

Meeting: Cabinet
Date: 23 June 2005
Subject: Breakspear Crematorium
Responsible Officer: Area Director : Urban Living
Contact Officer: David Corby 020 8424 1758
Portfolio Holder: Environment & Transportation
Key Decision: No
Status: Public

Section 1: Summary

Decision Required

- That the progress made in service delivery in the first year of the development plan be noted.
- That the work/negotiations in terms of the viability and construction of a multi purpose hall be noted.
- That the amended timescale for delivery of key development be approved.

Reason for report

At it's meeting on 16th December 2004 the Cabinet considered the report on development proposals for Breakspear Crematorium. Cabinet requested that that further work/negotiations take place with Hillingdon Council in terms of the viability providing community facilities and that a further report be submitted to Cabinet at the earliest opportunity.

This report provides an overview of action taken since December and updates members on progress towards viability of a multi-use hall. This report also highlights potential issues, which may affect service deliverability.

Benefits

The action proposed will enable development of the partnership between Harrow and Hillingdon, to meet the needs of Harrow's and Hillingdon's diverse communities.

Cost of Proposals

A business plan with a financial forecast has been developed to include essential infrastructure improvements, customer service enhancements and overall modernisation of the facilities.

In February 2003 Hillingdon's Cabinet agreed that all Hillingdon Council's surpluses and deficits from the operation of Breakspear Crematorium are carried forward and reinvested in the Crematorium facilities in line with the 5 year Business Development Plan. The Urban Living capital review includes medium term capital investment proposals over the next three years as follows:

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08.
£450k	£450k	£200k

The above figures represent Harrow's one third contribution in accordance with the SLA with Hillingdon providing two thirds investment.

Risks

The main risks are summarised as follows:

- Failure of Hillingdon to secure funding required to match Harrow's capital investment to implement the proposals.
- The facility may not be viable and develop an affordability gap or funding shortfall.
- The Crematorium is in the Green Belt and there may be site constraints or Planning restrictions.
- Management and development is a joint venture between Harrow and Hillingdon Councils. Failure to agree vision on proposals may delay service implementation.

Implications if recommendations rejected

If the proposals are not adopted the most significant implications are:

- Market share may be lost with commensurate loss of income as customers take business to more modern / refurbished facilities.
- The full needs of the community will not be realised
- It will not be possible to maintain the existing level of capacity with consequential impact on income.

Section 2: Report

Brief History

Following consultations in September 2004 six key issues were determined for future development.

- Construction of a multipurpose hall to enable mourners to carry out their extended respects and provide increased capacity to the crematorium.

- Increasing car-parking capacity to complement the multipurpose hall and improve traffic management throughout the crematorium.
- Continuing health and safety works and incorporate conditions as indicated within the 2003 survey to ensure compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act.
- Negotiating adoption of a revised (SLA) to ensure effective management and operation of the service and in particular to allow customer needs to be considered as a fundamental function of the service.
- Undertaking a feasibility study and trial to ascertain the viability of extending the services for weekend operation.
- Replacing cremators with modern energy efficient units to meet government Mercury emission guidelines. Provide extended viewing area to allow mourners to witness the Cremation.

Multi use Hall

Due to specialist nature of the construction external partner architectural consultancies have been identified to deliver the project, one of which has experience in Crematorium constructions. Hillingdon Council's Design and Mechanical Engineering Section have commenced a feasibility study to build up costing and architects design brief.

Two locations have been considered for a multi-use hall. Either a stand-alone building at the rear of the Crematorium or an extension to the East Chapel. Options appraisal has identified the East Chapel extension as being most advantageous to maximise flexibility, provide community facilities and accommodate larger congregations without effecting operation of the Crematorium. The construction will involve building over a substantial proportion of the east flower terrace, which will be reduced in size and partially relocated.

