

**RECOMMENDATIONS TO CABINET- 8th JANUARY 2013
FROM THE REGENERATION, ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNITY PANEL
HELD ON 3rd JANUARY 2013**

REC112: MINTLYN CREMATORIUM – NEW CREMATOR HALL AND CREMATORS

The Project Officer presented the Cabinet Report which detailed the procurement work required to provide a new cremator hall and cremators. He explained that in 2006/2007 the cremators and mercury abatement equipment had been replaced to enable the Authority to become an early adopter of the new legislation relating to mercury abatement. Since then the cremation industry had found that inline abatement for each cremator is a much more efficient way to design a crematorium plant and legislation stated that from 2020 all new cremators must be abated.

Following the change of legislation, the Council had made capital provision available for the installation of new cremators and abatement equipment and associated building works.

The Project Officer explained that the Council was proposing to:

- (i) Build a new cremator hall as the existing hall would not be large enough to site the new cremators.
- (ii) Purchase three new cremators, each with single stream inline abatement equipment, which would be more efficient and easier to operate.
- (iii) Remove the old cremators and abatement equipment.
- (iv) Convert the old cremator hall into much needed office space, meeting rooms and a staff changing room with showering facilities.
- (v) Introduce cost effective energy efficient options for heating and cooling the building.

The Project Officer explained that the works were necessary to ensure that the crematorium was fully compliant with the Environmental Permitting (England and Wales) Regulation 2010 as amended, as defined in Article 2, Schedule 1, Chapter 5, Section 5.1 Part B to operate an incineration installation. The Permit stated that the plant should be replaced by April 2014. However as a result of recent improvements to the plant, the regulator had agreed to an extension to September 2014. In addition to this, the Permit had a condition which stated that there would be three cremators with their own abatement plant in operation by 31 March 2015. If the Council did not comply with the conditions of the regulator there would be a danger that the Crematorium could be shut down.

The Project Officer referred the Panel to the report contained in the Agenda, which detailed how the project would be managed and which

works were necessary to allow the project to progress. He also referred to the proposed timescale which summarised the main processes within the project.

The Chairman thanked the Project Officer for his report and invited questions from the Panel, some of which are summarised below:

Councillor Foster raised concern about the lack of detail contained within the report. The Project Officer confirmed that a further report would be available in March 2013 which would contain more detail on the proposals. The report being considered today was seeking Cabinet's approval to progress the project to procurement stage. Councillor Foster raised further concern regarding the lifespan of the existing cremators which had only been replaced in 2006. He asked if it would be more cost efficient to defer the project until the current cremators needed replacing. The Project Manager explained that the usual lifespan of a cremator was ten to fifteen years, however the current cremators had already needed repairing several times, and the Permit required the cremators to be replaced so that they complied with the emission standards.

In response to a question from Councillor D J Collis regarding applying for an extension of the Permit so that the work could be deferred, the Project Manager explained as a result of recent improvements to the plant, the regulator had agreed to an extension of the permit from April 2014 to September 2014.

The Executive Director, Environmental Health and Housing explained that the existing cremators suffered from cramped space which was causing frequent breakdowns and repairs. He explained that the current emission levels were often very close to being breached and stressed the importance of complying with the laws and guidance set up to enable the Crematorium to continue operating. He confirmed that the Regulators were the Environmental Health Department at the Borough Council, who regulated the operation in the same way as they would any other private operation.

Councillor Long, Portfolio Holder for Environment, explained that he had previously put pressure on the regulators to ensure that they adhered to the same strict rules and guidelines as they would any other private operator. He confirmed that it would not be possible to abate the existing three cremators so that they adhered to the Permit as there was insufficient space in the existing hall. Councillor Long felt that the proposals contained within the report were the most sensible way forward and if they were not progressed the only other option would be for the Crematorium to close.

Councillor Pitcher asked if it was likely that the regulations would change again in the future, resulting in further expenditure to bring equipment up to standard. The Project Officer explained that the

proposals contained within the report, if progressed, would result in the installation of three new cremators, which would be fully abated and up to standard. If legislation changed in the future it would be most likely that any improvements required would not need to be implemented until the cremators needed replacing at a certain date.

