

Rotherham Cemeteries & Crematorium Draft Service Improvement Plan

Cemeteries & Crematorium Service Improvement Plan

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1 Summary

This service improvement plan has been informed from several sources including its key stakeholders and external consultants. The information gathered informs the unit of the changes required to ensure that Rotherham's Cemetery & Crematorium Services are positioned as a quality provider of bereavement services, offering a service which will compare with authorities in the top quartile within the bereavement services sector.

The sources of consultation have included "Reachout", the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management's "Best Value Assessment Process", Information from Customer Complaints, Staff Comments, Information gathered from the Yorkshire Benchmarking Group for Bereavement Services Organisations, Community groups including Friends of Cemeteries groups at Masbrough and Moorgate and the Muslim community, and a consultation document was commissioned through the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management'

Many issues brought out in the consultations have been found to cross cut amongst various stakeholders, for example, making improvements to boundary walls, fences and roads and improving car-parking facilities.

Other Issues are identified as key to providing quality services that can be compared with other providers within the bereavement services sector. These were discovered in the Best Value Assessment Process. Many of the issues which require improvement here are procedural or where documentation is required to provide our customers with range of information. These issues may be tackled with existing resources provided staff time is made available to carry out the additional workloads.

There are other issues, which have been identified where because of external pressure from central government it will be necessary to make substantial resources available to conform with impending or existing legislation. These are chiefly:

The requirement to ensure that the cemetery memorial safety is tackled and that there is an effective programme to ensure that dangerous memorials are made safe at the same time as ensuring our grounds and monuments are preserved.

The requirement to improve the cremation process to ensure that mercury abatement is addressed

Other unavoidable external pressures on service which will require additional Capital resource will be the requirement to provide additional grave space as there are cemeteries which are nearing exhaustion for new grave space, new

cemeteries or extensions to those that are currently operational will need to be brought on line.

Additionally there are a number of other major improvements which are desirable to improve the facilities to the customers of the service in Rotherham which are viewed as poor when compared with some of our neighbouring establishments facilities. Some of these improvements may be seen as opportunities to diversify and to provide extra value and choice to our customers as well as providing the potential to generate additional streams of revenue income. Other improvements such as providing waiting rooms, consultation rooms and research rooms are basic facilities, which are presently inadequate at Rotherham.

This report will look at the current level of service in the service profile and look at the current Strengths and Weaknesses through a SWOT analysis. It will then give brief descriptions of the consultations and assessments which have been carried out to inform the process. From this information together with a look at the known external pressures on our service, some of which are unavoidable because of impending or existing Government legislation, the key issues are drawn into a plan. Within the plan there are eight issues, which are viewed as Service Improvement (referred to as SI within the table) requiring either a change or alteration to process within the current establishment / infrastructure. More substantially, there are a further eight service improvements which are major changes and require substantial Capital investment, these have been identified as Redevelopment plans (RD).

The Redevelopment plans may be viewed as modular, with the option to consider them as separate projects to be developed piecemeal according to priority and available resource; or, it could be possible to look at the whole package of improvements and redevelop the infrastructure within the site to tackle a range of improvements within one major project. These options where they are appropriate are indicated in the table.

2 Service Profile

Rotherham cemeteries & crematorium services provides the preponderance of the Borough's funeral facilities through 10 Borough cemeteries, acting as agents in 4 Parish Council cemeteries and through its crematorium at Ridgeway.

The service carries out 750 burials, 2000 cremations annually and makes provision for around 550 cemetery memorials and provides 160 cremation memorials each year. Additionally each year there are around 200 applications for entries into the crematorium's book of remembrance.

The unit also operates an enquiry service providing support and information to the users of the service such as general enquiry over grave locations, family historical research, information regarding burial and memorial rights etc. Currently in addition to funeral requests the unit deals with around 2500 service requests per annum

The service is delivered directly through its Cemeteries & Crematorium section within the Council's Neighbourhood Services. Grounds maintenance & grave digging activities are provided under contractual arrangements, as part of the current Councils Grounds Maintenance contracting arrangements.

A Best Value Assessment of the cemeteries and cremation service has recently been carried out using the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management benchmarking process. The results of which in addition to carrying out SWOT analysis and consultation exercises with customers and specialist advisors from the burial & cremation industry have been used to inform this Service Improvement Plan.

