



Solihull MBC

A Strategy for Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council

&

A Sustainable Service Plan for the Bereaved

2012 -2042

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Executive Summary

The Bereavement Service Strategy sets out the Councils aims and intentions for delivery of Bereavement Services across the Borough. This includes the provision of a Burial, Cremation and Memorialisation service for all bereaved families across Solihull borough and for families across the wider regional area. The Strategy covers the period of 2012-2042.

Solihull Bereavement Service is empathetic to every bereaved family, we take great care to create a peaceful and tranquil environment in our cemetery and crematorium facilities across the borough. Our sites are in the heart of the local community and are places of peace and tranquillity where families can come to pay their respects. We are committed to helping every bereaved family, offering comfort through practical and compassionate support in every aspect of our service and facilities. Since in 1917 we have offered a highly valued and respected service to the communities in and around the Solihull and our professional caring staff are always available to assist the bereaved and our promise to the bereaved is that we will provide the best possible care and the best possible service, delivered with the best possible attention to detail.

The Purpose of the Strategy for Bereavement Services

The provision of Bereavement Services is an area that requires considerable forward planning to ensure that the service is able to provide a sustainable burial and cremation service and provide continual memorial opportunities for bereaved families. In addition, the service needs to plan for the future in order for the service to adapt to the needs and expectations of the bereaved and the wider diverse community.

Local Authorities have been the main service provider for both Burial and Cremation services over the past 120 years. This is in addition to the historical provision of burial service provision by the Church Authority through Local Parish churchyards. Over the last 50 years, we have seen the rapid decline in the Church Authority developing and providing land for burial provision. This has resulted in Local Authorities continuing to develop land in order to meet the continual demand for burial, in addition, during the same period the demand for cremation has increased significantly and again Local Authorities have been the main service provider.

Prior to the opening of Robin Hood cemetery in 1917, the demand for burial in Solihull was provided within the local parish churchyards located throughout the Borough.

Crematorium facilities were developed in 1958, when the local demand for cremation provision was evident. Prior to this crematorium provision was available in Birmingham at Yardley (1952), Selly Oak (1937) or at Perry Barr (1903). In the first year of opening, Robin Hood crematorium undertook 611 cremations, increasing to currently around 1,900 cremations carried out at Robin Hood and around 750 at

Woodlands. Since opening the service has conducted over 97,000 cremations at Robin Hood and over 7,000 cremations at Woodlands.

In conjunction with Solihull Observatory, the task of predicting future demand for burial and cremation service over the next 30 years has been undertaken. This enables the service to identify what future land and development of existing facilities will be required in order to provide the bereaved families with future sustainable service provision.

Therefore, in order to meet future predicted demand it will be essential to identify and plan for investment requirements over this period for the development and purchase of additional land, improvement and development of new and existing facilities together with the continual review and development of service provision.

Background

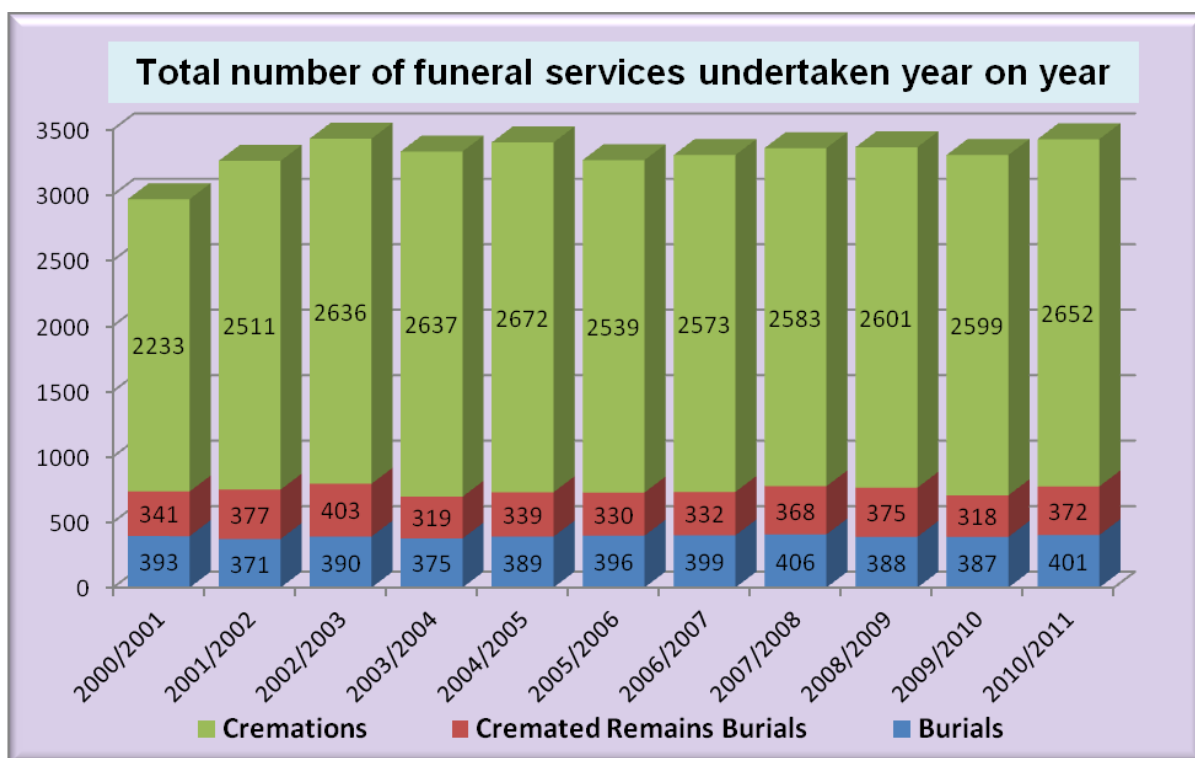
Solihull MBC has provided a burial service for the last 95 years and provided a cremation service for the last 54 years. The service, together with the facilities has continued to expand and develop as demand for service provision has increased. This increased demand has led to the development of Woodlands Cemetery in 1983 and Woodlands Crematorium in 2000, Widney Manor Cemetery in 1992, the development of these facilities have enabled the service to meet this increased demand and enabled us to offer the bereaved additional capacity for burial and cremation across the Borough.

As a result of improved health care, improved nutrition, and general living conditions evidence has shown that people can expect to have an improved quality of life and an increased life expectancy. This has resulted in a significant decrease in the number of bereavements in recent years.

Although nationally the number of bereavements has fallen by around 60,000 in the last 10 years, the number of burials and cremations undertaken by Solihull has remained fairly constant. In some areas of the service, we have seen a year on year increase in the number of services undertaken, particularly in relation to the number of cremations undertaken at Woodlands Crematorium and this information is considered important in the planning of future service provision.

We believe that the current high level of service provision, together with the quality of the facilities offered to the bereaved, has helped to maintain the current demand for service provision and helps demonstrate that Solihull Bereavement Service is the bereaved families service provider by choice.

The following table demonstrates that over the last 11 years the total number of funeral service undertaken by Solihull Bereavement services has seen a slight increasing trend for all funeral services provided.



The data contained within the above table, together with the data provided by the Solihull Observatory, has been utilised to inform the decision making process and in the development of the long-term service strategy for future service provision. This information has enabled officers to plan future service provision based on future predictions and this can be seen in section 3.1 and 3.2 of this strategy.

Challenges and Solutions

There are a number of challenges facing the future delivery of the Bereavement Service. These include:

- If future burial and cremation service provision can be provided
- Identify and purchase land for future burial requirements
- Development of existing cremation facilities
- Meet changes in future legislative and environmental requirements
- Develop new and innovative service provision in order to meet the needs of the bereaved and the wider diverse community.

These issues are discussed together with options available in more detail within this Bereavement Service Strategy document.

