

EXECUTIVE BOARD DECISION



REPORT OF: Executive Member of Growth & Development

LEAD OFFICERS: Director of Place

DATE: Thursday, 12 August 2021

PORTFOLIO(S) AFFECTED: Growth and Development

WARD/S AFFECTED: (All Wards);

KEY DECISION: Y

SUBJECT:

Development of a new Prayer Shelter at Pleasington Cemetery

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The current Muslim burial grounds will be at capacity within 12-15 months at which point all future burials will take place in the new cemeteries extension which is located over ½ mile from the existing prayer shelter.

Traditionally, the deceased is taken to the Muslim prayer shelter and immediately following the prayers, the deceased is then carried to graveside and buried. The new Muslim burial grounds are located too far away from the existing prayer shelter to allow this practice to continue, hence the need for a new Muslim prayer shelter located in the new cemetery extension.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Executive Board:

- Approves the construction of a new modular build Muslim prayer shelter within the new cemetery extension at Pleasington Cemetery, subject to planning permission being granted.
- Approves the establishment of a capital budget in the financial year 2021/22 to fund the surveys, professional fees and construction costs.
- Delegates approval to the Director of Place, in consultation with the Executive Member for Growth and Development, to award the contract to build the prayer shelter following a tendering process.

3. BACKGROUND

The current Muslim burial grounds which surround the existing prayer shelter will be at capacity within the next 12 -15 months, at which point all future burials will take place in the new extension to the north of the cemetery, which is some considerable distance from the existing prayer shelter. Traditionally, the deceased is taken to the Muslim prayer shelter and immediately following the prayers, the deceased is then carried to graveside and buried.

The new Muslim burial grounds are located too far away from the prayer shelter to allow this practice to continue – not only would it be a long walk for mourners, particularly in inclement weather but it would require mourners to cross paths with other mourners in the cemetery

including those attending services in the crematorium. The consequence of this is that there is a need for a new Muslim prayer shelter located in the new cemeteries extension.

The need for a new Muslim prayer shelter has been accelerated by the impact of the pandemic with a significant increase in excess deaths in our Muslim community.

Proposed New Muslim Prayer Shelter

As part of an initial feasibility study, a desktop analysis supported by a soft marketing exercise with a construction contractor has helped to inform the design and build of a new Muslim prayer shelter located in the Cemetery extension.

This work highlighted a lack of locally available supplies for utility services (water and electric), which would need to be addressed as part of the build programme. There is no obvious local supply, therefore further work will be required to determine how best to connect these supplies, which may result in mains connections. Mains connections for water and electricity have been accounted for within the initial costs and the build programme but could be subject to change on further review.

Desktop study - This was carried out calculating the proposed size and using industry standard construction build schedule of cost rates, which accounts for all perimeter works, small kitchen, utilities/services, heating system, WC's, decoration and finishes throughout, based on a building size of a minimum of 200m².

Soft market testing - Through the desktop study, a schedule of works was produced and presented to a local building contractor, who had recently completed a construction project for the Council which was procured in open competition. The brief for the contractor was to cost both a modular building and traditional building methods for comparison of costs and delivery times.

Build Programme - It is estimated that a modular build option could be in use within 12 months, a traditional build would be up to 18 months dependent on the weather during the winter months.

The existing prayer shelter is located next to a large steel shipping container which contains the grounds maintenance equipment used by the Muslim burial volunteers who tend to the graves and maintain the burial grounds on a weekly basis. The volunteers require more space for equipment and a space for training new volunteers, the existing prayer shelter could be used for this purpose and would enable the unsightly shipping container to be removed from the site.

4. KEY ISSUES & RISKS

The Muslim burial grounds will be at capacity in 12-15 months due to the increased number of Muslim burials undertaken throughout the pandemic.

The new burial grounds are a considerable distance from the existing prayer shelter therefore the practice of carrying the body immediately after prayers to graveside cannot continue unless a new prayer shelter is provided in the new cemeteries extension.

The new prayer shelter will require planning permission.

5. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

None.

6. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

The estimated capital cost of constructing a new Muslim prayer shelter have been obtained following a desktop survey and a soft market testing exercise. The actual cost will be confirmed following a tendering process led by the corporate procurement team

The operational day to day cost for the new Muslim Prayer shelter will be funded from the Cemeteries and Crematoria revenue budget.

7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The contract value is below the threshold for works where the Public Contracts regulations 2015 would apply. The contract will be in a form approved by legal officers in the Contracts and Procurement team.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Officers from the Corporate procurement team and Construction and facilities team would be engaged in the procurement process to award the contract for the new build. Officers from the Construction and facilities team would perform clerk of works role working with the appointed contractor on the delivery of the scheme.

9. EQUALITY AND HEALTH IMPLICATIONS

Please select one of the options below.

Option 1 ☒ Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) not required – the EIA checklist has been completed.

Option 2 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Member needs to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

Option 3 ☐ In determining this matter the Executive Board Members need to consider the EIA associated with this item in advance of making the decision.

10. CONSULTATIONS

N/A.

11. STATEMENT OF COMPLIANCE

The recommendations are made further to advice from the Monitoring Officer and the Section 151 Officer has confirmed that they do not incur unlawful expenditure. They are also compliant with equality legislation and an equality analysis and impact assessment has been considered. The recommendations reflect the core principles of good governance set out in the Council's Code of Corporate Governance.

12. DECLARATION OF INTEREST

All Declarations of Interest of any Executive Member consulted and note of any dispensation granted by the Chief Executive will be recorded in the Summary of Decisions published on the day following the meeting.

CONTACT OFFICER:	Martin Eden Director of Place martin.eden@blackburn.gov.uk
DATE:	3 August 2021
BACKGROUND PAPER:	N/A.