

## Summary Sheet

### Council Report

Improving Places Select Commission

### Title

Update Report – Dignity Funerals Ltd/Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Contract

### Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

This is not a key decision

### Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Damien Wilson – Strategic Director for Regeneration and Environment

### Report Author(s)

Louise Sennitt  
Superintendent Registrar

### Ward(s) Affected

All wards

### Executive Summary

This report has been requested to provide an update on the report presented to Improving Places Select Commission on 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2018.

### Recommendations

1. That Members note the content of this report.
2. That Members note the progress made on establishing new contract management arrangements.
3. That Members note the Annual Performance Report from Dignity.
4. That Members provide feedback to support the ongoing contract management process.
5. That Members agree to receive a further progress report in November 2018

### **List of Appendices Included**

Appendix 1 Performance Management Framework  
Appendix 2 Annual Performance Report

### **Background Papers**

Report to Improving Places Select Commission on the 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 2018

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

Not applicable.

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

Not exempt

## **Update Report – Dignity Funerals Ltd/Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Contract**

### **1. Recommendations**

- 1.1 That Members note the content of the report
- 1.2 That Members note the progress made on establishing new contract management arrangements.
- 1.3 That Members note the Annual Performance Report from Dignity.
- 1.4 That Members provide feedback to support the ongoing contract management process.
- 1.5 That Members agree to receive a further progress report in November 2018.

### **2. Background**

2.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008, the Council entered into a 35 year contractual agreement with Dignity Funerals Ltd (Dignity) for the provision of bereavement services for Rotherham. This partnership enabled the transfer of significant risks from the Council to Dignity and saw Dignity take on the responsibility for capital works and maintenance of the East Herringthorpe Cemetery and Crematorium along with the maintenance of the eight other Municipal Cemeteries located throughout the Borough. The Council retained the risk in relation to cemetery chapels, associated buildings and boundary walls on some cemetery sites. The partnership has resulted in a number of significant improvements in relation to the provision of bereavement services throughout Rotherham.

2.2 The Regeneration and Environment Directorate has been working to improve the quality of contract monitoring arrangements and IPSC has received regular reports, most recently on 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018.

2.3 This new report is intended to update Members on the progress of key issues relating to the service and performance of Dignity and the new monitoring arrangements following the transfer of the contract management function to Registration Services.

### **3. Financial aspects**

3.1 Dignity has made a financial investment of £3.5 million since the start of the contract. This year a further investment of £250 000 has been made to refurbish Herringthorpe crematorium and chapel; a programme of works, expected to take 17 weeks, commenced in May 2018.

3.2 Fixed rate payments have been made to the Council by Dignity.

3.3 There have been no exceptional surplus payments in the financial year ending April 2018.

3.4 There have been no performance related financial deductions in the financial year ending April 2018.

3.5 The Council's obligations in relation to retained responsibilities will exceed the £4,000 provided for in the revenue budget for the financial year 2018/2019. This is largely due to essential works to the chapel and boundary wall at Masbrough cemetery.

#### **4. Contract and performance monitoring**

4.1 The contract management arrangements now in place include a Performance Management Framework, based on key requirements detailed in the contract.

4.1.1 Availability requirements: these requirements relate to the availability of services at each location that Dignity are responsible for, and include matters such as opening times and operational periods, access, provision of utilities, lighting and legislative requirements.

4.1.2 Performance Requirements: the performance targets are detailed within the contract and are intended to verify that Dignity is complying with its contractual obligations and that the contract is delivering the specified outcomes and standards expected by the Council.

4.2 In addition to contractual arrangements a number of service improvements have been proposed, set out in Section 16 of the 03 January 2018 report. These proposals are monitored via the Performance Management Framework and have been included in the Annual Performance Report.

4.3 Monitoring and reporting takes place on a monthly basis in the form of: a report from Dignity and a monthly performance meeting; a quarterly exception report and a quarterly exception meeting; a full performance report and annual performance meeting.

4.3.1 For the purpose of this meeting, the Performance Management Framework and the Annual Performance Report are attached at Appendices 1 and 2 respectively.

#### **5. Annual Reports Provided by Dignity**

5.1 The annual report is provided at Appendix 2.

#### **6. Service Improvement Proposals**

6.1 A range of service improvement proposals (SIP) were made in the report of 3<sup>rd</sup> January 2018 and an update is provided. Schedule 27 of the contract details the change protocol and is a suitable route for progressing change requests.

##### **6.1.1 SIP 1 Financial Aspects, Exceptional Surplus:**

*Dignity will provide the Council with sufficient financial detail in the Annual Report to assess the level of Equity Internal Rate of Return payments to be made at each financial year end.*

Dignity has provided the information confidentially to the Council's Finance Team.

**6.1.2 SIP 2 Financial Aspects, Financial Related Deductions:**

*The Council will levy charges against Dignity in relation to failure events against the Performance Management Framework reported on a monthly basis to the Council.*

There were no event failures reported in the 2017/2018 financial year and therefore no charges were levied.

