

Growth Bid Business Case
Coroner & Mortuary

The Coroner's Service, which forms part of the local risk budget of the Department of Markets and Consumer Protection (M&CP), although entirely independent of its management, has seen an approximate four-fold increase in workload in recent years, largely due to a new acute cardiac unit opening at St Bart's Hospital and a resulting increase in deaths, post-mortems and inquests. This increased workload has until now been covered by a combination of a corporate funded apprentice and agency staff, the latter of which was unfunded and has resulted in the Coroner's service overspending in 2018/19.

Coroner's Officer salaries have traditionally been paid by the City of London Police, but they are unable to meet the costs of the additional staff. The City Police have recently agreed that the budget and responsibility for the existing Coroner's Officer post should be transferred from the Police to M&CP. The details of this transfer are currently being finalised and have not been reflected in the proposed budgets for your Committee.

To ensure sustainable and consistent support for the Coroner it is now essential to employ a second full time Coroner's Officer, at a cost of £60,000. Pay costs for the Senior Coroner are increasing by £55,000 due to the most recent JNC guidelines. In addition, running costs including coroners' fees, medical fees, expert witness costs, body transport and software have also risen substantially as a result of the increased workload, and an additional £30,000 is required.

The City Corporation is also required by s.198 of the Public Health Act 1936 to provide public mortuary and post-mortem facilities. The cost of this service is included within the budgets for City Environmental Health. The London Borough of Camden (LBC) has been providing mortuary services for the City since the closure of its own mortuary over 10 years ago, and at your last meeting it was reported that a one-year extension had been approved for the Public Mortuary Services Contract, during which it is intended that a new contract will go out to tender. Due to the increase in throughput of bodies and of post-mortems, the annual contract price has risen to £45,000, an increase of £30,000 against the existing budget. This also reflects increased charges from LBC after a significant number of years during which the City Corporation has enjoyed very favourable rates.

The total additional cost as a result of the increase in deaths in the City, and which cannot be met from existing resources, is £175,000, and additional funding is therefore requested.