In response to a further question from Councillor Pitcher, the Project Officer explained that it was anticipated that the abatement equipment would last longer than the life span of the new cremators, which was approximately ten to fifteen years. The Project Officer asked Members to bear in mind that the additional cost to create office space and the new hall to house the cremators would be a one off cost, and in future when new cremators would be required, the cost would be substantially less than the capital expenditure required to take the current proposals forward. He confirmed that the progress report on the project, which would most likely be available in March 2013 would contain a breakdown of costs so would provide a better understanding of any future costs involved.

Councillor Mrs Allen asked what the current body weight limit for the existing cremators was and how the cremators coped. The Assistant Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager explained that the existing cremators should accommodate a 39 inch coffin, and could accommodate up to approximately 40 stone in weight. Unfortunately due to overuse of the current cremators and the resulting repairs required they could currently only accommodate a 37 inch coffin. The Panel was informed that it took approximately an hour and a half for an ordinary cremation to take place. A cremation of a body of approximately 40 stone in weight could take up to five hours. It was pointed out that these cremations were only a very small (less than 0.25%) proportion of total cremations.

Councillor Bubb asked if any proposals were in place to expand the car parking area. The Project Manager confirmed that this could be investigated in the future dependent on budget available. In response to a further question from Councillor Bubb, the Assistant Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager explained that there was a bus stop just outside the exit of the crematorium.

Councillor White commented that often members of the public travelled a long way to attend a service at the Crematorium and asked if it would be possible to have refreshments available in the form of a café or vending service. He also raised concern regarding the lack of signage on the roads directing people to the Crematorium. The Assistant Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager asked Members to have regard to the staffing implications and budget required to introduce refreshments, but agreed to take the comments on board for the future.

In response to a question from Councillor D J Collis, the Project Officer confirmed that, in taking the proposals forward, due regard would be

had to ensure that the cremators and abatement equipment were fit for purpose and provided the best value for money.

In response to a further question from Councillor D J Collis, the Assistant Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager provided those present with an explanation of how the abatement equipment worked. Abatement equipment removed mercury and other toxic particles before any gases were released into the atmosphere. The mercury and toxic particles were then stored in a sealed container and removed by a specialist.

In response to a question from Councillor Foster, the Assistant Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager explained that presently the Crematorium performed approximately 2000 cremations each year, meaning that the three current cremators were often in constant use all day. The Project Officer confirmed that should the demand for cremations increase, the operating hours of the cremators could be increased. Councillor Foster requested figures on predicted future demand of the cremators be contained within the next Cabinet report.

The Panel discussed the possibility of creating an additional Chapel at the Crematorium, should demand for cremations increase and asked for any proposals and plans taken forward to have due regard for the possible necessity to construct an additional Chapel in the future. The Executive Director, Environmental Health and Housing, agreed to take the Panel's comments on board to ensure that any works carried out would not have an effect on any other future work that may be required.

The Project Officer confirmed that the proposed works would not have an effect on the front of the building, where any future additional Chapel could possibly be built. He referred Members to the tight timescale which would need to be adhered to, to ensure that all equipment was up to standard by the deadline set out within the Permit and reminded the Panel that if the equipment was not up to standard cremation operations would cease.

The Chief Executive reminded those present that it was important not to incur any additional unnecessary expenditure at this stage. He explained the importance of ensuring operations at the Crematorium continued. He explained that the Project Officer would carry out regular meetings with the Portfolio Holder and the Project Officer would pass on the comments made by the Panel to the Architect to ensure that the works would have no impact on any future work that may be required. An update on progress would be contained in a further Cabinet report, which was likely to be available in March 2013 and would be presented to the Regeneration, Environment and Community Panel, prior to consideration by the Cabinet.

In response to a question from Councillor White, the Project Officer confirmed that the proposals would require planning permission.

Portfolio Holders, Councillor Lawrence and Councillor Long, commended the work of all staff involved in running the Crematorium and the Panel agreed that they conducted a dignified and professional service.

RECOMMENDED:

- (1) That the Panel supported the recommendations to Cabinet as follows:

That Cabinet:

- (i) Authorise officers to procure the works laid out in section 3.2 of the report.
- (ii) Approve the procurement timetable laid on in section 4.
- (iii) Requires further reports to Members as laid out in the report.

- (2) That consideration be given to 'future-proofing' the Crematorium and that any work involved had due regard to any work that may be required in the future.

- (3) That a further update report be presented to Panel in March 2013 and the Panel be given the opportunity to suggest improvements.