3SWOT

Strengths

- Experienced dedicated staff committed to improvements
- Staff dedicated to deliver high standards of service
- Trained workforce
- Involved in networking
- Grounds are attractive and well maintained
- Understanding of our customer base
- Good understanding of customer care
- Good quality systems in place
- Understanding of our costs
- Good relations with contractors
- Good relations with stakeholders
- Modern working practices
- Up for change
- Seen as principle adviser in Borough
- Staff in place dedicated to memorial safety

Weaknesses

- Office facilities are not fit for purpose
- Waiting facilities are poor
- No parking facilities
- No refreshments available
- Poor facilities for family history research
- Our records are nor fully computerised
- We do not have sufficient staff to develop projects
- We are running short of burial space in some areas
- We need to develop better ways of consulting our stakeholders / customers
- We are the cash cow
- We need more resources to complete the memorial safety programme
- roads & walls in cemeteries in poor condition

Opportunities

- Could develop office complex
- expand range of services at crematorium refreshments /catering /flowers
- Could offer our expertise to others (memorial testing) (warden services)
- expansion of memorial range
- Buildings at Moorgate could be utilised or sold

Threats

- Lack of investment / stagnation mediocracy
- Need to modernise cremation plant driven by legislation
- Cross boundary drift to more attractive facilities
- HSE have powers to impose improvements (memorial safety)
- Shortage of burial space

3.1 Key Issues from Swot

3.1.1 Strengths within the existing organisation

The SWOT provides an illustration of the organisation with experienced staff who have commitment to quality services. The staff are open to new ideas and improvements and have a good understanding and positive approach to customer care. Staff are able to share our expertise with others e.g. memorial testing programme and they are already involved in networking with other Authorities.

There are effective quality systems in place which are reviewed regularly to ensure their effectiveness

A team in place dedicated to the issue of memorial safety

3.1.2 Areas of potential improvement

Increase the range of choice for memorials, Improve office, public buildings, car parking and provision of refreshment facilities.

There are some ancillary buildings at outlying cemeteries, which could be either brought into alternative / community use, or if not required should be demolished or sold off.



3.1.3 Areas requiring urgent attention

Roads and walls in some cemeteries are now in need of urgent attention.

The computerised administration service requires upgrading from the DOS

version which will no longer receive support in the near future and the cemetery and cremation records are required to be backed onto the computer data base.

The office and reception areas have been identified as unfit for purpose with cramped conditions for the staff and little or no room for private interviews with members of the public and inadequate space for family history research to be carried out.

3.1.4 Unavoidable pressures on service

Impending legislation will require upgrade to the cremators to provide mercury abatement plant. This will be a major capital cost.

The DDA will impose a duty for us to improve access to existing buildings or where buildings are modified.

The ongoing need for burial space will mean that further extensions to existing cemeteries will be required to meet burial demand. Within the next decade this will effect, East Herringthorpe, Maltby, Wath, and Greasbrough

4 Best Value Assessment

The Institute of Burial & Cremation Administration has developed a proxy benchmarking process using the Charter for the Bereaved to compare levels and ranges of service comparative to other authorities who are providing bereavement services. The assessment process provides a valuable guide to Authorities who are undertaking Best Value or Service reviews, as well as scoring Authorities who are seeking Membership of the Charter for The Bereaved

Rotherham undertook this process in July 2003, by completing a self assessment questionnaire. The questionnaire has been scored by QLM, and the results show from a maximum of 660 points Rotherham is currently scoring 493, placing Rotherham at 63rd amongst 73 Authorities who have undertaken the same process.

The assessment has identified 14 areas for improvement which require attention in order to achieve the charter mark.

4.1 Areas requiring improvement

There are 14 areas identified by the process which require attention so that Rotherham achieves charter status.

- One area for improvement involves a process change in cemetery memorial management.
- One area requires staff to be in membership of the Institute of Burial & Cremation Administration.
- 12 areas have been identified which require the provision of reference information or charter details to be made available or on display.

Once these areas have been resolved Rotherhams score could be increased by 70 points placing us around 41st of 73 in the country who have undertaken the same process.

5 Consultation

5.1 Rotherham Reachout

In Autumn 2002 the results from the 3rd Rotherham reachout survey were received, in general the service was thought to be in a good or very good by users of the service although some issues over car parking and security were of concern. Many customers thought that the service should be extended to offer cremations into the evening and at weekends and that they would be prepared to pay more for this enhanced level of service.

5.1.1 Key issues from the Reachout consultation

One in five respondents had visited the Councils Crematorium or cemeteries once during the past year. A majority of respondent rated the burial and cremation services good or fairly good when visiting or attending a funeral. However around a third of the respondents were unsatisfied with car parking at the councils crematorium.



Three quarters of respondents thought that weekend cremation services should be made available and around half of those who responded thought that evening services should be available and would be prepared to pay an extra cost for this service.

6 Complaints

Complaints and customer comments are monitored internally within the section as well as corporately through the Performance and quality unit. Learning from complaints exercises are undertaken to inform where improvements can be made.

