

**Report of the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods**

**Report to Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 12<sup>th</sup> November 2012**

**Subject: Bereavement Services**

Are specific electoral Wards affected? If relevant, name(s) of Ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input type="checkbox"/> No
Is the decision eligible for Call-In?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information? If relevant, Access to Information Procedure Rule number: Appendix number:	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary of main issues**

1. Leeds is a statutory burial and cremation authority, and the Parks and Countryside service is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 23 cemeteries, 25 closed churchyards and 57 war memorials. On average, the service deals with over 5,000 cremations and 1,000 burials each year and is the fifth busiest burial authority in the country.
2. The net cost of the bereavement service is £576k based on actual income and expenditure in 2011/12.
3. A report on long term burial supply in Leeds in December 2008 identified remaining capacity for around 8,500 new graves across the city, with shortages in the East North East area of the city. Since then new cemetery extensions at Harehills, Garforth and Kippax have been completed, and work is underway on constructing a 5 acre cemetery at Whinmoor with planning approval given for a new cemetery site off Elmete Lane, Roundhay.
4. A capital budget of £2.9m has been identified for mercury abatement in crematoria, with £1.4m identified for work at Rawdon, now complete, with plans now being drawn up for phase 2.

**Recommendations**

5. That members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board note the contents of the report.

## **1 Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report sets out the role and responsibilities of Bereavement Services within Parks and Countryside and considers capital investment requirements and overall resource implications in managing cemeteries and crematoria across the city.

## **2 Background information**

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has one of the largest fully inclusive local authority Parks and Countryside services, managing almost 4,000 hectares of parks and green space. This includes 7 major parks, 167 community parks and recreation grounds, and 383 acres of local green space, which include 144 playgrounds and 500 sports facilities ranging from skateboard parks to golf courses, and which play host to 600 events annually. We also manage 96 allotment sites, almost 800km of PROW, and 156 nature conservation sites, as well as 23 cemeteries and 3 crematoria.

## **3 Main issues**

### **3.2 Service Provision**

- 3.2.1 Leeds is a statutory burial and cremation authority, and the Parks and Countryside service is responsible for the management of 3 crematoria, 23 cemeteries, 25 closed churchyards and 57 war memorials. On average, the service deals with over 5,000 cremations and 1,000 burials each year and is the fifth busiest burial authority in the country. Normal hours are Monday to Friday, however an out of hours service is provided to cater for specific faith groups.

- 3.2.2 The following table provides a list of the cemeteries and crematoria in Leeds:

Armley Cemetery	Kippax cemetery
Beckett Street Cemetery	Lawnswood Cemetery/Crematorium
Beeston Cemetery	Lofthouse Cemetery
Cottingley Hall Cemetery and Crematorium	Morley Cemetery
Farnley Cemetery, Tong Road	New Wortley Cemetery
Garforth Cemetery	Otley Cemetery
Gildersome Cemetery	Pudsey Cemetery
Guiseley Cemetery	Rawdon Crematorium
Harehills Cemetery	Rothwell Haigh Cemetery
Holbeck Cemetery, Beeston Road	Upper And Lower Wortley Cemetery
Horsforth Cemetery	Whitkirk Cemetery
Hunslet Cemetery, Middleton Rd	Yeadon Cemetery

3.2.3 Similarly, a list of closed church yards is contained in the following table:

Chapel Hill (Burial Grd), Morley	St Marks, Woodhouse
Hall Tower (All Saints), Barwick in Elmet	St Marys, Garforth
Holy Trinity, Rothwell	St Marys, Kippax
Leeds Parish Church	St Matthews, Chapel Allerton
Otley Parish Church	St Matthews, Holbeck
St Bartholomews, Armley	St Michaels, Headingley
St Hildas, Cross Green	St Oswalds, Guiseley
St James, Seacroft	St Peters, Bramley
St Johns (City Centre)	St Saviours, Cross Green
St Johns, Farsley	St Stephens, Kirkstall
St Johns, Yeadon	Yeadon Burial Ground
St Lawrence, Pudsey	Zion Baptist Church, Morley
St Margarets, Horsforth	

3.2.4 The Leeds Quality Parks scheme is based on the Green Flag Award Scheme which represents the national standard for parks and green spaces. The relevant criteria assessed are as follows:

- A welcoming place
- Healthy, safe & secure
- Clean & well maintained
- Sustainability
- Conservation & heritage
- Community involvement

3.2.5 In Leeds, the standard is used to assess a representative sample of 143 parks and green spaces over a 3 year period, which includes all city, country and community parks along with cemeteries and a sample of nature conservation sites. It should be noted that the award is a measure of a well managed site, not excellence in every respect. The data is used as a performance indicator published in the Council Business Plan namely 'the percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed internally that meet the Green Flag criteria'. Performance in 2011/12 was 26.6% against a target of 26.2%.

