

Manchester City Council Report for Information

Report to: Environment, Climate Change and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Committee - 8 February 2024

Subject: Bereavement Services – Cemetery and Crematorium Climate Change Action Plan

Report of: Strategic Director (Neighbourhoods)

Summary

This report provides an overview of Bereavement Services Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). The report provides the background to the development of the plan, how this aligns with wider ambition of the Council, along with an overview of the action plan.

Recommendations

The Committee is recommended to consider and make comments on the contents of the report.

Wards Affected: All

Environmental Impact Assessment - the impact of the issues addressed in this report on achieving the zero-carbon target for the city	The Manchester Climate Change Framework 2020-25 is the city's high-level strategy for tackling climate change. It sets out how Manchester will 'play its full part in limiting the impacts of climate change', a commitment in the Our Manchester Strategy 2016-25. The Framework' key aims are to be: 'cleaner, litter-free city, which recycles more' and '...play its full part in limiting the impacts of climate change and create a healthy, green, socially just city where everyone can thrive.'
Equality, Diversity and Inclusion - the impact of the issues addressed in this report in meeting our Public Sector Equality Duty and broader equality commitments.	Bereavement Services Climate Change Action Plan recognises the need for a fair and equal delivery of a climate action plan across the cemeteries and crematorium, giving focus to providing an equitable and inclusive service to all service users, customers, residents, and visitors. Giving focus to community engagement, sustainable travel for staff and continual review and assessment of the delivery of actions within the plan.

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of how this report aligns to the Our Manchester Strategy/Contribution to the Strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Bereavement Services works with organisations and communities to increase opportunities for development through volunteering.
A highly skilled city: world class and home-grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Management of the green open spaces and infrastructure in cemeteries provides a range of volunteer opportunities.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Parks are at the heart of our communities, offering opportunities for community cohesion through volunteering, events and activities in a setting that is open and accessible to all.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Our cemeteries provide green space in our neighbourhoods, inviting visitors to enjoy open spaces within inner city locations. The biodiversity offers at each of the cemeteries contributes to the low carbon city agenda and the new cremators provide carbon neutral cremations.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Cemeteries connect our city in various ways, through community groups who volunteer, green spaces which provide wildlife and nature trails, as well as providing dignified funeral services and places of rest for both residents and non-residents.

Financial Consequences – Revenue not applicable

Financial Consequences – Capital not applicable

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy, please contact one of the contact officers above.

- Manchester City Council Climate Action Plan 2020-25
- Manchester City Council Climate Emergency Declaration July 2019
- Manchester City Council Change Framework 2020-25 - Updated 2022

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This report provides information on Bereavement Services' actions in relation to climate change, the zero-carbon agenda, and to provide an update on the development of a Bereavement Services Climate Change Action Plan (CCAP). A service specific CCAP, enables officers to identify actions that can be delivered across all five of the Councils CCAP workstreams. It will help to embed zero-carbon approaches within the service and identify where further work is required towards achieving zero-carbon by 2038.
- 1.2 Each year approximately 2,900 funeral services take place in the cemeteries and crematorium managed by Manchester City Council. In 2022-23 the service undertook 1857 burials and 1058 cremations. It is estimated cemeteries attract around 500,000 visitors every year. The overall cemetery infrastructure consists of 105 hectares which is predominantly green open space within the City's neighbourhoods. There are more than 160,000 graves and over 480,000 burials have taken place since the first cemetery opened in 1837. There is 52km of roads and pathways, in addition to 18 buildings of which 11 are Grade II listed.
- 1.3 The Service is responsible for Blackley Cemetery and Crematorium (Higher Blackley), Southern Cemetery (Chorlton), Phillips Park Cemetery (Miles Platting & Newton Heath), Gorton Cemetery and Manchester General Cemetery (Harpurhey).

