

**MINUTES  
OF THE MEETING OF THE  
GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT SCRUTINY GROUP  
WEDNESDAY, 14 OCTOBER 2020**

Held at 7.00 pm in the

**PRESENT:**

Councillors N Clarke (Chairman), D Virdi (Vice-Chairman), S Bailey, N Begum, J Cottee, A Phillips, J Stockwood and L Way

**ALSO IN ATTENDANCE:**

Councillors

**OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE:**

D Mitchell

Executive Manager - Communities

L Ashmore

Executive Manager - Transformation

A Pegram

Service Manager - Communities

T Coop

Democratic Services Officer

**APOLOGIES:**

Councillors L Howitt

**23 Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest reported.

**24 Minutes of the meeting 25 August 2020**

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 August 2020 were approved.

**25 Abbey Road and Crematorium Update**

**Abbey Road Development**

The Executive Manager – Transformation advised the Group that the contract with the developer for Abbey Road had not exchanged and, it would therefore not be appropriate for the developer to come to this meeting and the item would be carried forward to the next meeting of Growth and Development Scrutiny in January.

**Crematorium**

The Executive Manager – Transformation delivered a presentation on the crematorium and provided the Group with the background from a feasibility study completed in 2017/18, which highlighted a strong level of need in Rushcliffe, along with a financially viable acquisition of an appropriate site identified at Stragglethorpe, Cotgrave.

The Executive Manager – Transformation advised the Group that Cabinet at its meeting in November 2018 had supported the principle of a new provision and planning permission was secured in September 2019. In December 2019 Cabinet approved the land purchase and in September 2020 the Council appointed a project management and design team.

The Executive Manager – Transformation provided information on how the scheme was progressing and highlighted some of the key features as follows:

- Strong focus on green credentials and a modern facility
- Sympathetic to the landscape
- Focus on user experience
- A single storey building, with a single chapel and a capacity for 120 mourners, including potential overflow space
- Potential for a viewing/committal space, in response to cultural shifts
- Car parking for 90 vehicles
- Potential for electric, rather than gas cremator, to support the Councils' carbon neutral target
- Potential for the chapel garden to be visible from within the chapel and is proposed to include a reflective water feature
- Memorial gardens
- Natural landscaping design to blend in with the surroundings

In response to the proposal for an electric cremator rather than gas, the Executive Manager – Transformation explained this would be one of the first electric cremators in the UK, it could run on a full green renewable tariff and would mean that no gas supply was required for the building, producing 90% less CO<sub>2</sub> and 50% less NO<sub>x</sub> emissions with a catalytic reduction.

The Executive Manager – Transformation provided the Group with a number of photographs and architectural visuals of modern crematoria buildings and advised the Group that the appointed architect Benchmark have designed multiple crematoria buildings throughout the UK, including more recently as examples, Hinckley and Bosworth and Netherhouse Farm in Waltham Abbey.

The Executive Manager – Transformation explained the crematorium will be operated on an in house model, as this is the most financially beneficial option for the Council and would enable the Council to maintain control of quality of service to residents, the primary focus being on user experience. In supporting this decision the Executive Manager – Transformation advised the Group that officers have been in communication with stakeholders including the City Council, Wilford Hill and Bramcote crematoria and local funeral directors within the Borough and are working on plans for some further community engagement with local residents and businesses.

In concluding the Executive Manager – Transformation provided a timeline, highlighting the next steps as follows:

<b>Finalise designs and prepare tender pack for build</b>	October 2020 - Jan 2021
<b>Construction procurement process</b>	February - April 2021
<b>Operation project planning and execution eg Recruitment, Training, Branding, Marketing, Audio/Visual, Licenses</b>	November 2020 to April 2022
<b>Appoint construction contractor</b>	March 2021
<b>Commence works on site</b>	April 2021
<b>Build Completion</b>	March 2022
<b>Training and snagging</b>	March/April 2022
<b>Operational</b>	May 2022

The Chairman welcomed the concept of the development and commended the Council's focus on green credentials and a modern friendly design. The Chairman asked specific questions in respect of the electric cremator and whether anything had been considered as a standby or back up should there be an interruption in the electricity supply. The Executive Manager – Transformation explained that a backup resource would be difficult to include, once the cremator is switched on, it can take up to 3 days to reach temperature. Members asked if officers had considered the close proximity of a solar farm as a viable resource to provide power. The Executive Manager – Transformation advised this is on the projects work programme to explore.

