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**Democratic Services Section
Chief Executive's Department
Belfast City Council
City Hall
Belfast
BT1 5GS**

5th January, 2018

MEETING OF PEOPLE AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

Dear Alderman/Councillor,

In addition to those matters previously notified to you, the following item(s) will also be considered at the meeting to be held at 4.30 pm on Tuesday, 9th January, 2018.

Yours faithfully,

SUZANNE WYLIE

Chief Executive

AGENDA:

4. **Restricted Items**

- (a) Revenue Estimates and District Rate 2018/19 (Pages 1 - 6)

5. **Committee/Strategic Issues**

- (b) Minutes of Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Development Working Group (Pages 7 - 14)

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Subject:	Update on Strategic Cemetery and Crematorium Development
Date:	9 January 2018
Reporting Officer:	Nigel Grimshaw, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services
Contact Officer:	Siobhan Toland, Assistant Director Michael Patterson, Bereavement Services Manager Claire Sullivan, Policy and Business Development Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision After Council Decision Some time in the future Never	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of main Issues
	The purpose of this report is to report to committee on the key issues discussed at the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group meeting held on 7 December 2017.
2.0	Recommendations
	That the People and Communities Committee approve the minutes and the recommendations from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group meetings held on 7 December 2017.

3.0	Main report
	<p><u>Key Issues</u></p> <p>The Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group is a Working Group of the People and Communities Committee which consists of an elected member from each of the political parties.</p> <p>The minutes from the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group are brought before the Committee for approval.</p> <p>The key issues discussed at the 7 December meeting were:</p> <p><u>Update on the Charity Nomination Process for the Distribution of Money received from the recycling of metals</u></p> <p>The Members were provided with an update on a number of options in regard to the distribution of funds to charities in respect of the monies received from recycled metals. The Members agreed that option 3, Grant authority to the Bereavement Services Manager to liaise with Funeral Directors as a means to agree a programme in respect of nomination of charities for 2018, would be its preferred option.</p> <p><u>Funeral poverty</u></p> <p>The Members were provided with an update on the increasing levels of funeral poverty and initiatives that were being undertaken by local authorities elsewhere to help alleviate it. Members noted the update provided and agreed the next steps around further work that needed to be undertaken.</p> <p><u>Update on Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council – Memorandum of Understanding</u></p> <p>Members noted the cessation of the MOU as per a LCCC committee decision. The agreement had involved LCCC residents being charged the subsidised rate and BCC then charging LCCC the difference in the subsidised rate and the non-resident rate and it had terminated on 1st October 2017.</p> <p><u>Water Infrastructure at Roselawn Cemetery</u></p> <p>Members noted the update that was provided in relation to issues with the water supply standpipes used by the public (for flowers and cleansing of headstones etc.) in Roselawn Cemetery. To improve the water supply to standpipes to sections E to T would require a</p>

	<p>significant capital investment solution. A temporary solution is being developed for the dry standpipes in sections R,S, T and U. The offices, public toilets and crematorium are not affected.</p> <p><u>Update on Permanent Memorial to mark Plot Z1 in the City Cemetery</u></p> <p>The Members were updated on the progress that has been made in relation to the erection of a permanent memorial to mark Plot Z1 in the City Cemetery. The Members agreed, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, the tender documentation for the appointment of a stonemason to create and erect an agreed memorial for Plot Z1.</p> <p><u>Financial & Resource Implications</u></p> <p>There are no financial implications related to this report. The costs of the memorial at Plot Z1 will be met through the Council’s capital programme. The water supply issues at Roselawn may require a capital decision in the future.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications</u></p> <p>There are currently no equality or good relation implications in relation to the capital projects however this will continue to be reviewed as the projects are developed.</p>
4.0	Appendices – Documents Attached
	Appendix 1 – Copy of the Minutes of the Strategic Cemeteries and Crematorium Development Working Group’s meeting on 7 December 2017.

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**STRATEGIC CEMETERY AND CREMATORIUM
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

Minutes of Meeting of 7th December, 2017

Members Present: Alderman Rodgers (Chairperson);
Alderman Sandford and
Councillor Sian O'Neill

In Attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Assistant Director, City and
Neighbourhood Services;
Mrs. C. Sullivan, Policy and Business Development
Officer;
Mr. M. Patterson, Bereavement Services Manager; and
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

Minutes

The minutes of the meeting of 2nd November were taken as read and signed as correct.

Declarations of Interest

No declarations of Interest were reported.

**Update on the Charity Nomination Process for the
Distribution of Money Received from the recycling of Metals**

The Bereavement Services Manager provided the Working Group with an update on a range of options in regard to the distribution of funds to charities in respect of recycled metals. He reminded the Members that the Working Group had agreed in June, 2017 to the use of a survey as a preferred method to select a nominated bereavement charity. He advised the Members that the cost of adopting a survey for that purpose had proved expensive and that the low level of response had rendered this method relatively ineffective. The Policy and Business Development Manager referred to issues around sensitivity in the distribution of the survey, in that some bereaved families had felt it inappropriate to receive charitable donation requests from the Council following their loss.

In order to achieve a more effective response to the consultation process, he provided the Working Group with a number of alternative options including:

Option 1. Continue with the current nomination process by the use of a survey to determine charitable nominations

Option 2. Permit the Working Group to nominate a programme of charities for 2018.

