

Update Report on Progress with the Scheme to Develop and Refurbish Yeovil Crematorium

Executive Portfolio Holder: Cllr, Peter Gubbins, Yeovil Crematorium,
Cllr Ric Pallister, Leader, Strategy and Policy.
Cllr Henry Hobhouse, Property and Climate Change

Ward Member(s) Peter Seib, Sarah Lindsay

Director: Clare Pestell, Director for Commercial Services and Income Generation

Service Manager: Alasdair Bell, Environmental Health Manager

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Purpose of the Report

1. To report on progress with the scheme to refurbish and develop Yeovil Crematorium. This is an updated report for the Scrutiny Committee to the one that was circulated to members before Christmas.

Forward Plan

2. A version of this report appeared on the District Executive Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of 7th December. In the event it was just circulated to elected members rather than being presented at committee.

Public Interest

3. The purpose of this report is to update elected members on progress with the scheme to refurbish and develop Yeovil Crematorium.

Recommendation

4. That the Scrutiny Committee notes this report.

Background

5. South Somerset District Council (SSDC) owns an 89% interest in Yeovil Crematorium and Yeovil Without Parish Council (YWPC) owns an 11% interest. Yeovil Crematorium is the only crematorium facility in the immediate area and averages 1,700 cremations a year. The crematorium is managed by SSDC on behalf of Yeovil Crematorium and Cemetery Committee and operates as a separate legal entity. Yeovil crematorium was built in 1970 and earlier in the year it was decided to review the existing facility and consider the future need for crematory services in Yeovil and the surrounding area for the next 25-50 years. The aim was to ensure that we provided high quality facilities for families and mourners in the years to come.
6. The existing crematorium is of a seventies design and the chapel is considered by many to be cramped and gloomy. Parking is often a problem. The cremators themselves will need renewing in the near future with more efficient and environmentally friendly equipment and other maintenance costs were increasing due to the age of the facility

7. The use of the crematorium has changed over the years. In the past people used to go to church for the main committal service and only a few people would then go on to attend the actual cremation. These days however most people view the cremation service as the main and only service for their loved ones. The services in the chapel have become ever more elaborate with readings, hymns and now videos. With the introduction of the Wesley audio visual system and with improved technology this is a trend that is likely to continue. Services at the chapel can now be filmed and shown in real time across the world for relatives and friends who are unable to attend. Discussions with local funeral directors suggested that was a need for a larger chapel to cater for larger attendances.
8. Running the crematorium is a commercial business with a turnover of £1.2million and an operating surplus of approximately £400K. We are in competition with both the private and public sector for business. The better and more attractive the facility we can provide the more business we can attract and the more cost effective the facility becomes. If we provided a first class facility with increased capacity it could generate new business. Most recently built crematoriums are of light airy designs with ample seating and parking.
9. With this in mind, in June both the District Executive and Full Council agreed to fund the refurbishment and improvement of the existing facilities to include the construction of a new chapel with greater capacity, the creation of a smaller secondary chapel, the conversion of part of the old chapel into a new waiting room, the installation of new cremators, the provision of extra parking and the creation of a new Garden of Remembrance. Both reports that went to these committees were confidential due to the costing information included.

Report Detail

10. Since the scheme was agreed by the District Executive and Full Council in June 2017 a Project Board has been set up comprised of officers and member from SSDC and YWPC. The Project Board is meeting regularly to progress matters. Within the last three months we have gone out to tender for the Architectural Design role, the Project Manager and QS role, and for provision of the new cremators. We also went out to tender for a new access road and for the relaying of a new electricity service supply. In most of these cases we have had to go down the OJEU (European) tendering route that has slowed up the tendering process.
11. The architects Kendall Kingscott have been selected to carry out the overall design work of the new chapel and the refurbished crematorium. At the time of writing this report the selection of the Project Manager/QS and the contractor to provide the new cremators had not yet been decided
12. We are currently in discussion with the architects to fine tune the new design. There will then be a period for detailed design planning that will result in planning applications coming before the relevant committee. Once the design work is finished and planning permission/building regulation approval etc confirmed the actual building work will then need to be tendered. It is anticipated that actual construction work will start next July with a finish date July-September 2019.
13. Work on the new Garden of Remembrance has already started with a new tarmac path being laid in the lower meadow. Plans are also well advanced for a memorial wall to be constructed for the placing of memorial plaques and flower tributes.
14. Work on the new access road has started along with the felling of several old Leylandii trees. This work should be complete within six weeks
15. Generally the project is on track and everything is going according to plan.

Financial Implications

There is agreed budget for this project and all projected spend is well within budget.

Council Plan Implications

This project will contribute towards the following council aims;

To deliver high quality cost effective services

1. Actively manage assets and resources to ensure the best financial or community return.
2. To seek business opportunities for the council.

Carbon Emissions and Climate Change Implications

The replacement of the old non-mercury abatement cremators with new state of the art, efficient environmentally cremators will have a very positive effect on carbon emissions and pollution levels.

Equality and Diversity Implications

A full equality assessment report has been undertaken on this project and there are no adverse implications.

Privacy Impact Assessment

There are no privacy implications to this report

Background Papers

Confidential reports to District Executive, 1st June and Full Council on 15th June 2017
