**Middleton Crematorium Proposal FAQ**

**Q1: Why does the Middleton Crematorium need updating?**  
The crematorium's equipment is approximately 30 years old, unreliable, noncompliant with current regulations, and potentially dangerous. The cremator and ancillary equipment cannot be adapted to meet new emission regulations coming into force in January 2027.

**Q2: What are the main recommendations of the report?**  
The report recommends delegating to the Director of Economy and Place to consult with the public and contractors on the options listed to ensure the future viability of the facility.

**Q3: What are the reasons for these recommendations?**  
The cremator and equipment are outdated and noncompliant with Mercury Emissions regulations. The equipment regularly fails, is difficult to source parts for, and has had incidents requiring fire service attendance. The cremator has been temporarily decommissioned due to safety concerns.

**Q4: What alternatives were considered in the report?**  
Three main alternatives were considered:

1. Stop using the cremator and leave the chapel as it is, saving approximately £40k per year.
2. Replace the cremator and install a new one with abatement, costing approximately £740k.
3. Invest in the chapel and parking facilities without replacing the cremator, costing approximately £350k with ongoing revenue savings of £40k per year.

**Q5: What are the financial implications of each option?**

* **Option 1:** Cease using the cremator, saving approximately £40k per year on fuel and maintenance.
* **Option 2:** Replace the cremator with a new one, costing between £740k and £1 million with no savings.
* **Option 3:** Remove the cremator and develop the chapel, costing approximately £350k with savings of £40k per year on fuel and maintenance. This option also increases potential revenue through improvements to the facility, which will increase its size and future use.

**Q6: What impact would there be of redeveloping of the chapel have?**

Redeveloping the chapel could potentially double its capacity to around 80 seated and 20 standing. This, along with improvements to parking and memorial space, could help Middleton compete with other local crematoria in terms of customer service, environmental quality, and financial efficiency.

**Q7: What is the current usage of Middleton Crematorium?**  
Middleton Crematorium is one of the lowest attended in the country, with around 450 cremations per year. An independent report suggested it was not financially viable to continue operating at Middleton.

**Q8: What is the proposed solution for cremations during the redevelopment?**  
Funeral services could be held at either Heywood or Rochdale, but cremations will be completed at Rochdale Crematorium, which has newly fitted, more efficient, and reliable cremators.

**Option 1 Specific:**

**Q: Would the coffin still be on display in the chapel during the memorial service?**  
A: Yes. The funeral service would stay as it is now with the coffin placed on the catafalque during the service, then be transferred to the rear of the crematorium once the service has ended.

**Q: How will the coffin be transported to Rochdale?**  
A: The coffin would be transported to Rochdale by the Funeral Director.

**Q: At what point would the coffin be taken to Rochdale?**  
A: Once the services have finished and all mourners have left the site, the coffin would be transferred discreetly and respectfully to a hearse or private ambulance at the rear of the chapel for transportation to Rochdale.

**Q: Would there be a delay returning the ashes to the family?**  
A: No. Ashes would be available for collection from Rochdale Crematorium by the funeral director within 48 working hours of cremation.

**Option 2 Specific:**

**Q: Would the chapel be closed during the building work if a new cremator were installed?**  
A: It is likely that the chapel would need to close during any major works. However, we would work with contractors to ensure works were kept to schedule to minimize closure time. We will be able to offer alternative facilities at Heywood Cemetery Chapel or Rochdale Crematorium during closure.

**Q: How long would the chapel be closed if a new cremator were fitted?**  
A: It is envisaged this would take around 6-9 months to complete.

**Q: What would the life expectancy of a new cremator be?**  
A: Most cremators have a 15–20-year lifespan.

**Q: Would the installation of a new cremator affect the price of cremations?**  
A: No. The cremation fee would remain in accordance with the Council’s current fees and charges, which may/may not increase annually in accordance with RPI.

**Q: Would there be an opportunity to increase or improve the chapel capacity with this option?**  
A: We could not increase the size of the chapel as all the available space would be taken up by the new cremator and related equipment.

**Option 3 Specific:**

**Q: Will the chapel have to close while works take place?**  
A: Yes. Due to the nature of the building work, the chapel will be closed. We will be able to offer alternative facilities at Heywood Cemetery Chapel or Rochdale Crematorium during closure.

**Q: How long would the chapel extension building work take?**  
A: It is envisaged this would take around 6-9 months to complete.

**Q: Will the price of cremations change under this new service?**  
A: No. The cremation fee would remain in accordance with the Council’s current fees and charges, which may/may not increase annually in accordance with RPI.