Planning advice in relation to Greenbelt Planning legislation has indicated that it would be problematical to provide a separate building. It is the considered opinion of Hillingdon Planning Department that a stand alone building for community use on open Green Belt land would be contrary to the aims and objectives of Green Belt policy as set out in Planning Policy Guidance Note 2: Green Belts and UDP policy. Very special circumstances would therefore be required to justify such a development. With regard to extending the existing Chapel, advise is that as the existing use is an acceptable use in the Green Belt, the proposal would be acceptable in principle subject to the proposed use of the extension being ancillary the primary use of the site, and the design/scale/bulk of the development and its impact on the openness and visual amenities of the Green Belt. Due to these Greenbelt planning restrictions and to maximise flexibility the location adjacent to the East Chapel has been selected.

The Crematorium is currently running at 65% of capacity, which is based on Mon-Fri operation with ½ hour time slots. It is noted that full use of the East Chapel extension would increase time slots to one hour with consequent reduction of throughput, which may have impact on the crematorium operation during high demand levels. The one-hour time slots could account for 10% of cremations, which would bring the Crematorium up to 72% capacity. A greater flexibility in booking allocation may have to be introduced to encourage effective

use. Officers do not consider that at current projected use there will be significant adverse impact.

Due to the demographic changes in diversity including age and population it is projected that in 20 years time there will be significant increase in usage of the hall and it is likely that the one-hour time slots may represent 20% - 25% of cremations. If this level of increase is realised to ensure effective operation of the Crematorium there will be significant management need to direct change to make full value of the asset for example 24/7 working, a concerted approach to the management of income yield and resource consolidation.

The Crematorium market in general is not increasing in volume; experience has already shown that there is an increase in the size of attending congregations. Although there has not been an extensive market research, there have been issues raised that suggest that extended facilities will have market interest and may have a positive effect on income. In considering the location of the facility, flexibility and increasing potential use has been a significant factor.

The project is at an early stage of development. The facility plans will require submission to Hillingdon Council for Planning consent for approval to move to procurement. It is estimated that the full procurement process, including the submission plans, would be approximately 7 months. The project has already secured approval through the Crematorium Business Plan and has been through a significant part of the decision making process.

It is important for the Service that any delay must be minimised. Continued service provision from the existing Chapel is prone to overcrowding on occasion with increasing staff resource being spent on traffic control management. Members should be aware that although the project has already secured approval, within the current business plan there is a condensed delivery cycle in which procurement will commence before for planning approval is obtained.

Increasing Car Parking Capacity

Appropriating adjacent Open Space land owned by Hillingdon Council is providing additional car parking to service 200 vehicles. The costs provided for this project do not include land purchases and it is intended that the land will either be directly appropriated or provided on a lease basis.

Hillingdon have agreed that appropriation would be acceptable to them in principal. A site constraint report and appropriate legal processes need to be secured to undertake legal transfer of the usage

The project provides major service developments for the Crematorium and will have improved benefit to customers. The current service development is restricted by the available accommodation and space.

In recognition of the current use of the land and its' status as greenbelt the preferred surface of the car park is a grass reinforcement system which will provide a car park facility with natural grass coverage.

Disability Discrimination Act & Health and Safety Works

Access improvement has been the focus works this year. Current operations works include providing level pedestrian access from front entrance, path renewal; drop kerbs and pedestrian management barriers. Additional building work and decoration has been undertaken to the mourner's waiting rooms.

Currently extension work is being carried out to improve access and upgrade reception facilities.

Further projects are programmed this year and are on target to comply with the 2003 survey recommendations.

Service Level Agreement

Members agreed that Officers should negotiate a revised SLA with Hillingdon Council and a new draft was supplied at Cabinet 16th December 2004. Officers have submitted this to Hillingdon Council for their considered response. Hillingdon Council's Borough Solicitor and Environment Directorate have made comment and their formal response has been received on 6-May-2005. Officers are considering given the sums involved if the capital works programme would be better regulated through a discrete collateral contract identifying the capital apportionment and incorporating a binding works time table. Review of the draft SLA has indicated that it requires further modification and to secure general agreement with officers from both Councils before being put to members for approval.

Extending operations to allow Saturday Cremation services on a pilot basis.

