

Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

23 January 2013

Service Asset Management Plan Update 2013/14 to 2016/17



Report of Alan José Superintendant and Registrar

Purpose of the Report:

1. To provide members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee with an update regarding the development of a Service Asset Plan as recommended in the Annual Internal Audit Report.

Background:

2. Under the terms of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee Constitution, the Crematorium is legally vested in Durham County Council and operated by a Joint Committee on behalf of Durham County Council and Spennymoor Town Council.

The Crematorium is nestled on the outskirts of Durham on South Road (A177 Just off A167) close to Durham Cathedral and serves the residents of the whole of County Durham and beyond. The Crematorium Chapel, designed by J P Chaplin, A.R.I.B.A is hexagonal in shape and has large windows, giving panoramic views over the meadowland surrounding the building and of the distant woodland surrounding the site. The Crematorium was opened in August 1960.

Areas are set aside for the scattering of cremated throughout the crematorium land and an atmosphere of peace and tranquillity prevails in the surrounding of the Crematorium.

3. Durham County Council's Bereavement Services manage the Crematorium on behalf of Joint Committee. Bereavement Services align to the constituent authorities' corporate priorities through the Durham County Council, Council Plan 2012-16 and the Spennymoor Town Council Mission which is explored further below.
4. The Council Plan 2012-16, aligns with the ambition to transform the economy of County Durham and Bereavement Services has a role, along with all other services, to play in the achievement of the priorities within the Plan. In operational terms the Plan links closely with our Medium-Term Financial Plan and in broad terms also sets out what we consider to be our corporate priorities for improvement. The Council Plan provides a means by which we can shape our future plans for County Durham and outlines our vision of an: **"Altogether Better Durham"**

5. All actions within the Council Plan are structured around this overarching vision. The Plan also outlines five priority themes which will enable us to deliver the vision, as well as an additional priority theme specifically around the continuing improvement of the County Council. These priority themes are;

Altogether wealthier – focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of our plans;

Altogether healthier – improving health and wellbeing;

Altogether safer – creating a safer and more cohesive County;

Altogether better for children and young people – enabling children and young people to develop and achieve their aspirations, and to maximise their potential in line with Every Child Matters Agenda;

Altogether greener – ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment, and contributing to tackling environmental challenges;

Altogether Better Council – ensuring corporate improvements are achieved against the five priority themes.

The Altogether Better Council strand aligns closest to Bereavement Services, by:
Improving efficiency and value for money
Working to satisfy customer needs and expectations

The Spennymoor Town Council, Mission

Ensure that the Community of Spennymoor can democratically voice its opinion;
Contribute towards the economy of the Community;
Contribute towards the regeneration of the Community;
Contribute towards the well being of the Community; and
Provide quality services at an economic cost.

6. In setting out to achieve the service aims, the Joint Committee has ensured that adequate funding is available to maintain the quality and the fabric of the crematorium to a high standard, which recognises its value as an open space. The Management Plan sets out how these standards are being achieved, through current practices. The primary aim is that Durham Crematorium shall remain a peaceful, safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing place for the bereaved. Any visitor who may wish to come to the crematorium shall be presented with an open space and surroundings that are safe, clean, peaceful, reverent and relaxing, which is effectively managed by the authority.

7. Although the County Council's Cemeteries and Crematoria have had a varied history in the past, the service now has a high reputation for providing a well maintained environment, customer friendly service and proactive solution in how it manages its cemeteries and Crematoria. However, more hard work has been done, as all services within a local government environment, need to consistently monitor and review its service functions if it wants to remain effective in its management responsibilities and efficient in its provision.

8. Service quality is about the delivery of a service to the specified standards and ensuring that customers have the necessary information to judge the service. Durham Crematorium, like the other cemeteries and crematoriums have adopted the department's service quality aim, which is defined by the County Council as:

To provide a sensitive, respectful service fitting for the bereaved.

To ensure that sympathetic, supportive and confidential advice is given to the recently bereaved on funeral service arrangements and give assistance in co-ordinating the funeral process if required.

To provide consistent high quality standards of maintenance in cemeteries across County Durham, working to maximise value for money.

To ensure the proper respect of all Council cemeteries with fair Rules and Regulations, which are explained to bereaved and cemetery visitors.

Fair and sensitive enforcement where Rules and Regulations are not followed and used as a last resort.

9. This document which uses Asset Management Planning principles to set the framework for the Council's ownership and use of buildings and land to deliver the council vision and corporate aims.

10. This strategy needs to be translated to as service level so that the property which any service occupies enables that service to deliver its aims and vision in the best possible way, meeting the needs and expectations of customers and staff.

11. It was therefore felt appropriate, to produce a Service Asset Management plan to ensure that:-

- a. The property needs of the service to deliver its "vision" could be identified.
- b. The property occupied could be analysed and audited against the identified needs.
- c. Options and priorities to close the gap between future needs and current provision could be appraised.

- d. A way forward that would deliver the changes needed to meet Durham Crematoriums needs taking into account cost, funding streams and opportunities.
12. Extensive work has recently been carried out with regards to looking at the future for Durham Crematorium.
13. Substantial Improvements have been made through the opportunities afforded by the harmonisation of fees and charges in 2010/11. The Joint Committee has significantly more financial capacity to address investment requirements going forward.

Service Development Plan:

Crematoria Grounds

14. Durham Crematorium has carried out just in excess of 99,995 cremations in 53 years of operating in which approximately 70% of the cremations have had the ashes scattered in the crematorium grounds. Recent trends indicate that the percentage rate for ashes being removed from the crematorium will eventually exceed 50% which will mean less land will be required in the future. In excess of 2,200 cremations are carried out each year.

