

**NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**CORPORATE LEADERSHIP TEAM'S**  
**REPORT TO CABINET**

**23 June 2026**

**Report Title:** Pet Cremation Progress Report

**Submitted by:** Service Director – Commercial Services

**Portfolios:** Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Town Centres

**Ward(s) affected:** All

<b><u>Purpose of the Report</u></b>	<b><u>Key Decision</u></b> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
<p>The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet with an updated Business Case on the proposed Pet Crematorium which was given permission to proceed in July 2025 and to seek approval to proceed with the necessary contracts including the delivery of the cremation unit.</p>	
<b><u>Recommendation</u></b>	
<b>That Cabinet:</b>	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <b>Agrees to continue their support of the development of a pet cremation service to provide residents with a local caring service when needed.</b></li> <li>2. <b>Notes the progress made in relation to the planning application and the procurement of the necessary products to deliver the service in line with the up to date business plan.</b></li> <li>3. <b>Delegates to the Service Director for Commercial Services in consultation with the Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Planning &amp; Town Centres to complete all necessary contracts to ensure the effective delivery of the project in line with the legislative requirements.</b></li> <li>4. <b>Adopts the fees and charges as set out in the report and marketing commences at the appropriate time.</b></li> </ol>	
<b><u>Reasons</u></b>	
<p>Following the July 2025 approval, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to bring this opportunity to fruition, including a procurement exercise for a containerised cremation unit, positive public feedback, architectural drawings of the Bradwell site to support the submitted planning application along with Biodiversity Net Gain and tree site surveys.</p>	

Media coverage following the July Cabinet report was overwhelmingly positive, there has been no changes to the market place and therefore it is appropriate that the Council continues to seek to deliver high quality services locally.

## 1. Background

- 1.1 In July 2025 Cabinet approved the proposal for the development of a pet cremation service at Bradwell. This was based on an analysis of local need and financial viability. This report outlines progress in establishing the key elements of the service and a review of the business case to demonstrate continuing support for a service receiving positive resident feedback.
- 1.2 In preparation for the original business case a significant amount of national and local research was undertaken to understand the potential market size for the Pet crematorium. This research is still considered accurate and for reference places animal ownership across Newcastle, Stoke and Moorlands as:

Category	Volume
Households owning dog / s	78,100
Households owning cat / s	62,900
Estimated dogs	103,400
Estimated cats	95,800
Estimated small animals	21,930

- 1.3 Animal mortality across the areas listed in 1.1 was projected at 17,995 annually and this number is still considered to be statistically valid. It is still the proposal to offer a premium service to those pet owners who intend to make their own arrangements rather than entrusting their pet's cremation to their veterinary surgery.
- 1.4 Local & regional competition; this has remained unchanged; the closest alternative providers are still at least 16 miles from Bradwell.

## 2. Issues

- 2.1 Following the July 2025 approval, a significant amount of work has been undertaken to bring this opportunity forward;
- Competitive procurement has been undertaken for a containerised cremation unit,
  - Architectural drawings of the Bradwell site have been produced and submitted with planning application along with biological net gain and tree site surveys.
  - Receiving positive public feedback including direct communication with residents adjoining the access road, then more recently public consultation through the planning application process.
  - The Service will trade as Loved & Loyal Pet Crematorium. Domain names, both .co.uk and .com, for the dedicated website have been purchased to support the marketing and sharing of information for the service.

- Media coverage following the Cabinet report approval was overwhelmingly positive and no new competitors have entered the local marketplace.
- The project is also predicted to remain with the allocated budget, albeit requiring access to the 10% contingency budget.

**2.2** The financial aspects of the project are included in the separate closed agenda.

**2.3** Media coverage following the July Cabinet report was overwhelmingly positive, there has been no changes to the market place and therefore it is appropriate that the Council continues to seek to deliver high quality services locally.

### **3. Recommendation**

#### **3.1 That Cabinet:**

- 1. Agrees to continue their support of the development of a pet cremation service to provide residents with a local caring service when needed.**
- 2. Notes the progress made in relation to the planning application and the procurement of the necessary products to deliver the service in line with the up to date business plan.**
- 3. Delegates to the Service Director for Commercial Services in consultation with the Leader & Cabinet Member for Planning & Town Centres to complete all necessary contracts to ensure the effective delivery of the project in line with the legislative requirements.**
- 4. Adopts the fees and charges as set out in the report and marketing commences at the appropriate time.**

### **4. Reasons**

**4.1** It is recommended that the Cabinet continue their support to both continuing the opportunity and to the appointment of the preferred cremator manufacturer for the following reasons:

- The landscape in which the proposed business will operate has remained unchanged since the original business case, resulting is a financially viable opportunity
- The procurement exercise identified a supplier that has a strong alignment to NULBC's requirements and objectives; thus, meeting all essential criteria requested of them
- The cost of the unit has increased but only by 2.4%. With increasing costs due to international circumstances the Council has placed a deposit with the contractor to secure the steel supply. This has retained the costs within the tender price and therefore business case.
- Overall costs incurred & expected are still within the approved budget of £134k.

## **5. Options Considered**

**5.1** The Council has a choice whether to continue with the proposal or cease. Given the stage of this project, with the plans and planning process, plus competitive tendering process progress has been made and costs incurred. Costs have been incurred by the appointed architects for the planning application which includes the proposed site design, Bio-diversity Net Gain survey and Tree Protection survey. The Planning Application has also been submitted, thus incurring costs.

## **6. Legal and Statutory Implications**

**6.1** There have been no additional legal or statutory changes since the original report was approved by Cabinet in July '25. The service will need to be registered with DEFRA, the costs have been factored into the budget and support is to be provided by the cremator supplier.

