



To: Executive Councillor for Community Development and Health
Report by: Paul Nocus - Head of Specialist Services
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services Scrutiny Committee 13/1/2011
Wards affected: All Wards

BEREAVEMENT SERVICES (Cemeteries & Crematorium) BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE 2011-2016

Key Decision

1. Executive summary

This plan updates and refreshes the 2006-07 Plan for Cambridge's Bereavement Services. Based on an assessment of where our service stands today and what challenges and opportunities exist for it in the future, this new plan sets out a development programme for the future. It aims to continue improving our service to customers and to couple this with the meeting of sensible financial criteria.

The numbered recommendations below refer to the sections of the attached Business Plan

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended:

Mercury Abatement

- 2.1 To robustly manage the timely implementation of the Mercury Abatement investment programme, in order to minimise financial and operational risks (Section 6.2).
- 2.2 To investigate the potential benefits of joining the CAMEO Mercury credit scheme once details are published (Section 6.2.2).
- 2.3 To develop cost and process a programme of building works, repairs and maintenance through the Capital Plan (Section 6.2.3).

Commemorations

- 2.4 To work closely through a supply partnership with an experienced specialist supplier to develop extend and market commemorations (memorial choices) and to review progress after 12 months of operation (Section 6.3).

Management Issues

- 2.5 To prepare a detailed specification, and undertake soft market testing to ensure that the current management arrangements are achieving value for money and meeting service standards (Section 6.4.1).
- 2.6 To identify the best model for the future management of grounds maintenance (Section 6.4.1).

- 2.7 To carry out a comprehensive review of working practices for the management of cremation activities in order to identify the most energy efficient and cost-effective ways to manage cremations operations (Section 6.4.2).
- 2.8 To review the structure of the whole service in year 2, in conjunction with the other recommendations for reviewing and reorganising the operations of cremations and grounds maintenance, with a view to meeting any shortfalls in the skills and experience required in the areas of procurement, marketing, business finance, IT and administration (Section 6.4.2/3).

New Processes

- 2.9 To develop the option of a green burial in the portfolio of customer services available and to develop suitable expertise within existing resources to accommodate demand for such burials (Section 6.5.1).
- 2.10 To maintain a watching brief over cryomation, promession and similar technologies and report back to members accordingly (Section 6.5.2 and 6.5.3).

Additional Services

- 2.11 To explore the business case further for providing a flower shop in Year 2 of this business plan (Section 6.6.1).
- 2.12 To explore the business case further for providing catering services at the Crematorium in Year 3 of this business plan (Section 6.6.2).
- 2.13 To promote a 24-Hour Booking Service as a priority in Year 1 (Section 6.6.3).
- 2.14 To examine the business case for developing the Deceased On-Line scheme in Year 2 (Section 6.6.4).
- 2.15 To investigate whether an option now exists to purchase additional land to increase the capacity of the service (Section 6.6.5).
- 2.16 To examine the business case for offering a more comprehensive service to the public, subject to additional land becoming available (Section 6.6.6).

Environmental Scheme Adoptions

- 2.17 To join the Plastic Recycling Scheme (Section 6.7.1).
- 2.18 To join the Carbon Footprint Scheme (Section 6.7.2).

Monitoring Performance

- 2.19 To move internally towards a business unit base for accounting for the service to enable improved benchmarking on a business basis against a mixed economy of others (Section 7.1).

3. Background

Over the past five years Bereavement Services have made progress in:

- Delivering greater customer choice from enhanced memorials
- Improving customer standards as demonstrated by Charter Membership
- Improving customer safety and the security of memorials
- Improving staff flexibility and personal development opportunities through reorganisations.

In financial terms, the Council has maintained its cost base over the last 5 years and the most significant increase in costs has resulted from energy pricing and from plant maintenance. The service has enjoyed a stable market for burials and cremations over the past five years Evidence from the private sector indicates clear potential for growth in Commemorations.

The service is now poised to deliver significant changes that will bring it more into line with expectations for a modern, forward-looking service that will provide excellent services at good value to its customers and offer improved returns to future investment in the service. In this regard there are a number of key strategic areas in which the services are proposed to develop in the coming years.

4. Implications

See Business Plan

5. Background papers

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

PLMC (Peter Linsell Management Consultants) – September

Business Plan

CAMEO Paper

DEFRA PG5/2 (04)

ICCM Guiding Principals for Burial and Cremation

ICCM The Installation, Inspection, Management and maintenance of Memorials

6. Appendices

See Business Plan

7. Inspection of papers

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

Bereavement Services

(Cemeteries & Crematorium)

BUSINESS PLAN UPDATE

2011 – 2016

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1 INTRODUCTION

This new plan sets out a development programme for the future of Cambridge's Bereavement Services. It is based on an assessment of where our service stands today and what challenges and opportunities exist for it in the future. It aims to continue improving our service to customers and to couple this with meeting sensible financial criteria.

2 MISSION STATEMENT

It is our mission to provide exemplary services to the bereaved within the Cambridge City Council area and to the wider community of East Anglia. We will endeavour to deliver a caring, considerate and understanding service to people of all religions and of none. We will not discriminate on grounds of creed, colour or orientation.

It is our duty to be as efficient, understanding and respectful as humanly possible in delivery of the bereavement service. We will endeavour to provide clean well-managed grounds and buildings that are safe to visit and where high standards of housekeeping are evident.

It is our ambition to provide choice in everything. We will offer flexible service times, opportunities for self-expression and facilities that allow the performance of individual requests. We will offer an extensive range of memorials allowing families to choose something that reflects their loved one in a meaningful way.

It is our intention to offer the best possible environmental care no matter whether burial or cremation is chosen.

It is our aim to continue improving our service to customers and to couple this with achieving a financial surplus to the Council.

3 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This business plan sets out a development programme for the future of Cambridge's Bereavement Services. It is based on an assessment of how these services are performing today and what challenges and opportunities exist for them in the future. It offers a more commercial approach to bereavement services than previously. The plan proposes improvements to the quality and value of services to customers and envisages a modern, forward-looking service delivering good value and offering improved returns to future investment. A range of options is presented to develop services, extend choices and improve the budgetary position.

3.1 Summary of Recommendations

It is recommended:

Mercury Abatement

- 3.1.1 To robustly manage the timely implementation of the Mercury Abatement investment programme, in order to minimise financial and operational risks (Section 6.2).
- 3.1.2 To investigate the potential benefits of joining the CAMEO Mercury credit scheme once details are published (Section 6.2.2).
- 3.1.3 To develop cost and process a programme of building works, repairs and maintenance through the Capital Plan (Section 6.2.3).

