



Democratic Services

Location: Phase II
Ext: 0693
DDI: 01895 250693
CMD No: 754

To: **COUNCILLOR MARTIN GODDARD**
CABINET MEMBER FOR FINANCE

COUNCILLOR EDDIE LAVERY
CABINET MEMBER FOR RESIDENTS' SERVICES

COUNCILLOR DOUGLAS MILLS
CABINET MEMBER FOR CORPORATE SERVICES

c.c. All Members of the Residents' Services Select Committee
Harjeet Sohal – Central Services Directorate
c.c. Dan Kennedy – Corporate Director for Central Services

Date: 30 March 2023

Non-Key Decision request

Form D

CAPITAL RELEASE REPORT (MARCH 2023)

DEPARTMENT: CENTRAL SERVICES

SERVICE AREA / PROGRAMME: Corporate Technology & Innovation Programme

RELEASE NO: 1 – Digitisation of Cremation, Burial Records & Plans

Dear Cabinet Member

Attached is a report requesting that a decision be made by you as an individual Cabinet Member. Democratic Services confirm that this is not a key decision, as such, the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012 notice period does not apply.

You should take a decision **on or after Tuesday 11 April 2023** in order to meet Constitutional requirements about publication of decisions that are to be made. You may wish to discuss the report with the Corporate Director before it is made. Please indicate your decision on the duplicate memo supplied, and return it to me when you have made your decision. I will then arrange for the formal notice of decision to be published.

Steve Clarke
Democratic Services Officer

Title of Report: Corporate Technology & Innovation Programme - RELEASE NO: 1 - Digitisation of Cremation, Burial Records & Plans

Decision made:

Reasons for your decision: (e.g. as stated in report)

Alternatives considered and rejected: (e.g. as stated in report)

Signed Date

Cabinet Member for Finance / Cabinet Member for Residents' Services / Cabinet Member for Corporate Services

CAPITAL RELEASE REPORT (MARCH 2023)

DEPARTMENT: CENTRAL SERVICES

SERVICE AREA / PROGRAMME: Corporate Technology & Innovation Programme

RELEASE NO: 1 – Digitisation of Cremation, Burial Records & Plans

Cabinet Members	Councillor Martin Goddard Councillor Douglas Mills Councillor Eddie Lavery
Cabinet Portfolios	Cabinet Member for Finance Member for Corporate Services Member for Residents' Services
Officer Contact	Harjeet Sohal – Central Services Directorate
Papers with report	Appendix A with capital release requests for approval

HEADLINES

Summary	To seek Cabinet Member approval for the release of capital funds for digitisation of cremation and burial records and plans on BACAS (Burial and Cremation Administration System) from Clear Skies Software Ltd.
Putting our Residents First Delivering on the Council Strategy 2022-2026	This report supports our ambition for residents / the Council of: An efficient, well-run, digital-enabled council working with partners to deliver services to improve the lives of all our residents. This report supports our commitments to residents of: A Digital-Enabled, Modern, Well-Run Council.
Financial Cost	This report seeks the release of £41k from the 2023/24 Corporate Technology & Innovation budget for the Digitisation of Cremation and Burial Records and Plans on BACAS. The works will commence upon release of the funds and are due for completion by December 2023.
Relevant Select Committee	Residents' Services
Relevant Ward(s)	All

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Cabinet Member for Finance, Cabinet Member for Corporate Services and the Cabinet Member for Residents' Services:

1. Agree to awarding the contract to Clear Skies for the Digitisation of the maps and plans for Bereavement Service at the cost of £35,770; and,
2. Agree to the capital release request of £41,136 from the 2023/24 Corporate Technology & Innovation programme budget for the Digitisation of Cremation and Burial Records and Plans on BACAS (Burial and Cremation Administration System) - Appendix A

Reasons for recommendation

The Bereavement Team is based at the Breakspear Office in Ruislip, they use the Burial and Cremation Administration System (BACAS) to manage booking of cremations and burials for the following Hillingdon cemeteries:

1. Northwood
2. Hillingdon/Uxbridge
3. Cherry Lane
4. Harmondsworth
5. West Drayton.

Current grave records are more than one hundred years old, and plans are managed using cardboard and paper, making it extremely difficult to find a location of a grave, especially when families are trying to locate or trace a grave of their ancestors.

The Bereavement Team also have 180 burial record books which go back almost one hundred years. These record books have entries of everyone buried in the above-named cemeteries. Using Burial Registers was a statutory requirement at one stage, however with the digital technology evolving this is now less perceived by the Ministry of Justice. Not everyone that is registered on the Burial register has an account on BACAS, therefore it is crucial that these records are scanned and stored electronically, making it secure and reliable.

The service is seeking to digitise the grave maps by creating digital maps and linking these to individual BACAS records and scanning of the 180 burial record books so that all the information can be held electronically.

Alternative options considered

Do Nothing

This option is not recommended as the Cemeteries records will continue to exist in physical paper format, which could impose future threats on files being lost in an event of fire, flood or due to

decomposition. The Cemeteries maps would also continue to exist on scraps of cardboard, with no digital maps in place - making it difficult to identify grave locations.

