

MINUTES OF MEETING URGENT DECISIONS HELD ON FRIDAY, 4TH SEPTEMBER, 2020, 9AM

PRESENT:

Councillor: Matt White – Cabinet Member for Corporate and Civic Services

ALSO ATTENDING: Gavin Douglas and Ayshe Simsek

45. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

46. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

47. INTER AUTHORITY PAN LONDON TEMPORARY MORTUARY PROVISION

The Cabinet Member for Corporate and Civic Services considered the report which sought agreement to enter into a pan London inter-authority agreement for temporary mortuary facilities as part of the plan for a potential Covid 19 second surge.

Further to considering the exempt appendices at item 4,

RESOLVED

- i) That the Council enter into a legal inter-authority pan London agreement as detailed in exempt Appendix 2 for temporary mortuary (storage) facilities and services between all London Boroughs until March 2021, and to delegate authority to the Director of Environment and Neighbourhoods to approve the final agreement; and
- ii) for Westminster City Council to be the lead authority for contractual services required; and
- iii) for London Borough of Camden to hold and administer the finances into a Sink Fund; and
- iv) Payments be made as required to the Sink Fund for Haringey's contribution of cost, with the first payment of £485,964 to be made by 4th September 2020.

Reasons for decision

Modelling based on Government data has been carried out planning for a second surge of Covid-19 deaths and estimates the required storage capacity in temporary mortuary facilities needed within London.

This modelling has taken into account the existing provision of storage at Hospitals, Private Funeral Directors and Public Mortuaries and, depending on a number of arrangements and circumstances, concludes that there is a need to plan for an increased capacity at the peak of a potential second surge across London. This modelling takes account of all excess deaths.

As a result of this need, the Leaders of City of Westminster and the London Borough of Camden have requested that pan London storage facilities are set up to manage this demand. See Appendix 1. Such an arrangement was carried out in wave 1 as part of Emergency planning.

A legal agreement has been drafted for all boroughs to consider for Westminster City Council to enter into the necessary contractual arrangements for pan-London temporary mortuary provision and undertake the mortality management function, and for London Borough of Camden to hold and administer the sinking fund, thus taking responsibility for ensuring finances are secured. See exempt Appendix 2.

Alternative options considered

The urgent request for the pan London agreement follows on from the wave 1 management of mortality across London. Coronial jurisdictions areas (in our case Brent, Harrow, Enfield and Barnet) had been asked to consider what local arrangements could be made to support the mortality storage needs across London. The need identified from modelling has already taken account jurisdiction storage and plans that have been implemented by September 2020. This included the proposed use of MHCLG portacabins for storage, which Haringey has already responded to and installed a portacabin onsite at Tottenham Mortuary. Site location is very sensitive, meaning there are very few suitable options. All other options are smaller and local, and are still at the feasibility stage, requiring detailed planning before they can be considered. These local options include:

Marsh Lane N17

The Marsh Lane Tottenham site used in Wave 1 for a temporary structure is no longer available and has therefore been ruled out.

Old Finchley Mortuary site

Some feasibility has been carried out at Finchley Mortuary site, but substantial groundwork needs to be carried out before it can be used, and there are serious logistical issues regarding access to the site. It is possible that this site can be used for a more local need, but at present this is not a viable option in the short term.

Private Funeral Director

There is only one private Funeral Director locally we are aware of who is offering substantial allocation for storage space. This may be a useful additional consideration, particularly to support any local needs on top of the pan London agreement. There is a requirement for a one-year contract, and transport costs would have to be included. This option does not give a pan London approach which is likely to have additional benefits in providing improved dignity and respect to the deceased and support to their families. If Haringey were to pursue this as a standalone provision there would be considerable governance, family liaison, transportation and logistical tracking requirements to be implemented. Whilst there is some expertise there is a risk that resources within existing mortuary structures (e.g. Tottenham) would be at risk of being over stretched.

48. EXEMPT APPENDICES

As per item 47.

CHAIR:

Signed by Chair

Date