Commemorations

- 3.1.4 To work closely through a supply partnership with an experienced specialist supplier to develop extend and market commemorations (memorial choices) and to review progress after 12 months of operation (Section 6.3).

Management Issues

- 3.1.5 To prepare a detailed specification, and undertake soft market testing to ensure that the current management arrangements are achieving value for money and meeting service standards (Section 6.4.1).
- 3.1.6 To identify the best model for the future management of grounds maintenance (Section 6.4.1).
- 3.1.7 To carry out a comprehensive review of working practices for the management of cremation activities in order to identify the most energy efficient and cost-effective ways to manage cremations operations (Section 6.4.2).
- 3.1.8 To review the structure of the whole service in year 2, in conjunction with the other recommendations for reviewing and reorganising the operations of cremations and grounds maintenance, with a view to meeting any shortfalls in the skills and experience required in the areas of procurement, marketing, business finance, IT and administration (Section 6.4.2/3).

New Processes

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Additional Services

- 3.1.11 To explore the business case further for providing a flower shop in Year 2 of this business plan (Section 6.6.1).
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Environmental Scheme Adoptions

3.1.17 To join the Plastic Recycling Scheme (Section 6.7.1).

3.1.18 To join the Carbon Footprint Scheme (Section 6.7.2).

Monitoring Performance

3.1.19 To move internally towards a business unit base for accounting for the service to enable improved benchmarking on a business basis against a mixed economy of others (Section 7.1).

4. OVERVIEW AND REVIEW OF GENERAL PROGRESS (2007-2010)

4.1 Introduction

Cambridge's Bereavement Services last business plan in 2007 set out a vision for the service in 2012 and beyond. Whilst assessing the Service in terms of Best Value it explored the Council's options in respect of service delivery. The plan aimed:

- To provide well-maintained and accessible buildings, gardens and cemeteries close to the community
- To provide a sensitive service to meet the needs of bereaved families
- To work closely with all stakeholders in the funeral service to ensure dignified and meaningful services
- To provide a range of memorials
- To manage the service in a balanced budget and to seek to generate a surplus.

The need to modernise the service and to take care of the environment were recognised as priorities. The plan proposed a bold initiative on the provision of cutting-edge services, including green burial and the provision of more memorial choices, and examined the statutory commitments needed for the mercury abatement requirements of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in the UK.

This section describes what the Bereavement Services look like now and what they do. It considers how the services have performed since the 2007 Business Plan, and assesses the current state of health of the services.

A Draft Action Plan is attached at Appendix 1.

4.2 Present Service

Cambridge City Council operates four cemeteries and one crematorium providing a service for a number of adjacent authorities in addition to its own population.

4.3 Crematorium

The crematorium on Huntingdon Road is a prime asset of the council and a contributor to the council's funds. Cambridge Crematorium conducts around 2,700 cremations a year. It is set in

extensive wooded ground including lakes, ponds and a stream, which help to create a feeling of peace and tranquillity.

4.4 Cemeteries

4.4.1 Huntingdon Road

The city’s cemeteries provide a more local service to adjacent communities than the crematorium. The Huntingdon Road Cemetery is now the principal cemetery in the city. This facility offers the scope to provide additional services including development of a Green Burial area and provides facilities to accommodate cremated remains. This site has burial capacity for a further 30 - 40 years.

4.4.2 Newmarket Road

The major burial facility in the city since 1903, this cemetery is widely used by the public and has extensive areas of both conventional and lawn style interments. It is almost at full capacity. However, it still offers space in some areas and the opportunity of reopening existing graves, plus the provision to now accommodate cremated remains in an area other than a grave space, meeting a local need. Table 1 shows the activity between sites over the last five years.

Table 1	Burials in Cambridge (last 5 years)			
Year	Histon Rd Cemetery*	Huntingdon Rd Cemetery	Newmarket Rd Cemetery	Total
2006	0	7	140	147
2007	2	33	121	156
2008	0	54	119	173
2009	0	59	112	171
2010	1	33	82	116

*Whilst Histon Road Cemetery remains the responsibility of Cambridge City Council, it is no longer directly managed by Bereavement Services.

4.5 Major Achievements

4.5.1 Charter for the Bereaved Membership

Long recognised as the hallmark of good service the Council’s acceptance as a Charter Member is significant recognition of the efforts made by the management team over the last four years to improve customer service. Adopted by The Council on 1 January 2008 the Charter sends out a distinct signal that the authority is determined to offer a high standard of care, setting out what customers may reasonably expect from the cemetery and cremation authority, and identifies a series of “charter rights” for the bereaved.

<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/?pagename=charterforbereaved>

4.5.2 Enhanced memorials

4.5.2.1 Children's Garden

A new children's garden was completed in the summer of 2010, providing a poignant focal point for grieving parents to visit, with a wide range of optional choice for commemoration. One of the largest of its kind in the UK, the city can now be proud of the Children's Garden.

4.5.2.2 Cremated remains garden

In response to local community needs, the facility to accommodate cremated remains at Newmarket Road and Huntingdon Road cemeteries was introduced during 2010.

4.5.2.3 Sunken garden refurbishment

This project is underway, and will provide a more pleasing place to visit for the bereaved who have previously commemorated in this area, and additional options will soon be available.

4.6 Security - Installation of CCTV and other Safety Issues

In response to the need to improve overall security, CCTV was trialled during 2009 at the request of our users and subsequently installed on a permanent basis and during 2010 was extended to cover the car park and main entrance areas.

To meet their statutory obligation the Council requested a survey of its cemeteries in 2005, via the Institute of Cemetery & Crematorium Management (ICCM), following wide spread national coverage of the potential danger from unstable memorials (headstones) in public cemeteries. A comprehensive five-year rolling programme of memorial safety was introduced in 2006. This was implemented in 2007 following the recruitment of two dedicated staff, and is compliant with ICCM guidance.

4.7 Metal Recycling

Bereavement Services have become a member of the metal recycling group sponsored by the ICCM. Proceeds from the scheme, which recycles orthopaedic implants, is donated to medical research related charities only, and was responsible for donating £86K in 2010 to charities such as Cancer Research UK and the British Heart Foundation.

<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/?pagename=recyclingmetal>

4.8 Deceased On-Line

Launched in July 2008, this is a new web-based national search facility to assist members of the public to research their family history. The Council adopted this service in 2009. All registers have now been successfully scanned and are on-line.

