

Report considered by Cabinet on 18 June 2013

TITLE OF REPORT : FEASIBILITY OF A CREMATORIUM AT WILBURY HILLS CEMETERY

PORTFOLIO HOLDER – COUNCILLOR PETER BURT

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 Wilbury Hills Cemetery was opened in 2008 in its current form with the whole intention of meeting the future needs for burials and remembrance of the dead for the residents of North Herts as a District Wide facility for many years to come.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 The key recommendation from this report is to authorise officers to undertake the development of a Business Case to follow on from the completed feasibility study and report its conclusions to Cabinet at a future date.

3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 As a site already dedicated to the burial and remembrance of the deceased Wilbury Hills has significant potential to be developed further to provide a full profile of options for burial or cremation.
- 3.2 The feasibility study has already identified that there is currently a viable market for a Crematorium in this location and that it would be able to return an income to the District Council into the future without any significant impact upon any neighbours adjacent to the existing facility at Wilbury Hills.

4. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 There are no alternative options for the location of a new Crematorium within the land ownership of North Herts. One criteria is that any Crematorium is sited at least 200 yards away from any domestic residence. This element alone would exclude the majority of land in either the ownership of North Herts or even private ownership.

5. CONSULTATION WITH EXTERNAL ORGANISATIONS AND WARD MEMBERS

- 5.1 Consultation has taken place with the Portfolio Holder for Waste and Environment and with members in preparation for this meeting. An initial element of research has been undertaken of the market place as part of concluding the feasibility study.

6. FORWARD PLAN

- 6.1 This item was first identified on the forward plan in April 2013

7. BACKGROUND

- 7.1 Following the completion of an independent feasibility study it has been made apparent to Officers that there is a substantial opportunity for the development of a Crematorium at Wilbury Hills. The completed research provides basic back ground information that can assist with the development of a detailed business case. The business case is expected to identify the options for delivery of the project and advantages and disadvantages of each option proposed.

8. ISSUES

- 8.1 The key issue is to confirm if North Herts District Council wishes to continue investigating the options for developing a crematorium within the District.
- 8.2 The Business Case will identify the various options for delivering this project and will identify the pro's and con's of each. Upon receipt of the Business Case at a subsequent Cabinet meeting the chosen delivery option will be identified and confirmation sought to proceed with the project.

9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 Within Cabinet's terms of reference are "to prepare and agree to implement policies and strategies other than those reserved to Council" and "to oversee the provision of all the Council's services other than those functions reserved to the Council".
- 9.2 As a burial authority under section 214 Local Government Act 1972 the District Council has a statutory duty to provide facilities for the burial of the dead on behalf of the community it serves. However there is no stipulation as to how this duty has to be delivered.
- 9.3 As part of any further investigation of the future provision of burial services, it will be necessary to investigate and satisfy any land/property considerations.

10. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 A total of £30k of the strategic priority fund has been earmarked for the feasibility study and development of the business case for a Crematorium, should Members wish to proceed.
- 10.2 The business case will consider and include the detailed financial implications, which would be wholly dependant upon the chosen option for delivering the project and future management of the facility. However, for indicative purposes, the feasibility study suggests the cost to build an entirely new Crematorium would be approximately £2.8million. The annual gross income from cremations for such a facility is estimated at £455,000. The annual running costs for the facility are not estimated in the study.
- 10.3 The commercial market place for building a Crematorium is very limited within the UK and therefore the preferred route of procurement requires further research and clarification depending upon how the project will be delivered as indicated above.

11. RISK IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 The initial risks are associated with the financial implications and if North Herts District Council wishes to proceed with the project or not.

12. EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Equality Act 2010 came into force on the 1st October 2010, a major piece of legislation. The Act also created a new Public Sector Equality Duty, which came into force on the 5th April 2011. There is a General duty that public bodies must meet, underpinned by more specific duties which are designed to help meet them.
- 12.2 In line with the Public Sector Equality Duty, public bodies must, in the exercise of its functions, give **due regard** to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation, to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between those who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- 12.3 The provision of a crematorium in North Herts would provide new facilities to the residents of North Herts and beyond that would enable families to cremate their loved ones as their religion or beliefs dictates. This can only be seen as a positive.

13. SOCIAL VALUE IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 The proposal to construct a new crematorium does constitute a public service contract. Therefore the measurement of 'social value' as required by the Public Services (Social Value) Act 2012 will need to be applied, although equalities implications and opportunities are identified in the relevant section at section 12. Any individual award of a public service contract will be evaluated in terms of its social value through the Council's procurement processes. If the option of a new crematorium is deemed appropriate then the Act requires public authorities, at the pre-procurement phase of procuring services, to consider how that which is being procured might improve the economic, social and environmental well-being of an area. In this particular report, the consideration of increased CO2 emissions of a new crematorium would require careful consideration.
- 13.2 As associated with 12.1 above this can only improve the social value of the existing cemeteries currently managed by North Herts District Council

14. HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1 None that are apparent at this present stage. However depending upon the preferred delivery option consideration for employee's and their required skills might need some future consideration.

15. APPENDICES

- 15.1 None

16. CONTACT OFFICERS

- 16.1 Andrew Mills
Service Manager Grounds x 4272
- 16.2 Anthony Roche
Acting Corporate Legal Manager & Monitoring Office x 4588
- 16.3 Tim Neill
Accountancy Manager x 4461

- 16.4 Reuben Ayavoo
Policy Officer x 4212
- 16.5 Kerry Shorrocks
Corporate Human Resources Manager x 4224
- 17. BACKGROUND PAPERS**
- 17.1 Completed feasibility study