3.2.6 The Leeds Quality Parks assessment commenced in 2004, and 21 cemeteries and crematoria sites have been assessed on two occasions or more allowing comparisons to be made. When compared to original assessments made, improvements have been noted in 13 out of the 21 sites assessed, representing a 62% increase, with 3 sites remaining at the same standard. It should be noted however that as at the end of the 2011 assessments, Yeadon Cemetery is the only site to achieve the Leeds Quality Parks standard. It is estimated that the cost, excluding building works, to bring cemeteries and crematoria sites up to the Leeds Quality Park standard is around £550k.

3.2.7 Volunteers play an important role, and there are 'friends of' groups at the following cemeteries, with an estimation of the volunteer days each year:

<b>Group Name</b>	<b>Number of Volunteers</b>
Friends of Beckett Street Cemetery	10
Friends of Beeston Cemetery	5
Friends of Guiseley Cemetery	15
Friends of Holbeck Cemetery	5
Friends of Hunslet Cemetery	5
Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery	30
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

3.2.8 At Beckett Street Cemetery there have been 4 corporate volunteer tasks since April 2011, 3 of which were in partnership with Leeds Ahead. There have been 3 ranger-led tasks at Hunslet Cemetery all with the Friends of Hunslet Cemetery, and 3 ranger-led tasks at Pudsey Cemetery. As well as the monthly Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery tasks, there have been 4 corporate volunteer tasks organised in partnership with Leeds Ahead. Tasks included levelling the ground, clearing paths, litter picking, weeding beds, painting gates and clearing graves.

3.2.9 In addition to practical tasks, the Friends of Lawnswood Cemetery have also organised themed heritage walking trails which have been well attended. These trails include the 'Leeds Pals' telling the story of the Leeds pals battalion, 'Lord Mayors of Leeds' (14 buried at Lawnswood), 'Medical Men' and 'Leeds, a City of a Thousand Trades'.

3.2.10 Cemeteries are regularly patrolled using the Council ParksWatch service. Patrols take place 7 days a week with the objectives of engaging with the public and addressing issues associated with anti-social behaviour and vandalism. ParksWatch officers also liaise with Children's Services to report children out of school who are witnessed in cemeteries during school hours. The patrols also assist with access arrangements and include a lock up at every site during weekdays and both locking and unlocking of all sites on weekends.

3.2.11 From April 2011 to March 2012 there were 211 incidents logged by ParksWatch staff. The following table provides a summary of these incidents by category:

<b>Category</b>	<b>Incidents</b>
Access Related	21
Animal Issues	63
Crime Related	6
Illegal Tipping	7
Motor Vehicle Related	7
Motorcycle Related	1
Nuisance Persons	42
Other	60
Vandalism	4
	<b>211</b>

3.2.12 Sites with 10 or more incidents are summarised in the following table:

<b>Description</b>	<b>Incidents</b>
Harehills Cemetery	41
Hunslet Cemetery	30
New Wortley Cemetery	22
Pudsey Cemetery	21
Lawnswood Cemetery	17
Cottingley Crematorium	13
Lofthouse Cemetery	12
Horsforth Cemetery	11
Beckett Street Cemetery	10
	<b>177</b>

### **3.3 Capital Investment**

3.3.1 There are two key capital investment issues for the service, namely ensuring burial space and mercury abatement. In addition, security improvements are currently being implemented at 2 cemeteries. With regard to burial space, a report on long term burial supply in Leeds was approved by Executive Board on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2008. It agreed to adopt the recommended policy to establish a preference for smaller locally based cemetery sites combined with the extension, where possible, of existing sites.

3.3.2 The report identified the capacity for around 8,500 new graves across the city, set against demand for new graves at approximately 500 each year. The following table summarises this availability on an area basis set against the number of years to reach capacity:

<b>Area</b>	<b>New Grave Capacity</b>
East North East	1,080
West North West	4,289
South South East	3,116

3.3.3 At the time the East North East area was in shortest supply, and it was estimated that the Council had 15 to 16 years of supply remaining across the whole of the City. Since Dec 2008, new cemetery extensions at Harehills, Garforth and Kippax have been completed, creating capacity for an additional 1,301 new graves. Work is underway on constructing a 5 acre cemetery at Whinmoor that will become operational in January 2013 and planning approval has been given for a new cemetery site at the former caravan park off Elmete Lane, Roundhay. More formal negotiations are about to begin to purchase land adjoining Horsforth and Farnley Cemeteries with a view to developing these sites over the next 2 years.

3.3.4 Laying out cemeteries requires capital expenditure in addition to the increased burden on revenue involved in horticulture maintenance. Prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 Bereavement Services had spent £1.046m on existing capital schemes, and has programmed to spend a further £2.132m in 12/13 and £0.956m in 13/14.

3.3.5 With regard to mercury abatement, Executive Board approval was given in August 2010 to undertake work at two of the three crematoria to meet the 50% abatement target by December 2012. A capital budget of £2.9m has been identified, with

£1.4m identified for work at Rawdon, now complete, with plans now being drawn up for phase 2.