<http://www.deceasedonline.com/>

4.9 Staffing Changes

A staffing restructure took place on the operational side of the service in 2007, to provide resilience for the service and improve staff welfare. In 2010 an opportunity was taken to convert one of the operational posts to team leader position. As a result of these changes the service is now able to be more flexible in responding to all its customers, coupled with improved communication between management and staff. The current staffing structure is set out in Appendix 2.

4.10 Summary

Over the past five years Bereavement Services have made progress in:

- Delivering greater customer choice from enhanced memorials
- Improving customer standards as demonstrated by Charter Membership
- Improving customer safety and the security of memorials
- Improving staff flexibility and personal development opportunities through reorganisations.

5 REVIEW OF FINANCIAL PROGRESS 2006-2010

Introduction

This section summarises the key aspects of the financial performance of the Bereavement Services over the past five years. The summarised position shows a steady demand over this period, while cremation charges have risen to match increasing costs. Closer examination of recent performance identifies opportunities for cost savings and for efficiencies in way services are delivered in the short and medium terms.

5.1 Cambridge Crematorium Performance *(excluding employment costs)*

Table 2

Crematorium	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Cremations	2,761	2,707	2,593	2,620	2,680
Cremation Fee	£407	£462	£482	£499	£527
Income (£m)	1.125	1.168	1.090	1.189	1.242
Expenditure (£m)	0.511	0.638	0.532	0.626	0.624
Gross Margin (£m)	0.614	0.530	0.558	0.563	0.618

5.2 Cambridge Cemeteries Performance *(excluding employment costs)*

Table 3

Cemeteries	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Interments	155	148	157	170	164
Interment Fees	£407	£437	£460	£475	£495
Income (£'000s)	125	108	109	141	116
Expenditure (£'000s)	140	118	131	123	96
Gross Margin (Deficit)	(15)	(10)	22	18	20

5.3 Commemorations (Memorial sales) Performance *(excluding employment costs)*

Cambridge's financial performance in relation to Commemoration income (Table 4) shows that over the past five years net income from memorial sales has increased by less than 5%.

Table 4

Commemoration	2005/6	2006/7	2007/8	2008/9	2009/10
Income (£'000s)	105	115	102	113	118
Expenditure (£'000s)	18	21	17	20	30
Surplus (£'000s)	87	94	85	93	88

5.4 Overall performance

Table 5					
Overall Performance (£'000s)	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Expenditure					
Employees	307	336	303	302	313
Premises	163	198	148	220	188
Supplies and Services	323	388	376	399	425
R & R Contributions	59	70	72	75	78
Total Expenditure	852	992	899	996	1,004
Income					
Cemeteries	(122)	(106)	(107)	(140)	(114)
Commemoration	(105)	(116)	(102)	(113)	(66)
Crematorium	(1,129)	(1,171)	(1,092)	(1,191)	(1,296)
Total Income	(1,356)	(1,393)	(1,301)	(1,444)	(1,476)
Operating Surplus	(504)	(401)	(402)	(448)	(472)
Central Recharges	127	85	91	95	113
Financing Charges	130	150	78	95	83
Net Surplus	(247)	(166)	(233)	(258)	(276)

5.5 Analysis of Key Expenditure

Highlighted below (Table 6) are a number of areas of expenditure, which have a significant effect on the overall financial position. However, in comparing one year with another, it will be appreciated that most of the figures will be affected, not only by inflation, but also by the number of cremations undertaken. Taking 2005/06 as a baseline the operation has had to absorb 22% higher operating costs in these key cost areas over the past five years, excluding employment costs, which have remained stable over the period.

Table 6					
Cost Area	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10
Employee Costs	306,526	336,073	303,148	301,840	313,098
Plant Repairs	9,820	19,343	26,577	28,274	29,027
Repairs to Gardens	47,616	20,294	4,902	4,532	21,197
Energy	75,934	119,032	78,753	132,209	101,902
Rates	47,426	52,282	53,878	56,499	61,716
Grounds Maintenance	172,440	230,846	236,165	230,403	237,575
Key Costs	487,321	547,024	467,258	523,355	526,940

5.6 Financial Summary

In financial terms, the Council has maintained its cost base over the last 5 years and the most significant increase in costs has resulted from energy pricing and from plant maintenance. The service has enjoyed a stable market for burials and cremations over the past five years. On the income side whilst the number of cremations has marginally reduced because of a healthier population, income has remained steady. Burials and Cremations and Commemorations' income has similarly remained static over this period.

6 STRATEGIC ISSUES

In recent years Cambridge's Bereavement Services have developed slowly, with little fundamental investment and until recently have achieved only modest improvements to service levels, absorbing increased costs along the way.

6.1 SWOT Analysis

A SWOT analysis (Appendix 3) highlights that the service has strengths in its history its heritage, and its location. The quality of its grounds and gardens, and the progressive approach to modernisation and development by a dedicated 'bereavement-led' team are further assets.

Weaknesses are the immediate environment of a busy and noisy A14 adjacent to the crematorium site, and the limitations on access and local congestion that are sometimes associated with it. Poor IT infrastructure presently impedes successful business development of the service.

While the risks from local competition and continuing increases in the costs of energy pose real threats to its continued success, the service has real opportunities to improve its financial performance and to extend its ancillary and more commercial activities. It expects to experience growth in demand for its services on account of local population growth.

The service is now poised to deliver significant changes that will bring it more into line with expectations for a modern, forward-looking service that will provide excellent facilities at good value to its customers and offer improved returns to future investment. In this regard there are a number of key strategic areas in which the services are proposed to develop in the coming years. The following sections address these issues, highlighting the associated risks for the City Council and recommending a course of action in each case.

6.2 Mercury Abatement Project

6.2.1 Procurement

The last business plan identified a major challenge to complete the gas abatement programme required by central government to prevent mercury pollution. The Council has since taken the decision to embrace the Government's Environmental Improvements Strategy through 100% mercury abatement. Whilst this is a significant investment, the environmental issues are high on the Council's strategic agenda.

By 1 December 2011, the Council's Crematorium will be fully abated, and a programme of investment is underway to replace its four existing cremators with three, including the provision for a wider version, to ensure all its customers' needs are met. The possibility of adding heat recovery and chapel refurbishments to this project is being examined to reduce the Council's Carbon footprint and minimise its energy costs, and enhance the general ambiance of its buildings.

Recommendation: To robustly manage the timely implementation of the Mercury Abatement investment programme, in order to minimise financial and operational risks.