Levels of customer complaint are generally low, some 20 complaints being received and investigated during the past 24 months

Issues have included standards of grounds maintenance (7) Stolen items from graves (3) Staff behaviour (2) Memorial safety inspections (4) level of service (2) and policy issues (2)

All complaints are analysed during investigation and wherever it is possible to put in place improvements from the learning from complaints procedure this is done.

In addition a number of reports are received on security issues which are not always handled or recorded as complaints.

6.1 Key issues on learning from complaints and reports

A number of complaints and reports have a similar theme and warrant more attention. One of the key issues which is repeated in more than one location is our boundaries, which are not secure, leading to concerns over safety in the cemeteries as well as anti social behaviour issues in the local communities around cemetery locations.

Particular examples where concerns have been raised in the past in connection with boundary security are

- Moorgate cemetery, where our boundary adjoins the Canklow estate
- Masbrough cemetery where the boundary adjoins the school fields
- Wath cemetery, on Cemetery Road and Stump Cross Road
- Greasbrough cemetery adjacent to Whitehill Road

Additionally concerns are expressed regularly about

- Footpaths and Roads in Haugh Road cemetery, Wath cemetery and Moorgate cemetery
- The condition of cemetery chapels at Haugh Road, Masbrough and Moorgate

7 Community Groups

Muslim community, friends of Boston Castle, Masbrough cemetery neighbourhood watch

7.1 Key issues from consultation with community groups

Friends of Boston Castle Park & Cemetery

- Security boundary fences.
- Condition of buildings
- Heritage Lottery Funding bid for scheme to include historical trails / nature trails etc
- Raise awareness and increase the use of the cemetery
- antisocial behaviour & fear of crime

Masbrough Cemetery Neighbourhood Watch

- Security boundary fences
- Security & antisocial behaviour

Muslim Community

- Response to request for service, enhanced weekend service

8 Benchmarking Group

This group is regularly attended and provides comparative information on issues which are current within the industry. The group provides a valuable platform to make comparison with other local authority service providers in the bereavement services sector. The group is currently working on developing performance indicators common to all authorities within the group that could also be recognised nationally.

9 Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Currently there are no satisfaction surveys being carried out to ascertain the users satisfaction with our services on a regular basis. This is one of the recommendations given by the Institute of cemetery and Crematorium Management in their consultants report.

10 Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management

In their consultation exercise the ICCM have drawn out the following key issues

10.1 Key Issues from Consultancy

A range of public information needs to be made available to the public as required by the charter for the bereaved

E access needs to be addressed making information available electronically

Open days should be established

Further development of community links & friends groups

Use of questionnaires to gauge customers satisfaction

A review of all procedures and documentation of procedures is required

The charter for the bereaved should be adopted

Consider using the ICCM Excellence criteria / EFQM quality standards

Achieving charter Mark

Review of Cemetery & Crematorium Regulations

Disability Audit

Review of all Health & Safety risk assessment's and safe working practices

Continue memorial safety programme

Review potential income generation particularly memorials

Look to community involvement to create funding opportunities

Develop bereavement services business plan

Consider need for memorial renewal programme

Carry out review identifying private sector / partnership options

Raise staff competency through service sector specific training

Review charging policies with social inclusion in mind

Provide advice on alternative funerals

Develop bereavement services specific software to assist in e government compliance

Continue with ICCM best value assessments

Develop service using ICCM Excellence criteria

Develop service questionnaires

Achieve 90% of customers indicating good or very good service

Increase range of burial options

Review length of Exclusive rights of burial and right to erect memorials

Improve range of memorials and choice

Consider provision of florists

Consider catering / refreshment facilities

Improve footpaths roads etc

The report also highlighted external pressure on service

Further measures to improve pollution control requiring large capital expenditure and increased revenue costs

Management of cemetery memorials requiring increased revenue and capital costs

Government pressure on Local Authorities to increase the resources given to cemeteries services as a response to the select committees enquiry into cemeteries

Political pressure from local communities should the authority decide to pass the responsibility for bereavement services to the private sector without clear benefit to the community. Historically, private operation of cemetery services without the ability to create additional income has led to dramatic reduction in service provision and quality standards.

11 Consultation with Staff

Staff make comments regularly and contribute freely to ideas for improving service.