To date, the fall in the national bereavement rate appears to have had minimal impact on the number of burials and cremations undertaken by Solihull Bereavement services year on year. However, we cannot take for granted that this will continue to be the case in the short-term. The mid to long-term forecast however, provided by Solihull Observatory, indicates that the number of national and local bereavements

will increase significantly over the 30 year period this Strategy covers. Therefore, we will need to develop and enhance our existing high quality service provision together with the continual development of our facilities to the highest standard. This will help ensure that Solihull Bereavement Service continues to be the bereaved preferred service provider. It is for this reason that the Strategy is designed to have some flexibility and there will be the need for an annual review in order to accommodate changes in Legislation, Policy or where expectations or alternative service requirements is vital due to the bereaved service demands.

The Council has constantly met the challenges over the years by continually developing its service provision, which meets the needs and expectations of the bereaved, the challenge that the Council now faces is to ensure that we are remain well placed in order to identify and meet all future challenges for the service.

The Challenge for the Cremation Service Provision

Crematorium facilities have been improved and developed over a number of years to ensure it meets the needs and requirements of the bereaved. However, in order to meet future requirements it will be important that the service plans for any future service and Governmental requirements. This will ensure that the service is able to accommodate any increase in service demand and that the service remains fit for purpose.

In order to meet the challenges, the existing 3 cremators at Robin Hood Crematorium will be in need of replacement by 2013/14, it will also be necessary to consider the installation of additional cremation equipment over the next 10 years in order to meet predicted future demand. The planning for any additional equipment will be undertaken as part of the planned cremator replacement programme and will be subject to a full business case. It is not possible to develop or build crematorium facilities at Widney Manor cemetery due to limited land constraints of the site . However, in identifying and developing future land for service provision, it may be possible, as an alternative to the installation of additional equipment at Robin Hood, to develop cremation facilities at any new future sites and this will be considered fully at this time.

It will be necessary to give full consideration for the possible installation of mercury abatement equipment at the time of cremator replacement or to continue to meet our legislative environmental obligation via the national trading organisation, the 'Cremation Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation' (CAMEO). This is considered in more detail in section 5.1.3 of the Strategy

There is also a need to reduce where possible, the use of non-renewable resources such as natural gas, and, in order to achieve this it may be necessary to implement new ways of working, including new working arrangement or longer working week etc. This will ensure that the cremation service is operated in the most efficient and

effective way to reduce carbon emissions, whilst continuing to offer the bereaved the highest possible level of service provision.

The Challenge for the Burial Service Provision

It is known that our existing cemetery sites are nearing capacity and without extending current cemetery sites and the development of new cemeteries, Solihull would exhaust its current burial capacity within the next 4 years. As detailed in 1.2 of the strategy document, Robin Hood has no future new grave capacity, Widney Manor cemetery is nearing capacity with approximately 18 months remaining, and Woodlands cemetery currently has approximately 6 years capacity remaining.

However, Widney Manor cemetery is currently being extended in order to provide burial capacity for an estimated 25 years capacity in south Solihull. Officers are in the process of attempting to secure land, adjacent to Woodlands cemetery, in order to provide approximately 25 years burial capacity in north Solihull. Therefore, it is important that this forward planning approach for extending existing sites where possible and securing additional land be continued, if we are to meet future predicted demand requirements, as detailed in section 3.2. In the future it may be necessary to consider alternatives and innovative approaches to service provision, if we are to continue to offer the bereaved the facilities and service provision they require.

Alternative and innovative approach will include:

- Investigation of an innovative environmental burial facility.
- Investigate the potential to introduce above and or below ground burial Vaults facility at Widney Manor cemetery.
- Consideration for the re-introduction of traditional style grave layout provision.

These options are discussed in more detail in section 7.0 of this strategy document

In addition, it is evident that many bereaved families from outside the borough choose Solihull MBC Bereavement Services in preference to their local service provider. However, this must not be taken for granted, and the challenge is to ensure that we maintain and develop our service provision along the lines previously stated. To achieve this it will be necessary for us to engage with the wider community (stakeholders, the bereaved, charity organisations and friends of groups, etc.) in order for us to fully understand and develop service provision around the needs and expectations of the bereaved.

The Challenge for Memorial Service Provision

The challenge for the provision of a memorial service is to maintain suitable memorial facilities and products across all cemetery sites that meet the current and future needs and expectations of the bereaved. This has been achieved at Robin

Hood cemetery following the recent development of the Tranquillity Garden scheme. This scheme has clearly demonstrated that there is a public need and demand for considerate memorialisation. It will therefore be important that we identify and develop similar facilities and memorial products, for Woodlands and Widney Manor Cemeteries.

Key Legislative Constraints

There are a number of legislative constraints on a Local Authority if and where they choose to provide a burial service or maintain existing burial facilities. These include:

Provision of Burial, Cremation or Memorial Facilities:-

There is no statutory requirement for a Local Authority to provide Burial, Cremation or Memorialisation facilities.

However, recommendations are that the Council continues to provide and develop its service provision for the bereaved. However if for any reason the Council elects to discontinue to provide burial and cremation facilities for its bereaved residents, there would be a number of implications for the Council and its bereaved residents, including:

- **Access to alternative service providers facilities.**

There may be considerable difficulties for bereaved families within Solihull to access alternative service facilities due to their place of residence and the location of these facilities. There is also the issue of capacity for neighbouring service providers, and their ability to accommodate the additional number of burials and or cremations due to the impact that this may have for their existing service capacity.
- **Neighbouring service providers Fees and charges policies.**

There would be financial implications for the bereaved of Solihull particularly in relation to burials, due to neighbouring service providers who already apply enhanced fees and charges for the burial of their non-residents
- **Maintenance of existing burial sites.**

Solihull MBC would still have to allow burials with existing graves, where the family has purchased the exclusive rights to a grave. However, a Contractor appointed by the Family or Funeral Director could complete the grave excavation works. The Council would however have to maintain current burial sites to a good standard of maintenance
- **Statutory Public Health Requirements.**

The Local Authority does however have a statutory duty under the Public Health (control of disease) Act 1984, to bury or cremate those who pass away within the Borough where no funeral arrangements are being made. However, a Local Authority does not have to provide burial facilities in order to meet this

legal obligation this requirement could be discharged by arranging the funeral in another district or with an alternative service provider.

- **Management of Memorials Located within Cemetery Grounds.**

Under Health and Safety Legislation, there is a requirement upon the Service provider to ensure that all memorials are erected in accordance within approved industry standards and that they do not at any time present a risk to staff, contractors or visitors to the cemetery grounds.

Provision of Facilities to Non-Residents of the Borough:-

Approximately 50% of all burials and cremations currently undertaken in SMBC cemeteries are for non-residents of the Solihull Borough.

Where the Local Authority chooses to provide burial or cremation facilities, it is obliged to offer the service to all individuals. The Provision of Services Regulations 2009, Regulation 30, state that:

- 30.-(1) A competent authority may not subject recipients of a service who are individuals to discriminatory requirements based on their nationality or place of residence.
- 30.-(2) The provider of a service may not, in the general conditions of access to a service which the provider makes available to the public at large, include discriminatory provisions relating to the place of residence of recipients who are individuals.

Paragraph (2) does not apply to differences in conditions of access which are directly justified by objective criteria.

However, this does not apply to fees and charges. Specific Legislation (The Local Authority Cemetery Order 1977) allows a Local Authority to charge such fees and charges as they deem appropriate for the provision of its burial service. This allows a Local Authority to charge residents and non-resident differential fees and charges for a burial or cremation

On-going Maintenance Obligations of other Burial Sites

Section 215 of the Local Government Act 1972 enables a Parochial Church Council to close a churchyard by an '*Order in Council*' and then serve notice on the Local Authority to maintain the Churchyard in decent order. As a result of this legislative position, Solihull MBC is responsible for the maintenance of the closed churchyard at St Mary's and St Margaret's located in Castle Bromwich.