6.2.2 Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation (CAMEO)

A mercury credit-trading scheme has been set up that enables those authorities that cannot upgrade to buy clean emissions from those that have upgraded thus sharing the burden. Once fully abated, Cambridge could consider joining this scheme and trading its surplus credits in return for income. The scheme details are expected to be finalised during 2011, after which an informed decision can be taken about the basis on which to participate in mercury-credit trading.

Recommendation: To investigate the potential benefits of joining the Mercury credit scheme once details are published.

6.2.3 Associated refurbishment and investment

It is intended to incorporate much of the necessary refurbishment of the public areas as possible while the major civil works take place in the crematory, so as to avoid a second period of disruption once the mercury abatement capital project is completed. The intended areas for refurbishment are the chapels and waiting rooms, including toilets. Consideration needs to be given to extending the administration building for additional office space, meeting rooms and in order to provide a suitable area for staff to take a break. An improved drainage system is also required at the Huntingdon Road Cemetery. Bids for the balance of the capital works through the Capital Plan will be prepared in the future.

Recommendation: A programme of building works, repairs and maintenance is developed, costed and processed through the Capital Plan.

6.3 Commemorations - Extending Memorial Choice

6.3.1 The Expansion of Choice

Cambridge's philosophy is based on choice, and on enabling the public to choose something, which meets their individual needs, and to dedicate it for a meaningful period of time.

A business opportunity exists for the Council to increase its income from commemorations, and the evidence indicated that there is unrealised potential. The memorial income per cremation currently averages about £44. This compares to an average of £244 achieved by the largest private crematorium operator, based on one sale for every twelve cremations. The difference is the deployment of a trained and dedicated commemorations team, and appropriated marketing of a range of memorial products.

It is proposed to deliver a substantially improved commemorations service at Cambridge Cemeteries and Crematorium by adopting proven techniques and extending customer choice. It will be necessary to set up a dedicated commemorations team working from a private area to provide information, meet and consult with the bereaved, for example (temporarily, pending any permanent extension to the administration building) from an office in the grounds. A dedicated display area could act as a 'shop-window' for the service, whilst balancing and enhancing the aesthetics and ambiance of existing gardens of remembrance.

6.3.2 Key elements of a successful service

A commemorations project will need to address a number of key elements, including:

Support and information

- Dedicated consulting room
- Written communication with all funeral applicants
- Dedicated & trained commemorations advisory team
- Marketing capacity

Customer Choice

- Extensive Choice
- Sufficient sample products
- Appropriate lease periods
- Quality products

Aesthetics and ambiance

- High standard of grounds maintenance
- On site control of grounds maintenance
- Regular comprehensive monitoring of products
- Strict adherence to garden regulations
- Continuing quality assurance

The Council's has recognised the need to become more proactive and offer a wider range of choice. Different approaches offer varying opportunities both to improve customer choice, and also develop an additional income stream for the Council that can compete with the typical performance of private sector providers.

6.3.3 Alternative models

Four potential models of service have been considered as a means of achieving this step change for Cambridge's bereavement services:

6.3.3.1 Delivering the service entirely in-house.

This model gives the Council the opportunity to maintain complete control of activity and maximise its return on sales, but relies heavily on maintenance of relevant in-house skills and capacity to develop and manage a brand new service area.

6.3.3.2 Engaging an experienced company to deliver the launch and initial growth period on a commission basis.

6.3.3.3 Will ‘hit the ground running’ but relinquishes an element of control over the style of service, through its focus on commission-based sales.

6.3.3.4 Outsourcing the operation to an experienced specialist company through a franchise arrangement

6.3.3.5 Offers many advantages in terms of commercial expertise and reduced risk to the council, but the supply market is very limited, and is likely to need a longer-term commitment from the Council.

6.3.3.6 Working closely with an experienced specialist supplier to deliver the service in-house through a supply partnership.

Offers the best chance to maximise financial control and ensure a return on sales, without the same degree of risks from inexperience and lack of expertise that an in-house young business might expect, whilst retaining sufficient flexibility to allow for project review after two or three years. This model would involve a preferred supplier contract under which marketing and product expertise, sales team training, advice and after-sales support would be provided. It is the recommended option for Cambridge.

The key benefits and disadvantages are summarised in table 7 (below):

OPTION	BENEFITS					DISADVANTAGES					
	Retain total control and income	Hits the ground running	Fully resourced day one	Immediate financial security and lower risk	Potential to avoid capital outlay	Income from current memorials stock	Extensive training needed requiring management time	Lack of flexibility in staff incentivisation	Some loss of control by council management	Probably only one potential operator	Long term operation by private contractor
1. Entirely in-house	✓							✓			
2. Commission based support		✓	✓			✓			✓		
3. Outsourced franchise		✓		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
4. In house supplier partnership	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓						

A financial plan for this service is included at Appendix 4 to illustrate how Cambridge’s commemorations service might typically grow and develop. The forecasts are based on experience in other local authorities and in the private sector, and treats this as a progressively growing business, making prudent assumptions about the number of customers that might take up the service, as a share of overall cremations, and about the value and cost of memorials themselves. Experience elsewhere indicates that a successful commemorations

team could expect to generate significant income growth from increasing demand for commemorations products over a five-year period.

By adopting option 4 the service will launch and train a new in-house team staff over a two year period, to build up a sustainable model of service, and will review progress after 12 months of operation.

Recommendation - To work closely through a supply partnership with an experienced specialist supplier to develop extend and market commemorations (memorial choices), and to review progress after 12 months of operation.

6.4 Strategic Management Issues

6.4.1 Grounds Maintenance- Current and Future Choices

Maintenance of two existing cemeteries and the crematorium Garden of Remembrance are at present carried out through a Service Level Agreement with Streetscene, the Council's in-house operation.

Direct management of building cleaning and grounds maintenance by Bereavement Services is now a much more common model of practice than in the past. The previous Business Plan challenged current practice and examined the potential for employing an outside contractor to undertake building cleaning and grounds maintenance work at lower cost. No recommendation was agreed to pursue this option at the time.

This plan contains proposals that will require new gardens with an extensive range of memorials. It emphasises the importance of being able to ensure excellent standards of maintenance in order to reflect a new level of presentation for the Cemeteries and Crematorium and their grounds in future years.

