

AGENDA ITEM

REPORT TO CABINET

DATE 20 APRIL 2017

**REPORT OF SENIOR
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

CABINET / COUNCIL DECISION

Leader of the Council – Councillor Bob Cook

THE DEVELOPMENT AND OPERATION OF A CREMATORIUM & GARDENS OF REMEMBRANCE IN STOCKTON-ON-TEES

Summary

This report seeks approval to build and manage a crematorium on the site of the former Blakeston School Playing Fields site, Junction Road, Roseworth, Stockton.

Recommendations

1. That Cabinet approve the construction of a crematorium, including gardens of remembrance and associated landscaping and parking on the former Blakeston School playing field site, which will be owned, and managed by the Council.
2. That Cabinet recommend to Council to fund £6.35m through prudential borrowing.

Reasons for the Recommendation(s)/Decision(s)

Stockton has a growing population which has increased by 1.56% from 2011 to 2015. The Borough's population is projected to increase by 9.96% by 2039 equating to an additional 19,400 residents compared to 2015. In England, the vast majority of people opt for cremation over burial: 2014 figures from the Cremation Society of Great Britain show the cremation rate was 74.77%, in the Borough of Stockton this figure is currently 78%.

Of those deaths registered in Stockton [based on statistics 2010 to 2016], the average rate over that period for those choosing cremation is 78%, with balance of 22% choosing burial. This equated to an average number of 1605 of registrations opting for cremation annually. During a consultation held April 2014 – October 2014, 496 death informants were asked the question "If the option had been available, would you have chosen Stockton Crematorium?" 87% stated 'yes'.

Outline planning has been granted on the former Blakeston playing fields site for a Crematorium, at which time residents were consulted.

A full financial assessment has been carried out which demonstrates the viability of the Council operating a Crematorium as well as independent feasibility reports and viability models which have been completed by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) and, more recently, an external Crematorium Services Consultant (PLMC) in conjunction with relevant SBC Officers.

Members' Interests

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or
- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

Disclosable Pecuniary Interests

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code).

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SUMMARY

This report seeks approval to build and manage a crematorium on the site of the former Blakeston School Playing Field site, Roseworth, Stockton.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. That Cabinet approve the construction of a crematorium, including gardens of remembrance and associated landscaping and parking on the former Blakeston School playing field site, which will be owned, and managed by the Council.
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DETAIL

Need for Development

1. Stockton has a growing population. The current population is estimated at 194,800 [ONS 2015 mid-year population estimate published 23 June 2016]. By 2034, based on most recent trends, it is projected to increase to 211,000 and by 2039 to 214,200 [ONS 2014-Based Subnational Population Projections for Local Authorities released 25 May 2016].
2. The Borough's population has increased by 1.56% from 2011 to 2015 and this is projected to increase by 9.96% by 2039 equating to an additional 19,400 residents compared with 2015.
3. In England, the vast majority of people opt for cremation over burial: 2014 figures from the Cremation Society of Great Britain show the cremation rate was 74.77%. In a significant and growing number of cases, cremations are themselves followed by the formal burial of cremated remains at cemeteries, crematoria and churchyards.
4. Of those deaths registered in Stockton [based on statistics 2010 to 2016], the rate for those choosing cremation is 78%, with burials being 22%. Which means, on average 1605 of death informants choosing cremation have no choice other than to cremate their family member outside of the Borough as we currently have no crematorium facilities.

Public Consultation

5. In February 2014 and February 2016, formal public consultation took place on the proposed provision of a crematorium in Stockton Borough. On both occasions overwhelming support for a crematorium was gained, with the latter identifying over 93% of respondents in favour.
6. During the period of February 2014 to February 2015, additional informal consultation was undertaken. Information boards used during the Community Engagement Event were placed in the reception area of The Register Office in order to engage with actual service users of Registration and Bereavement Services and to gauge to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a proposal for a new cemetery and crematorium at Stockton – 956 customers completed feedback sheets and the results were 87% strongly agreed with the proposal, 10% slightly agreed, 2% slightly disagreed and 1% strongly disagreed.
7. Similarly in a consultation exercise between April 2014 – October 2014, 496 death informants were asked the question “If the option had been available, would you have chosen Stockton Crematorium?” 87% stated ‘yes’.

Location for Crematorium

8. The location for development of a crematorium is the former Blakeston/Northshore School playing fields. The site is located to the north of Junction Road (B1274) and Roseworth housing estate, and falls within the Roseworth Ward.
9. Directly to the north of the site is a railway line. To the east is Blakeston Court housing estate and to the west is a large supermarket with car park. Adjacent to the western boundary of the site is Roseworth Community and Social Club and Crossley’s Bungalow.

Planning Status

10. Under planning reference 16/0846/LAO, outline planning permission for a crematorium with associated memorial gardens, access roads, car parking and landscaping with all matters reserved was granted, with conditions, on the 1st September 2016.