2.0 Background

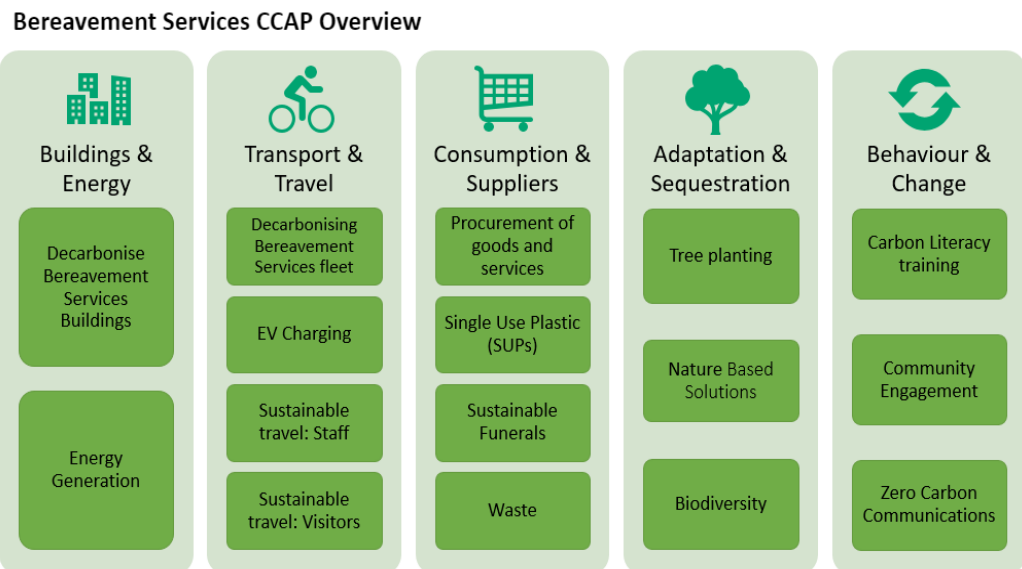
- 2.1 In March 2023 Bereavement Services presented a report to the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee on the management and delivery of cemetery and crematorium services, describing how the activities contribute to carbon reduction, biodiversity, and sustainability. Following this report, the Committee requested a further report on a specific Climate Action Change Plan.
- 2.2 As part of the development of the CCAP, Bereavement Services have reviewed the Parks CCAP. Both services manage green, open spaces, and public buildings - the Parks CCAP has provided a blueprint to work from. The Zero Carbon Team have further assisted in the development of Bereavement Services CCAP to achieve:
 - Increased understanding of carbon emissions relating to the cemeteries and crematorium
 - Identification of potential carbon reduction options
 - Wider environmental benefits and continuation of existing environmental benefits such as the services biodiversity plans
- 2.3 The purpose of the plan is to act as a framework for Bereavement Services to align our priorities with the Council CCAP and to utilise the various delivery workstreams to deliver on actions within the service, including:

- Defining realistic outcomes
- Identifying measurable KPIs
- Monitoring progress
- Coordination of resources

2.4 It is important to identify good practice and plans already in place within the service which contribute to this area, and these actions have been captured within the CCAP. These actions include the decarbonisation of the cremators, which are 100% mercury and NOx abated, the continued planting of new trees and the biodiversity plans which are reviewed regularly to ensure continual improvement.

3.0 CCAP Overview

3.1 Bereavement Services CCAP identifies the actions across all five workstreams of the Council’s CCAP:



3.2 The actions in each workstream are detailed below:

3.2.1 Buildings and Energy

Main CCAP Ref	Bereavement CCAP Ref	Actions
1.1	1.1	Decarbonise Bereavement Services Buildings - Apply the Estates Carbon Reduction Programme to Cemetery/Crematorium buildings by: Use the Estates building assessment for buildings in the cemeteries estate to identify what measures can be taken to reduce emissions. This includes actions for users of the buildings and collaboration with the Zero Carbon Team in Corporate Estates.

		<p>In 2024/25 actions will include delivery of low carbon projects at Blackley including the Crematorium, Chapels, Office, and yard funded by the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme. As part of the project the gas boilers will be removed and replaced with air source heat pumps to provide heating and hot water. A Building Management System (BMS), LED lighting and solar will also be installed. The offices will benefit from new windows and insulation. It is expected this will reduce the carbon by almost one third.</p> <p>Blackley Crematorium and Chapels: The current carbon baseline is 215.14 tCO₂pa. The actions above will reduce this to 174.65 tCO₂pa (-40.49 tCO₂pa), another 8 tCO₂pa will be removed by the PPA (Power Purchase Agreement) /grid greening. The new cremators are gas and will continue to produce 166 tCO₂pa until end-of-life replacement, where zero carbon cremators or an alternative approach must be installed.</p> <p>Blackley Office & Yard: The current carbon baseline is 34.53 tCO₂pa. – work will reduce to 4.2 tCO₂pa (-30.33 tCO₂pa) removing all gas. The PPA / grid greening will take this to zero when it takes effect, as this will remove all electricity carbon.</p>
1.2	1.2	Energy Generation - Generate renewable energy in Bereavement Services by:
		Consider if there are options for energy generation and identify further scoping work if needed.