Recommendation – To prepare a detailed specification, and undertake soft market testing to ensure that the current management arrangements are achieving value for money and meeting service standards and to identify the best model for the future management of grounds maintenance

6.4.2 Energy Management And Staffing Structures

The financial appraisal highlighted how more efficient use of fuel is key to reducing operating costs at the crematorium. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- Adopting the ICCM Guiding Principles (<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/library/Excellence%20Criteria.pdf>)
- Adopting the 72 hour rule – (<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/library/Response%20to%20EA.pdf>)
- Reducing the number of cremators operational at any one time
- Ensuring that down-time is minimised

By already reducing the number of cremators from four to three the Council has avoided a capital cost that at current levels is circa £150,000 when upgrading takes place.

In addition there will be savings in energy by operating the remaining cremators over longer periods. Running cremators for longer periods helps to reduce thermal shock and thus prolongs active service life.

Alternative models of operation are available that demonstrate how real savings in energy can be and are being made at other local authority crematoria, by introducing flexible working arrangements into the crematorium team and through business process reengineering. A hypothetical example of changed working patterns and business redesign is shown at Appendices 5 and 6, and a real example of energy savings from a regime operating a similar process is illustrated in Appendix 7.

Recommendation – To carry out a comprehensive review of working practices in relation to the management of the cremation activities in order to identify the most energy efficient and cost-effective ways to manage cremations operations

6.4.3 Management Capacity and IT

The challenges of this business plan, to sustain customer focus, while managing major change and delivering and sustaining successful, competitive and commercial bereavement services exposes a number of key risks that must be addressed.

The capacity to manage change, the skills to administer new administration systems, the financial acumen and commercial and technical skills knowledge and experience to deliver new services in a sensitive way will all need to be carefully developed, and will need to be resourced.

Recommendation – To review the structure of the whole service in year 2, in conjunction with the other recommendations for reviewing and reorganising the operations of cremations and grounds maintenance, with a view to meeting any shortfalls in the skills and experience required in the areas of procurement, marketing, business finance, IT and administration.

6.5 New Processes

6.5.1 Green Burial

The green burial concept first came to prominence about 20 years ago as part of the overall effort to offer more environmentally friendly alternatives to cremation and conventional burial. Green or woodland burials are becoming increasingly popular in the United Kingdom and consists of a green coffin – cardboard, chipboard, veneer or other soft wood, a shrub/tree planted instead of a headstone with a wooden plaque inscribed simply with just name and lifespan, or maybe nothing at all.

The idea is largely focused around burial of the body in an environmentally friendly container or shroud within natural woodland or an area where there are no memorials (headstones). There is currently a green option at both cemeteries, an area set aside purely for those wishing not to display a memorial

All coffins, if used must be biodegradable and floral tributes are quickly removed from the grave space following the burial. In most cases, nothing other than the tree and wooden plaque are permitted to be placed on the grave. Current demand for Green burials is small,

but is expected to increase in popularity over time, and there is potential of growth of 30% per annum, if the site is managed correctly.

Recommendation – To identify the best option for both cemeteries and to develop suitable expertise within existing resources to accommodate demand for such burials.

Technology has advanced to a degree that new processes now are available that offer alternatives and additional choice to the bereaved to burial or cremation, including:

6.5.2 Cryomation Promession and Resomation

A new method of disposal, a freeze-drying alternative method known as Cryomation, is being tested in Suffolk. After freezing the remains are fragmented and then reduced to a biodegradable deposit that is then buried in a small coffin. A similar process, called Promession reduces remains to dust, to be interred in the ground to ultimately be compost within 12 months. Recent investigations reveal legislation is expected within the next two years.

Resomation is a water/alkali-based alternative to burial and cremation with significant environmental benefits, which uses the same chemistry as in natural decomposition but is much quicker and resomated ash is fine and pure white in colour. Resomation is now reported to be gaining acceptance in some North American legislation and increasing pressure on authorities in the UK to follow suit.

Recommendation - To maintain a watching brief over cryomation, promession and similar technologies and report back to members accordingly.

6.6 Additional Services

The Council may wish to consider additional kinds of commercial services in order to further extend choice, develop and enhance the experience of people using Bereavement Services in future years. This section identifies key areas for consideration.

6.6.1 Flower Shop

At the City of London cemetery the café shares a building with a flower shop. Once again this is reported as a success and works for both the authority and the lessee. We believe such a venture is worth proper consideration for Cambridge, and that any business proposals should examine different models of operation and locations.

Recommendation -To explore the business case further for providing a flower shop in Year 2 of this business plan.

6.6.2 Catering

There are few crematoria in the UK where a serious attempt at catering has been undertaken. One was established at Golders Green in the early 90s, but subsequently closed as uneconomic. However another facility still operating is at the City of London Cemetery in east London. The particular conditions for success there are not clear, but are worthy of further investigation.

Recommendation – To explore the business case further for providing catering services at the Crematorium in Year 3 of this business plan.

6.6.3 24-Hour Booking Service

As soon as the IT infrastructure has capacity to support it, The Council intends to implement facilities that will enable Funeral Directors to make diary reservations remotely for funeral services 24 hours a day, either using teletone and/or telebooking, via telephone and online respectively.

Recommendation – To promote the 24-Hour Booking Service as a priority in Year 1 of the business plan.

6.6.4 Development of Deceased On-Line

A revenue generating opportunity exists for the bereavement services industry to benefit from the interest in family history and genealogy with a unique on-line record searching service. This is a new web-based national search facility providing global internet searching of burial and cremation records, enhancing facilities provided to the bereaved by creating an effective way to increase access to the council records. The facility allows enquirers to purchase on line scans of a register page, lists of interments and maps showing grave locations. There is further potential to provide additional services such as images of headstones, scans of the book of remembrance and photographs of a strewing area or individual location. Marketing is a key factor to ensure commercial success of this facility.

Recommendation – To examine the business case for developing the Deceased On-Line scheme in Year 2 of this business plan.

6.6.5. Purchase of additional land

There is now an opportunity to revisit the potential purchase of land adjacent to the Crematorium. The vendors previously decided not to sell purely due to awaiting the completion of the planned A14 works. As part of the current business plan, options discussed for the uses of this land were to provide additional parking, memorial choices, and new services such as a pet cemetery.

Recommendation – To investigate whether an option now exists to purchase additional land to increase the capacity of the service.

6.6.6 Pet burial/cremation

The need to recognise the sense of loss of a family pet is becoming more widespread. There is a potential to enhance the service to the bereaved, by combining the same care and professionalism as we do for a human burial and cremation, by providing an area to commemorate the loss of a pet.

Recommendation –To examine the business case for offering a more comprehensive service to the public, subject to additional land becoming available.