It is not known at this time if there are likely to be any future applications by the church authority for the closure of a churchyard. However, there are an estimated 35 parish churchyards across the rural districts of Solihull. It is not known how many of these have burial provision for residents of the parish. It is possible that over the next

30 years a number of these could apply for closure and the responsibility for their future maintenance could ultimately be passed to Solihull Council or the local Parish Council.

It is important to note that although the Council are responsible for the maintenance of the closed churchyard in Castle Bromwich, the Council receives no income from the Church Authority for any maintenance works undertaken. As a result there is a financial implication for the Council for the continual maintenance of this site of around £7,000 per annum. Clearly if further churchyards were to close and the maintenance responsibility passed to the Council, there would be an added financial implication for the Authority.

Solihull MBC Bereavement Services

Vision Statement

Our Bereavement Service aims to provide the bereaved with a caring and compassionate service that is considerate to the current and future needs and expectations of a wide and diverse community. We will provide services and facilities of the highest quality, where all bereaved families are treated equally and respectfully and that our service provision demonstrates good value services.

Bereavement Service has 3 Key Service Areas:

- **Cremations**
- **Burials**
- **Memorials**

There are 6 Key Strategic Objectives that apply to the whole Service:

Objective 1	To be at all times respectful and caring to the needs of the bereaved community. To ensure that our approach is empathetic to the needs of bereaved families and that the services are provided in a thoughtful and sympathetic way
Objective 2	To be a considerate and inclusive service, that is open, honest and that engages fully with the bereaved and stakeholders in order to understand the needs and expectations for all service provision.
Objective 3	To be seen as market leaders in respect of service provision and standards by adoption of best service practices and to demonstrate continual improvement. Where new ways of working and alternative service opportunities are sought and embraced.
Objective 4	To ensure the efficient and effective use of all equipment, facilities and financial resources in order to deliver optimum value for money services.
Objective 5	To ensure that all service provision complies fully with legislative requirements, and is compliant with industry standards and Codes of Practice.
Objective 6	To ensure that the service is operated and facilities managed in ways that support the Council's Environmental Policies and minimise the impact the service may have on the local and the wider environment.

1.0 Background

1.1 The Cremation Service

Solihull MBC provides Cremation facilities in the Borough at 2 locations; Robin Hood in south Solihull and Woodland in north Solihull.

1.1.1 Robin Hood Crematorium.

Robin Hood Crematorium is located within the grounds of Robin Hood Cemetery and has provided cremation service provision for residents of the borough since 1958. The crematorium chapel was originally a cemetery chapel built in 1917 and was converted and extended to accommodate cremation equipment in 1958.

Approximately 1880 cremations were carried out during 2010/11 at Robin Hood and in excess of 97,000 cremations have been undertaken since its opening.

Both the chapel and flower terrace were completely refurbished in 2004/5 to improve public facilities. The existing 3 cremators were installed in 1996 and are now nearing the end of their working life, and ideally should be replaced in 2013/14.

The grounds of the crematorium provide a tranquil and peaceful setting where the bereaved can walk or sit to spend some quiet and reflective time. The grounds accommodate a wide range of memorial options for the bereaved to commemorate the loss of a loved one. New memorial facilities have recently been developed at this site and the range of memorial products increased to provide the bereaved with a wide choice of commemorative options.

1.1.2 Woodlands Crematorium

Woodlands Crematorium is located within the grounds of Woodlands Cemetery and has provided cremation service provision in north Solihull since 2000. The development of a cremation facility at Woodlands followed an increased demand for a cremation service across the Borough and beyond.

Approximately 770 cremations were carried out during 2010/11 at Woodlands and over 7000 have been conducted since its opening. The number of cremations undertaken at this facility has continued to increase on an annual basis.

The single cremator was installed in 2000 and could be due for replacement in approximately 7 years,

The grounds of the crematorium provide a tranquil and peaceful woodland setting where the bereaved can walk or sit in order spend some quiet and reflective time. The grounds accommodate a number of memorial options for the bereaved to commemorate the loss of a loved one. Consideration will be given however for the option to increase memorial facilities and the range of memorial products in order to offer a wider choice and increase options available for the bereaved.

1.2 The Burial Service

Solihull MBC provides Burial facilities across the Borough at three locations; Robin Hood cemetery and Widney Manor cemetery in south Solihull and Woodland cemetery in north Solihull.

1.2.1 Robin Hood Cemetery

The Cemetery, located in Shirley, is 37 acres in area and has provided burial facilities for residents in the south of the Borough from 1917 until all new grave provision was exhausted in 1992, after which interments have taken place within existing graves only.

Bereavement Services receive a number of requests annually from the bereaved for a new grave at Robin Hood cemetery. However, as previously stated, new grave provision was exhausted some years ago. However, a project was undertaken in 2011 to re-examine historical burial records and the burial grounds within the cemetery in order to identify if there were any previously unused graves, which could now be made available to the bereaved. As a result, approximately 100 graves across the site have been identified that were previously unused. It is likely that these graves were previously recorded as unusable for burial, which could have been a result of collapse during their previous excavation prior to 1992. However, ground conditions have now stabilised and with improved shoring techniques, allow these graves to be excavated safely and therefore these are now available to the bereaved. Based on current requests this will provide additional interment facilities within this site for approximately 12 months.

Facilities remain for the interment of Cremated Remains burials at this site, with approximately 5 years capacity remaining based on current demand.

Robin Hood cemetery is in effect landlocked between Olton Road and Streetsbrook Road and once existing capacity is exhausted, it will not possible to extend the site further or provide new burial capacity within the existing boundary of the site. However, alternative burial capacity is provided within the Borough at Widney Manor and Woodlands cemeteries.

1.2.2 Widney Manor Cemetery

Widney Manor cemetery opened in 1992 and is located in Bentley Heath; the site is currently 8.5 acres in area. The cemetery was developed at that time in order to meet the continuing demand for burials in south Solihull following the closure of Robin Hood cemetery for new grave provision.

However, within the existing cemetery boundary new grave provision is now nearing capacity with an estimated 18 months remaining. In order to provide a sustainable burial facility in the south of the Borough, development of approximately 9 Acres of land adjacent to the existing Cemetery is underway and is programmed to be

available for burials from May 2012. Once completed the cemetery extension should provide burial capacity for approximately 25 years based on current and predicted demand.

1.2.3 Woodlands Cemetery

Woodlands cemetery opened in 1983, it is located between Chelmsley Wood and Coleshill and is 26 acres in area. The cemetery provides burial facilities for the bereaved in north Solihull and the cemetery has a remaining burial capacity of approximately 6 years based on current demand.

The cemetery is located on Solihull Council owned land just outside of the Solihull Borough Boundary, in North Warwickshire. At the time of the development of the cemetery, the Council agreed to allow residents of Coleshill the use of the burial facilities at this site on the same fees as those of a Solihull resident.

Officers are currently negotiating with an adjacent landowner for the purchase of 10 acres of land, in order to provide future burial provision in north Solihull, when existing capacity will be exhausted in approximately 6 years. The purchase and development of this land, would allow the existing cemetery to be extended and provide future burial capacity. It is anticipated that on completion of the development, a further 25 years capacity would be made available for the bereaved.

1.3 The Memorial Service

The bereaved commemorate their loved ones in a range of ways and whilst it is essential for the Council to regulate the type and size of memorials within its cemetery and crematorium grounds, it is also recognised that some latitude is afforded for the bereaved in the style of memorial allowable. It is however important that a balance is achieved between allowing some freedom for the bereaved with the need to ensure that memorials do not adversely affect the appearance of the grounds, do not affect efficient maintenance operations and that we are able to provide for a safe environment for visitors.

Historically the bereaved have had little choice in the memorials available following the cremation. These have been limited to entries in the Book of Remembrance or the purchase of a rose bush or a tree. Alternatively, Cremated Remains have been interred within a grave and a memorial placed at the head of the grave.

