

**STRATEGIC CEMETERIES AND CREMATORIUM  
DEVELOPMENT WORKING GROUP**

**Minutes of Meeting of 25th September, 2023**

Members Present: Alderman Rodgers;  
Councillors Black, Bower, Ferguson and Flynn.

In Attendance: Mrs. S. Toland, Director of City and Neighbourhood Services;  
Mr. S. McBride, City Protection Manager;  
Mr. N. Brennan, Project Manager, Property and Projects;  
Ms. S. Kalke, Client Manager, Property and Projects;  
Mr. D. Armstrong, Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager;  
and  
Mr. G. Graham, Democratic Services Assistant.

**Election of Chairperson**

Nominations were sought to fill the vacant position of Chairperson and it was:

Moved by Councillor Ferguson,  
Seconded by Councillor Flynn and

Resolved – that Alderman Rodgers be appointed to the position of Chairperson for the period ended June 2024.

Alderman Rodgers accepted the appointment and thanked the Members for their nomination.

(Alderman Rodgers in the Chair.)

**Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting of 12th December 2022 were taken as read and signed as correct.

**Declarations of Interest**

No declarations of interest were reported.

**Update on New Crematorium**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with background information in regard to the construction of the new Crematorium facility at Roselawn, now that planning permission for the development had been approved. Visuals of the latest design of the new crematorium building were presented to the Members of the Working Group, these included images of both the proposed interior and exterior design.

The Director provided the Members with information on the next steps in the lead up to the construction and development of the new crematorium including wayfinding, design principles, tender awards, and handover, scheduled to be completed in 2025.

In response to a question from the Chairperson regarding the height clearance of the entrance to allow for access by the emergency services and including the pitch of the

roof to ensure adequate run-off and drainage, the Project Manager assured the Members that the concerns raised had been taken into consideration and had been incorporated into the design of the new crematorium building. The Client Manager stated that, as part of the design process, crematorium staff had been consulted and problems identified at an early stage to ensure that the design of building met all their operational requirements.

The Project Manager confirmed that the Crematorium had been designed in such a way to ensure respectful throughput of mourners, with each chapel provided with a seating capacity for two hundred mourners. He provided the Working Group with details of the proposed fabric design and materials used, in both chapels, to reflect adequately their unique positioning and design themes.

In response to a question from a Member in regard to alternative use options for the current Crematorium, the Project Manager reported that a number of business models were being explored currently and that the Council continued to wait on a response from DfI Roads Service, in regard to access and egress proposals, as part of the Crematorium development project.

The Working Group was provided with additional information on the signage used to direct mourners which would be constructed sensitively and positioned to ensure that that the circulation of mourners was managed in such a way to ensure that traffic bottlenecks and misdirection of mourners and visitors was avoided.

In response to questions from Members in regard to sensitivity of the information and directional signage, including soundproofing to eliminate noise migration, the Client and Project Manager assured the Working Group that the issues raised had been considered and incorporated into both the layout and design of the Crematorium facility.

The Members thanked the Project Manager and Client Manager for their detailed and informative presentation and agreed to undertake an information gathering site visit to the new Crematorium, in Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

Noted.

### **New Crematorium Naming**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood Services provided the Members with a update on proposals to consider appropriate naming of the new ceremony rooms from a list of proposed shortlisted options. The Members agreed that the following preferred options should be forwarded to the People and Communities Committee for consideration:

#### **Option 1**

Hawthorn and Rowan

#### **Option 2**

Lagan and Creevy

The Members requested that the People and Communities Committee be made aware that the Working Group had a stated preference for Option 1. The Working Group agreed also that the 'City of Belfast Crematorium' should continue to be used as the name for the new crematorium in order to ensure consistency and that the two ceremony rooms should be referred to as 'Chapels, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

### **Update on Bereavement Services – Operational**

The City Protection Manager reminded the Members that, at the December meeting of the Working Group, it had been agreed, subject to the endorsement by the People and Communities Committee, to extend the timeframe for the statutory submission of cremation forms to two working days for operational reasons.

It was reported that the two-day statutory timeframe had been introduced and was, in the main, being complied with by the majority of funeral directors. The Cemeteries and Crematorium Manager confirmed that the two-day working time frame provided the opportunity for staff to follow up on partially completed cremation forms and to engage with GPs as required.

The City Protection Manager confirmed that Roselawn Crematorium had retained its green flag status. The Chair and Members of the Working Group offered their congratulations to the staff in achieving green flag status in recognition of their hard work and dedicated service in regard to the operation and administration of, both, cremation and burial services at Roselawn.

The Members were provided with an update on the Muslim burial ground within Roselawn which had an estimated future capacity of approximately eighteen months with request for a further extension of approximately fifty to sixty burial plots. The City Protection Manager reported also that work was ongoing to assess if the area designated for the burial of cremated remains, at Section P, was suitable to be extended. He stated that the work associated with the possible extension of land, identified for cremated remains, was being progressed through the Council's capital programme.

The Working Group was informed that the visitor centre, located at the City Cemetery, was opened in February 2023, with a formal launch to be organised once all restoration work had been completed. The Members were informed that headstones in regard to the Commonwealth War Graves had arrived at the City Cemetery after previous vandalism incidents, and that the replacement headstones would be erected in partnership with the Commonwealth War Graves Commission.

The Working Group noted the work which had been undertaken at the City Cemetery, including the erection of the new visitor centre and restoration work. The Members thanked the officers and staff for their dedication and offered their congratulations on the work undertaken as part of the process.

The City Protection Manager stated that a small amount of funding had been received from the Department for Communities (DfC) in regard to the Council's historic graveyards, culminating in the completion of four condition surveys. He reported that the condition surveys had highlighted the reasons why those graveyards were not suitable to be accessed by the public and identified the future work required to remedy that situation, under difficult public finance considerations. In terms of the Shankill Graveyard, it was reported that a conservation architect had been appointed as part of the perimeter rebuild programme. The City Protection Manager advised that the opening hours to the graveyard had now been extended. The Working Group was informed of the future staff resource requirements attached to Roselawn, as the number of graves had increased with associated additional maintenance requirements. The City Protection Manager stated that future staffing models were being assessed, as part of that process, within a restricted budgetary framework.

Noted.

### **Update on Future Burial Provision**

The Director of City and Neighbourhood services provided the Members of the Working Group with an update on future burial land provision and were asked to consider including the proposed burial site at Troopers - Lane to the existing agreed shortlisted

sites at Dundrod and Moira. She referred to the complexities surrounding the previous sites which had been shortlisted and the advantage associated with collaborative working, with other councils, in connection with the Troopers - Lane site.

After discussion, the Working Group agreed to add Troopers - Lane to the list of shortlisted potential burial sites, subject to the approval of the People and Communities Committee.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The Working Group agreed that its next meeting would be held as a site visit to the new Crematorium, in Antrim and Newtownabbey Council area on Monday, 11th December at 11.00 a.m.

Chairperson