3.3.6 The work at Rawdon has enabled the installation of a heat exchange unit that heats the chapel and other ancillary rooms around the crematorium. Some other local authorities when constructing new crematoria, heat exchange for other, often larger adjacent buildings. In Leeds, Lawnswood and Cottingley crematoria are located in the middle of a cemetery and Rawdon is in the middle of remembrance gardens used for strewing ashes, and therefore the scope for heat exchange is limited.

3.3.7 Following incidents of anti social behaviour over the past few years including those reported within the media, members of the public have been lobbying Members and officers to implement security improvements at Harehills and Hunslet cemeteries. At Harehills cemetery this will be done through the installation of CCTV and at Hunslet through the installation of security fencing at an overall cost of £98k.

### 3.4 Financial Information

3.4.1 The table below shows the current core city comparisons for burial and cremation fees, following the introduction of revised prices from 1<sup>st</sup> October 2012. Whilst Leeds is equal highest with Liverpool for cremations, it is third highest for new burials, some £888 lower than the highest core city:

	<b>New Burial Including Interment</b>	<b>Cremation</b>
Birmingham	£2,819	£575
Manchester	£2,325	£600
<b>Leeds</b>	<b>£1,931</b>	<b>£674</b>
Bristol	£1,462	£584
Sheffield	£1,565	£521
Nottingham	£1,273	£405
Liverpool	£1,473	£674
Newcastle	£1,492	£623

3.4.2 In order to put these charges into the context of overall costs of provision, the following table sets out a financial statement that summarises all sources of income and expenditure associated with the provision of bereavement services based on actual income and expenditure in 2011/12.

	<b>Actual 2011/12 £ '000</b>
<b>INCOME</b>	
Cemeteries & Crematoria Income	-4,949
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>	
Staffing, including clothing and expenses	1,161
Horticultural maintenance, including forestry	1,174
Supplies and services, including overheads	1,361
Capital charges	1,301
Internal reallocation of central costs	528
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,525</b>
<b>Net cost of service</b>	<b>576</b>

3.4.3 Staffing is in respect of those directly employed in bereavement services and includes management and administrative, as well as those engaged in memorial testing, crematoria technicians and grave digging.

3.4.4 With regard to horticultural maintenance, as discussed above, the increase in supply of burial space has placed additional revenue demands. As cemeteries reach capacity they also require more intense maintenance due to amenity grass areas being converted to grave plots. Where possible gardeners are site based, and the following table sets out typical staffing levels for staffed cemeteries:

<b>Site</b>	<b>Number of Staff (FTE)</b>
Beckett Street	1.5
Chapel Allerton and Roundhay	1.0
Cottingley	1.0
Garforth, Kippax and Whitkirk	2.0
Guiseley Cemetery	0.6
Harehills Cemetery	3.0
Holbeck and Beeston	2.0
Hunslet	3.0
Lawnswood	5.0
Rawdon	2.0
Rothwell and Lofthouse	1.5

3.4.5 Tree maintenance activities are carried out on a reactive basis and prioritised according to available budget. The actual spend in 2011/12 was £20k and only represents reported problems with individual trees.

3.4.6 Supplies and services include costs associated with utilities (primarily gas), national non-domestic rates and transport and machinery costs. The level of capital charges reflects the value associated with sustaining and developing land for burials, buildings and cremators. The apportionment of central establishment costs is also included as allocated corporately.

## **4 Corporate Considerations**

### **4.5 Consultation and Engagement**

4.5.1 This report is in response to a request by the Safer and Stronger Communities scrutiny board.

### **4.6 Equality and Diversity / Cohesion and Integration**

4.6.1 This report outlines general information about bereavement services and the level of investment and resource implications on running cemeteries and crematoria in the city. An equality and diversity, cohesion and integration assessment has taken place for relevant proposals on pricing, the long term burial strategy and associated capital investment.

### **4.7 Council policies and City Priorities**

4.7.1 This report makes reference the report to Executive Board outlining the approach to addressing issues of long term burial supply which is now being implemented with a preference for smaller locally based cemetery sites combined where possible of existing sites. Reference is also made to performance indicator associated with Leeds Quality Parks, namely 'the percentage of parks and countryside sites assessed internally that meet the Green Flag criteria' published in the Council Business Plan.

### **4.8 Resources and value for money**

4.8.1 The net cost of service based in 2011/12 is £576k. Prior to 1<sup>st</sup> April 2012 Bereavement Services had spent £1.046m on existing capital schemes, and has programmed to spend a further £2.132m in 12/13 and £0.956m in 13/14. A capital budget of £2.9m has been identified for mercury abatement, with £1.4m identified for work at Rawdon, now complete, with plans now being drawn up for phase 2.

### **4.9 Legal Implications, Access to Information and Call In**

4.9.1 Leeds is a statutory burial and cremation authority. There are no restrictions on access to information presented in this report.

### **4.10 Risk Management**

4.10.1 There are no significant risks identified in this report.

## **5 Recommendations**

5.1 That members of the Safer and Stronger Communities Scrutiny Board note the contents of the above report.

## **6 Background documents<sup>1</sup>**

6.1 Long term supply of burial space in Leeds: Executive Board December 2008.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the Council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.