommodated. The outcomes of that review were approved by Employment Committee on 12 September 2018 and this report proposes the necessary budget to implement the increased staffing resources.
- 3.2 Although a temporary post was agreed by CMT in March 2018 to backfill a long-term sickness absence the review has confirmed that additional resources are required to provide a stable structure that improves service resilience as currently any staff absences within the small but specialist crematorium team have a severe impact on the ability to deliver the service.
- 3.3 There is a legal requirement for the Council to ensure that the staff operating its cremators are suitably qualified. Securing agency staff with the required qualification, to cover absences has proved problematic and costly (c£450.00 + travel per day), hence it is more cost effective to add to the staffing establishment.
- 3.4 The lodge house in Leamington Cemetery has been vacant since the last incumbent left; the caretaker post was subsequently deleted in the 2017 restructure and duties transferred to the ranger service. They are going to be under increased pressure dealing with car park displacement activities, removing the necessity to carry out caretaking activities in Leamington Cemetery would free up resource in the ranger service.
- 3.5 The rental income on the lodge house has been lost, and there are budget liabilities in relation to the property being empty, for example, council tax, and costs to maintain security, which outstrip the salary saving.

#### 4. Policy Framework

##### 4.1 Fit for the Future (FFF)

"The Council's FFF Strategy is designed to deliver the Vision for the District of making it a Great Place to Live, Work and Visit. To that end amongst other things the FFF Strategy contains several Key projects"

"The FFF Strategy has 3 strands – People, Services and Money and each has an external and internal element to it. The table below illustrates the impact of this proposal if any in relation to the Council's FFF Strategy."

FFF Strands		
People	Services	Money
<b>External</b>		
<b>Health, Homes, Communities</b>	<b>Green, Clean, Safe</b>	<b>Infrastructure, Enterprise, Employment</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Improved health for all Housing needs for all met Impressive cultural and sports activities Cohesive and active communities	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Area has well looked after public spaces All communities have access to decent open space Improved air quality Low levels of crime and ASB	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Dynamic and diverse local economy Vibrant town centres Improved performance/ productivity of local economy Increased employment and income levels
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
The provision of high quality Bereavement Services, which enable cultural rites and rituals to be performed, support residents and non-residents through their grieving journey.	Oakley Wood Crematorium is situated within the boundaries of ancient woodland. It is used by members of the public for quiet contemplation and remembrance of their loved ones as well as by the wider community as a leisure destination.	The additional posts are likely to be filled by local residents.
<b>Internal</b>		
<b>Effective Staff</b>	<b>Maintain or Improve Services</b>	<b>Firm Financial Footing over the Longer Term</b>
<u>Intended outcomes:</u> All staff are properly trained All staff have the appropriate tools All staff are engaged, empowered and supported The right people are in the right job with the right skills and right	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Focusing on our customers' needs Continuously improve our processes Increase the digital provision of services	<u>Intended outcomes:</u> Better return/use of our assets Full Cost accounting Continued cost management Maximise income earning opportunities Seek best value for money

behaviours		
<b>Impacts of Proposal</b>		
These proposals will introduce a more resilient staffing structure, better support for staff, and training and career development opportunities.	Due to increased levels of business, burials and cremations have been the sole priority. This has resulted in zero capacity to react to other types of service requests, leading to dissatisfied customers. For Example, Memorial applications, grave transfers, family history are amongst the services that have severe delays	In the first 12 months the number of funerals taking place has surpassed original expectations. There are opportunities (eg through improved marketing of memorials, etc...) to maximize income that are not able to be exploited with current staffing levels.

## 4.2 Supporting Strategies

N/A

## 4.3 Changes to Existing Policies

This report does not bring forward changes to existing policies.

## 4.3 Impact Assessments –

This report does not require impact assessments as there are no changes to existing policies.

## 5. Budgetary Framework

5.1 The cost of the additional staffing resources, including on costs, are set out below. These are based on the highest increment point and it is likely that starting salaries will initially be lower.

