

**Report to: Income Generation Sub-Committee, 9<sup>th</sup> June 2021**

**Report of: Head of Finance**

**Subject: BEREAVEMENT SERVICES**

**1. Recommendation**

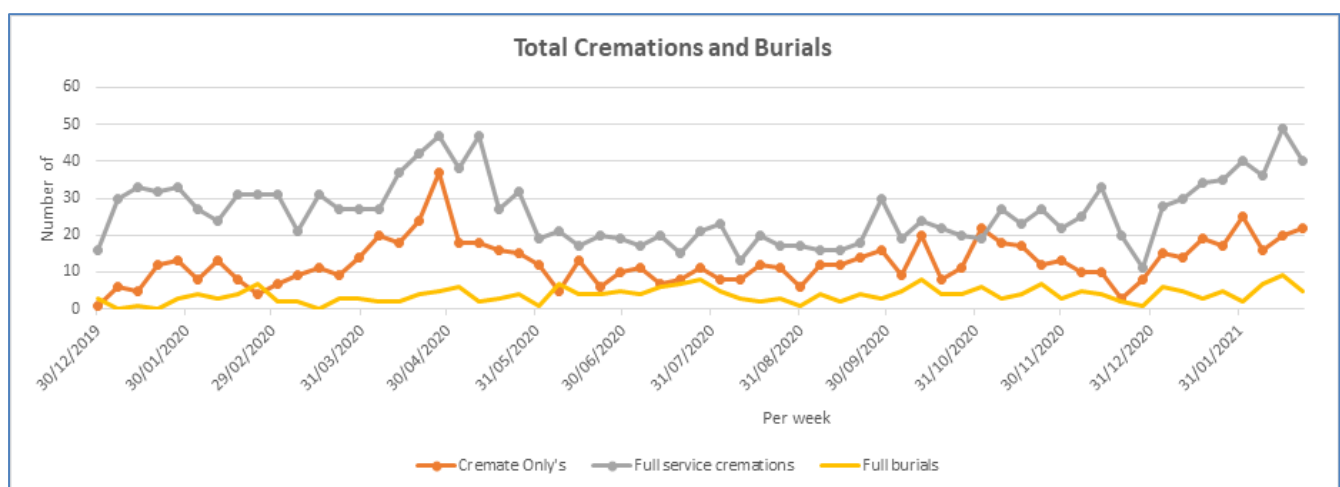
**1.1 That the Sub-Committee note the progress made by Bereavement Services in enhancing the service provided to customers.**

**2. Background**

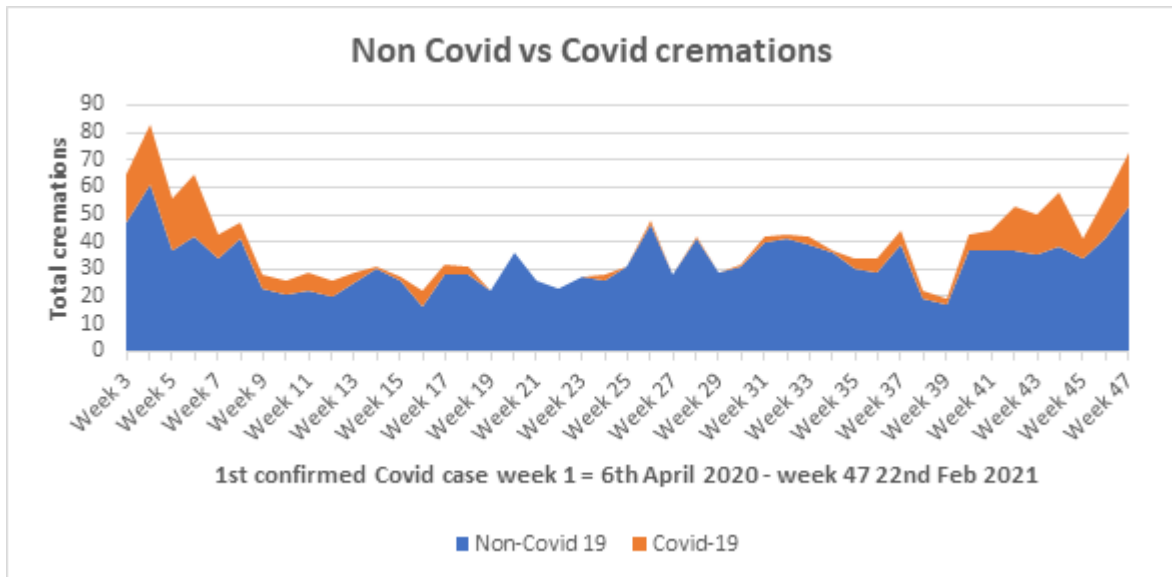
2.1 The City Council Bereavement Service offers a cremation service at Astwood crematorium and burials at Astwood and St Johns cemeteries. The crematorium was refurbished in 2015 and performs approximately 2,000 cremations per annum and serves customers from both the city and outlying areas.

