



Report sponsor: Samantha Dennis Director of  
Public Protection and Streetpride  
Report author: Samantha Dennis Director of  
Public Protection and Streetpride

## **Bereavement Services Update**

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 Through the Covid 19 pandemic all services in the council have been stretched to capacity and Bereavement Services is no exception; one of the Council's critical functions, the service adapted to the needs of Derby residents through the pandemic by increasing its operating model and working in a different way.
- 1.2 This report seeks to update Communities Scrutiny on how the service has adapted to the changing needs of residents through the pandemic by working with communities and funeral directors; and future plans to review and improve the service.

### **Recommendation(s)**

- 2.1 Communities Scrutiny to note the report and provide any feedback to support the review of Bereavement Services

### **Reason(s)**

- 3.1 Derby City is a vibrant, diverse city and Bereavement Services has worked with communities throughout the pandemic to meet the needs of communities. This has 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.
- 3.2 Bereavement Services has 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.
- 3.3 Adaptations have been well received and positive feedback has been received from funeral directors and service users in a recent survey; however, there is a recognition from the service that a review now needs to take place to ensure the service meets the needs of the community and is fit for the future.

## Supporting information

- 4.1 The Council's Bereavement services delivers burial and cremation services in Derby city at Markeaton Crematorium and 6 cemeteries, 4 of which are closed for new burials but are available for re-opening of existing graves. The service, which performs over 2,000 cremations and 450 burials per year, also provides maintenance to 15 closed church yards.
- 4.2 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 there have been other sites opening within a short distance from Derby, these are: Alfreton and Trent Valley. This has meant that Markeaton Crematorium now provides services to around 34% of residents in the catchment area.
- 4.3 Markeaton Crematorium has 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. This year the crematorium has had a decorative refresh.
- 4.4 Despite an increase in demand of 24% in Derbyshire from 2014 to 2019 cremations at the site have 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.
- 4.5 Burial provision in Derby has remained relatively stable, between 250 and 300 from 2012 to 2019. In 2020 there was an increase of 48% which is attributed to the pandemic.
- 4.6 Intelligent data is required to gain accurate information on burial capacity within the city to enable effective future planning for this element of the service; but it estimated that there is capacity in the Nottingham Road Cemetery, at the current rate of burials, to last approximately 10 to 15 years.

- 4.7 To gain accurate information the service is currently exploring ways to engage in digital technology to link mapping systems to burial records and give plot access to operational staff. This is part of a wider review of the service to help modernise and become fit for the future.
- 4.8 Recognising that the crematorium is an ageing facility, the review will also consider what needs to be done to modernise this aspect of the service.

### **Public/stakeholder engagement**

- 5.1 A recent survey of users determined that the Council's service provides an empathetic and professional approach to providing cremation services, but the aesthetics of the site require improvement to retain and increase usage of the site.
- 5.2 A workshop took place in autumn 2021 with funeral directors which provided the service with constructive feedback and confidence that collaborative conversations will continue to shape the future of Bereavement services for the city.

### **Financial and value for money issues**

- 6.1 As the review progresses a full financial business case will be developed to inform decision making.

### **Legal implications**

- 7.1 In accordance with the provisions of the Local Government Act 1972, Section 214, Derby City Council is defined as a Burial Authority and as such is required to ensure the provision of facilities for the dignified disposal of the dead.

The design of the cemetery will need to comply with the Local Authorities Cemeteries Order 1977 and the Cremation Act 1902

Burial Act 1900

Public Health (Control of Disease) Act 1984

Note: Emergency Planning – Excess Deaths Plans

### **Climate implications**

- 8.1 The service will work collaboratively with colleagues and partners to identify the best options for any crem developments which support the climate agenda.

### **Other significant implications**

- 9.1 Equality Impact Assessments will be completed for any review of the crematorium and burial ground.

This report has been approved by the following people:

Role	Name	Date of sign-off
Legal Finance Service Director(s) Report sponsor	Samantha Dennis Director of Public Protection and Streetpride	30/06/2022
Other(s)	Christos Zannettou Commercial Manager Doug Walkman Head of Service, Regulatory Services	

Background papers:  
List of appendices: