

Report No.
ES14025

London Borough of Bromley

PART ONE - PUBLIC

Decision Maker: **PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SAFETY PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

FOR PRE-DECISION SCRUTINY BY THE PUBLIC PROTECTION AND SAFETY PDS COMMITTEE

Date: **4th March 2013**

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Key

Title: **PROPOSED JOINT MORTUARY SERVICE WITH LONDON BOROUGH OF BEXLEY**

Contact Officer: Jim McGowan, Head of Environmental Protection
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Chief Officer: Nigel Davies, Executive Director of Environment & Community Services

Ward: All Wards

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The current arrangements for the provision of Mortuary Services for the London Borough of Bromley has come to an end and discussions are currently being held with regard to utilising a contract placed by the London Borough of Bexley as an alternative to the re tender process on the open market. Members have requested an update on the current position.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

2.1 **The Portfolio Holder is asked to:**

Consider and note the contents of the report with regard to the services provided to Bromley Council for its Mortuary services and agree to the use of the London Borough of Bexley Contract as the basis of service requirement.

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Excellent Council
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: £99k per annum
 2. Ongoing costs: £99k per annum
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Mortuary Budget
 4. Total current budget for this head: £99k
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget 2013/14
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 0.1FTE
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours: 0.1fte
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement
 2. Call-in: Applicable
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Approximately one million residents within the HM Southern District
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Not Applicable
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments: N/A

3. COMMENTARY

The Mortuary Service

- 3.1 The Coroners service is provided by a consortium of the Boroughs of Bromley, Croydon, Sutton and Bexley as a shared service, on behalf of Doctor Roy Palmer, HM Coroner, Southern District. As part of this service each Borough is required to provide its own suitable mortuary service.
- 3.2 The provision of mortuary facilities was historically provided within the Borough of Bromley in its own Public Mortuary, but in 2004/5 the Bromley Public mortuary, which was owned and operated by LB Bromley, developed serious structural building faults and had to be partially demolished.
- 3.3 The public mortuary facilities were moved on a temporary, informal basis to the Princess Royal University Hospital (PRUH). The decision was subsequently taken not to return to the public mortuary building and the building was returned to the LBB property portfolio; at the same time it was agreed to continue using the PRUH for the Borough's mortuary services. The arrangements with the PRUH were subsequently formalised through an SLA, which has now come to an end. Concerns have been raised regarding the renewal of the agreement with the PRUH as a single specialist contractor and whether this provides value for money; the contract has been extended to allow for consideration of joint contracts with neighbouring Boroughs or a public open tender for these services.
- 3.4 Discussions have taken place with Doctor Palmer, the HM Coroner for Southern District, who expressed a strong preference not to have the mortuary services outside his HM Coroner District and he further informs that the mortuary cannot legally be positioned further than an adjacent Borough .
- 3.5 Discussions have also taken place with the three Boroughs within HM Coroners Southern District all of whom are experiencing similar problems with the provision of this service and a shortage of available facilities for its delivery.
- 3.6 Bexley has now also closed their own public mortuary in Queen Mary's hospital and has moved all of their mortuary work to the PRUH. Discussions have taken place with LB Bexley with a view to adopting their specified service requirement and operating on a common basis with the PRUH.
- 3.7 Croydon would consider taking on additional mortuary services but would need to extend their buildings, build in more capacity for body storage and take on more staff and as such would not provide an immediate solution to the further provision of this service.
- 3.8 Using a hospital outside the HM Coroner's district would mean varying the contract with Dignity for body transportation within the Coronal District and would incur additional costs for Bromley to transfer bodies outside of the District. If an inner London mortuary were to be awarded this contract then this would involve a congestion charge for each cadaver as well as the additional movement charge by the contractor. These additional charges were also factored in when deciding on the option to combine with London Borough of Bexley.
- 3.9 The services provided by the PRUH mortuary service are the same for both Bexley and Bromley and currently include the following:
- 24/7 access to the Mortuary facility
 - Use of the refrigerated body stores and the body freezers for the storage of up to 700 deceased persons in any year, under the jurisdiction of HMC Southern District
 - Mortician call-out outside normal working hours

- Access to Post Mortem facilities and the use of hospital mortuary staff to support Post Mortem examinations carried out on behalf of HMC Southern District
- Provision of all post mortems as directed by the Coroner or his staff
- Provision of all consumables and overspill nutwell cube supplementary systems
- Provision of specialist Home Office Post Mortems

3.10 The specification within the LB Bexley contract mirrors that of the current London Borough of Bromley contract specification and as such both services could run off the same contract. The LB Bexley current fees are the same as Bromley fees. Bromley would save an element of officer time by not having to re tender and have the economy of scale necessary to achieve a best value price when the contract extension is negotiated with the PRUH (now Kings NHS Trust), as well as allowing for future joint contracting and service arrangements.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The existing Bromley Mortuary Service provided at the Princess Royal University Hospital is budgeted at £99k per annum.
- 4.2 It is expected that a joint contract with LB Bexley would cost the same per annum, £99k.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The existing Coroners Act 1988 requires Local Authorities to pay to pay all Coronial expenses.
- 5.2 There is also an existing duty on Local Authorities to provide mortuary facilities (S.198 Public Health Act 1936) as amended by S.2 Local Government Act 2000 power of well being

Non-Applicable Sections:	Policy and Personnel Implications
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	