

**City of London Cemetery
Facilities Consultation and Research**

Report

Prepared for

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BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

This is a report on a Consultation and Research programme carried out on behalf the City of London Cemetery.

Like all local authorities, the City of London is required to make savings and find new ways to produce income. The Cemetery service, like many other local authority services, is more and more reliant on its ability to produce income and this consultation exercise was designed as an opportunity to identify opportunities for increasing revenue in a way which is acceptable to all users and potential users of the Cemetery and its facilities.

The objectives of this programme were:

1. to examine the ability of current facilities and resources to produce more income;
2. to identify other facilities and resources which could be introduced;
3. to identify the most appropriate option for increasing income/decreasing expenditure

In addition it was specified that any recommendations must protect the Cemetery & Crematorium as a service to the public, as a Grade I listed landscape and as a business.

The consultation was also specified to include examining the establishment of a Friends organisation, the development of Guided Tours, development of the Newsletter, whether to charge for vehicle access permits, enhancement of current facilities and establishing new facilities.

The programme consisted of a three stage programme:

First qualitative stage -

12 Depth interviews with main stakeholders to explore key issues conducted during June and July 2012

Second qualitative Stage -

2 Focus groups with existing visitors held during September 2012

A quantitative stage -

400 Face to face interviews with visitors carried out during December 2012

This report focuses on the third quantitative stage. A set of data tables analysing the results of the survey have been prepared and are included as an appendix to this report.

The questionnaire was developed in conjunction with CoL executives and is also included as an appendix to this report.

A report on the qualitative stages has already been delivered to CoL and this report summarises the findings of the quantitative stage but draws on the qualitative findings for the Summary and Recommendations. The qualitative reports are included as an appendix to this report.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The City of London Cemetery is almost universally regarded by families and stakeholders as *the* outstanding cemetery and crematorium. The area of its influence is significant, stretching into central and north London and out of Essex towards Suffolk and Hertfordshire.

Fees

City of London Cemetery is clearly highly respected and appreciated by both client groups and the bereaved. However, the quantitative stages of the survey demonstrate that there is little enthusiasm for increasing prices. This is not an uncommon response, but it does indicate the problems that the CoL may face when it is necessary to increase fees or introduce a fee for vehicle access permits.

Recommendation

Any significant above inflation increase may provide the financial stability to allow more modest increases in future. Whilst there may well be a reaction from FDs and the bereaved, any price increase is likely to be followed by other cemeteries and crematorium and the likely impact on business level is therefore expected to be short term.

Friends

Establishing a Friends of City of London Cemetery organisation would be a popular move with both stakeholders and families.

A Friends organisation should be concentrated on the heritage and Listed aspects of the Cemetery. Specific renovation projects should be identified and used as the basis for its fundraising activities. The CoL management should therefore, in time, be relieved of this aspect of revenue generation.

The database of contacts from the qualitative research is available as the starting point for setting up an organisation.

Recommendation

Early activity to follow up on this research project is strongly recommended so that those who have expressed an interest can be engaged immediately. This will require some initial executive time in the early stages, but involvement should reduce significantly after the processes have been established.

A meeting with those who have expressed an interest in helping set up a Friends organisation and those offering specialist knowledge should be organised as soon as possible.

Whilst a Friends organisation should be capable of being run by volunteers it is important that the ownership and oversight is retained by CoL. As such a constitution for the Friends organisation should be drawn up by CoL so that it has the authority to oversee and control issues such as approving charity donations and fundraising objectives.

CoL executive time should be minimal, with attendance by the Superintendent at an annual meeting and possibly one or two further meetings each year.

Education

Based on the qualitative stages we believe that there may be an opportunity to develop an educational visit programme, targeted at local schools and colleges.

This may require some initial (modest) investment to develop a course to meet Education Key Stage requirements and to make contact with local schools, but this should eventually provide a revenue stream for CoL without impacting on existing staff commitments.

Recommendations

Setting up the education facility should be subcontracted to a suitable consultancy.

The consultancy would be tasked with developing a programme which links the history and other aspects of the Cemetery with educational Key Stages.

Research to identify the most appropriate pricing structure will need to be undertaken and appropriate promotional materials developed. This would then be used in a marketing campaign carried out by the consultancy with the aim of securing some initial visit bookings from local education al establishments.

Liaison and support from the Friends should be an essential part of this process.

Research into the most effective structure for operating the events should also be undertaken, taking into account CoL legal and regulatory requirements and the effectiveness of the Friends organisation.

This should then create a structure which can be handed to CoL such that when they receive an enquiry it can be passed to the Friends or a nominated contact at the consultancy. They would then take full responsibility for all the organisation of the event, with the bulk of the revenue accruing to CoL or the Friends.

Vehicles

Introducing charges for vehicle access is not recommended. Stakeholders especially warned of the impact of even modest charges for 'extras' having a major detrimental impact on perceptions of CoL.

Fundraising

The opportunity for The Friends to place fund raising collecting boxes approved by CoL should be taken. These should be in places where there will be significant numbers of visitors. One should be placed in the minibus to allow users to express their thanks. The collection boxes should refer to the specific fundraising target agreed for the Friends (e.g restoration of a window in a chapel)

Recommendation

As previously recommended in relation to the setting up of a Friends organisation, CoL should retain control over the destination of charity donations to ensure these meet with existing CoL guidelines

Newsletter

The Newsletter is currently highly regarded and should be developed to become a source of information about The Friends.

There would appear to be a growing acceptance of receiving the Newsletter by Email and efforts should be made to encourage recipients to adopt this delivery method.

Advertising is not seen as appropriate in the CoL Newsletter

Recommendation

The information about the formation of the Friends should be heavily promoted in the Newsletter with simple and clear contact details for those who wish to become involved. Once established, Friends activities should only be promoted via the Newsletter or other CoL facilities such as the website rather than setting up their own dedicated Friends newsletter.

Brochures

A review of the brochures and leaflets produced should be undertaken. They appear to be little used by FD staff and the increasing use of the Internet for information may offer an opportunity to make some savings in this area in the future.

Catering

The catering facilities at CoL are regarded very highly and are part of the overall high quality offering by CoL. Some FD staff are not aware of this facility (others who are aware were extremely impressed) and this is an area which could usefully be promoted and should increase the revenue available to CoL.

There are no good local facilities available and this offers an opportunity for CoL to establish a strong market position for this service.

Recommendation

At an appropriate time in the current contract period a detailed review of the catering facilities and arrangements should be carried out with the aim of highlighting any significant potential for increasing revenue from this area.