

BRIEFING PAPER

Transportation of Bodies on behalf of HM Coroner



1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The project will look to renew a 5-year Contract for contractors to provide a service to transport deceased persons between the place of death to the Coroner's chosen destination(s). The majority of bodies are currently transported to the Department of Anatomical Pathology at University Hospitals Plymouth NHS Trust in Plymouth. In some cases, bodies may need to be transported to other locations including long distance transfers within the UK for forensic and non-forensic post mortems.

2. EXISTING CONTRATUAL ARRANGEMENTS

In certain cases when there is a sudden death other than by natural causes, it is the responsibility of the Coroner to examine the cause of death. This may result in a post mortem examination being carried out. It is also the Coroner's responsibility to remove bodies from the scene of death to the mortuary, pending investigation into the death.

The current Contract expires 31 October 2021 and has one contractor.

3. BACKGROUND

Plymouth is the relevant authority for the combined coronial jurisdiction for Plymouth, Torbay and South Devon. Torbay Council also has a contract for body removals, which ceases at the end of October 2021. As part of the Service Level Agreement arrangement, Torbay's contract is the only legal contract that they hold in their own right and it was agreed that any new contract going forward reflects the whole Coroner area. Plymouth has agreed to take the lead on any new procurement process.

4. OBJECTIVES

The Coroner for Plymouth, Torbay and South Devon is required to arrange the removal of bodies from the place of death or body holding area to the designated mortuary in order to allow the investigation of sudden unexpected death, unnatural deaths and those required to be reported to the Coroner under the Coroner's Act. This service is a statutory service in which the Coroner needs to work closely with police and other statutory agencies such as the Health and Safety Executive to preserve the evidence and establish the identity of the deceased to an appropriate level, and establish the cause of death. Removal of the body by an undertaker to a public mortuary or designed holding place is required by the Local Authority to comply with Public Health legislation especially where it is a destitute body.

5. OUTCOME AND BENEFITS

The Coroner is an independent judicial officer who has freehold position but is required to carry out a statutory duty laid down in the Coroners Act and Rules. The expenses of the Coroner are reimbursed to the Coroner by the local authority.

The new service arrangements will provide continuity of service to the Coronial function and it is proposed to effectively mirror the current arrangements in terms of specification and outputs.

A joint procurement exercise with Torbay Council will ensure that any new contract for the transportation of bodies reflects the whole Coroner area (Plymouth, Torbay and South Devon) and supports the Service Level Agreement arrangement.

6. FINANCING

A 5 year Contract at £130,000 per year (totalling £650,000). Tendered fees will apply for the whole contract period with inflation increases contained in line with the CPI.

The current Contract expires 31 October 2021 and has one contractor.

7. TIMESCALE

A fully compliant procurement process must be undertaken jointly with Torbay Council by 31 October 2021 when the current Contract expires.

8. RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that the Leader of the Council:

- Approves the Business Case
- Authorises the procurement process to renew a Contract for contractors to provide a service to transport deceased persons between the place of death to the Coroner's chosen destination
- Delegates the award of the contract to the Andy Ralphs, Strategic Director for Customer and Corporate Service