3.2.2 Travel and transport

Main CCAP Ref	Bereavement CCAP Ref	Actions
2.2	2.1	Decarbonising Bereavement Services fleet - A rolling replacement of fleet to electric vans, bikes and e-Cargo bikes and the appropriate charging infrastructure by:
		Work with Fleet Services to decarbonise Bereavement Services fleet including electric vans, cycles, mowers and diggers and the appropriate charging infrastructure. (Review annually – and as opportunities arise).
2.2	2.2	EV Charging - Support the EV Charging Infrastructure Strategy, with Park installation opportunities for visitor usage

		Investigate opportunities to expand EV infrastructure and explore potential for charging points to be used by visitors / funeral directors
2.3	2.3	Sustainable travel: Staff - Implement and embed the Staff Travel Policy across the Bereavement Service teams by:
		Engage and promote incentives for Bereavement staff on Sustainable Business travel and Active Travel planning. Encourage increased use of the service's electric bicycles for travel to and from work.
2.4	2.4	Sustainable travel: Visitors - Develop and deliver communications on sustainable and active travel and promote sustainable transport options
		Update information shared with visitors to include sustainable travel options inc. carshare, public transport. Review and update annually.
		Work with Neighbourhood officers to help to reduce anti-social parking associated with the private Manchester Crematorium (next door to Southern Cemetery)
		Develop a cycle trail in cemeteries, including installing cycle racks, linking cemeteries with cycle trails. Work closely with colleagues both in MCC and the wider AGMA network to deliver locally on the Pedal More in 24 projects

3.2.3 Consumption, Emissions and Suppliers

Main CCAP Ref	Bereavement CCAP Ref	Actions
3.1	3.1	Bereavement Services Procurement of goods and services - Apply Climate Change social value scoring in line with Council's procurement process to:
		Ensure new contracts procured by the service include 10% environmental weighting.
3.2	3.2	Single Use Plastic (SUPs) - Reduce Single SUPs across Bereavement Services by:
		Reviewing and eradicating avoidable SUPs and other packaging purchased by Bereavement Services. Audit to be completed in 24/25.
		Investigate opportunities to install water fountains across public grounds
		Apply service specific actions outlined in the SUP Action Plan.

3.3	3.3	Sustainable Funerals - Communicate Sustainable Funeral options to residents and funeral directors e.g., Woodland burials
		Continue to provide options for burials promoting Woodland burials. Continue to investigate within the sector alternative sustainable options.
3.4	3.6	Waste - Research and assess viable opportunities within Grounds Maintenance to reduce carbon emissions by:
		Complete a full review of waste generated, recycling options and litter bin provision with Waste & Recycling Team in 2024/25. This will help to create a baseline and identify actions to increase recycling.

3.2.4 Climate adaptation, carbon storage & sequestration

Main CCAP Ref	Bereavement CCAP Ref	Actions
4.1	4.1	Tree planting - Increase the quantity of trees and hedgerows within the service by:
		The continued programme of tree replacement across the service.
4.2	4.2	NBS - Increase the amount of Nature Based Solutions across cemeteries:
		Explore funding opportunities for further NBS across cemeteries including resource and their maintenance. We will investigate this further as part of the renewal of the biodiversity plans.
		Investigate the aspiration for Southern Cemetery to be considered as a nature reserve
4.5	4.3	Biodiversity - Improve biodiversity across the Bereavement Services by:
		The continued implementation and refresh of Biodiversity Plans for: Southern Cemetery Philips Park Blackley Gorton Manchester General All reviewed annually
		Maintain Green Flag status via annual applications, including Manchester General in 24/25

3.2.5 Influencing behaviour change and being a catalyst for change.

Main CCAP Ref	Bereavement CCAP Ref	Actions
5.1	5.1	Carbon Literacy Training - Ensure all staff are carbon literate and understand how to embed carbon reduction measures and climate action into their working lives.
		Bespoke training: Explore how operational staff can embed the learnings from CLT into their work roles. Currently 23% of the workforce have completed the Carbon Literacy training. The target in 2024/25 is to achieve 100%.
5.3	5.2	Community Engagement - Engagement with Funeral Directors
		Engage with Funeral Directors on sustainable options available to residents and ways we can support them.
		Support delivery of citywide climate change community engagement approaches, working with internal stakeholders such as Neighbourhoods Officers, Friends Groups, Britian in Bloom, Keep Manchester Tidy and Climate Change Delivery Officers to identify opportunities in cemeteries to engage with residents and community groups in alignment with climate action in ward plans and the MCCA In Our Nature programme.
5.7	5.3	Learning & Skills - Encourage schools, other education settings to use parks for Climate Change educational sessions by:
		Continuing to engage and deliver climate change activities with young people through the Youth Council and schools. Explore how Bereavement Services can support Manchester's Eco Schools.
5.4	5.4	Zero Carbon Communications -Support and contribute to the delivery of the citywide Zero Carbon Communications Strategy by:
		Work with the Zero Carbon team to share Bereavement Services environmental content for climate change messages and reports.
		Work with the customer care team to better advise residents on services they can access directly from the Council including options with minimal environmental impact.