In respect of parking spaces and alternative travel options, members asked whether there were sufficient public transport links as an alternative to using cars. The executive Manager - Transformation advised that there is a bus stop located close to the site entrance and that pedestrian access would form part of the plan.

Members asked whether the Council had considered other use of the venue to support other events to increase income opportunities and whether two cremations per day is financially viable. The Executive Manager – Transformation explained that the Business Plan provides a low estimate of 750 cremations a year, which equates to 2 per day. However, it is expected based on local demand that the facility would provide nearer 1600 cremations per year, equating to 5 plus per day, and that the Council were already receiving enquiries and interest in bookings and are confident this can be achieved.

In respect of the operating model, members questioned how officers were

planning to maintain the quality and service. The Executive Manager – Transformation explained that the Council's preference is to maintain an in house operation, to focus on user experience and to provide a respectful and dignified service. The Council aims to recruit experts from the industry, combined with the front of house customer experience that Rushcliffe Borough Officers are already accomplished in.

Finally, members asked who will approve the final plans and whether a name for the crematorium had been decided and who will make the final decision on this also. The Executive Manager - Transformation explained that Cabinet would make the ultimate decision on plans and name, however officers would welcome ideas from the Group and invited members to provide suggestions to the Democratic Service Team who will make a list for Cabinet to consider.

It was **RESOLVED** that the Group approve the key design elements of the crematorium.

## 26 **Planning Enforcement Policy - Part Two**

The Service Manager – Communities presented the Group with the Planning Enforcement Policy Report Part 2, which had been amended to reflect the comments made by members at the previous meeting of the Growth and Development Scrutiny Group held on 25 August 2020. The report sets out the regulatory framework within the enforcement function that the Borough operates. Details of workload and resources within the team and performance statistics together with details of the emerging policy.

The main changes to the policy are as follows:

- Amendments to the prioritisation of enquiries;
- Minor changes to content to ensure clarity to the reader;
- The range of enforcement powers are set out in an appendix rather than in the main body of the policy with additional detail on each power;
- Information on Proactive Development Monitoring has been expanded; and
- Signposting to relevant bodies for non-planning issues.

The Service Manager – Communities highlighted the level of resources available to deliver the enforcement function had been raised by the Group as an area of concern. The Service Manager – Communities added, the Council has engaged consultants to undertake a health check on the planning service generally involving an assessment of workload, resources and capacity within the team, adding that the final report from the consultation is due shortly.

In addition, the Service Manager – Communities reminded members that the Government is currently undertaking a consultation on the 'Planning for the Future' white paper, which in respect of enforcement invites responses on proposals to strengthen enforcement powers and sanctions. Depending on the outcome of this consultation, any potential changes to the Council's planning system may have implications for resources, particularly in relation to the enforcement function.

The Chairman welcomed the changes adding that the policy was a powerful

document to stop developers building off plan. The Chairman asked a specific question relating to the section titled '*What is a breach of planning control?*' and asked whether some extra wording on the lines of '*not in accordance with approved plans*' could be added to strengthen the enforcement. The Service Manager – Communities suggested adding some additional text after point b) under '*What is a breach of planning control?*'

It was **RESOLVED** that:

- a) The updated Planning Enforcement Policy is referred to Cabinet for approval highlighting that the White Paper, 'Planning for the Future' may lead to a further review of the policy.
- b) The initial findings of the external consultants in relation to the level of dedicated enforcement resources was noted

## 27 **Work Programme**

The Group considered its Work Programme and made the following suggestions for future scrutiny.

### **20 January 2021**

- Abbey Road Development
- Management of Open Spaces on New Developments – Part 2

### **12 April 2021**

- Cycling Networks

### **ACTIONS – 14 October 2020**

<b>Minute No.</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Officer Responsible</b>
<b>25</b>	Members are to provide the Executive Manager – Transformation with suggestions for a name for the new crematorium. The list will be considered by Cabinet	Executive Manager – Transformation and Democratic Services to create a list
<b>27</b>	Letter to all Councillors requesting information on management companies operating in their wards for officers to prepare details on cost and provisions.	Service Manager – Communities and Democratic Services

The meeting closed at 8.23 pm.

CHAIRMAN