

CO-OPERATIVE REVIEW PROJECT PLAN



REVIEW OF PUBLIC FUNERALS

Background	
Chair:	Councillor Mrs Aspinall
Lead Officer:	Darin Halifax, Community Cohesion Coordinator
Democratic Support Officer:	Katey Johns
Membership:	Councillor Mrs Aspinall, Chair Councillor Mrs Bowyer, Casey, Martin Leaves and Tuffin
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Vincent, Cabinet Member for Environment
Date review approved by the Co-operative Scrutiny Board:	27 November 2013
Summary of subject to be reviewed:	To review the Council's current process for dealing with public funerals
Reason(s) and rationale for the review:	The cost to the Council for each Public Funeral, is in the region of £2000 to £2200 but can be more, depending on the time spent investigating the case. Traditionally, the older generation have made provision in their wills for their funeral arrangements but this is no longer the case and, with the number of public funerals set to rise combined with the existing budget pressures of the current economic climate, it is essential that the Council looks at ways of making better use of its resources.
Objectives of the review:	To consider whether the Council's Public Funeral Policy is fit for purpose
What will the review look at?	As agreed at the Your Plymouth panel meeting on 4 November 2013, the scope of the review will be limited to consideration of the following – <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The funeral arrangements are made at a time to suit the Bereavement Service, rather than give a choice to family members. Should we accommodate the wishes of the family? • Even when family members have not accepted responsibility, we still notify them of the time and date of the funeral. Should we continue to do this? • The Council offer a simple, non-denominational burial, and no choice is given to family members for burial or cremation. The law requires that cremation should not be carried out if it was contrary to the wishes of the deceased, and if a next of kin was unable to be traced, the Council would always be legally required to provide a burial only. Should we offer a choice of burial or cremation to family members, even if cremation is more expensive?

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Should we employ a minister where the denomination of the deceased is known, which currently has a fee of £179? <p>The service is basic and minimal and does not provide for flowers or anything but a graveside service, and no marking of a grave. Are the Council happy that this is acceptable? Some information is available from other Councils but further benchmarking data could be obtained about what is offered elsewhere.</p>
Who will benefit from the review:	Members of the public (Council Tax payers), Councillors and Officers.

Methodology	
The method and approach of the review:	<p>One meeting to –</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> review current procedures look at processes in place at other authorities talk to witnesses identify areas for improvement
Witnesses and experts:	<p>To agree witnesses and experts that might be called to provide evidence -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Council Officers; Cabinet Member; Funeral Operatives; Plymouth Hospitals NHS Trust; Civil Funeral Celebrant
Documents and/or reports for analysis e.g. internal/external reports or legislation):	<p>Which documents would assist with the review. Documents can take a variety of forms including (for example):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Government guidance or legislation; Local policies and strategies;
Site visits:	Site visit to Efford Crematorium
Consultations/Research:	Identify the research that will be required for this review and the method by which this research should be carried out.
Resource Requirements:	<p>When considering resource requirements you should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs of venue hire Costs of site visits Travel costs Publicity costs

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Approximate officer hours
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Timetable		
Activity	Timescale / Date(s)	Intended Outcome(s)
Meeting 1: (Non public)	31 Jan 2014	Agree scoping document
Meeting 2: (Public)	26 Feb 2014	To consider evidence, hear from witnesses and identify areas for improvement
Draft report:	End March 2014	
Meeting 3 (approve report): Alternatively, agree report content via e-mail	Early April 2014	
Submit report to the Co-operative Scrutiny Board Meeting:	23 April 2014	Approve report
Submit to Cabinet Meeting:		
Submit to other bodies/organisations:		
Scrutiny Panel to evaluate and track the outcomes of the Co-operative Review:		