Joint discussion with the Crematorium management has agreed a feasibility trial to commence 2nd July to determine uptake and operational issues. The feasibility trial will cover a six-week period and extend operations to provide cremation activity on Saturdays. Officers have agreed operational planning and success criteria.

Funeral directors have been briefed and the trial will be further publicised to Temples, Churches and other stakeholders to ensure full opportunity to take up this service is realised.

A joint report and feedback from the feasibility study will be available 30th August for joint decision. The report will detail probable volumes, costing and pricing levels. The service will be at an additional cost and part of the study will be to ascertain the full cost implications.

Harrow Officers are concerned that the trial time scale may be insufficient and active representation made to Hillingdon Council as necessary.

Replacing cremators to provide an enhanced viewing environment and to meet Mercury emission guidelines

This replacement programme is phased over a three-year period. The design aspect is programmed for later this year. It is not expected that major works will commence until the end of 05/06 with the main works occurring in the following financial year. Completion is programmed to complete in advance of reduction deadlines.

Admittance and access to the crematory area to view the charging of the coffin is permitted, but is restricted to a maximum of six persons for safety reasons and customers have limited viewing. The need has been identified to facilitate safe viewing for a larger number of people. The new crematory will allow greater number to view charging safely and with better-quality facilities.

Financial Implications

Hillingdon's Cabinet in February 2003 agreed that all revenue surpluses and deficits from the operation of the Crematorium are carried forward and reinvested in the Crematorium facilities in line with the 5 year Business Development Plan, this will be applicable for Hillingdon's contribution only. Harrow Cabinet in Feb 2005 decided to invest Capital to meet our obligations towards the Business Development Plan over the three years as follows :-

2005/06	2006/07	2007/08.
£450k	£450k	£200k

The above figures represent Harrow's one third contribution in accordance with the SLA with Hillingdon providing two thirds investment.

The financial implications have been an integral part of the investigations into the options for delivery. It is acknowledged that the Harrow Council will be required to contribute to the affordability of this project to approx £100k which is secured within the capital investment programme and Hillingdon Council to secure £200k from their portion of the profit share to ensure success. This figure will be subject to the final negotiation terms. However, this is an important project that will secure considerable benefits for service users and the wider community. It will be necessary for Hillingdon Council to secure $\frac{2}{3}$ of the funding according to the sharing ratio. If Hillingdon Council fails to fully secure funding there would be a funding gap, it may be possible to reduce the gap by identifying additional funding sponsorship. Officers are considering options to enter into a contractual agreement with Hillingdon Council as a supplement to the Service Level Agreement to address these issues.

If the hall is being used to meet, greet and pay extended respects then the current standard service time of 30 minutes will be inadequate and the facility will be let for 1 hour to allow sufficient time with additional cost to the customer. This will have a minor positive effect on income in terms of additional hall hire, however if hall hire volumes conflict with operational capacity there will be loss of income and pricing strategies will have to be reviewed.

Legal Implications

The applicable law is Section 101(5) of the LGA 1972 and Section 20 of the LGA 2000. The new draft SLA delegates to Hillingdon the management and maintenance of the Crematorium on behalf of both Boroughs.

Equalities Impact

The proposal will increase access and opportunities to our diverse community.

Section 3: Supporting Information/ Background Documents

Appendix A - Delivery Timescale

Appendix B - Key Development Proposals

Background papers

Cabinet (information Circular) 20 May 2004.

Report to Cabinet 16 December 2004.

Any person wishing to inspect the background papers should telephone 020 8424 1758

Delivery Timescale

HALL EXTENSION

Area of Activity	Actions	Timescale
Location and outline brief	Confirm location for facility and Identify core requirements.	April
Architect	Select partner architect	June
Planning Application	Completion of plans for submission to Hillingdon Planners	August
Pre Qualification Questionnaire (PQQ)	Preparation of PQQ including evaluation criteria.	August
PQQ evaluation		September
Invitation to Tender (ITT)	Issue ITT	September
Return completed ITT		October
Bidders Presentation	Fix venue and date Agree Format and Panel	October
Planning Approval	Plans heard by Planning Committee	October
Issue invitation to submit Best and Final Offer (BAFO)	Issue BAFO to preferred Bidder	November
Evaluation of BAFO	Two weeks	November
Appoint Preferred Bidder	Draft letter of Appointment Appoint Preferred Bidder	November
Publicity	Joint press and publicity releases	November
Negotiate to Contract Close	3 months	December
Contract Implementation	Agree implementation team	
Construction commences	Subject to Bidder's proposals	December 2005 February 2006