Issues which staff are concerned over include

- Office accommodation for staff and visitors is not large enough
- Uninviting entrance to the cemetery
- Feasibility of selling flowers
- Refreshment facility for crematorium users
- Little room for family history research
- Car parking is inadequate
- Could increase range of memorials

12 Improvement Plan

Key Issue identified from	Ref	Description of Improvement	How addressed	Resources required	Additional benefit	Target date
BVAP	SI 1	Achieve Charter for the bereaved	14 key issues in BVAP + additional enhanced service features	Staff Time Will require membership of ICCM by at least 1 member of staff	Bring Rotherham into top quartile for bereavement services and indicate service which offers value for money	July 2005
BVAP Staff ICCM Benchmarking	SI 2	Electronic BOR	Acquire and market as an alternative memorial product	Set up cost £10 K	Potential additional income, more choice offered	2005 - 2006

Key Issue identified from	Ref	Description of Improvement	How addressed	Resources required	Additional benefit	Target date
SWOT IBCA Staff	RD 1	Develop Sale of flowers at East Herringthorpe	Requires improvements to or a new building development. Could be a 1 off project or part of Part of major development project to redevelop the whole complex at East Herringthorpe /	Capital £25 K or spend to save Staffing revenue growth £18k + Staff time to develop project Marketing Rotherham Crematorium Would possibly require a partner to enter into a joint venture and operate as a trading company Alternatively could be operated as a franchise this would limit opportunity to increase revenue income	Income generated potentially £30k p.a. local needs delivered locally, waste reduction	2006-2007
SWOT IBCA Staff	SI 3	Increase memorial choice	Develop new types of cremation memorials possibly at alternative sites	Revenue growth item to purchase / install columbarium / niches £15K to pump prime	Income generated greater customer choice.	2006
SWOT IBCA Staff	RD 2	Refreshment facility	Could be a single project or Could be Part of major re- development project	Capital £50k for building + Staffing Costs to operate	Income generated, filling local need locally.	2007

Key Issue identified from	Ref	Description of Improvement	How addressed	Resources required	Additional benefit	Target date
Complaints Staff Friends groups	SI 4	Security / boundary improvements	Rolling programme Wath, Moorgate, Masbrough, Greasbrough Lane, Maltby	Growth 20 K per anum	Addressing issues of safety and security	2005 – 2009
Reachout	SI 5	Evening cremation services	Requires feasibility study and pilot	Self financing Additional staffing required	Greater choice some additional income	2007
Reachoout Staff	RD 3	Car parking	Could be part of a major redevelopment	Capital £40K	Improve traffic flow within the complex.	
SWOT Staff ICCM	RD 4	Office unsuitable for purpose, reception interview room, records and archive centre, required	1. Refurb cemetery lodge & existing office accommodation as a one off or 2. could be part of a major programme to redevelop complex at East Herringthorpe	Capital programme £35K - £50K		2006
SWOT ICCM Staff	SI 6	Electronic access to all cemetery records	Backup all records	Additional staffing to enter back data	Provision of information over internet once all data has been captured	2007

Key Issue identified from	Ref	Description of Improvement	How addressed	Resources required	Additional benefit	Target date
Complaints Friends groups	SI 7	Improve roads & walls	Rolling programme	Growth item 20 – 30 K per annum	Safer cemeteries less claims against authority	2004-2008
SWOT Staff Legislative	SI 8	Completion of memorial safety programme	Increase warden staffing to enable increase in level of inspections and to get involved in remedial works to memorials identified as unsafe.	Staffing and revenue some resources already in place Additional funding for safety rectification £30 K p.a revenue growth	Possibility to roll out service to others, i.e churches, parish councils, other authorities.could generate additional income	2007 and beyond
ICCM Legislative	RD 5	Upgrade Cremators to comply with anticipated requirements of EPA	Major Upgrade of cremators and alteration of crematorium building Could be part of redevelopment of the complex at East Herringthorpe / Rotherham Crematorium	Capital expenditure £265K per cremator (x 2) + civil works to building est £100 K	Compliance Reduced pollution Could enable Rotherham to be a key provider of bereavement services	Possible compliance date of 2010 ? or sooner guidance from Do E pending

Key Issue identified from	Ref	Description of Improvement	How addressed	Resources required	Additional benefit	Target date
Staff Funeral directors	RD 6	Waiting Room access is unsuitable as it shares the same entrance as the chapel entry	Could be part of a redevelopment or from capital programme as a one off project	£20 K	Better facilities for customers waiting for funeral services	
Staff Clergy Funeral directors	RD 7	Facility for bearers / Drivers and funeral directors			Improved facility for our stakeholders (funeral Directors)	
Staff Clergy Funeral directors	RD 8	Covered canopy for exit to chapel	Provision of covered route to where funeral limousines park at exit to crematorium	Capital programme or alternatively part of redevelopment at east Herringthorpe & Crematorium	Improved facilities to those attending funeral services	

