

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Improving Places Select Commission – 19 December 2019

Report Title

Burials pilot evaluation and update report on the agreement between Dignity Funerals Ltd and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

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

No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Paul Woodcock, Strategic Director of Regeneration and Environment

Report Author(s)

Louise Sennitt louise.sennitt@rotherham.gov.uk

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report has been requested to provide feedback on the pilot Out of Hours Burial Service which was trialled between April and September 2019 by the Council and Dignity.

The report also provides an update, by exception, on progress against the performance management framework which monitors the Council's contract with Dignity for the delivery of bereavement services.

Recommendations

1. That Members note the content of this report.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Report on the result of the Out of Hours Pilot.

Appendix 2 Equality Screening Assessment.

Background Papers

Minutes of the Improving Places Select Commission meeting held on 6th June 2019.

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

None

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Burials Pilot Evaluation and update report on the Agreement between Dignity Funerals Ltd and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council.

1. Background

- 1.1 At the Improving Places Selection Commission meeting of 6th June 2019, Members requested that officers provide feedback on the pilot Out of Hours Burial Service which was trialled between April and September 2019 by the Council and Dignity. The pilot was intended to trial extended hours for burials at Herringthorpe Cemetery, with the aim of better serving the needs of the Muslim faith community.
- 1.2 The report also provides an update, by exception, on progress against the performance management framework.

2. Key Issues

BURIALS PILOT

- 2.1 The report on the pilot is contained at Appendix 1. In summary, the key findings are in the following section:
- 2.2 The report concludes that the pilot was largely a success, particularly in relation to better delivery of the Council's commitment to the Public Sector Equality duty:
 - 77% of respondents consider the pilot made a reasonable adjustment to meet community, religious and cultural needs.
 - 71% of respondents consider the pilot had a positive impact on community relations.
- 2.3 Demand for the service was relatively low during the first 6 months. Further research is required to assess the likely speed and volume of growth in demand in future.
- 2.4 Further research is also needed to assess implications in relation to the following issues:
 - Whilst there was no change to the fee charged for burials that took place between 5pm and 6:30pm, there is a need to give further consideration as to whether this fee is comparable with other areas and if it is acceptable under the terms of the Public Sector Equality Duty.
 - Although the delivery of the pilot has achieved significant support from the community, further work is needed to manage the impact on staff delivering the service.
- 2.5 The findings will be given further consideration by the internal working group at the next meeting in January 2020.

PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK

2.6 There are 47 Key Performance Targets which have been met (green).

2.7 Key Performance Targets not met (red) are:

KPT 9.1 The provision of environmentally friendly burial options. Initial investigations into a potential location were carried out. A consultation exercise would be required to assess likely take up and this will be scheduled into the action plan for 2020. Meanwhile, the current focus is on expansion of cemeteries, where additional burial space is most required.

KPT 10.2 Secure storage for registers and records. This is a priority for the Council, Dignity have allocated funding for a safe and identified a supplier, delivery dates are pending.

2.8 Key Performance Targets that are in progress (amber) are:

KPT 3.1 All signs in the Facilities (including temporary signs) shall be clearly legible and illuminated (where relevant) and maintained in good order. All temporary signs shall be provided or removed promptly where appropriate, such as maintenance operations, in accordance with the Council's requirements. The signage audit has commenced and proofs were provided to the Council on the 29th November, 2019.

KPT 3.2 All external light fittings to be working at all times. A capital request of £12,000 has been made to the Council's capital programme to cover the costs of reinstating lighting on the driveway to the crematorium which is used mainly by Funeral Directors. This will be considered by Members as part of the Council's capital approvals process.

KPT 8.3 Provide annual statement on customer satisfaction levels including plan for improvements. Customer surveys have been ongoing since May 2019, it was reported at the Project Liaison Group on 19th November 2019 that response rates are low. Dignity will provide results at the next Project Liaison Group in February 2020.

KPT 10.3 Restoration of and redrafting of cemetery plans in line with agreed proposals. Plans are in place to create electronic copies alongside memorial testing, there is no timescale for the plan at present.

KPT 15.4 Provision of an effective plan for systematic testing of all cemetery memorials and progress in accordance with agreed timescales. Testing protocols and procedures to be in accordance with the Council's policy for the Management of Cemetery Memorials. Paper plans and registers are being cross checked to ensure accurate data before the process commences, there is no timescale for the project at present.

2.9 Other Actions

Repairs to Maltby cemetery wall. Contractors started work on the project week commencing 2nd December 2019, weather permitting, works are scheduled for a five week period.

Haugh Road cemetery gates. This work is included in the same five week schedule set out for the repair of Maltby cemetery wall as the same Contractor is carrying out the works.

3. Consultation on proposal

- 3.1 Consultation on the burials pilot took place in November 2019 and the report on the evaluation is attached at Appendix 1. The report sets out the consultation methodology and the results are summarised in section 2 of this report.

4. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 4.1 This report is for information only, no decision is requested.

5. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications (to be written by the relevant Head of Finance and the Head of Procurement on behalf of s151 Officer)

- 5.1 This report introduces no additional financial or procurement implications.

6. Legal Advice and Implications (to be written by Legal Officer on behalf of Assistant Director Legal Services)

- 6.1 There are no specific legal implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

7. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 7.1 Whilst there are no human resources implications arising directly from this report, the delivery of the pilot has highlighted a need to address wider resilience for Out of Hours working in the Registration Service. Accordingly, officers in Culture Sport and Tourism and Human Resources are working to address this and reporting progress to the internal working group.

8. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 8.1 This report introduces no specific implications in relation to Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults.

9. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 9.1 An Equality Screening Assessment was carried out prior to the issue of post pilot surveys. This is attached at Appendix 2.

10. Implications for Partners

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

11. Risks and Mitigation

11.1 All Risks relating to the Agreement are monitored via the performance management framework. There are no issues to report.

11.2 Financial risks are monitored via the Council's annual review of the finance model. There are no issues to report.

12. Accountable Officer(s)

Polly Hamilton Assistant Director, Culture Sport and Tourism.

Approvals obtained on behalf of:-

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Paul Woodcock	Click here to enter a date.
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Stuart Fletcher	Click here to enter a date.
Assistant Director of Human Resources (if appropriate)	John Crutchley	Click here to enter a date.
Head of Human Resources (if appropriate)		Click here to enter a date.

Report Author:

Louise Sennitt louise.sennitt@rotherham.gov.uk

This report is published on the Council's [website](#).