Tender for a new Bereavement Management System

Tendering for a new Cemeteries Management solution, will replace the current Bereavement software, however, additional factors will need to be considered, such as data migration costs, process mapping costs, Project Manager costs and the cost of training staff and Funeral Directors on the new system. Additionally, a portal will also have to be procured in order for the Funeral Directors to make Cremation bookings. This option would require significant funding to replace the incumbent solution.

Indicative costs to implement a solution from an alternative specialist supplier in Cemeteries management were acquired from the Digital Marketplace, however the costs were significantly more than the current supplier - Clear Skies offering.

Select Committee comments

None at this stage.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The recommended contract will innovate, automate and transform services offered by the Bereavement Team by enabling them to store information electronically and allowing Residents and other members of the public to download maps and connect to GPS systems that the public can access and use to find the location of a grave/memorial.

Awarding the contract to Clear Skies for the Digitisation of the maps and plans would benefit the Bereavement Service as follows:

- Staff will have easy access to grave locations within the BACAS solution with dedicated functionality for this.
- The grave number and details of the first person buried in a grave would be accessible from the map.
- The mapping system can highlight any graves that have met certain criteria/alerts (such as unpurchased graves and graves that have failed a risk assessment).
- Ability to download the maps and connect to GPS systems that the public can access and use to find the location of a grave/memorial.
- Save time looking up information in physical registers and improved access to records for cemetery staff, by having a searchable digital version.

- Maps can be produced to display the location of all graves or memorials within a cemetery and be displayed at the entrances to each (and throughout the grounds of larger cemeteries).

Breakdown of cost:

Details	One-off Capital Costs	Revenue Costs
Mapping Cost based on Ordnance Survey data	£20,325	-
Mapping Software Licence	£2,200	-
Scanning of maps	£900	-
Project Management	£2,000	-
Site Visits – to take reference positions and section outlines £600 per day – estimated 5 days	£3,000	
Additional Ongoing Support – Bundled with Clear Skies Support		£500 per annum*
Scanning of 180 Burial Records	£7,272	-
Collection & Delivery of Records	£73	
TOTAL	£35,770	£500

The capital budget cost plan is provided below:

Description	Amount
Implementation	35,770
Internal Fees	3,577
Contingency	1,789
Total	£41,136

Financial Implications

Corporate Technology & Innovation Programme 2023/24 Budget £1,540k, Previously Released Nil, Capital Release Requested £41k – Appendix A

The 2023/24 Capital Programme, approved by Cabinet and Council in February 2023, included a budget of £1,540k for the Corporate Technology & Innovation budget funded from Council resources.

The report seeks the capital release of £41k from the Corporate Technology & Innovation budget for the digitisation of the cremation and burial records & plans. The cost plan is based on tendered costs and includes internal fees and contingency of 10% and 5% respectively of tendered costs.

The project will incur annual recurring revenue costs of £500 which includes ongoing support.

The remaining £1,499k of the Corporate Technology & Innovation 2023/24 budget is subject to the capital release process.

RESIDENT BENEFIT & CONSULTATION

The benefit or impact upon residents, service users and communities

The proposed configuration work will enable the business area to store digitised maps on the BACAS system and link the graves to the records within BACAS. Doing so, will future proof the Service Area, as well as preserving the records held for anyone buried in Hillingdon. It will also remove manual handling of Cemeteries maps and allow the public/residents to easily find the graves of their loved ones, using the static maps that would be placed at each Cemetery and the digitised maps that they can download or connect to via GPS.

Additionally, as the Cemeteries are large and have very old records, finding ancestral records can be an arduous process when trawling through paper records, once the burial books are scanned, staff will be able to search for records electronically and provide information to residents efficiently as and when required.

Consultation carried out or required

Consultation not required.

CORPORATE CONSIDERATIONS

Corporate Finance

Corporate finance concurs with the financial implications above, noting that the cremations and burials system will be funded from the 2023/24 Corporate Technology and Innovation budget, financed by Council resources.

Legal

The Borough Solicitor confirms that the Council is responsible for carrying out this function pursuant to Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Thus there are no legal impediments to the capital release being authorised, although any contract that is entered into must comply with the Council's Procurement and Contract Standing Orders.

Capital Release Protocol

The release of all capital funds, and certain revenue funds, held by the Council is to be made by a formal democratic decision. No expenditure can be placed or committed by officers until this formal approval is given by Democratic Services. Release of funds must be for identified projects only and strictly not for the general release of funds for projects to be identified at a later date. No block releases of capital or funding will be allowed, except if authorised by the Leader of the Council in advance to Corporate Finance. The release of funds will only be made if previous Council, Cabinet or Cabinet Member agreement has been given to the project and only if there is an approved budget.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

NIL.

APPENDIX A - CAPITAL RELEASE REQUESTS FOR APPROVAL

Corporate Technology & Innovation Programme 2023/24 Digitisation of Burial & Cremation of Records & Plans (CR1)

Location	Project / Expenditure Title	Information	Funds Release Sought £000's	Approve	Hold	More Information Required
Boroughwide	Implementation of electronic system	Digitisation of Burial & Cremation of Records & Plans	41			
Total seeking release			41			
Previously released			0			
Budget			1,540			
Remaining budget			1,499			