4.0 Existing Strengths

4.1 Buildings and Energy

- As part of the project to replace the cremators in Blackley Crematorium (2022), carbon and emissions were key considerations. It is estimated the new cremators reduced the carbon baseline by 60 to 100 tonnes per year. Over a 20-year lifetime saving 1,200 to 2,000 tonnes. The new cremators providing 100% mercury abatement. This project was discussed in detail in March 2023 at the Environment and Climate Change Scrutiny Committee.
- Excess energy generated during the cremation process is captured and utilised to reduce the overall energy usage throughout the cremation buildings.
- LED lighting in both memorial chapels at Blackley and Southern, with additional work being undertaken in 2024/25 funded by PSDS at the Crematorium and Blackley offices, including LED and replacement boilers.

4.2 Transport and Travel

- The fleet used by the service consists of 8 electric vehicles (80% of fleet is electric), 1 x buggy/coffin carrier, electric ornamental mowers, battery strimmer's and hedge cutters.
- EV charging points are installed at Blackley, Gorton, Philips Park and Southern Cemetery
- Four electric bicycles to enable operational staff to move around the cemeteries. These bicycles are available for staff to travel to and from work.
- Funding has been secured for cycle racks within Blackley, Gorton, Philips Park, and Southern Cemetery to support active travel. The service is working with colleagues to support the 'Pedal More in 24' initiative.

4.3 Consumption, Emissions and Suppliers

- Procurement of goods and services include 10% environmental weighting.
- Recyclable waste collected from the cemeteries is separated at the plant.
- Work continues with Funeral Directors to further promote the use of biodegradable funerals and cremations.
- Recycled materials from grounds maintenance activities are used where possible for making pathways and bedding plants are grown in peat free materials.

4.4 Climate adaptation, carbon storage and sequestration

- Use of differential mowing, where mowing is concentrated on some areas with the surrounding area being allowed to grow naturally, has resulted in an increase in wildflowers and a reduction in maintenance, resources, and fuel consumption.
- Woodland burials are available which offer an environmentally friendly alternative to traditional burials, in a secluded area, in a peaceful place within the cemetery. The area is managed to encourage native wildlife, plants and wildflowers. The Meadows is surrounded by trees and shrubbery, with minimal maintenance, allowing the area to grow naturally.

- Biodiversity plans for Blackley, Gorton, Philips Park, Manchester General and Southern Cemeteries have been instrumental in the increased planting of trees, introduction of wildflower meadows, planting of hedgerows, placing of bird boxes and other wildlife boxes.
- With over 4,700 trees across the various sites there is a significant absorption of CO₂. A typical tree can absorb around 21 kilograms of CO₂ per year. Over a lifetime of 100 years, one tree could absorb as much as 2.1 metric tonnes of CO₂, ensuring our cemeteries support the Council's carbon reduction aims.

4.5 Influencing behaviour and being catalyst for change.

- Continue to identify good practice from across the organisation, Local Authorities, and other sector experts.
- Deliver bespoke Carbon Literacy Training to all staff including operational staff.
- Continue to work closely with Friends Groups, local schools, and volunteers to deliver safe and welcoming green spaces.

5.0 Conclusion and next steps

5.1 The Parks CCAP will form part of the Bereavement Service Business Plan from 1st April 2024. The delivery phase of the action plan will require a focus on:

- Completing Carbon Literacy for all staff in the service.
- Continual identification of good practice both within the service and across MCC to embed zero-carbon approaches into business-as-usual.
- Communication to staff, stakeholders, and partners to ensure they understand the ambition of the CCAP and can get involved.

5.2 The Service Lead will be responsible for delivery of the Bereavement Service CCAP. Annual updates will be provided to the Zero-Carbon Co-ordination Group to ensure a link back to the MCC CCAP.

6.0 Recommendations

6.1 The Committee is recommended to consider and make comments on the contents of the report.