

**Briefing Paper to the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Commission****Wards: All**11<sup>th</sup> December 2025**Bereavement Services Update****Briefing Paper of the of Corporate Director for Legal Services and Partnerships****1. Purpose of the Paper and Summary**

1.1 To provide the Committee with a general update with regards to the service.

**2. Background**

2.1 Bereavement Services includes the day-to-day management of cremation services at the Chanterlands Crematorium, burial services, memorial safety and maintenance of 5 of the cities open cemeteries. The service also provides a low-cost funeral service to bereaved families, as an alternative to the traditional funeral service conducted by a funeral director.

2.2 The team of staff at Bereavement Services have played a crucial role in the recovery of the incident at a funeral home in the city, in March 2024. The team have dedicated a considerable amount of time with families, to support them to provide funerals services, manage the repatriation of human ashes, and create a memorial garden to lay to rest those ashes that were unidentified. Additional staff resources were provided to the service, however the length of dedicated time spent with the volume of families that continue to come forward, has resulted in less focus on a number of other operational duties. This has also had an impact on the current financial pressure in the service.

2.3 Two additional Bereavement officers will remain in the service for a further 12 months, to provide the additional resource to get back on track, particularly with tasks including the renewal of leases for rose trees, trees, and exclusive rights of burial plots. The newly appointed position of a dedicated Publicity and Marketing officer has also joined the team from October 2025, to focus on the marketing of the service.

3. Issues for Consideration

3.1 **Promotion of the service** – The dedicated Publicity and Marketing Officer is developing a marketing plan for the next 12 months. The Plan includes key areas of the service listed below, and includes the use of various methods of marketing, to ensure key messages about what we can offer, reaches all residents in our communities.

<b>Services to Market</b>	<b>Methods of Marketing</b>
Hull Funeral Service -low cost cremation service Pet Cremations (live February 2026) Pet cemetery Cemeteries in general – choices of memorabilia. Priory Natural Burial Ground Priory Woods Memorial Gardens Priory Woods Woodland Walk Crematorium Open Day (proposal)	Media coverage Social media – Corporate and Ward accounts My Communities – E newsletter Local Ward newsletters Print – to distribute to local places, community centres, hubs, Health Centres, GP surgeries Engagement with key stakeholders – VETs, local hospitals

3.2 The plan will also consider the need to market certain services at certain times of the year in order to get the best take up. It is also important that each specific service has a known visible brand for each product which is identifiable for residents. The emphasis that these are alternative, low cost services delivered by Hull City Council are key messages.

3.3 The Publicity and Marketing Officer has already started to review the Hull Bereavement Services website, making sure the information is easy to find and up to date. Reference to the website will be used through the marketing plan, to point residents and other professionals to this information.

3.4 **Leased memorabilia** – Within the 5 open cemeteries in the city, there are 25 areas in total which offer families a leased memorial. This could be a rose tree, a tree, a bench, sanctum box, a variety of plaques or an area within the Columbarium. This totals over 1,500 items currently in lease. Most leases are for 10 years and the team have a process to contact the lease holder usually 12 months before the expiry date of the lease, to ask if they wish to renew. Due to other commitments since 2024, the team have not managed to contact all those families whereby their lease has expired. There are also a number of new options available for families to lease at the Priory Woods cemetery which will be a focus within the marketing plan to promote more widely.

3.5 **Exclusive Rights of Burial plots** – residents can reserve a burial plot at Eastern Cemetery, Northern Cemetery and Priory Woods Cemetery, for a minimum of 10 years. The team have a similar process to the above, in terms of contact prior to the expiry of the lease to seek renewal. Again, it is unfortunate that since 2024 the team have not managed to make contact with those leases due for renewal due to other commitments. This will be the focus of the team in

the new year, and to consider the use of automation through technology to make contact with the deedholder.

**3.6 Grounds maintenance of the cemeteries** – Bereavement Services have a Service Level Agreement with Streetscene Services Grounds Maintenance Team to maintain the cemetery grounds of the 5 open cemeteries. The teams meet regularly to discuss any issues or areas of concern sometimes highlighted by our customers. The current climate of a long period of dry weather and then sudden rainfall, for example causes issues with maintaining the presentation of the grounds. Priory Woods cemetery is growing in demand and Streetscene have recently agreed to provide a dedicated grounds maintenance officer for the site, to ensure the memorial gardens and Woodland Walk is maintained regularly.

**3.7 Death Registrations Hull and East Riding** - A death must be registered in the district in which it occurred; therefore, if someone from the East Riding dies in HRI their death must be registered in Hull. If a customer is unable to visit the Hull Register Office, they can attend an appointment their local office in the East Riding. This is called registering a death by declaration. The Registrar in the East Riding will collect the relevant information and pass it through to the Hull Office to complete the registration. This process can result in delays as actions are needed by both offices before paperwork to allow a funeral or a death certificate can be issued. We do work closely with the East Riding to minimise delays however some delay is unfortunately unavoidable.

Work is ongoing to digitise the Registration Service. New legislation will remove some of the administrative burden and the need for a wet signature on a register page. These changes will enable deaths to be registered over the telephone and ultimately online in the future. It is anticipated the option to register a death over the telephone will be made available Autumn 2026. Telephone registrations will remove the need for a customer to travel to attend an appointment.

#### 4. Next steps

4.1 Bereavement Service will continue to work to the service priority, which is to promote affordable and high-quality bereavement services to local residents.

### **Corporate Director for Legal Services and Partnerships**

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Officer Interests: None