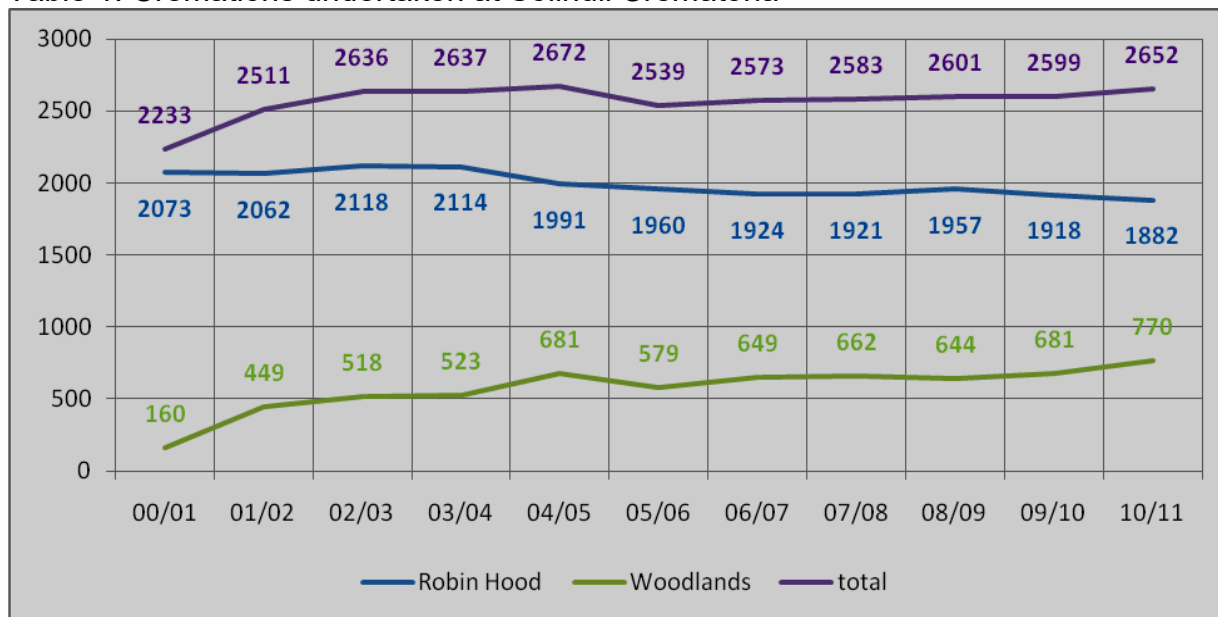
In recent years, memorial facilities and the range of memorial products has been reviewed and a programme of development undertaken in order to demonstrate our continued commitment to the bereaved, significant investment was provided during 2010 for the development of a new memorial scheme (Tranquillity Gardens) at Robin Hood Crematorium. Further development opportunities for memorial options at Woodlands and Widney Manor will be ongoing.

2.0 Current Service Demand Trends

2.1 Cremation

Bereavement Services undertook 2652 Cremations during 2010/11. Of these approximately 70% take place at Robin Hood with 30% taking place at Woodlands. The following gives an indication as to where Cremations have taken place and the trend over the last 11 years:

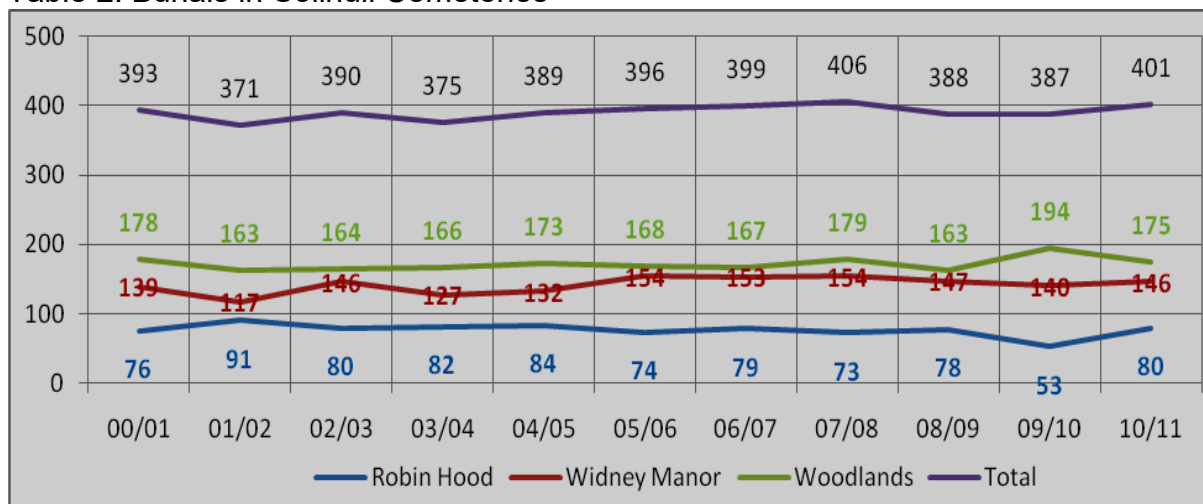
Table 1: Cremations undertaken at Solihull Crematoria



2.2 Burial

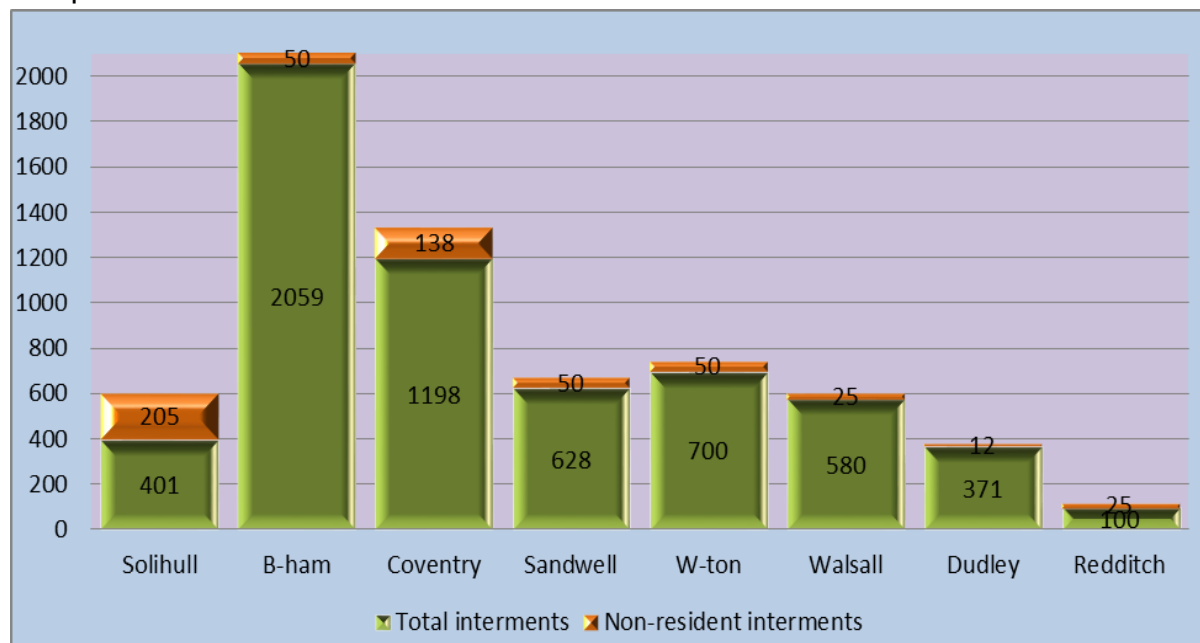
Bereavement Services currently undertake approximately 400 interments per annum. Of these approximately 50% take place in new graves, with the remaining 50% being within existing graves. The following table gives an indication as to where those interments take place:

Table 2: Burials in Solihull Cemeteries



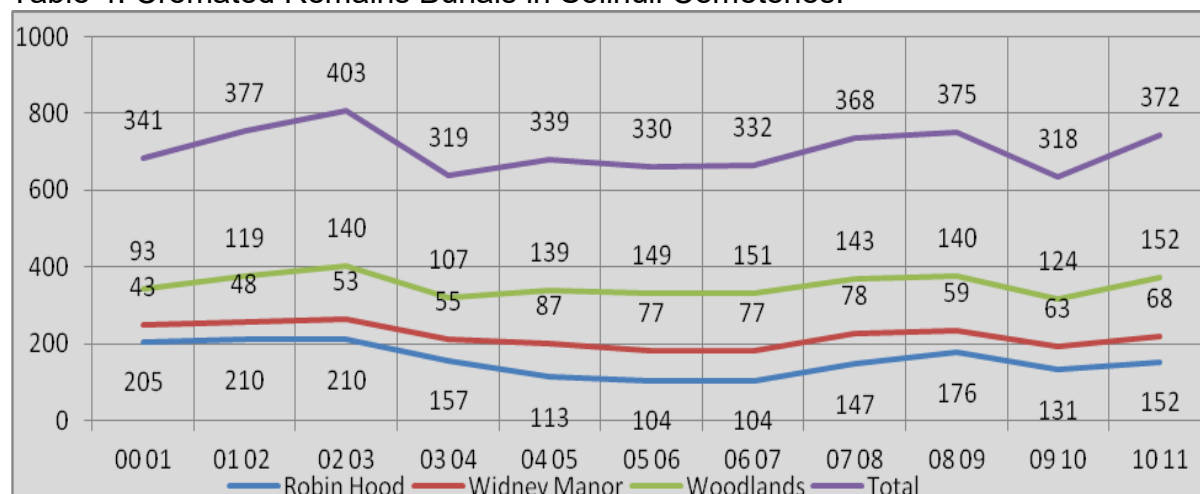
It is also important to note that of the 401 interments undertaken in 2010 2011 approximately 50% (205) were of non-residents of the Solihull. This high percentage of non-residents choosing Solihull for burial, vastly exceeds the number of non-residents using other Local Authority facilities across the West Midlands region. This can be seen in the following table:

Table 3: Comparison for the region of the average number non-resident burials compared to the total number of burials undertaken:



In addition, Bereavement Services currently undertake around 370 Cremated Remains Burials per annum.

Table 4: Cremated Remains Burials in Solihull Cemeteries:

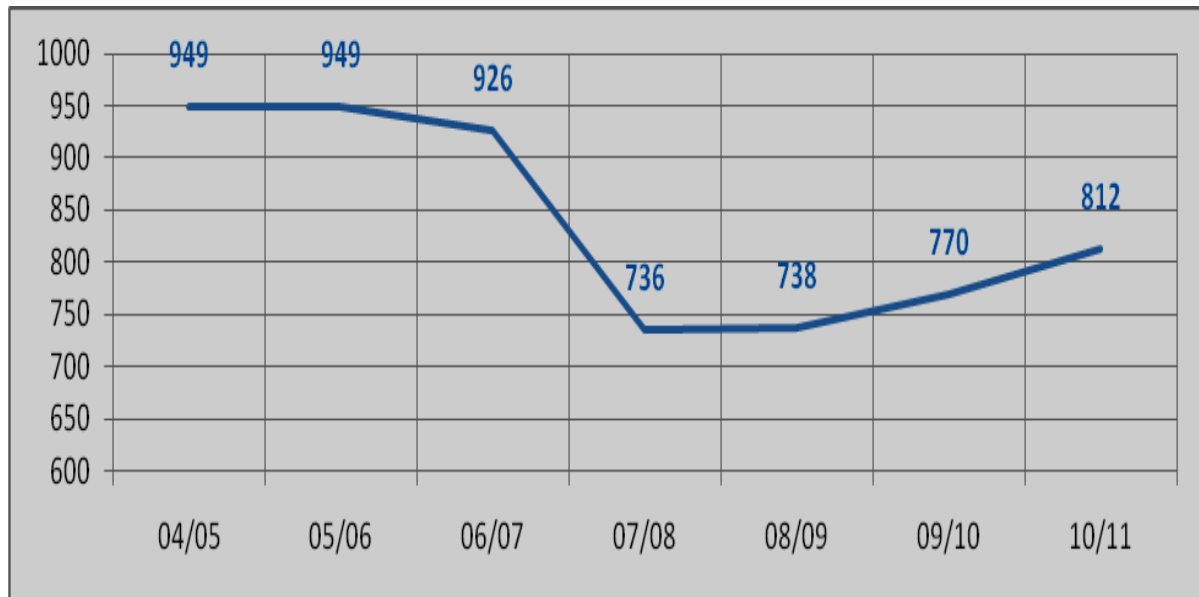


2.3 Memorials

Sales of memorials have fluctuated significantly over the last 11 years; however we have over the last 3 years seen a progressive recovery and a gradual increase year

on year. The following chart identifies the number of memorial sales over the last 7 years across all sites.

Table 5: Total Memorial Sales across all sites



3.0 Predicted Future Demand Trends

Due to improvements in medicine, health care and social care people are now living longer with an increased life expectancy. This is supported by national statistical records, which clearly indicate that there has been a significant decrease in the number of bereavements across the whole country over the last 10-15 years.

However, current national demographics and predicted population statistics over the next 40 years lead Government to anticipate that nationally the number of people passing away within the UK will increase from the current 560,000 per annum to an estimated 800,000 by 2050. There are a number of reasons for this predicted increase; Most notably is the Government predicted increase in national population figures, the impact resulting from the baby boom of the 1950s and 1960s, and from an increased immigration and migration rate over an extended period, together with the consequence of an aging population.

Solihull Observatory has provided data information, which has been used to help inform the service on future demands requirements. This information has been used in the future planning process for the service.

3.1 Cremation

In order to provide the bereaved with a sustainable Cremation service, it will be necessary to establish the current and future demand for this service.

By using the data provided by Solihull Observatory, it is possible to forecast that there will be over the next 30 years a significant public dependence on Solihull Council to provide a full and comprehensive cremation service.

The following table indicates what this impact is likely to be for Solihull Council, based on the anticipated number of bereavements within Solihull Borough over this period. For the purpose of the Strategy, it has been necessary to assume that the current percentage of cremations undertaken for residents and non-residents (approximately 50% / 50%) of the Borough will continue at the current level.

Table 6: Predicted Future Cremation Demand

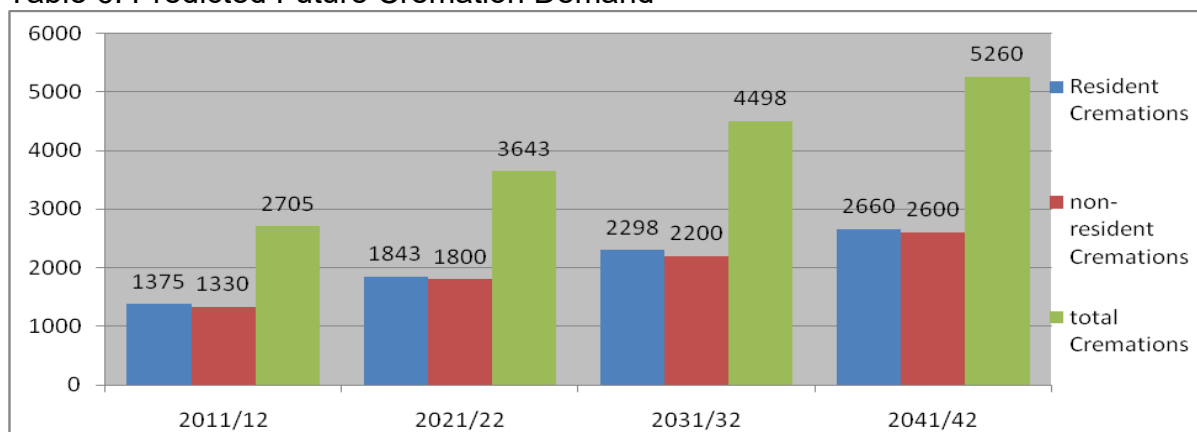


Table 6 indicates that over the next 30 years it is projected that there will be a significant increase by approximately 95% in the number of bereavements across the wider regional area resulting in cremation for Solihull. .