6.7 Environmental Scheme Adoptions

6.7.1 Plastic Recycling Scheme

After a successful pilot scheme, a system is now ready, to be launched nationally. The ICCM currently promote a plastic recycling scheme for floral tribute packaging. There are no financial benefits for the Council, but the environmental benefit of the scheme is its primary purpose.

Belonging to the scheme, it will be possible to recycle the green material from tributes, to then compost and reuse on site. Plastics will be collected via the scheme, similar to the recycling of metals.

<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/library/PlasticRecyclingNewsFeb2010.pdf>

Recommendation – To join the Plastic Recycling Scheme

6.7.2 Carbon Footprint Scheme

Just launched by the Burial and Cremation Education Trust this scheme sets out national standards for crematoria to aspire to and publishes tables of performance. It would be in the interests of the council to join the scheme both to measure its effectiveness as a management tool and also to demonstrate to the industry its commitment.

(<http://www.iccm-uk.com/iccm/library/BCETCarbonFootprintScheme.pdf>)

Recommendation - To join the Carbon Footprint Scheme

7 FUTURE SERVICE PROVISION OPTIONS –The potential for Cambridge.

7.1 Benchmarking the private sector

During the Best Value Review and again in 2006-07 the Council considered the option of privatising services through a number of potential routes; these included:

- Introducing external marketing and sales expertise into its in-house operations
- Entering into a partnership with a private provider.
- Selling off the service to the private sector, thus ending the Council's long-standing involvement with service provision in this area.

The last plan endorsed the continued operation of an in-house bereavement service. Without changing that assumption, this plan reinforces the value of benchmarking our services and performance to the increasingly mixed economy of providers in the market, but blending our response with the best of the public service ethos.

Appendix 8 shows recent private sector performance in relation to cremations. Elsewhere in the plan recommendations are made to continue benchmarking for direction and guidance in relation to service provision. For financial performance, it is a reasonable objective for the service to return a significant operating surplus to the Council. This is an important enabler for the investment that is needed over time in our facilities. To city council taxpayers it also

ensures that it remains judicious to resist periodic offers from the private sector to purchase the crematorium.

Recommendation: To move internally towards a business unit base for accounting for the service to enable improved benchmarking on a business basis against a mixed economy of others.

8 FINANCIAL PLAN

Table 8 (below) sets out the overall summary projections for expenditure and income for Bereavement Services for the next five years. Appendix 9 shows a breakdown of these figures for Cremation Services and Appendix 10 shows the position regarding services related to Cemeteries.

Table 8					
Summary	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Commemoration	35,000	70,000	105,000	140,000	175,000
Crematorium	257,100	243,700	253,900	240,500	251,500
Cemetery	(11,360)	(11,680)	(12,100)	(12,360)	(12,720)
Total Service Contribution	280,740	302,020	346,800	368,140	413,780

8.1 Overall Service Summary 2011-16

From the summary and from the individual service forecasts, it is clear that income from both Cemetery and Cremation services are not expected to grow over the coming years without significant growth in the Cambridge sub-region.

Improvements in the overall financial position of those particular areas of Cambridge's Bereavement Services are likely to depend on the success of initiatives to reduce operating costs. This plan focuses on a number of such initiatives.

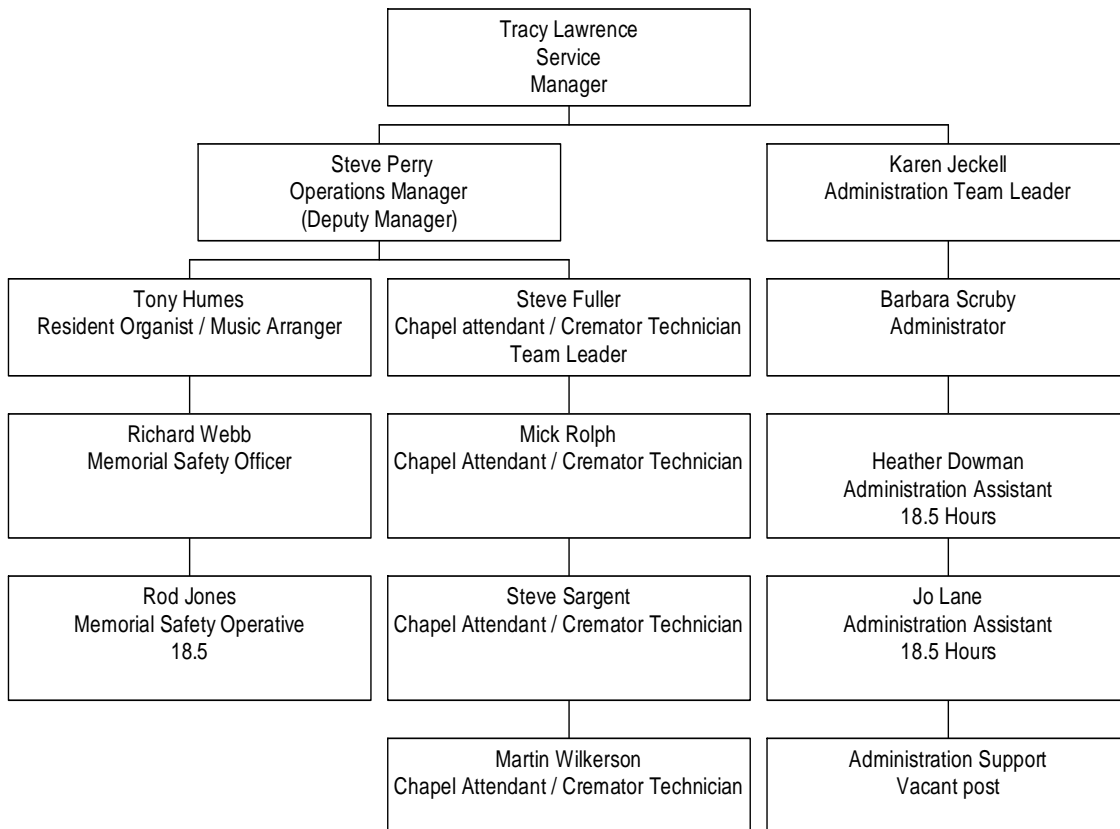
It is also clear that the Commemoration Service has the best potential for sustaining additional income growth in the coming years. It is intended that prudent investment in this area and in other similar, more commercially based initiatives in the future will provide the foundation to secure, sustain and maintain a successful and valued community service.