2.2 In 2018/19 the Service generated income of £2.0m. However, following the opening of the new crematorium at Fladbury, the number of funerals held by the City Council reduced and the income generated fell to £1.5m.

2.3 The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant effect on the Service, causing an increase in the number of funerals and also restricting the number of mourners able to attend. The graph below shows the number of funerals held each week from January 2020 to January 2021. The spikes in April 2020 and January 2021 correspond with the periods of national lockdown when the pandemic was at its height.

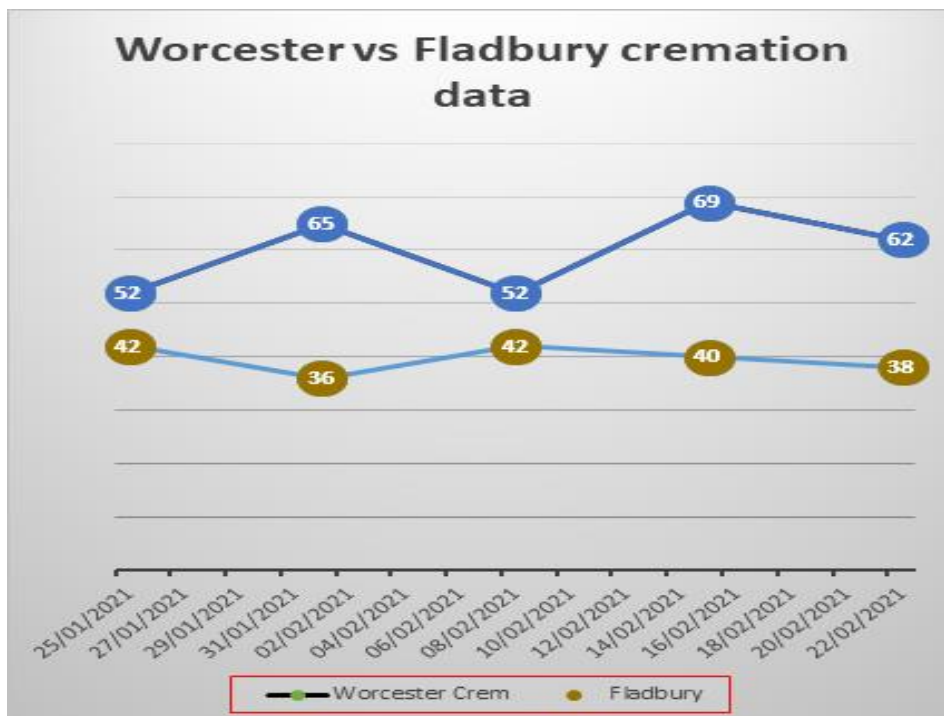


2.4 A similar picture is shown by this graph which compares the number of deaths linked to Covid as opposed to other causes. The Covid impact is again shown in April 2020 and January 2021.



2.5 The Bereavement Service responded by the reducing the length of funeral services from 45 to 30 minutes and lowering the charges accordingly.

2.6 The crematorium at Fladbury continues to attract customers who were previously likely to use Astwood. The graph below shows the number of cremations at each site during January and February 2021. This shows that over this two month period, Fladbury held 40% of the combined 498 funerals.



2.7 The trend for the income generated from Bereavement Services has been as follows:

Year	Income £'000	Notes
2017/18	1,932	
2018/19	2,022	
2019/20	1,542	24% reduction following Fladbury opening in Dec 2018
2020/21	1,684	Affected by Covid-19 pandemic

### **3. Information**

3.1 A new Business Development Manager was appointed in Bereavement Services in February 2020 with the aim of enhancing the Service's offer.

3.2 Previously information on the Council's bereavement services was held on the City Council's website. However, in 2021 a new standalone website was launched.

<https://www.worcestercemeteries.co.uk>

This holds a wealth of information on the crematorium and the cemeteries to help customers with planning a funeral. There are many high quality photographs of the building and the surrounding gardens. During the month of April the website had over 2,000 visits.

3.3 Although funerals are arranged through a funeral director, families usually purchase memorials directly. The City Council has sold memorials for several years, with customers generally needing to visit the Astwood site to review the availability. However, the range on offer is now shown on the website and can be ordered on-line.

3.4 The memorial offer has also been extended to include innovative ways of families remembering their loved ones. An example of this is the new memorial tree. This is a metallic tree on which families can hang a decorative metallic leaf bearing the name of the deceased. This represents a cost-effective memorial when compared to the larger more expensive items that are also available. Sales of these are currently averaging 4 per month.

3.5 Customers are also to be given the opportunity to store the ashes of the deceased above ground in a new large memorial that will form the centre piece of a new garden of tranquility. This will include seating to allow families the opportunity for a period of quiet reflection.

3.6 A further new garden area is being created with a memorial to remember those who have died from Covid-19.

3.7 Memorial income has grown in recent years and it is hoped that these new developments will continue that trend.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Memorial Income £'000</b>	<b>Notes</b>
2018/19	97.6	
2019/20	103.4	
2020/21	110.1	Assisted by the launch of the new website

**Ward(s):** All  
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**Background Papers:** None