In order to accommodate this predicted increase it will be necessary to plan and develop facilities across the Borough over the next 30 years. This will require a detailed financial planning process together with a development plan identifying what facilities and equipment will be required and when it will be necessary to undertake the appropriate works.

Appendix B 'Consideration of Future Service Provision' document details when it may be necessary to undertake this work based on the current predicted forecast over the next 30 years.

In order to help meet the predicted future demand in will be necessary to consider new ways of working. This will include staff working arrangements, the potential for a longer working days/week and ensuring that facilities and equipment is used in the most efficient and effective way.

One of the considerations for new ways of working and alternative service provision includes the option to 'Care for the Deceased Overnight' and this should be considered carefully. The option to offer this service provision will be investigated as part of the proposed cremation equipment replacement programme for Robin Hood in 2013/14. It should be noted, that at this time there is insufficient space to install appropriate equipment for the 'Care of the Deceased overnight' at Robin Hood.

Based on predicted forecasts we have identified that there will become a point, prior to the need to increase cremation equipment, but where the demand for service times exceeds our current ability with available single chapel. This would ultimately result in the bereaved family having to wait an unacceptable period (several weeks), particularly during busy periods before we could accommodate and undertake their funeral. However, the option to 'Care for the Deceased Overnight' would enable the service to utilise spare capacity on less busy days, early in the morning, or by extending the working week by undertaking cremations on a Saturday.

The option to 'Care for the Deceased Overnight' has been introduced at an increasing number of Crematoria around the country and operators claim that this option is working effectively and has wide public acceptance. This issue is discussed in more detail in section 5.1.3 of the Strategy.

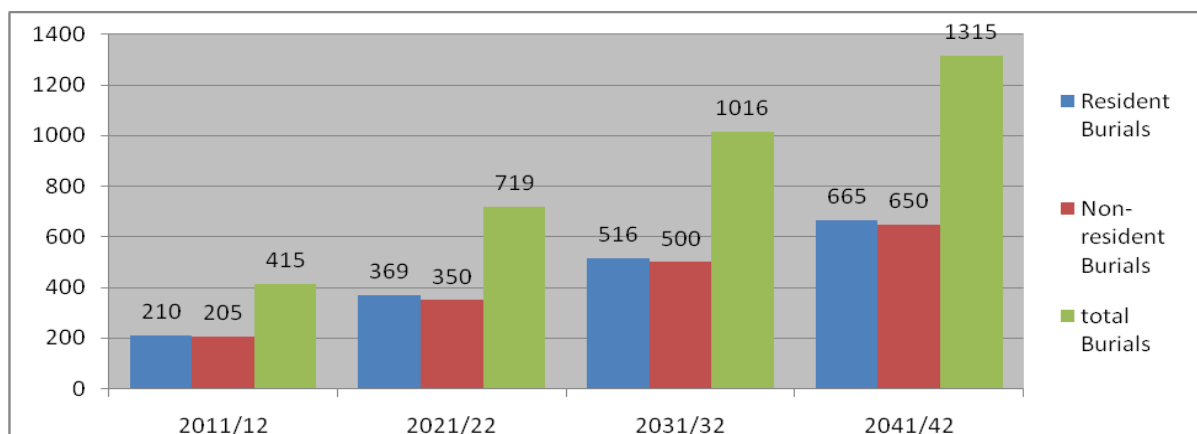
The consideration for the option to 'Care for the Deceased Overnight' could be a very sensitive issue for the bereaved, and one that would need to be considered very carefully and respectfully to ensure that the bereaved are engaged in the development of this option. Therefore, before this option would be introduced it is proposed to undertake a detailed consultation exercise with stakeholders and the bereaved during 2012. The exact detail of the consultation process has yet to be finalised.

3.2 Burials

As with cremation, by using the data provided by Solihull Observatory, it is possible to forecast that there will be a significant public dependence on Solihull Council to provide a full and comprehensive burial service.

The following table indicates what this impact is likely to be for Solihull Council, based on the anticipated number of bereavements within Solihull Borough over the next 30 years. For the purpose of this of this Strategy, it has been necessary to assume that the current percentage of burials undertaken for residents and non-residents (approximately 50% / 50%) of the Borough will continue at the current level.

Table 7: Predicted Future Burial Demand



As indicated previously, current burial facilities and capacity if not extended, would be exhausted within the next 4 years. If we are able to extend existing burial capacity at Widney Manor (9 acres) and Woodlands (10 acres) cemetery sites, although this will provide much needed capacity for approximately 25 years, it will be insufficient to provide the Council with sufficient land for burial demand over the period covered by this Strategy. Using the predicted future burial demand data shown within table 7 above, a further 10-15 acres of land will be required to be sourced, developed and made available across the borough by 2035.

3.3 Memorials

Following the successful development in 2010 of the Tranquillity Garden memorial scheme at Robin Hood cemetery and crematorium, it is now proposed to develop a business case for the possibility of a similar scheme for Widney Manor cemetery and Woodlands cemetery and crematorium.

Following the cremation of a loved one, memorials are available for the bereaved to purchase on a lease period across all 3 cemetery and 2 crematoria sites. The memorials that are available to the bereaved should not be confused with the memorial that is placed on a grave following interment, as these are purchased from a Memorial Mason and cannot be provided by a Local Authority.

The current range of memorials available to the bereaved is listed below but it is important to note that not all of these products are available at all cemetery sites:

- Books of Remembrance
- Memorial Trees, Shrubs and Roses
- Memorial Seats/Benches
- Private Memorial Gardens
- Cremated Remains Vaults
- Fence 'Boutonniere' Plaques (Woodlands)
- A range of 8 Memorial Plaques and Tablets (Tranquillity Garden Robin Hood).

The development of the new memorial scheme at Robin Hood in 2010 has enabled the service to offer a much wider range of memorial products for bereaved families wishing to commemorate the loss of a loved one.

4.0 Financial Constraints

4.1 Burial, Cremation and Memorialisation

The gross total income generated in 2010/11 from all burials undertaken was £1.096 million and £1.26 million from all cremations and £0.16 million from memorial sales. This represents a significant level of income generation for the Authority and enables the service to provide high quality service provision and a high standard of maintenance to its grounds and facilities for the bereaved.

The level of income received supports the significant financial investment required by the Authority through an annual contribution of £60,000 into the Bereavement Service Reserve Fund. This fund sustains the current service provision and helps support finance future service enhancements and service development including the development of further cemetery sites and crematorium facilities.

There were 401 burials undertaken in 2010/11 (with approximately 50% relating to burials of non-residents). The income received from undertaking non-resident burials is an important source of financing for current and future burial service provision and assists the Authority in funding the maintenance of existing cemetery sites. In addition it contributes to the Bereavement Services Reserve Fund for investment into future development and service provision.

5.0 Future Service Development

5.1 Cremation

5.1.1 Robin Hood Crematorium

The 3 Cremators at Robin Hood Crematorium were installed in 1996 and should be capable of undertaking around 2700 cremations pa (current volumes are around 1900 pa). Manufacturers initially indicated that cremators are likely to remain serviceable and operational for at least 15 years before the need for replacement. The cremators at Robin Hood were installed in 1996 so were 15 years old in 2011.

Repairs to the cremation equipment at Robin Hood are becoming increasingly more frequent and more expensive due to the age and condition of the equipment. Furthermore, it is now becoming increasingly more difficult to acquire some spare parts, particularly for the emissions monitoring and computer equipment. Following recent relining works in 2011 to the 3 cremators, the brickwork should remain serviceable until 2013/14 at which time it would be considered the most cost effective point in time to undertake a full replacement programme.

