

## **MATTERS DEALT WITH BY CABINET**

77/05 - **MERCURY ABATEMENT - CREMATORIUM:** The Bereavement Services Manager submitted a written report which outlined the government's new guidance on dealing with toxic mercury released from crematoria and the options available to achieve a 50% reduction in the emissions of mercury at Stonefall Crematorium in accordance with those deadlines set by government. The Bereavement Services Manager advised that the government had set a deadline for all crematoria to notify their local authorities, by no later than 31 December 2005, on how they would achieve the 50% reduction. A general discussion ensued on the various options available and advice on the potential loss of VAT was given by the Director of Resources.

### **RESOLVED (UNANIMOUSLY):**

- That
- (1) the installation of the filtration equipment to both cremators be agreed;
  - (2) further consideration be given on the implementation details for the project already available in light of the potential tax loss;
  - (3) subject to 2.2, the timescale for upgrading commences at the earliest in 2006 and no later than 2009;
  - (4) the funding strategy project be agreed with a review at the end of the three year period; and
  - (5) the existing cremators not be replaced at the same time as the upgrade.

### **Reason for making decisions:**

To comply with the Government's new statutory guidance that 50% of all mercury emissions from cremations at existing crematoria be abated by 31 December 2012, it is recommended that abatement equipment is installed to both cremators.

Legal advice states that the upgrading of the facilities is the safest way forward to improve Harrogate's own cremation facilities for the benefit of the Harrogate Borough.

In achieving 100% abatement, if and when future legislation is introduced requiring the complete cessation of mercury emissions there will be no requirement to undertake further works or expenditure.

Harrogate Borough Council may be in a strong position to 'sell' abated cremations to other authorities that are unable to upgrade, during the initial 50% reduction requirement of 2012 if this matter is resolved. This could provide additional income.

To replace the existing cremators earlier is likely to be unnecessary due to their usage. It could be that they have 10 years or more further use. To replace at this stage could result in considerable unnecessary expenditure.

**Alternative options considered and rejected:**

To do nothing. This is recommended for rejection as it is a legal requirement to make a decision by 31 December 2005 as to how a 50% reduction of mercury emissions will be achieved. To do nothing will mean that HBC will be in breach of its permit to operate.

To introduce a 'burden-sharing' scheme with other local authorities rather than upgrade. This is recommended for rejection, as the legality for this option is still in question. It will not benefit the occupants of Harrogate either in terms of promoting environmental quality.

To only upgrade one cremator. This is recommended for rejection as there are major financial savings to upgrade two cremators and should it be legislated after 2012 that total cessation of mercury is required, further costly works will be necessitated.

To leave the upgrade until 2012. This is recommended for rejection as the manufacturers are limited and a surge of demand by cremation authorities to install this equipment to meet the deadline could cause delays if left to the last year and could result in Harrogate breaching the legislation.

To replace the two existing cremators at the time of installing the equipment. This is recommended for rejection as it could be they have 10 years or more further use and could result in substantial unnecessary expenditure.

(5.45 pm – 5.56 pm)

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