

COMMUNITIES SCRUTINY REVIEW BOARD 11 July 2022

Minute Extract

08/22 Bereavement services plan

The Board received a report from the Director of Public Protection and Streetpride on the Safer Derby Community Safety Partnership Plan. This report was presented by the Acting Bereavement Services and Markets Manager.

It was reported that Derby City was a vibrant, diverse city and Bereavement Services had worked with communities throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of communities. This had included supporting the development of a Muslim Burial Council and Friends of Nottingham Road Cemetery Group; and providing a bespoke service to support all religious requirements.

It was noted that Bereavement Services had worked collaboratively with partners including NHS and Funeral Directors to develop new approaches through the pandemic to enable families to hold funerals within the Coronavirus legislation with some examples being:

- Offered free webcast of cremation services whilst funeral numbers were reduced.
- Made other rooms available within the Crematorium for mourners who had concerns over the spread of covid.
- Offered of free memorial service to families who chose a direct cremation due to covid restrictions.
- Offered witness charge via screen in chapel as unable to accommodate witness within social distancing.
- Offered token fill of graves as unable to offer full backfill due to social distancing.

It was reported that the Council's Bereavement services delivered burial and cremation services in Derby city at Markeaton Crematorium and 6 cemeteries, 4 of which were closed for new burials but were available for re-opening of existing graves. The service, which performed over 2,000 cremations and 450 burials per year, also provided maintenance to 15 closed church yards.

It was noted that Markeaton Crematorium was built in 1956; and at the time was one of two crematoria locally with one in Chesterfield, in the north of the county providing services to 43% of residents in the county and Derby city providing 57%. More recently, other sites had opened within a short distance from Derby, these were: Alfreton and Trent Valley. It was reported that this had meant that Markeaton Crematorium now

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provided services to around 34% of residents in the catchment area.

It was reported that Markeaton Crematorium had previously undergone some minor refurbishment including improvements to the waiting room, toilets, offices, and the small chapel, as well as investment in equipment with a new standalone cremator.

It was noted that despite an increase in demand of 24% in Derbyshire from 2014 to 2019, cremations at the site had declined steadily since the neighbouring sites opened; but increased again at the start of the pandemic with a 16% increase in bookings at the site.

It was reported that burial provision in Derby had remained relatively stable, between 250 and 300 from 2012 to 2019. In 2020 there was an increase of 48% which was attributed to the pandemic.

It was noted that intelligent data was required to gain accurate information on burial capacity within the city to enable effective future planning for this element of the service; but it was estimated that there was capacity in the Nottingham Road Cemetery, at the current rate of burials, to last approximately 10 to 15 years.

The Board noted that to gain accurate information, the service was currently exploring ways to engage in digital technology to link mapping systems to burial records and give plot access to operational staff. This was part of a wider review of the service to help modernise it. Recognising that the crematorium was an ageing facility, the review would also consider what needed to be done to modernise this aspect of the service.

A councillor asked whether the Council had plans for a new burial site once the Nottingham Road Cemetery could no longer be used. It was noted that a new system would be used to accurately map the cemetery to determine how much longer it could be open for. It was noted that a new area had been identified. It was reported that this area was in the city boundary and that a land search had shown that it was appropriate.

A councillor asked whether groups similar to the Friends of Nottingham Road Cemetery Group could be set up in other areas of the city. It was reported that this group was made up of volunteers. It was noted that there was interest in setting up a Uttoxeter Road group and that the Council were working with individuals on this.

A councillor asked whether the Council were considering building a new crematorium. It was noted that this was being considered as part of a review of Bereavement Services. It was noted that a report would be going to Cabinet on this. A councillor asked whether officers supported refurbishing the current crematorium or building a new one. The Acting Bereavement Services and Markets Manager gave their personal view that a new crematorium was the better option. Councillors expressed their support for this option.

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A councillor suggested that Climate Change funds could be put towards building an environmentally friendly facility.

The Board resolved:

- 1. to note the report.**
- 2. to thank Bereavement Services for their work.**
- 3. to strongly encourage Council Cabinet to build a modern crematorium to provide the best service to the people of Derby and beyond.**
- 4. to support the review of Bereavement Services to enhance and maximise burial facilities in Derby.**