

**REPORT TO:** Environment & Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board

**DATE:** 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2022

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Operational Director – Community and Environment

**PORTFOLIO:** Environment and Urban Renewal

**SUBJECT:** Update on Cremator Provision at Widnes Cemetery

**WARD(S):** Borough-wide

## **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide Members with an update on progress with the installation of a new Cremator at Widnes Cemetery and the removal of a temporary Cremator.

## **2. RECOMMENDATION: That:**

- 2.1 Members of the Board receive and comment upon the report.**

## **3. BACKGROUND**

- 3.1 A number of public questions were submitted to the Environment and Urban Renewal Policy and Performance Board meeting of 16<sup>th</sup> February 2022 in respect of the temporary cremator at Widnes Cemetery. Arising from that meeting, it was agreed that a report be presented to the June meeting of the Board to update on progress with the installation of a new cremator at Widnes Cemetery and the removal of the temporary one and this report provides Members with the sequence of events and timeline surrounding these matters.

## **4. SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 4.1 Widnes Crematorium operates with two cremators. In 2013, the Council procured two new cremators and these were subsequently installed in the early months of 2014. The type of cremator provided by the successful bidding contractor was estimated to have a life expectancy of 15 years and, for that reason, a service and maintenance contract to cover that period was entered into with the contractor. On 18<sup>th</sup> March 2020, the Council received confirmation that the contractor had ceased to trade. A week later the first Covid-19 lockdown was announced.

- 4.2 After the demise of the cremator contractor, the Council was left with no service and no maintenance contract. Cremators, like any other mechanical apparatus, can and do fail from time to time for a wide variety of reasons. They also require regular servicing. The Council approached a number of the larger cremator manufacturers to see if they would enter into a service and maintenance contract for Widnes Crematorium. Only one company was interested at the time and, whilst they declined to enter into a formal contract with the Council, they did agree to help the Council by carrying out service and repair on an ad-hoc basis to the existing cremators.
- 4.3 The company also provided the Council with a temporary cremator to help deal with an expected increase in cremations at the time, and also to provide cover in the event that the Council's own equipment broke down. Installation of the temporary cremator commenced in May 2020. At the time, it was envisaged that the temporary cremator would be in place for approximately 12 months but during that period, the Council experienced some technical issues with the existing cremators, which resulted in the need to replace one of them.
- 4.4 In July 2021, the Council's Executive Board approved the procurement of a replacement cremator and associated service and maintenance contract and, using authority delegated by the Executive Board, Officers commenced contract negotiations with its service provider at that time.
- 4.5 As part of those contract negotiations, and in accordance with the Council's Standing Orders and due diligence processes, Officers commenced financial checks on the company in September 2021. By November 2021 the company had failed to satisfy the Council's financial requirements and negotiations began with a second possible manufacturer. Whilst they had not previously expressed an interest in providing a service to the Council, they did so on this occasion and, again using delegated authority, an order for the installation of a new cremator was placed in January 2022.
- 4.6 Given the bespoke nature of the cremator build and the use of specialist parts that are sourced from around the world, the lead-in time for the build and installation of a new cremator is 6 months.
- 4.7 Whilst, due to reasons beyond the control of the Council, the procurement exercise for a new cremator has taken longer than anticipated, and the Council has had to keep the temporary facility in place for longer than expected, Members are advised that the installation and commissioning of the new cremator is on schedule for completion by mid-July. It is therefore anticipated that the temporary cremator will be removed by the end of July 2022.

## **5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 There are no policy implications associated with this report.

## **6. OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

6.1 There are no financial or other implications arising from this report.

## **7. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **7.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

No direct impact

### **7.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

No direct impact

### **7.3 A Healthy Halton**

No direct impact

### **7.4 A Safer Halton**

No direct impact

### **7.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

No direct impact

## **8. RISK ANALYSIS**

8.1 Having in place two functioning cremators mitigates the risks to the Widnes Crematorium operation.

## **9. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 There are no equality or diversity issues as a result of this report.

## **10. LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

10.1 Executive Board Report 15<sup>th</sup> July 2021 - ATI UK Ltd Cremator Issue at Widnes Crematorium.