Appendix 1 – Draft Action Plan

No	Reference	Section	Issue	Action	When	Who
1		Mercury Abatement	Robust implementation	Complete works on time and on budget	Sep-11	Paul Necus
2			Joining Cameo Scheme	Join scheme and begin trading credits	Jan-12	Tracy Lawrence
3			Carrying out associated building works and repairs	Heat recovery, refrigeration unit, viewing area, electricity substation	March 12	Tracy Lawrence
4		Commemorations service	Choice of preferred model	Recruit and train new staff	May –11	Tracy Lawrence
5			Set up new service	Establish supply contract	April-11	
6			Operational start up and review	Evaluate Y1 success	March-12	Paul Necus
6		Management Issues	Flexibility of working practices-operational/ Energy efficiencies	Evaluate Y2 success	March-13	Paul Necus
7				Research and develop business case for restructure	Sep-11	Tracy Lawrence
8			Propose restructure	Jan-12	Tracy Lawrence	
9			Implement restructure	Sep-12	Tracy Lawrence	
10			Grounds maintenance soft market testing	Research market	Sep-11	Tracy Lawrence
11			Management Capacity and investment in IT	Prepare programme of infrastructure improvements, and identify web transactional requirements	Sep-11	Paul Necus
12		New processes	Green burials	Prepare market, research service development needs	March-12	Tracy Lawrence
13			Cryomation/ Promession	Monitor progress/developments	March-12	Tracy Lawrence
15		Additional services	Flower shop	Explore business case	March-12	Tracy Lawrence
16			Catering	Explore business case	March-12	Tracy Lawrence
17			24-Hour Booking Service	Implement /deliver	April –11?	Tracy Lawrence
18			Deceased On-line	Develop marketing of this service	March 12	Tracy Lawrence
19			Complete Service	Examine business case	March 2016	Tracy Lawrence
20		Environmental Scheme Adoptions	Plastic recycling scheme	Join scheme	Sep-11April 11?	Tracy Lawrence
21			Carbon footprint scheme	Join scheme	Sep-11April 11?	Tracy Lawrence
22		Future model of service provision	Expectations for future performance	Benchmark performance of current services against private sector	March 2013	Tracy Lawrence

Appendix 2 – Staffing Chart - Cambridge

Bereavement Services Team Structure



Appendix 3

SWOT Analysis

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The cemetery at Newmarket Road and the Crematorium has a long and distinguished record of service to the people of the city and the wider county. • Heritage is a valuable and tangible asset in the challenges that lie ahead. • The services' proximity to one of the largest population centres in the region. • The attractively landscaped nature of the crematorium itself. • The Service's commitment to stay abreast of technology. • The commitment of the management team and its attitude to modernisation and service delivery. • Dedicated team of operational staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The immediate environment of a busy and noisy A14 adjacent to the crematorium site. • The limitations of current site infrastructure, especially IT and financial management/support. • Restrictions on travel access to the crematorium site by public transport. • The hazard of congestion. • Failure to address key Manager dependency. Manager.- succession Planning to manage and deliver organisational change. • Small team - Minimal service resilience.
Opportunities	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased demand from population growth. • Increased revenue from commemoration, resulting in enhancement of the gardens of remembrance. • The potential for burial and cremation charges to increase following relatively low increases of inflation over the last three years. • New processes. • Enhance service standards and meet customer needs via utilising use of the Cemetery Lodge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Risk of local competition. • Continuing rise in energy costs. • Failure to invest in infrastructure – IT & Administration systems. • Failure to invest in refurbishment of facilities and gardens. • Failure to invest in adequate drainage at Huntingdon Road Cemetery. • Financial and environmental risks of failing to deliver mercury abatement.

Appendix 4 Commemorations Forecast

	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No of cremations	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700	2,700
Income per cremation	55	65	80	96	112
Memorial Income	148,500	175,500	216,000	259,200	302,400
Memorial purchases etc	22,300	26,300	32,400	38,900	45,400
Employee Costs	52,100	53,400	54,700	56,100	57,500
Office costs	15,000	2,500	2,600	2,700	2,800
Miscellaneous Costs	4,100	3,300	1,300	1,500	1,700
Total Direct Costs	93,500	85,500	91,000	99,200	107,400
Surplus from Memorial Sales	55,000	90,000	125,000	160,000	195,000
Repayment to Reserves Phase I	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Repayment to Reserves Phase II	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000	10,000
Net Contribution	35,000	70,000	105,000	140,000	175,000

Appendix 5 – Weekly Rota Regime

CREMATORIUM ATTENDANT HYPOTHETICAL 4 WEEK ROTA SYSTEM

Week 1

MONDAY – FRIDAY
9.00 a.m. – 5.30 p.m.
Lunch 1.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m.
One afternoon finish 5.00 p.m.
to suit funerals
= 7 ½ hours per day (one day 7 hours)

TOTAL HOURS = 37

Week 2

THURSDAY, FRIDAY
Rest Days

MONDAY – WEDNESDAY
8.00 a.m. – 4.00 p.m.
Lunch 12.00 noon to 1.00 p.m.
= 7 hours per day = **21 hours**

CHAPEL DUTY
Unlock
Disperse ashes etc.
Turn on cremators (pre-heat)
Flower card stands, Cleaning etc.
Programme Wesley Music System
Chapel

SATURDAY
8.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. = **9 hours**
CLEANING
PUBLIC ATTENDANCE
Chapel duty/cremating

SUNDAY
10.00 a.m. – 5.00 p.m. = **7 hours**
CLEANING and cremator maintenance
PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

TOTAL HOURS = 37

Week 3

MONDAY – FRIDAY
12.00 noon – 8.00 p.m.
Lunch 2.00 p.m. – 2.36 p.m.
= 7 hours 24 mins per day

Relief chapel and crematory
After lunch, witness dispersals
fixing plaques, general cleaning/maintenance etc.
End of day, finish cremations,
CLEANING and lock up.

TOTAL HOURS = 37

Week 4

MONDAY – FRIDAY
8.00 a.m. – 4.15 p.m.
Lunch ¾ hr between 11.45 a.m.
and 2.00 p.m.
One afternoon finish 3.45 p.m. to
suit funerals
= 7 ½ hours per day (one day 7 hrs)

Unlock
Disperse ashes etc
Turn on cremators (pre-heat)
Flower card stands
Programme Wesley Music System
Cleaning etc
CHAPEL DUTY

TOTAL HOURS = 37

Details

1. Thursday & Friday Chapel Duties (East Chapel) carried out by a new part time chapel attendant.
2. Relief crematory duties carried out by late duty attendant, general assistant or gardener.
3. Relief chapel duty covered by changing rota duty, operations manager and overtime.
4. Relief weekend duty covered by overtime.