- 0.2 increase Bereavement Officer post £6,023 pa
- Additional FTE Bereavement Officer post £30,700 pa
- Additional 0.1FTE Cemetery caretaker post £4,205 pa

5.2 The rental income for the lodge house is £4,570 and will entirely fund the cemetery caretaker post.

5.3 Circa £26,000 has already been spent/committed in 2018/19 for 45 days agency cover for a certificated cremator operator. It is probable that without the additional posts shown in 5.1, similar levels of agency cover would be required for the remainder of the year. The total cost of this type of agency cover would be circa £52k per annum..

5.4 The 2017/18 original annual budget estimated that £1,202,000 would be generated. Whereas the actual income following the introduction of enhanced services was £1,289,553, resulting in an additional surplus of £87,553 being delivered to the general fund.

- 5.5 Anticipated volumes of service requests and subsequently income generation predictions based on continuing with the enhanced services have been taken into account in the preparation of figures provided for the Fees & Charges report which is also being considered at this meeting.
- 5.6 Within the Fees and Charges report on this Executive agenda, the estimated 2019/20 Crematorium income is £1.385m. This is £32.5k above the assumed 2% inflation increase included in the Medium Term Financial Strategy. It is proposed that this £32.5k is used towards the additional £36.7k costs of the posts, with the balance of £4.2k being factored into the Medium Term Financial Strategy; this will increase the level of savings to be found by the Council by that amount.
- 5.7 It is anticipated that a more resilient Bereavement Services Team will be able to investigate further opportunities for additional income generation.

## **6. Risks**

- 6.1 In order to carry out the volume of cremations required last year there have been several occasions where staff have worked in shift patterns to extend the working day. This has meant redeploying staff from other duties; staff have given up "rest days" and cancelled leave to make sure the front line services are carried out. In the long term this is unsustainable and staff may leave or become de-motivated. There is no resilience in the service leaving the authority in a vulnerable position.
- 6.2 There is currently no capacity for training to take place. Staff who are enthusiastic about their career progression are being held back.
- 6.3 The volume of cremations that took place in 2017/18 may not be sustained. This is unlikely due to the growth of the district and surrounding areas.
- 6.4 Whilst this report has concentrated on crematory resilience (because of the legal requirement for operators to be certificated) there are only 2 members of the team competent in relation to cemeteries work. Training across the team is required to enhance resilience for the other important area of Bereavement Services.
- 6.5 There are a number of key projects being planned for the future that will require resources from within the Bereavement Services Team. These include the replacement of the current computer system, the longer term strategy for crematorium and burial space provision, and further service enhancements etc.
- 6.6 Due to new opportunities presented to staff in the restructure, through retirement and bereavement there have been several employees who now perform different job roles to the ones they did a year ago. They require additional support and training to reach their potential in their new roles.
- 6.7 In an attempt to reduce dependence on very costly agency cover, more creative cover arrangements, for example: swapping staff roles, changing shift patterns, using bank and seconded staff, have been put in place where possible. These cover arrangements are unsustainable and posing severe impacts on the ability to deliver services as all available resources are being devoted to front line functions. This leaves some less essential, but never the

less valuable, both in terms of quality of service and income generation significantly behind normally acceptable levels of customer service.

- 6.8 The Council has a duty to plan for any major emergency and business continuity. In addition to these overarching corporate duties, Bereavement Services specifically have a legislative duty, which is highlighted in the permit to operate, to plan for emergencies which give rise to mass fatalities including provision of adequate members of trained staff. This report and its recommendations will enable The Bereavement Services Emergency and Continuity plans to be as robust as practicable.

## **7. Alternative Option(s) considered**

- 7.1 To continue with the existing levels of staffing resource, this is incompatible with the existing service offering and has therefore been discounted.
- 7.2 Reduce the service offering to remove the need for additional members of staff, this has been discounted because the opportunities for additional income generation would be lost, customers would have less flexibility, waiting times would be increased and the service would be less competitive.