

From: Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

Rebecca Spore, Director, Infrastructure

Zena Cooke, Corporate Director, Finance

To: **Roger Gough, Leader of the Council**

Decision No: 22/0006

Subject: Procurement of Temporary Body Storage Facilities

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Electoral Division: All**

**Summary:** As part of the continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in light of the new Omicron Variant, latest modelling, rising absenteeism of frontline hospital staff and other routine winter pressures, the multi-agency partners of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) of which KCC has a lead role have decided to initiate preparations to set up the Aylesford Temporary Place of Rest in case it is needed in 2022 to support the county's existing mortuary space.

The KRF's Death Management Pathway Group, which includes the NHS, funeral directors, and faith groups, is led by Kent County Council – in line with its statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingency Act 2004. As such, KCC will take forward the decision on behalf of the KRF to prepare the site to Stage 1 readiness enabling it to be operational to less than 20% of its capacity when it was last operational, from mid-January (with capacity to extend this, if necessary).

This paper seeks approval to provide delegations to allow enabling works to be completed and the necessary land arrangements to be put in place to facilitate the provision and operation of additional mortuary capacity that may be required to support the COVID-19 emergency response.

**Recommendations:**

The Leader of the Council is asked to approve the procurement and setup arrangements for a Temporary Place of Rest should it be needed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic as shown at Appendix A.

This approval includes agreement;

I. to approve up to £1 million from the Emergency Covid reserve to support the procurement and management of the temporary site to provide additional capacity for Kent and Medway at one location, should it be needed, as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Such solutions shall include, but not be limited solely to, site preparation, installation of temporary structure and equipment, management of the site, security and access control, facility management, ICT and technical systems support, mortuary storage management, transportation and traffic management services to and from the location, demobilisation and site clearance including any decontamination; management and staffing; and

II. to delegate authority under the Scheme of Officer Delegations to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director for Finance and the Monitoring Officer, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts and other legal agreements required to ensure the effective operation and delivery of the increased mortuary capacity, as necessary to implement this decision; and

III. to delegate authority under the Scheme of Officer Delegations to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, the Corporate Director for Finance, the monitoring officer and the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to direct the use of KCC land and to enable the provision and operation of the mortuary capacity, and take other appropriate actions in relation to Property Management and Infrastructure activity, necessary to implement this decision.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 On 12 January 2020, it was announced that a new coronavirus had been identified. COVID-19 is highly contagious and in response to the escalating death rates in December 2020 associated with COVID-19, a Temporary Place of Rest was set up on 1<sup>st</sup> January 2021, to provide additional capacity to support the hospital mortuaries across the County. Not delaying in the set-up of the site was key in responding to the escalating death rates (and associated modelling) in December 2020 and the Temporary Place of Rest was used by all Kent and Medway Trusts. The situation vastly improved throughout March 2021 such that operations at the site formally ceased on 31<sup>st</sup> March 2021.

1.2 KCC has a statutory responsibility under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to take the lead on behalf of the Kent Resilience Forum in responding to humanitarian impacts that result from an emergency. As part of the continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in light of the new Omicron Variant, latest modelling, the rising absenteeism of frontline hospital staff and other routine winter pressures, the multi-agency partners of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) of which KCC has a lead role, have decided to initiate preparations to set up the Aylesford Temporary Place of Rest in case it is needed in 2022 to support the county's existing mortuary space. Because setting up the site takes time, a proactive move is being taken to plan ahead, to allow for getting the necessary statutory and logistical plans in place at minimum cost, to ensure that the county remains prepared for any potential winter pressures on death management and services across the county in the new year. Preparing this

facility underlies the ongoing challenges of the pandemic and the other pressures we routinely see in winter.