If the 3 cremators at Robin Hood are replaced in 2013/14 they would be over 16 years old by 2030 and dependent on use and serviceability it may be necessary to consider and plan for further replacement of cremators at this time.

Furthermore, the ability to accommodate the increased demand for cremation services is not solely reliant on cremator capacity. At Robin Hood the single chapel facility accommodates all services for cremation. If the number of requests for cremation does increase along the lines identified in table 7, even with a longer working day/week the existing chapel facility will be unable to accommodate the increasing number of service requests. It is therefore anticipated that by 2024/25, with an anticipated increase in demand to an estimated 2800 service requests per annum at Robin Hood, a second chapel facility will be needed.

Currently this site is capable of accommodating a maximum of 14 cremation services per day, and there is currently good access to the chapel facility with ample car

parking to accommodate this number of funerals per day. However if additional chapel facility were provided additional car parking would also have to be considered.

The outcome of the development of a second chapel facility would result in increasing service capacity from the current maximum 14 services per day to a potential 28 services per day. This would help mitigate for any potential delay during busier periods, which otherwise could result in a bereaved families having to wait an excessive period of time to hold their funeral service.

In addition, it is anticipated that by 2024/25 a fourth cremator will be required in order to meet the predicted demand as identified in table 7.

However, it is important to note, that the current layout and footprint of the buildings at Robin Hood would not allow installation of an additional cremator or additional chapel facility without the need to extend the building footprint considerably. Therefore, it would be considered appropriate that the development of additional chapel facility and additional cremator be undertaken at the same time. Furthermore, if Mercury Abatement equipment is not already installed at this site further consideration will be given for its installation at this time.

In addition, the availability of land around Robin Hood chapel is limited by the current road layout and by existing burial areas. An area of land however adjacent to the existing chapel has previously been identified as a possible location for an additional chapel facility this could also include for the installation of a fourth cremator, and mercury abatement equipment. This will require careful planning to ensure that this has minimal impact on the surrounding areas of the cemetery and existing road layout, car parking and access for the bereaved to all facilities.

The likely financial implications and optimum sources of funding for the above are shown in section 1.3 in Appendix B

5.1.2 Woodlands Crematorium

The annual number of cremations undertaken at Woodlands continues to increase year on year, with 770 cremations being carried out during 2010/11. It is anticipated, that this annual number will continue to increase as the population and the numbers of bereavements increases.

By 2018 the existing cremator at Woodlands could be nearing the end of its serviceable life at which time; it may be considered the most cost effective juncture to undertake a replacement programme. As with Robin Hood, if the increase in the number of requests for cremation increase in line with predictions it may be necessary to install a second cremator, this could be undertaken at the time when the existing cremator may be due for replacement in 2018.

Currently this site is capable of accommodating a maximum of 5 cremation services per day; this is because of the layout of the grounds has restricted access and

egress to and from the chapel and car park facility. Therefore, in order to expand existing service capacity, it will be necessary to consider the option to establish a separate entrance/exit facility with additional car parking.

If replacement of the single cremator is undertaken in 2018 at Woodlands, by 2036 cremator/s at Woodlands would be over 16+ years old and dependent on use and serviceability it will be necessary to consider and plan for further replacement at this time.

The likely financial implications and optimum sources of funding for the above are shown in section 1.3 in Appendix B

5.1.3 Environmental Issues (Cremation);

Mercury Abatement

Current Legislation requires that Crematoria across the country reduces mercury emissions by 50% with effect from 1st January 2013, this can be achieved in two ways:

- Installation of mercury abatement equipment (at the time when new cremators are installed) and remove all mercury during the cremation process at both sites.
- Do not install mercury abatement equipment and purchase 50% from the national trading organisation '*Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation*' (CAMEO).

In 2006, Solihull MBC appointed a Consultant to undertake a detailed feasibility study in order to establish the most cost effective way for this Authority to meet its obligation in relation to mercury emissions. Following the submission of the feasibility study report the decision was taken by the Cabinet Member for Safer and Stronger Communities in June 2006, not to programme the installation of abatement equipment by January 2013 but to meet our obligation via the purchase of 50% through the national trading organisation CAMEO. At this time it is considered that the decision taken by the Cabinet Member in June 2006 remains valid, as no changes to the infrastructure have occurred since the production of the report to permit the installation of the required equipment. This would require significant building enlargement and alterations to accommodate the equipment. However, this will be reviewed fully and could be included within the cremator replacement programme for Robin Hood during 2013/14.

It is therefore proposed that a review of the feasibility study undertaken in 2006 together with the development of a business case during 2013/14 in order to identify all environmental and financial benefits for the Council for the installation of mercury abatement equipment.

It should be noted that at this time, mercury abatement equipment could not be accommodated within the existing building footprint at Robin Hood crematorium due to insufficient space being available. It is however possible to install equipment at Woodlands within the existing building. Although if mercury abatement equipment were installed this would prevent the installation of an additional cremator without extending the existing building footprint.

Social and Environmental Responsibility (Carbon Emission Management)

One of the principal issues to be addressed is how we meet our obligation to reduce Carbon Emissions. Government has placed a requirement on all businesses to reduce their impact on the environment by reducing carbon emissions.

One of the most significant areas for the reduction of carbon emissions is the use of natural gas. By reducing the gas consumption, significant reduction in carbon emissions can be realised. Currently 99.9% of cremation equipment across the UK is gas operated. Legislation requires Cremation equipment to be preheated to 800 - 850° C before a cremation can commence. The majority of gas consumption is used to preheat the cremator to the required temperature resulting in high levels of carbon emissions. By constant monitoring and reviewing the use of cremators, together with effective programming of funerals, lower gas consumption could be achieved, resulting in lower carbon emissions to atmosphere.

One of the other ways Local Authorities can deliver high quality service provision, whilst operating in a socially responsible way, is to reduce the impact on the environment by achieving a reduction in the carbon footprint and where possible to reduce carbon emissions into the atmosphere. This will ensure that its cremation service operates in the most efficient way by appropriate management of staff and equipment.

Therefore, full consideration will be given for adopting the process '***Caring for the Deceased Overnight***' this would enable the service to more effectively plan and programme cremation services during the day, which would realise a reduction in our carbon footprint and carbon emissions. The principal of this option is intended to provide the bereaved family with confidence that at all times the deceased will be treated with the utmost respect and dignity when in our care, whilst allowing the service to plan more effectively and accommodate service requests.

However, it would be necessary to undertake a full consultation exercise with stakeholders and the bereaved, develop a business case and seek Cabinet Member approval and before adopting or recommending the introduction of this option. The purpose of this consultation exercise would be to evaluate proposals in terms of the bereaved acceptance, together with environmental benefits and identifying any service delivery constraints. If acceptable, this would be included for and undertaken as part of the cremator replacement programme at Robin Hood in 2013/14.

One of the consequences of not considering this option fully may be that a restriction may have to be placed on the number of cremation services undertaken during the day, due to the capability to complete the cremation process during the day of the funeral. This may result in the family having an unacceptable delay in their funeral taking place.

The option of caring for the deceased overnight is becoming increasingly and widely accepted and adopted across the country where over the last 10 years we have seen an increasing number with approximately 40% (100) of crematoria adopting this practice.

5.2 Burial

It is estimated that in order to meet the predicted increasing demand for burials over the next 30 years it will be necessary to identify and develop a total of around 30 acres of land for long-term burial provision. The development of Widney Manor and the possible acquisition of land adjacent to Woodlands would equate to approximately 19 acres therefore to provide burial capacity beyond 25 years, a further 10-15 acres capacity will be required to be identified by 2030. Therefore, work will commence in the summer of 2012 with the Council's Corporate Land Service to investigate and identify possible land which could be developed for future cemetery provision

5.2.1 Widney Manor Cemetery

Work is already underway for the development of land adjacent to Widney Manor Cemetery as agreed by Cabinet Member for Safer Communities on 3 October 2011.

