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| <b>Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting</b>   |
| Improving Places Select Committee – 25 <sup>th</sup> October 2022   |
| <b>Report Title</b>   |
| Report from Dignity Funerals Limited on 2021-2022   |
| <b>Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report</b>  |
| <b>Report Author</b>  |
| Dignity Funerals Limited<br>4 King Edwards Court<br>King Edwards Square<br>Sutton Coldfield<br>West Midlands<br>B73 6AP<br><br>Clare Chisholm – Business Leader – Rotherham Crematorium & Cemeteries<br>Tel: 01709 850344<br>Email: <a href="mailto:clare.chisholm@dignityuk.co.uk">clare.chisholm@dignityuk.co.uk</a><br><br>Mark Williams – Operations Director<br>Email <a href="mailto:mark.b.williams@dignityuk.co.uk">mark.b.williams@dignityuk.co.uk</a> |
| <b>Ward(s) Affected</b>   |
| Borough- Wide   |
| <b>Report Summary</b>   |
| This report provides an update on the contractual agreement between Dignity Funerals Limited and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council. It includes the Dignity Funerals Annual Performance report (APR) for 2021-2022   |
| <b>Recommendations</b>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Members note the content of this report</li> <li>2. Members note the content of the Dignity Funeral Limited Annual Performance Report 2021-2022</li> <li>3. Members note the Five-Year Service Development Plan</li> </ol>  |
| <b>List of appendices included</b>  |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Five-year service development plan. Rotherham Crematorium and Municipal Cemeteries managed by Dignity with subcontractors Glendale on behalf of Rotherham Council</li> <li>2. Dignity Funerals Limited Performance Report 2021-2022</li> </ol>  |
| <b>Update report on Bereavement Services within the Agreement between Dignity Funerals Limited and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council</b>   |
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Background <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 this report provides updates on the progress made in relation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Actions set in relation to Dignity Funeral Limited at the Improving Places Select Commission dated 7<sup>th</sup> September 2021</li> <li>- The Annual Performance Plan for Dignity Funerals Limited</li> </ul> </li> </ol> </li> </ol>               |

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| <p>1.2 On the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008, the Rotherham Council entered a 35-year contractual agreement with Dignity Funerals Limited for the provision of Bereavement Services for Rotherham. This agreement saw Dignity take on responsibility for the capital works and maintenance of East Herringthorpe Cemetery and Crematorium along with the maintenance of eight other municipal cemeteries located throughout the borough. Rotherham Council retained cemetery chapels, associated buildings, and boundary walls on some cemetery sites</p>  |
| <p>1.3 Dignity provides annual assurance to Rotherham Council that that Key Performance targets are being met and service improvements are being made and are documented in the Annual Performance report.</p>   |
| <p><b>2. Key issues</b></p>  |
| <p>2.1 Dignity is required to maintain hard and soft landscaping including roads and footpaths, grave areas, memorial gardens, arboriculture, and all horticultural features.<br/> During the period significant improvements have been made to all cemeteries and Dignity has worked with its contractor, Glendale, to develop a five-year development and improvement plan.<br/> The driveway and footpaths at East Herringthorpe Cemetery have been resurfaced to improve access, safety and general appearance of the site. Additional equipment has been purchased to remove stubborn moss and other natural growth on the pathways without damaging the surface.<br/> All existing drainage at East Herringthorpe Cemetery has been repaired and a new drainage system is being developed for Muslim burial section to prevent the reoccurrence of historic groundwater issues in this area.</p> |
| <p>2.2 Dignity is committed to assessing customer satisfaction levels to agreed targets.<br/> The customer engagement log is regularly updated and shared with the Rotherham Council at monthly meetings.<br/> To improve reporting a revised customer survey was developed during July 2022.<br/> Information boards have been installed in every cemetery to encourage feedback from customers.<br/> Dignity has proactively engaged with Friends of Cemetery Groups and the Muslim community to better understand their needs.<br/> Serious complaints are referred to Rotherham Council within 1 working day.</p>  |
| <p><b>3. Expansion update</b></p>  |
| <p>3.1 Dignity have submitted planning applications in September 2022 for the expansion of the Wath and East Herringthorpe cemeteries to satisfy the future needs for burial space.<br/> The Wath Cemetery requires expansion for opening in 2023 so Dignity and Rotherham Council are agreeing the terms of the modelling currently and Dignity will commence the procurement and tendering process for the development whilst the planning process proceeds</p>  |
| <p>3.2 Both planning applications received positive pre-application approval earlier this year.</p>  |
| <p>3.3 Planning consent to extend the cemeteries should be received within the next 3-4 months once they have been through the statutory planning process.</p>   |

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| <p><b>4. Capital investment</b></p>   |
| <p>4.1 In 2022, Dignity have invested £460,000 at East Herringthorpe Cemetery to make significant improvements to the driveway and footpaths to improve the access, safety and appearance for visitors.</p>   |
| <p>4.2 An additional £250,000 has been invested in the in the Muslim burial area of the cemetery to improve access, provide land drainage and create tombs to improve the facilities provided to this community. This development is scheduled to be completed by early November 2022.</p>  |
| <p>4.3 Dignity have also invested £250,000 to resurface the driveways and footpaths at the Maltby Cemetery and further £200,000 investment in land and site drainage at the Greasbrough Lane Cemetery.</p>  |
| <p><b>4. Service improvements</b></p>   |
| <p>4.1 Removal of additional fee for weekend burials<br/> In common with other cemetery operators across Yorkshire, there has traditionally been an additional fee in Rotherham if a family required a burial at a weekend. This was intended to cover the overtime rates of the gravediggers and to pay for the Cemetery Supervisor to identify the burial site and oversee any practical requirements during the service.<br/> Dignity has reviewed its cemetery prices in Rotherham, and after consulting the Rotherham Council and local community, has decided to waive the additional fee of £481 and absorb the extra costs. Dignity has also offered a refund any grave owner that has previously paid the additional weekend fee from when Dignity entered the contract on 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008.</p> |
| <p>4.2 Extension to last burial times<br/> Improvements to services have also been introduced to assist those whose religious beliefs require a deceased persons to be buried within 24 hours of their passing. The last burial time of the day has been extended to 6.30pm. Portable lighting will be made available to maintain the safe conditions for visitors when burials take place during the late afternoon or early evening during the autumn and winter.<br/> We hope that this will provide additional capacity to meet this need from local residents and ensure loved ones can be buried within 24 hours.</p>   |
| <p>4.3 Provision of a natural burial ground<br/> An area of Greasbrough Lane Cemetery has been identified to provide a natural burial ground for those that want this option. Dignity's Business Leader and team in Rotherham have been visiting other such sites and conducting desk research to better understand the services that can be provided and how such facilities are operated.</p>   |
| <p><b>5. Muslim burial area</b></p>   |
| <p>5.1 Diversity and inclusion are integral parts of our business, and we are happy to seek ways to ensure our crematoria and cemeteries are inclusive and welcoming for all faiths.</p>  |

Dignity has invested £250,000 in the in the Muslim burial area of East Herringthorpe Cemetery to improve access, provide land drainage and create tombs to improve the facilities provided to this community.

5.2 A series of five public sessions have been held at the office of Rotherham Crematorium on Tuesday 12 and Wednesday 13 July for the purpose of engaging with the local community to better understand their needs.

5.3 Dignity's Central Operations Centre in Sutton Coldfield is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year to assist with public enquiries and funeral arrangements.

5.4 Dignity is seeking to improve communication with the Muslim community by using established social media groups, emails to mosque leaders and the cemetery noticeboard.