WEEKEND OPERATION PILOT

Area of Activity	Actions	Timescale
Feasibility	Agree trial period and staffing implications	April
Publicity	Deliver publicity to stakeholders	May/June
Trial Period	Trial commence 2 nd July	July
Report	Report on trial results – take up volume, costings, operational issues	August

INCREASING CAR PARK CAPACITY

Area of Activity	Actions	Timescale
Site constraint report	Draft site constraint report and identify any key issues and requirements.	May
Land appropriation	Draft and confirm appropriation of Open Space land for car park provision	July
Planning Application	Completion of plans for submission to Hillingdon Planners	July
Surfacing contractor	Selection criteria and selection of surfacing contractor	August
Bidders Presentation	Fix venue and date Agree Format and Panel	September
Planning Approval	Plans heard by Planning Committee	September
Issue invitation to submit Best and Final Offer (BAFO)	Issue BAFO to preferred Bidder	September
Evaluation of BAFO	Two weeks	September
Appoint Preferred Bidder	Approval Draft letter of Appointment Appoint Preferred Bidder	October
Construction commences	Subject to Bidder's proposals	November

SAFETY WORKS

Area of Activity	Actions	Timescale
Programme	Agree programme and priorities	January 2005
Priority delivery	Deliver priority development	May/June
Secondary delivery	Deliver secondary development	October

SERVICE LEVEL AGREEMENT

Area of Activity	Actions	Timescale
Draft agreement	Issue draft agreement to Hillingdon Council	December 2004
Negotiation	Agree amendments at Officer level	June/July
Approval	Seek member approval	August

Key Development Proposals

Proposal	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Construction of Multi-use Hall			
Used by all mourners to pay extended respects, provide community facilities and accommodate larger congregations without effecting operation of the Crematorium	Feasibility Project Team Planning Application Tender for Building Works Appoint Preferred Bidder Commence Building	Full Implementation	Review Pricing and Operation
Access and Disability discrimination Act			
The programme will enable compliance with regulations and create improved access especially to elderly and mobility impaired persons.	Path network Reception Facilities Priority areas	Secondary access enhancements Redecorate public areas to bring up to an acceptable standard	Programme Completion
Revise Service Level Agreement			
Ensuring effective management and operation of the service and in particular to allow customer needs to be considered as a fundamental function of the service	Issue draft agreement to Hillingdon Council Agree amendments and formally adopt SLA		

Proposal	2005/06	2006/07	2007/08
Extend Car Parking			
Utilise adjacent Open Space land to extend car-parking capability and introduce a traffic flow system. Consultees view car parking as a significant issue, the car parking capacity does not meet current volume and capacity and lack of parking is having an impact on the ability of the service to function.	Site constraint report Land appropriation Planning Application Appoint Preferred Contractor Construction commences	Completion of Car Park Construction Widen present one-way exit road to allow for two-way traffic flow	
Extend Weekend services on a Pilot Basis.			
Grounds are open every day of the year and cremations are available Mon - Fri. Some consultees have requested a weekend cremation service and indication within the community that there would be a good take-up if this option were instigated.	Trial study Feasibility Option Appraisal	Implementation of Enhancements arising from the study	
Replace Cremators			
Ensure the Crematorium meets Government Mercury emission guidelines. Provide opportunity to increase and enhance witness access to the cremators. Decrease running costs with modern energy efficient units and increase ability to take larger caskets.	Feasibility Formation of Project Team Planning Application	Seek tenders for building Works Appoint Preferred Bidder Commence Building	Full Implementation