## **7. Equality Impact Assessment**

**7.1** The corporate Equality Impact Assessment template has been complete previously for the original report. No changes are required; it is still believed that this opportunity does not affect one or more groups less or more favourably than another.

## **8. Financial and Resource Implications**

**8.1** The competitive tendering of the cremator unit has been completed, and this has enabled the review of the business case. Further information on the business case is available in the separate report on the closed agenda. There has been very little change to the information available. The overall summary is that the overall costs incurred and expected are still within the approved budget of £134k.

**8.2** Since September 2025, officers have complied with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules engaging, an architect, an environmental and ecology consultancy, an arboriculturist specialist, and an electrical company to develop plans suitable for planning application. As a result, the council has incurred expenses totalling £8,139.95.

**8.3** Officers having gone through a complaint tender process to find the most suitable provider for the pet crematorium and as a result of the ongoing conflict in Iran officers were faced with the volatility in pricing of some of the raw materials with steel prices dramatically increasing. It was therefore agreed and prior to entering a formal contract with the preferred supplier, (In order to fix the tender fee in line with budget expectations), to seek approval by way of waiver to Council Contract Procedure Rules to purchase the steels at a cost of £13,189.

**8.4** Further financial commitments as part of the introduction of the proposed solution and so as not delay the launch of the service was a need to establish a website template and .co.uk & .com domain name(s) at a cost of £1,421.91.

**8.5** The sum (£8,139.95 + £13,189 .00 + £1,421.91+) total of financial commitments to date totalling £22,750.86.

## **8.6 Fees**

8.6.1 Proposed fees and charges are still considered to be appropriate for a start-up in this sector. Below for reference:

<b>Pet</b>	<b>Fee</b>
Cremation of rabbit/small pets	£75
Cremation of cat	£100
Cremation of small dog (up to 10kg)	£150
Cremation of medium dog (10.1kg to 25kg)	£175
Cremation of large dog (25.1 to 40kg)	£200
Cremation of extra large dog (40.1kg to 50kg max weight)	£275

8.6.2 In accepting this report Cabinet are asked to adopt these, then to incorporate them into the fees and charges setting process.

## **9. Major Risks & Mitigation**

**9.1** The existing risks and mitigations have been updated:

<b>Risk</b>	<b>Mitigation</b>
Slow take up of service upon launch	<p>A healthy marketing budget has been factored into the initial set up costs with a provision for future years to market the service.</p> <p>The business case is based upon a very conservative take up forecast of 0.36% take up, raising steadily to 1.8% in year 4.</p> <p>In addition to public use, other options are available to maximise this asset, including:</p> <p>Marketing the service directly to vets as a premium service with the ability to collect animals from the practise (Research shows storage space is an issue for vets)</p> <p>Using spare capacity to cremate the carcasses of wild animals collected by Streetscene to avoid the travel time to Rugeley as currently is required.</p>
The cremation of pets is not an established service area that the Council has prior knowledge and skills of.	<p>The project team have researched this area in depth and spoken to several other councils who have shared their learning and data.</p> <p>The core skills, such as empathy to deal with grieving residents and crematory operation, are interchangeable with our core bereavement services.</p> <p>In addition, the preferred supplier has offered full training on the commissioning of their unit to help bridge this skill gap.</p>

<p>Lack of resident awareness of cremation options other than via vets.</p>	<p>The marketing of the service to distinguish our proposed offer is considered key and is budgeted into the set up costs. Learning from other councils identified that visible signage at popular dog walking locations proved highly effective – this is can be considered for the parks owned by the Council. Since that original business case was produced, the BBC reported on the Cabinet approval with a positive news report which has resulted in multiple enquiries to the Bereavement Care team asking when the service will launch.</p>
<p>Build costs exceeding modelled budget</p>	<p>The purchase cost of the unit has increased marginally (&lt;3%) however this cost is now fixed for this decision. Current costs are still within the original budget which included a 10% contingency fund.</p>
<p>Failure to secure licences</p>	<p>The Council will need to secure licenses from DEFRA APHA and Waste Transfer Licence, whilst there are no major concerns about these processes there is a minor risk that they won't be approved. The tendering exercise included the express terms that the preferred cremation unit supplier would support NULBC in securing the appropriate licenses to operate the unit in compliance with all applicable legislation.</p>
<p>Public concern re: contamination of human remains</p>	<p>A key USP of this proposal is the guaranteed return of pet ashes in a dedicated pet cremator – allaying this fear will be central to the marketing strategy. The services and cremators will be in separate buildings aiding the understanding that the pet cremation service is totally independent. Following the BBC news article, the public perception was overwhelmingly positive towards the service.</p>
<p>Stoke on Trent City Council has received cabinet approval for a Pet Cemetery</p>	<p>SOTCC have confirmed that they have no intention to offer pet cremations. The Newcastle cremation service would however be complementary as the ashes could then be scattered at Carmountside cemetery if the owner wished.</p>

**10. UN Sustainable Development Goals (UNSDG)**



**11. One Council**

Please confirm that consideration has been given to the following programmes of work:

**One Commercial Council**

*We will make investment to diversify our income and think entrepreneurially.*

**One Digital Council**

*We will develop and implement a digital approach which makes it easy for all residents and businesses to engage with the Council, with our customers at the heart of every interaction.*

**One Sustainable Council**

*We will deliver on our commitments and make all decisions with sustainability as a driving principle*

**12. Key Decision Information**

**12.1** This is not a key decision as the service is based within one ward and the separate contract values are not significant.

**13. Earlier Cabinet/Committee Resolutions**

**13.1** Cabinet report in July 2025 gave approval for this opportunity to progress and report back.

**14. List of Appendices**

**14.1** None.

**15. Background Papers**

**15.1** None.