- 1.3 Remobilisation of the site will be undertaken in two phases. Phase 1 will put all of the necessary infrastructure in place to an operational stage and can be implemented with an anticipated completion of set up by 14<sup>th</sup> January 2022. This will enable the site to be ready to move to Phase 2 if needed, to operate the site as a Temporary Place of Rest.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 The initial estimate is that funding up to £1m will be required for both phase 1 and 2, to rapidly respond to remobilising a Temporary Place of Rest.
- 2.2 This initial estimate is to provide, but not be limited solely to, site preparation and enabling works, installations of temporary structures and equipment, procurement of equipment and services to facilitate site operation, security provision, facilities management, ICT and technical systems support, mortuary management, transportation and traffic management services to and from the location, demobilisation and site clearance (including any decontamination works) and management and staffing costs.
- 2.3 The estimated cost for Phase 1 is up to £250,000, excluding VAT. This figure includes set up and hire charge costs. Phase 2 would involve operating the site and would invoke further costs, estimated at up to £750,000, excluding VAT. The Emergency Covid reserve will be used to fund the costs incurred.

## **3. Policy Framework**

- 3.1 KCC has an obligation under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to take the lead in responding to humanitarian impacts that result from an emergency that straddles more than one District within the county, on behalf of the Kent Resilience Forum.

## **4. Risks**

- 4.1 Urgent work is underway to identify equipment and service providers, sector specific supply chain, facilities and management organisations to ensure consistent and industry standard operation.
- 4.2 Current delivery risks include;
  1. Regulatory delays.
  2. Unable to secure supplies and labour to complete any enabling works.
  3. Increased costs due to high demand and speed of implementation.
- 4.3 Officers will seek to mitigate each risk at the appropriate time using the most up to date available modelling and commercial information.

## 5. Equality, Legal and Data Protection Implications

- 5.1 An EqlA is attached.
- 5.2 KCC has an obligation under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to take the lead in responding to humanitarian impacts that result from an emergency that straddles more than one District within the county, on behalf of the Kent Resilience Forum
- 5.3 KCC also has a statutory obligation to make provision for the care of deceased persons whose death is referred to the coroner.
- 5.4 There are no data protection issues arising from the procurement decisions or operation of the site.

## 6. Conclusions

- 6.1 As part of the continued response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and in light of the new Omicron Variant, the multi-agency partners of the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) of which KCC has a lead role have decided to initiate preparations to set up the Aylesford Temporary Place of Rest in case it is needed in 2022 to support the county's existing mortuary space. KCC has a statutory responsibility under the Civil Contingency Act 2004 to take the lead on behalf of the Kent Resilience Forum in responding to humanitarian impacts that result from an emergency. Because setting up the site takes time, a proactive move is being taken to plan ahead, to allow for getting the necessary statutory and logistical plans in place at minimum cost, to ensure that the county remains prepared for any potential winter pressures on death management and services across the county in the new year
- 6.2 The KRF's Death Management Pathway Group, which includes the NHS, funeral directors, and faith groups, is led by Kent County Council – in line with its statutory responsibilities under the Civil Contingency Act 2004.
- 6.3 As such KCC has a statutory duty to take forward the decision on behalf of the KRF to prepare the site to Stage 1 readiness enabling it to be operational to less than 20% of its capacity of when it was last operational, from mid-January (with capacity to extend this, if necessary).

## 7. Recommendations

**Recommendations:** The Leader of the Council is asked to approve the procurement and setup arrangements for a Temporary Place of Rest should it be needed as a consequence of the COVID-19 pandemic as shown at Appendix A.

This approval includes agreement:

- I. to approve the virement of up to £1m from the Emergency Covid reserve to

support the procurement and management of the site. Such solutions shall include, but not be limited solely to, site preparation, installation of temporary structure and equipment, management of the site, security and access control, facility management, ICT and technical systems support, mortuary management, transportation and traffic management services to and from the location, demobilisation and site clearance including any decontamination; management and staffing; and

- II. to delegate authority under the Scheme of Officer Delegations to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Leader of the Council, the Corporate Director for Finance and the Monitoring Officer, to take relevant actions, including but not limited entering into contracts and other legal agreements required to ensure the effective operation and delivery of the increased mortuary capacity, as necessary to implement this decision; and
- III. to delegate authority under the Scheme of Officer Delegations to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Leader, the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, the Corporate Director for Finance, the monitoring officer and the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport to direct the use of KCC land and/ or finalise the terms and enter into the necessary contracts and legal land agreements required to enable the provision and operation of the mortuary capacity, and take other appropriate actions in relation to Property Management and Infrastructure activity, necessary to implement this decision.

## **8. Background Documents**

### 8.1 Coronavirus Emergency Legislation

## **9. Contact details**

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