

**TITLE:** Bereavement Centre Project 6 Monthly Progress Update

**Committee:** Finance & Assets Committee

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**Report number:** AA132

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## **1. Issue**

1.1. To update on the Bereavement Centre Project progress.

## **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 Members are requested to note the progress towards completion of the Bereavement Centre.
- 2.2 Committee is asked to recommend to Full Council the approval of up to £300,000 of CIL funding towards the project, for risk contingency.

## **3. Background**

- 3.1. On 22 May 2025, the Council approved a Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) allocation of £12,960,617 for the construction of the Bereavement Centre. Full details are available [here](#). Following a competitive tendering process, Kier Construction was appointed for the design and build, with site works commencing on 4 August 2025.
- 3.2. This report details activity from August to December 2025, following regular updates provided to the Finance and Assets Committee. While the overall programme remains on track, with several workstreams currently ahead of schedule, the forecasted risk contingency budget has now been fully allocated. Consequently, any further emerging risks will result in a project overspend. Details of the financial risk position is provided in section 4.2

## **4. Arguments/Conclusions**

### **Project Progress**

- 4.1 The following milestones have been achieved during this period:
- a) Main Structure: The main chapel, offices and crematory structures are in place, and the concrete floor slab has been poured. The building is expected to be weatherproof by 24 March 2026 and watertight by end of 9<sup>th</sup> April 2026.
  - b) Landscaping and Habitats: Significant progress has been made in re-establishing natural habitats. This includes the creation of new sand dunes and deadwood planting to the south of the site. Roadways and pathways have been formed, with hard and soft landscaping areas clearly demarcated.

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- c) **Groundworks:** Substantial additional groundworks were required due to unforeseen obstructions, despite prior geotechnical surveys and borehole testing. This involved the removal and disposal of large foundation structures in the natural burial area and redundant piling structures beneath the main chapel. Ground quality improvements have also been carried out in specific areas.
- d) **Utilities:** Drainage and utility connections are nearing completion, with site electrification scheduled for April 2026.
- e) **Modular Function Room:** The design for the modular function room has been finalised and the unit ordered, with delivery expected on site in late February/early March.
- f) **Procurement:** The cremator and ancillary equipment have been ordered. Procurement for client-side items, including audio-visual systems, furniture, and refrigeration, is underway and on schedule.
- g) **Highways:** Section 278 works are currently in the design development phase, with detailed design of the main entrance underway presently. Physical works will begin following Highway approval. To the north of the site, an area has been designated for a small car park for the potential use of a fishing club. While the highways access for this area is currently under design, no budget has been allocated for the construction of the highways works or the car park itself. These elements were excluded from the original scope of the main design and build contract.
- h) **Topsoil Management:** Topsoil sourced from the Littleport depot and a further donor site has undergone extensive testing. While this testing delayed the removal of soil from the depot, transfers to the site are now scheduled for January 2026.

### **Risk Management**

- 4.2 The design and build contract with Kier included several provisional sums to address uncertainties regarding final site requirements, which remained subject to further testing and surveys. Additionally, a client-side risk contingency of £419,000 was maintained to offset potential increases in professional fees, equipment costs, or unforeseen works.
- 4.3 While the Council and Kier have successfully mitigated or negotiated many site risks to limit their financial impact, the final forecast cost is currently projected at £12,934,757. When compared against the agreed project budget of £12,890,618, this indicates a potential overspend of £44,139. Should all identified risks materialise, this shortfall is currently unfunded.
- 4.4 The full projected use of the risk allowance is generally attributed to three factors:
  - **Groundworks:** Additional unavoidable works required on site.
  - **Surveys:** Requirement for further unforeseen surveys, mainly ecology and surveys associated with groundwork/soil.
  - **Cost Increases:** A general inflationary rise in professional fees and the cost of equipment.

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### 5. Implications and Impacts

<b>Financial Implications</b>	<b>Legal Implications</b>	<b>Human Resources (HR) Implications</b>
<b>YES</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>
<b>Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)</b>	<b>Carbon Impact Assessment (CIA)</b>	<b>Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA)</b>
<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>	<b>NO</b>

#### Financial impacts

- 5.1 The risk contingency budget has now been fully allocated. Should all currently identified risks materialise, the project faces an expected overspend of £44,139. Furthermore, if current risk mitigation strategies prove unsuccessful, this overspend is likely to increase to approximately £129,000.
- 5.2 To have exhausted the risk contingency at this stage of a 12-month build programme is a significant concern, as any newly emerging risks will be entirely unfunded. Although the primary risks largely associated with groundworks and site improvements are nearing completion, it is not advisable to proceed toward the Summer 2026 completion date without a remaining contingency buffer.
- 5.3 To ensure the project remains on programme, avoids costs associated with client-side delays, and maintains a stable cash flow, the Council's appointed cost consultants and project management team recommend that a further £300,000 be made available to cover known and potential un-forecasted costs.
- 5.4 It is recommended that the Council allocate an additional £300,000 from the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) to the project. These funds would only be drawn down in the event that unavoidable new risks emerge beyond those already identified. This contingency is strictly for risk mitigation and will not be available for client-led design changes; any such requests must be managed within the existing main build budget.
- 5.5 On 22 May 2025 (agenda Item 18), Members resolved to fund up to £12,960,617 for the Bereavement Centre. A firm allocation of £8,203,530.78 was made from held balances with the remainder coming from future CIL receipts into the 'other' pot.
- 5.6 At the time of Full Council, it was reported that there may be a shortfall of £737,000 which could be covered by internal borrowing. The reason for this was due to the projected timing of CIL income.
- 5.7 As of 6 January 2026, the projections show that there is no longer a shortfall, as the total of CIL receipts will be sufficient to meet the approved allocation. Furthermore, based on the current projections and funding profile there will be sufficient funds in the 'other' pot to meet the additional £300,000 requirement.

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### **6 Background documents**

Finance and Assets Committee - Asset update reports 25 September 2025 and 7 November 2025