**6.1.3 SIP 3 Performance Management Framework: Reporting against the Performance**

*Management Framework will begin in the final quarter of 2017/18.*

Reporting against the framework commenced in April 2018; this is a delay on the original target. Performance management was transferred to the Registration Service in February 2018; the presentation of the performance framework was reviewed into a document that consolidated key performance targets and service improvement proposals.

**6.1.4 SIP 4 Annual Report:**

*Dignity will provide an improved Annual Report covering the requested information detailed in Section 5 of this report. The Annual Report will be provided by February 2018.*

The format of the Annual Report was reviewed. Dignity provided an initial report on 19<sup>th</sup> April 2018, this is a delay on the original target, supplementary evidence was provided on 6<sup>th</sup> June 2018.

**6.1.5 SIP 5 Maltby Cemetery:**

*Options identifying suitable land for burials will be produced during spring 2018 and presented to members to consider future action.*

The annual report confirms grave space, predicted to meet demand for the next ten years has been identified.

**6.1.6 SIP 6 Same day/short notice burials:**

*The Council continues to work to examine this issue and will provide a verbal update prior to examining potential options.*

Ongoing discussions are taking place with Dignity with regards to same day burial timings.

**6.1.7 SIP 7 Memorial Benches:**

*It is proposed that options to provide communal memorial benches are considered to reduce costs.*

A range of options are now available.

**6.1.8 SIP 8 Grounds Maintenance:**

*It is proposed that the provision of grounds maintenance will be measured against the criteria described in the Performance Management Framework.*

Performance management of the grounds maintenance contract is under review.

**6.1.9 SIP 9 Crematorium chapel and adjoining buildings:**

*Following the completion of the external works, a report will be written to put forward proposals in relation to alternative provision of services during the period that internal improvement works are underway.*

This information was delayed but, following a written request from the Council, a schedule of works and plans have now been received. Progress is monitored via the monthly performance meetings and there is provision for *ad hoc* updates should this be necessary.

**6.1.10 SIP 10 Provision of lined graves:**

*A review of lined grave options will be completed by February 2018 and scheduled liaison meetings with representatives of the Muslim community will begin early in 2018.*

A review of lined grave options was carried out and a Muslim community liaison meeting took place on 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2018.

**6.1.11 SIP 11 Funeral Directors:**

*It is proposed to ensure that periodic liaison meetings take place with funeral directors, starting in January 2018, to inform progress of the contract with Dignity.*

A draft communication strategy has been presented to Dignity, this includes liaison with key stakeholders.

**6.1.12 SIP 12 Legal Review:**

*It is proposed that the Project Liaison Group is established to discuss feasibilities of formal changes that might improve contract delivery whilst not affecting costs to service users.*

Schedule 8 of the contract, Liaison Procedure, details the formation of the Project Liaison Group and how it should function. The group is not presently functioning. In order to form the group, the Council and Dignity should nominate 3 members and a Chairperson and agree the frequency of meetings.

This will be an agenda item at the next performance meeting due to take place on Thursday 19<sup>th</sup> July 2018.

## **7. Consultation**

7.1 Dignity does not consider it appropriate to survey bereaved service users out of concern that it may be perceived as insensitive to survey the recently bereaved. Dignity does not consider it appropriate to contact the bereaved several months after a death as this may cause upset at a time when they are trying to come to terms with loss. Dignity assesses quality of service by mystery shopping, the results of the latest mystery shop exercise should have been included in the annual performance report, but remain outstanding.

7.2 A key stakeholder survey has been developed to be issued to: Funeral Directors; Clergy; Funeral Celebrants; Medical referees; Parish Councils; Friends of Maltby and Moorgate Cemeteries

## **8. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

8.1 This report is for information only, no decision is requested.

## **9. Financial and Procurement Implications**

9.1 This report introduces no additional financial or procurement implications.

## **10. Legal Implications**

10.1 There are no specific legal implications that are introduced by this report.

## **11. Human Resources Implications**

11.1 This report introduces no additional human resources implications.

## **12. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

12.1 There are no specific implications in relation to Children and Young People and or Vulnerable Adults that are introduced by this report.

## **13. Equalities and Human Rights Implications**

13.1 There are a number of issues which are being reviewed by the Council and Dignity

13.1.1 Following completion of the Equality Analysis, a number of issues have been considered in relation to Muslim burials and both the council and Dignity are working through these issues.

## **14 Implications for Partners and Other Directorates**

14.1 This report introduces no additional implications for partners or other Directorates.

## **15. Risks and Mitigation**

15.1 Contractual risks are monitored via the Council's performance management framework.

15.2 Financial risks are monitored via the Council's annual review of the financial model.

## **16. Accountable Officer(s)**

16.1 Damien Wilson, Strategic Director Regeneration and Environment

16.2 Polly Hamilton Assistant Director, Culture Sport and Tourism

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