Crematorium Building

15. The Crematorium Chapel, designed by J P Chaplin, A.R.I.B.A is hexagonal in shape and has large windows, giving panoramic views over the meadowland surrounding the building and of the distant woodland surrounding the site. The Crematorium Chapel provides seating for up to 60 people with standing room for over 50. The Crematorium was opened in August 1960. Service times are on every hour and half hour, allowing some 20 minutes for each service and, giving time for the Chapel to be tidied between each funeral service. Service times are on every 45 minutes, giving time for the Chapel to be tidied between each funeral service.
16. Improvements throughout the year have been carried out with regards any Health and Safety issues that have been identified. e.g. Installation of Fire alarm and emergency lighting etc.
17. Whilst carrying out an inspection of the crematorium a number of future improvements have been highlighted and have been included in the action plan namely:
 - Develop a maintenance plan that will address future repairs and maintenance. Commission a further Condition Survey in Spring 2013 to identify any new and emerging maintenance priorities going forward.

- No schedule has been put in place with regards to carrying out any internal or external decoration to the crematorium. Therefore it is proposed that this be placed onto a 2 year cycle subject to the necessary funding being secured in order to carry out this work.

Book of Remembrance Building

18. The display cabinet which holds the book of remembrance is close to the chapel entrance; a suggestion is that it should be re-located in grounds to make space in chapel and to provide greater privacy for mourners during funerals. Provide a suitable purpose built location for the Book of Remembrance.

Chapel

19. The chapel was not designed to be so well used and popular for multi faith funerals - extra space is required urgently. A feasibility study needs to be carried out, specifically for the development of an enlarged chapel (subject to funding).

Waiting Room

20. The waiting room is currently comfortable but small and can only cater for approx 12 mourners. A feasibility study needs to be carried out, specifically for the development of an enlarged waiting room (subject to funding).

Chapel Doors

21. The chapel entrance doors need to be raised to accommodate coffins with flowers on. A feasibility study needs to be carried out, specifically to provide alterations to chapel entrance doors

Entrance and exit from main building

22. The existing canopy provides a pleasant architectural image but is totally unsuitable for protecting mourners from the elements. A feasibility study needs to be carried out, specifically to provide a new port cochere and canopies adjacent to the crematorium building.

Toilet Facilities

23. Currently there are only 2 toilets, one male and one female (+1 disabled) which are totally inadequate for the number of visitors to the building. A feasibility study needs to be carried out, specifically to provide new toilet facilities.

Carpets/Curtains/Blinds

24. The carpets within the crematorium have been laid down since 2000 and a visual inspection by the premises manager has identified signs of wear and tear. Curtains have been in situ since 2000 and although regularly cleaned will require replacement along with blinds. Source budget provision and carry out a programme of replacement for carpets/carpets and blinds.

Wesley Tribute system

25. The current tribute system requires upgrading with new equipment to allow Wesley to prepare and display photographic tributes provided by families. Source budget provision and carry out a replacement of the tribute system.

Memorial Garden office

26. Currently within Durham Crematorium there is no facility in which wheelchair users can access the Summerhouse/memorial garden office and therefore disabled access is required. Determine the cost of providing access for wheel chair users to summerhouse/memorial garden office.

Energy Saving

27. Proposals could include fully explore the possibilities that may allow further used of the waste heat generated by the heat exchangers. The crematorium project team is currently investigating ways in which the surplus heat from 2 cremators could be utilised. As well as the possibility of the installation of solar energy panels to the building.

Action Plan:

Operational Objectives	Lead officer	Key Actions and milestones	Proposed Completion date	Progress notes	Costings
Commission a further Condition Survey	Alan José	Subject to funding	2013		TBC
Internal/external decoration of crematorium.	Alan José	Subject to funding	2013/14		£12,000
Carry out alterations to Book of Remembrance room	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 2016/17	–	£200,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to chapel	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 2016/17	–	£350,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to waiting room	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 2016/17	–	£50,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to chapel doors	Alan José	Subject to funding	2013/14		£9,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to external waiting area	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 2016/17	–	£100,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to toilet area	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 2016/17	–	£50,000(estimate)

Replacement of carpets /curtains/blinds throughout	Alan José	Subject to funding	2014/15 – 2016/17		£15,000(estimate)
Provide update from Wesley system	Alan José	Subject to funding	2013/14		£6,000(estimate)
Floor screed and finish memorial garden building	Alan José	Subject to funding	2013/14		£6,000(estimate)
Carry out alterations to crematoria heating	Alan José	Ongoing	2014/15 – 2016/17	Ongoing	£10,000(estimate)

28. It is therefore proposed that we work alongside Asset Management in order to obtain these costs and to present these at a future meeting.

Recommendations and Reasons

29. It is recommended that Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee:-

- (i) Note the interim Durham Crematorium Asset Management Plan.
- (ii) Note the action from within the plan.
- (iii) Consider and agree to obtain costings for work required within the plan.
- (iv) Note that a full report be presented at a future meeting.

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

As identified in the report.

Staffing

A member of staff has left the Authority and this will be reviewed in due course.

Risk

There are no risk implications associated with this report.

Equality and Diversity/Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no Equality and Diversity implications associated with this report.

Accommodation

There are no Accommodation implications associated with this report

Crime and Disorder

There are no Crime and Disorder implications associated with this report.

Human Rights

There are no Human Rights implications associated with this report.

Consultation

None. However, Officers of Spennymoor Town Council were provided with a copy of the report and given opportunity to comment/raise any detailed queries on the contents of this report in advance of circulation to members of the CDCJC.

Procurement

There are no procurement issues associated with this report.

Disability Issues

There are no disability issues associated with this report.

Legal Implications

There are no legal implications associated with this report.