Option 3. Grant authority to the Bereavement Services Manager to liaise with Funeral Directors as a means to agree a programme in respect of nominations of charities for 2018

The Bereavement Services Manager reminded the Members that the nomination process involved the selection of two charities per year and stated that any nominated charity would not be permitted to receive a donation more than once in any three year period. The Working Group considered the options proposed and agreed that option 3

would be its preferred choice, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

Funeral Poverty

The Assistant Director provided the Working Group with an update on the increasing level of funeral poverty that has been researched across the UK and experienced by bereaved families. She reported that the average cost of undertaking a funeral in Northern Ireland was approximately £3,000 and provided the Members with a breakdown of the detailed costs attributed to the provision of that service, including the costs associated with burials and cremations. The Working Group was provided also with information in regard to the financial assistance available currently through the Social Fund Funeral Expenses (S.F.F.E.P.), a fund which had been established to assist those individuals struggling with funeral debt and administered in Northern Ireland, by the Department for Communities. She reported that currently the costs considered 'necessary' can be fully covered – these include burial or cremation fees and doctors' fees. There is no upper limit on the amount that can be claimed for these although all applications will be considered on a case by case basis. However, there is a cap of £700 for other costs, which includes coffin, cars and the funeral director's fees, and this has not increased since 2003

She referred to a number of initiatives which had been adopted in England and Wales to alleviate the problem of funeral poverty, including direct contract arrangements with Funeral Directors, as a means to provide fixed price funerals. She referred to a 'Respectful Funeral' branding initiative undertaken by East Ayrshire Council which specified the minimal service required with agreed standards and cost limits for funerals.

In order to assist the Working Group to make an informed decision on the most effective way to alleviate the issue of funeral poverty in Belfast, she provided a range of ideas as to possible ways forward. As Funeral Directors work across NI the proposed next steps would involve discussion with other Councils, Faith Communities and Funeral Directors as well as the necessary legal and policy screening. She stated further that, once these exploratory discussions had taken place, she would report back to the Working Group with options to address the matter. The Working Group agreed to Council Officers taking the next steps proposed in the report.

Update on Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council – Memorandum of Understanding

The Assistant Director referred to a Memorandum of Understanding which had been in place between Belfast City Council (BCC) and Lisburn and Castlereagh City Council (LCCC) and which involved residents of LCCC being charged a subsidised rate for burials and cremations. BCC then reclaimed the difference between the subsidised rate and the non-resident rate from LCCC. She informed the Working Group that LCCC had formally terminated the agreement, a decision which had been ratified by that Council in September 2017.

She referred to a different scheme, whereby former Belfast residents who had been obliged to move out of the city to avail of residential/ nursing care, were still eligible to apply for a subsidised rate where proof of residency was provided. She stated that this scheme remained in force and was not affected by the Memorandum of Understanding.

Noted.

Water Infrastructure at Roselawn Cemetery

The Bereavement Services Manager provided the Working Group with an update on the water supply problems at Roselawn Cemetery. He pointed out that the water network supplying the 35 standpipes in sections E to T of the cemetery was installed 50 years ago and required full replacement if it was desired to continue this facility. The standpipes were provided so that the public have water for flowers and to wash headstones. He specifically mentioned the 16 standpipes in sections R,S, and T which were currently dry due to chronic leaks and airlocks. This system is separate from the supply to the offices and crematorium and they remain unaffected.

He reported that the water supply issues at Roselawn Cemetery had been discussed at a meeting of the Finance Oversight Board. It was agreed that the Council's Property Maintenance Unit would engage the services of a consultant to report on the current water supply infrastructure and make recommendations to remedy the problem. The Bereavement Services Manager stated that a report on the matter would be made available in the spring of 2018 and that, in order to remedy the water supply problem, would require approval to incur major capital expenditure from the Council's capital programme budget

As an interim measure, the Bereavement Services Manager stated that he would report back to the Working Group on the matter and would explore the possibility of hiring water bowsers for positioning at suitable locations at the above sections, to provide a temporary water supply until such times as the water supply issue had been addressed.

Noted.

Update on a Permanent Memorial to mark Plot Z1 in the City Cemetery

The Bereavement Services Manager provided the Working Group with an update on the progress which had been made, to date, in respect of the consultation and procurement process to erect a permanent memorial at Plot Z1 in the City Cemetery. He reminded the Members that the project was currently at a stage 3 committed expenditure in the Council's capital programme, with a maximum allocated budget of £50,000. He referred to a previous proposal to design a public art piece of art at the plot which had been considered by some of the bereaved families not to reflect their views, and stated that it had subsequently been agreed to establish a focus group, comprising representatives of bereaved families to ensure that their views were considered in any future design options in respect of the memorial. It was reported also that the focus group, at its second meeting, held on 26th October, had focussed on the design brief to be included within the tender documentation. The Working Group was provided with a copy of the draft tender documentation and agreed, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee, that the tender documentation which would be published, would provide for the appointment of a stonemason to create and erect an agreed memorial structure at Plot Z1.

Date of Next Meeting

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held on Monday, 29th January at 4.30 pm.

Chairperson