The development of 9 acres of Council owned land adjacent to Widney Manor Cemetery has required a programme of ground water monitoring and detailed assessment. The result of the monitoring works undertaken will require additional works to address site drainage and this is programmed to be completed during final development of the site.

In addition, the site is identified as a Local Wildlife Site (LWS) and as such, it has been necessary to identify and develop alternative land within the borough located at Whar Hall Farm, as a substitute LWS site to mitigate the loss of the LWS land at Widney Manor at a cost to the Authority of £11,000.

Within the boundary of the extension there is an area of land approximately 1 acre which could, subject to identifying the sufficient demand, be set aside for the development of an environmental burial option. Where demand can be identified a business case will be developed.

In addition a further area approximately 1.5 - 2 acres of land within the extension has been identified as a possible location for the installation of above

ground Vaults/Burial chambers. Again the demand for such a facility will need to be identified. Where demand is identified a business case will be developed.

Clearly further investigation and detailed consultation with stakeholders and the bereaved will be undertaken to establish the potential demand and acceptance for these alternative burial facilities before development proposals are considered further.

Cabinet Member for Safer Communities at the meeting on 3 October 2011 approved allocation of £479,000 for the development of this land. This does not include the development of an environmental burial option or the option to install above ground vaults. These will be subject to a separate business case.

5.2.2 Woodlands Cemetery

In order to provide a sustainable burial service in the north of the Borough there is an urgent requirement to identify additional land for longer-term provision. Remaining capacity for burials at Woodlands is approximately 6 years, it is essential that further land is secured and developed in time to meet future demand and to ensure a continual burial provision in north Solihull.

Land adjacent to Woodlands cemetery of approximately 10 acres in area has been identified as a possible site for future burial provision. However, the land is currently in private ownership and negotiations for the purchase of this land with the landowner are presently underway. Purchase of this land will only take place once a detailed investigation to comply with the Environment Agency's requirements and will require ground water testing and water pollution risks. This detailed investigation process will take approximately 18 months to complete. If this land were to be acquired and developed, the site could provide burial capacity in north Solihull for a further estimated 25 years.

The likely financial implications and optimum sources of funding for the above are shown in section 2.5 of Appendix B

However, it is important to note that if this land cannot be secured or if the land is identified as unsuitable for burial, it will be essential to identify and consider alternative land and service delivery options if we are to provide a sustainable burial service in north Solihull.

5.2.3 Future Burial Options for Consideration

Current burial options for the bereaved are limited to the Lawn style grave layout (memorial located at the head of the grave). It will be necessary to investigate any alternative options for future burial service provision, and in order to do this appropriately it will be important that work is undertaken to establish the potential demand for any alternative options as identified in 5.2.1 above. This will require a consultation exercise with all stakeholders and the bereaved where possible, in order to investigate fully the possible demand for development of any alternatives. This will

require the development of a Business case for the proposed introduction and development of any options identified. In addition, enquiries with neighbouring service providers will also be undertaken to establish if similar issues are being experienced in the wider regional area and what steps they have taken to manage them.

It must also be recognised that the service undertakes around 370 interments of Cremated Remains across all cemetery and crematoria sites. This will also have an impact on the use of available land and consideration of future requirements has been included for within future land needs.

5.3 Memorials

Following the development of the Tranquillity Garden scheme at Robin Hood, consideration will be given to the development of a new memorial scheme for Woodlands Crematorium and Widney Manor Cemetery, with the intention to offer a wider product choice and improved memorial facilities for the bereaved across the whole Borough. A new scheme at Woodlands and Widney Manor would significantly increase the memorial options available for the bereaved.

6.0 Future Innovation In Service Provision

The options highlighted in this section of the strategy, identify a number of alternatives currently available for the bereaved in different areas of the country. The level of potential demand is not known at this stage for these alternative service options. Therefore, it will be necessary to undertake consultation with the bereaved and stakeholders to establish the level of potential demand and acceptability before the introduction of some of these alternatives.

6.1 Cremation

No proven operational alternative to cremation is in existence within the UK. However, officers are aware that there are a number of alternatives under development in other parts of the world. Officers will continually monitor these developments and any that are commercially proven will be considered further and any possible benefits to the bereaved or the Council will be reported to Cabinet Member.

6.2 Burial

6.2.1 Development of Innovative Environmental Burial facility at Widney Manor Cemetery

The feasibility for an environmental burial option is being considered for introduction within the current extension at Widney Manor cemetery, this facility could provide the bereaved with an alternative and more environmentally aware option to the current burial provision available. This facility could be located in an area identified of approximately 1 acre in area, which would be set apart from the surrounding burial

areas specifically for those who require an environmentally aware facility. The concept of an environmental burial facility includes the following consideration:

- The use only of an environmentally friendly coffin, such as cardboard, wicker, basket weave, woollen or other similar biodegradable material.
- A permanent but simple marker would be placed on the grave for future identification and location purposes.
- The placing of floral tributes and other items would be located within a communal area.
- Grass would be cut 2/3 times per year encouraging the area to grow wild flowers and allow for self seeding in the area.

Although officers believe that there is a demand for this type of facility, the level of demand is not yet known. Therefore, if sufficient demand were to be identified a business case will be developed and a report will be prepared for Cabinet Member consideration. At this time, only two facilities are known to exist, and these are these are located 4 miles east of Rugby and approximately 3 miles south of Redditch.

Example of an Environmental/Green Burial Facility



6.2.2 Above Ground Vaults/Burial Chambers

This facility offers the bereaved an alternative to the current grave provision and is becoming increasingly popular in some areas of the country. The advantage of this facility is that they can be installed and located in areas that otherwise may not be suitable or possible to locate current lawn type graves. However, as with the Environmental/Green burial proposals, it is not known at this time what level of demand exists for this type of facility. There are no installations close to Solihull Borough that have this type of facility installed that would help gauge the potential for local demand for such a facility, with the nearest known location being in Bedford where these are very popular with the bereaved.

Example of Above Ground Burial Chambers/Vaults



6.2.3 Traditional Graves Provision

Further consideration will be given to the provision of an alternative to the lawn style grave layout, which would allow for the placing of a memorial, which covers the whole area of the grave. These are referred to as ‘traditional’ style grave layout, which can be seen in old Victorian and Edwardian cemeteries.

Example of a Traditional Style Grave Layout Section



7.0 Options Considered for Future Service Provision (see Appendix B)

7.1 Cremation

There are a number of options available to the Council in relation to future burial and cremation service provision and these are considered fully together with a detailed evaluation process has been undertaken in the Appendix B:

Option A – Discontinue Cremation Service Provision

Option B – Outsource Cremation Service

Option C – Develop Existing Cremation Service Provision

7.2 Burial

The following are the issues related the future provision of the burial service that have been considered and a detailed evaluation process has been undertaken for all options and is considered fully in Appendix B:

Option D – Discontinue Burial Service Provision

Option E – Provide for Existing Grave Provision only

Option F – Limit New Grave Provision to Bereaved Families of Solihull Borough only

Option G – Outsource Burial Service

Option H – Develop Existing Burial Service Provision

8.0 Fees and Charges

8.1 Fees Future Strategy

It is recommended that fees and charges are continued to be reviewed annually in line with the Council's medium term budget strategy, with a view to ensuring that the fees and charges applied fully recover the cost of service provision including the whole life costs.

In addition, this income could assist the Council in meeting the predicted future investment requirements in order to continue to offer the bereaved full burial, cremation and memorial service provision.

An annual comparison is undertaken of fees and charges applied by neighbouring service providers to ensure that the fees and charges applied by Solihull remain comparable in the local marketplace.

Fees and charges will also be reviewed in light of current supply / demand trends for services and on general market behaviour. This is to ensure that we are applying appropriately set fees and charges, which encourages demand rather than having a negative impact on take up of service provision.