Design Format

11. A new site access from Junction Road will be required to service the facility. The requirements of the facility must conform to the Crematorium Act of 1902 and the Secretary of State (DEFRA) Statutory Guidance for Crematoria.
12. It is envisaged that the new crematorium will be a modern single-storey building with one service chapel and two cremators, with abatement equipment. The crematorium will be surrounded by attractive landscaped gardens of remembrance, where enhanced planting will contribute positively to the visual appearance of the site and also provide an enhancement to the ecological value. The location of the crematorium building will be sympathetic to the surroundings in terms of both design and setting and would be complemented by ample car parking provision in accordance with the Council’s Supplementary Planning Document: Parking Provision for New Developments.

Facility Operation

13. The expectation would be the first service to commence no earlier than 09:15 with the last service ending at 16:00 from Monday to Friday as well as morning services available on a Saturday. The preference being that each service should be at least 45-minutes in duration, with the crematorium being served by two cremators able to accommodate the largest of coffins.

14. Incorporating the overall cremation service period above, it is assumed that the actual crematorium building would not be used outside of the normal opening hours e.g. 08:30 to 17:00. The gardens of remembrance are to be designed to provide both an area for the scattering of ashes and sections for the interment of cremated remains. It is anticipated that the grounds of the crematorium will have suitable summer and winter opening hours to enable bereaved families to tend their loved ones cremated remains graves and visit the remembrance gardens.
15. Subject to obtaining reserved matters approval it is anticipated that highway works associated with the new crematorium will begin later this year with construction of the crematorium starting in spring 2018 and completed spring 2019.

Viability

16. The assessment of future projected cremations in the Borough and the views of residents have focused the proposed design format as previously identified. These, together with the expected operation costs, have informed the determination process in assessing the viability of the preferred development.

COMMUNITY IMPACT IMPLICATIONS

17. The proposal for a local crematorium responds to the needs of our bereaved families. There is wide scale support from the local community for a crematorium, demonstrated through formal community engagement events and informal consultation with customers accessing the services of Registration and Bereavement.
18. Funeral services at the crematorium will be managed and structured in such a manner that they avoid rush-hour traffic. Sufficient car parking will be provided to accommodate funeral corteges as well as visitors to the crematorium grounds.
19. Modern cremators are governed by environmental protection legislation and have sophisticated pollution abatement systems which ensure there will be no smoke or smell associated with the crematorium.
20. The crematorium and grounds will be designed in such a way that they provide serenity, security and sensitive planting across the whole site, providing appropriate screening and barrier treatments to neighbouring properties.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

21. The facility will cost a total of £6.35m to build with the construction costs being met by prudential borrowing and ongoing running costs absorbed within the operating budget of the facility.
22. An estimated cumulative return to the Council after prudential borrowing over a 10, 15 and 20 year periods, £1.87m, £3.77m and £6.13m respectively.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

23. As set out in the report, the Council owns the land upon which it is proposed to build the new crematorium.
24. By virtue of Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 4 of the Crematorium Act 1902, the Council has the power to build and operate a crematorium. Section 4 and section 9 of the Cremation Act 1902 provide a power for the Council to charge in respect of the construction of a crematorium and the provision of cremation.

25. The Council will need to comply with its obligations under the Public Contract Regulations 2015 in the appointment of a construction contractor.

RISK ASSESSMENT

26. The proposed development and operation of a crematorium & gardens of remembrance in Stockton-on-Tees is categorised as low to medium risk included. It is included within the Authorities Development Framework governance and is considered to have existing management systems and daily routine activities in place that are sufficient to control and reduce risk.

COUNCIL PLAN POLICY PRINCIPLES AND PRIORITIES

27. Our Borough believes we should be a place where people are treated with dignity and respect, are treated well and receive the attention, support and assistance they need, both in life and end of life care.
28. The development and provision of a local crematorium facility will meet the needs and offer care and support to our bereaved families within their own community.

CORPORATE PARENTING IMPLICATIONS

29. This report does not contain corporate parenting implications.

CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS

30. The location of the crematorium is located in the Roseworth Ward although some neighbouring properties are also situated in the recent 'Elms' development which is located off Blakeston Lane, which is within the Northern Parishes Ward. All Members within the two wards have been consulted as part of the process with no issues arising; furthermore, consultation has been held with the Leader / Deputy Leader (who is also Ward Member for Roseworth). In February 2014 and February 2016, formal public consultation took place on the proposed provision of a crematorium in Stockton Borough. On both occasions overwhelming support for a crematorium was gained, with the latter identifying over 93% of respondents in favour.

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Education related? No

Background Papers

The Council commissioned PLMC in 2014 to work alongside an Officer Project Group to independently assess the viability of a Crematorium in Stockton. This would build on the previous independent report, which was written by the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM) in 2009. A copy of the PLMC report is also available on Egenda.

Ward(s) and Ward Councillors:

Roseworth Ward

Councillor Barbara Inman

Councillor Jim Beall

Northern Parishes

Councillor John Gardner

Property

The Crematorium will be constructed on SBC owned and managed land, located on the site of the former Blakeston School Playing Fields to the north of Junction Road (B1274).