Appendix 6 – Flow Calculator – Cremator Usages

CAMBRIDGE CREMATORIUM USE OF CREMATORS CALCULATION

For week beginning Calculated on Time.....

Allow 2 hours per cremation cycle, 12 hours minimum day, start cremators with highest retained heat from the previous week and once started use continuously for the remainder of the week.

Number of coffins carried over from the previous week

Number of Working Hours			12		14		16	
Day	Total cremations & time first coffins available	No of cremators	No of cremations	C/O	No of cremations	C/O	No of cremations	C/O
MON		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
TUES		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
WED		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
THURS		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
FRI		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						
SAT		0						
		1						
		2						
		3						

Appendix 7 – Energy Savings

CHILTERN'S CREMATORIUM Total Gas Electric Consumption 2004-10 (cremators not separately metered)

Gas Consumption Comparison							Electric Consumption Comparison						
Financial Year	Annual GAS kWH	Average/ Month GAS kWH	FACTOR GAS kWH	GAS P/kWH	FACTOR GAS P/kWH	Annual GAS COST	Financial Year	Annual ELECTRIC kWH	Average/ Month ELECTRIC kWH	FACTOR ELECTRIC kWH	ELECTRIC P/kWH	FACTOR ELECTRIC P/kWH	Annual ELECTRIC COST
2003/2004	2,811,651	234,304	100	1.19	100	£33,316	2003/2004	225,169	18,764	100	4.68	100	10,544.48
2004/2005	2,586,448	215,537	92	1.19	100	£30,649	2004/2005	141,575	11,798	Not full data	4.74	101	6,707.15
2005/2006	2,448,280	204,023	87	1.76	149	£43,142	2005/2006	255,737	21,311	114	6.38	136	16,317.23
2006/2007	1,862,058	155,171	66	2.58	218	£48,004	2006/2007	195,499	16,292	87	7.28	156	14,236.66
2007/2008	1,841,921	153,493	66	2.58	218	£47,558	2007/2008	184,058	15,338	82	7.56	161	13,915.39
2008/2009	2,034,440	169,537	72	2.47	209	£50,333	2008/2009	191,943	15,995	85	7.46	159	14,322.28
2009/2010	1,755,065	146,255	62	2.48	209	£43,467	2009/2010	153,046	12,754	68	8.15	174	12,472.46

Appendix 8 – Existing Private Sector Performance

Crematorium	Cremations 2009	Cremation Fee	Fee Income	
Bodmin	1,441	505	727,705	
Exeter	3,014	575	1,733,050	
Wear Valley	271	535	144,985	
Braintree	353	550	194,150	
Basingstoke	1,658	515	853,870	
Folkestone	631	500	315,500	
Bury	843	535	451,005	
Chorley	887	535	474,545	
Lancaster	1,768	530	937,040	
Loughborough	1,563	520	812,760	
Grantham	1,034	480	496,320	
Beckenham	1,979	575	1,137,925	
East London	570	475	270,750	
South London	913	545	497,585	
Norwich City	1,596	535	853,860	
Horsham St Faith	2,425	485	1,176,125	
Northampton	1,725	565	974,625	
Sherwood Forest	929	535	497,015	
Oxford	2,394	574	1,374,156	
Leatherhead	2,211	575	1,271,325	
Brighton Downs	992	410	406,720	
Chichester	2,235	575	1,285,125	
Crawley	2,961	575	1,702,575	
Nuneaton	1,932	570	1,101,240	
Birmingham Perry Barr	907	530	480,710	
Rotherham	1,881	515	968,715	
Dundee	1,558	605	942,590	
Holytown	1,209	430	519,870	
Irvine	1,257	485	609,645	
Moray	426	565	240,690	
	45,572		23,452,176	Average 515
Cremations performed	42,700	515	21,990,500	
Total Income			34,400,000	
Cremation Fees			21,990,500	
Cemetery & Other Inc			2,000,000*	
Memorialisation			10,409,500	Average 244*
Allocation of Central Overheads		Rounded		
Cremation Fees	21,990,500	1,428,743	1,430,000	
Cemetery & Other Income	2,000,000	129,942	130,000	
Memorialisation	10,409,500	676,315	675,000	
Total	34,400,000	2,235,000	2,235,000	

*an estimate of cemetery income has been made as figures are not publicly available

Appendix 9 Cremations Forecast

Crematorium	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No of adult cremations	2,600	2,600	2,600	2,600	2,600
Cremation Fee	£ 524	£ 537	£ 550	£ 564	£ 578
Cremation Income	1,362,400	1,396,200	1,430,000	1,466,400	1,502,800
Employee Costs	325,000	333,100	341,400	349,900	358,600
Repairs & Maintenance	52,100	26,200	26,900	53,400	54,700
Energy	117,800	87,100	89,300	91,500	93,800
Business Rates	64,000	67,200	70,600	74,100	77,800
Grounds Maintenance	141,200	142,600	144,000	145,400	146,900
R & R Contribution	74,200	120,000	121,200	122,400	123,600
Repairs to Gardens	35,000	35,900	36,800	37,700	38,600
Other Internal Recharges	130,000	133,300	136,600	140,000	143,500
Miscellaneous Office Costs	85,000	87,100	89,300	91,500	93,800
Depreciation	81,000	120,000	120,000	120,000	120,000
Total Direct Costs	1,105,300	1,152,500	1,176,100	1,225,900	1,251,300
Net Contribution from Cremation	257,100	243,700	253,900	240,500	251,500

Appendix 10 Cemeteries Forecast

Cemetery	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
No of adult interments	160	160	160	160	160
Interment Fee	£ 524	£ 537	£ 550	£ 564	£ 578
Cremation Income	83,840	85,920	88,000	90,240	92,480
Other Income	30,000	30,800	31,600	32,400	33,200
Total Income	113,840	116,720	119,600	122,640	125,680
Grounds Maintenance	108,000	110,700	113,500	116,300	119,200
Repairs to Gardens	10,000	10,300	10,600	10,900	11,200
Other Internal Recharges	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
Miscellaneous Office Costs	6,000	6,200	6,400	6,600	6,800
Total Direct Costs	125,200	128,400	131,700	135,000	138,400
Net Contribution from Interment	(11,360)	(11,680)	(12,100)	(12,360)	(12,720)