

<b>LONDON BOROUGH OF CAMDEN</b>	<b>WARDS:</b> All
<b>REPORT TITLE</b> Islington and Camden Joint Cemetery Service Agreement (SC/2026/09)	
<b>REPORT OF</b> Cabinet Member for Planning and a Sustainable Camden	
<b>FOR SUBMISSION TO</b> Cabinet	<b>DATE</b> 25 <sup>th</sup> February 2026
<b>STRATEGIC CONTEXT</b>  <p>We Make Camden is our joint vision for the borough, developed in partnership with our community. The Cemetery sites managed through this proposal provide key green areas for their local communities supporting the borough aspiration for a green and sustainable places. The business model for the burial services also provide discounted provision for residents of Camden to ensure we tackle inequality and the current cost of living pressures on our communities through an average 35% discount.</p> <p>The Way We Work is the Council's response to We Make Camden. This proposal would continue the successful shared service with Islington Council. As with Camden, Islington have a deep focus tackling inequality and a focus on supporting our communities so can be considered good partners in this key service.</p>	
<b>SUMMARY OF REPORT</b>  <p>This report sets out a proposal to renew the shared partnership arrangement between Camden Council and Islington Council for the continued joint delivery of cemetery and cremation services through the Islington and Camden Cemetery Services (ICCS) for a further 10 year period.</p> <p>This decision is coming to Cabinet as it is a reserved decision for Cabinet.</p> <p><b>Local Government Act 1972 – Access to Information</b></p> <p>No documents that require listing were used in the preparation of this report.</p> <p><b>Contact Officer:</b>          Oliver Jones          Director of Recreation and Public Safety          5 Pancras Square          London N1C 4AG</p>	

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

Cabinet is asked:

- (i) To agree that Islington Council continues as the lead authority in the delivery of the schedule of merged cemetery and crematorium services on behalf of both Camden Council and Islington Council under a renewed Partnering Agreement.
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Director of Recreation and Public Safety to undertake the steps to finalise and thereafter enter into the renewed Partnership Agreement.



Signed:

**Director of Recreation and Public Safety**

Date: 10th February 2026

## 1. CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1. The Islington & Camden Cemetery Service (ICCS) has operated as a shared service since 2004 and is governed under a formal Partnering Agreement adopted in 2016. This agreement sets out the financial, governance and operational framework for the service. Its core principles include:
  - The Operation of ICCS as a shared service across both boroughs.
  - Islington acting as Lead Authority.
  - Financial Management of the service through a ring-fenced trading account.
  - Retention of land and building ownership by each council.
  - Annual client contributions to each authority.
  - Defined site management responsibilities; and
  - Oversight and governance through an established ICCS Board, comprising of Lead Executive members and authorised officers from each council.
- 1.2. These arrangements have ensured clear accountability, consistent operational standards and stable long-term financial planning. They are proposed for retention in the renewed agreement, as they continue to provide an effective foundation for maintaining burial capacity and delivering a high-quality resident experience.
- 1.3. Within this framework, ICCS manages three cemeteries and a crematorium that together form one of London's largest cemetery estates:
  - the 192-acre St Pancras & Islington Cemetery in East Finchley (Approx, 87 acres owned by Islington and 105 acres owned by Camden);
  - Trent Park Cemetery in Enfield (40 acres, owned by Islington); and
  - Hampstead Cemetery (26 acres, owned by Camden). Currently provides re-open burial capacity within existing owned graves only.
- 1.4. Although land ownership varies, all sites operate as a single integrated estate delivered by staff employed by Islington as lead authority, using shared infrastructure, assets and resources.
- 1.5. This ability to share land, assets, staffing and equipment enables a broader and more resilient offer than either council could sustain independently and allows strategic planning across the entire estate to protect burial capacity throughout the term of the proposed agreement.

- 1.6. The detailed operating, financial and governance principles that underpin the proposed renewal are set out in the **Appendix A**, which provide the framework against which the full Partnering Agreement will be finalised.

### **Service Usage and Strategic Importance**

- 1.7. The Islington & Camden Cemetery Service continues to provide a sustainable, high-quality service that meets the needs of residents across both boroughs. On average, the service facilitates 2,048 funerals each year, comprising 911 burials (45%) and 1,137 cremations (55%). This level of activity is consistent with expected demand and demonstrates that the service has the operational capacity, workforce and facilities to respond effectively and sensitively to bereaved families.
- 1.8. Over the last five years, service usage has averaged approximately 25% Islington residents, 26% Camden residents and 49% out-of-borough residents. The higher collective proportion of out of borough usage reflects the location of the main sites in Barnet and Enfield. Rather than a reduction in resident access.
- 1.9. Although ICCS sites are non-denominational, the scale of the shared estate has allowed the continued development of specialist faith-sensitive areas most notably the Muslim burial provision at Trent Park ensuring that communities can observe cultural and religious traditions wherever possible.

## **2. PROPOSAL AND REASONS**

- 2.1. Operating as one service enables the councils to share staff expertise, specialist equipment, operational planning and a single memorial safety programme. This approach delivers economies of scale, reduces each authority's exposure to major capital liabilities and provides a more financially resilient service.
- 2.2. Renewing the agreement is essential to maintaining long-term burial capacity, securing investment in ageing cemetery infrastructure, meeting statutory memorial safety duties and ensuring continued access to fair, safe and inclusive services for residents.
- 2.3. The shared model remains the most effective way for both councils to respond to London-wide pressures of diminishing burial space and increasing regulatory demands. Cabinet are asked to approve option 3 as set out below.

## **3. OPTIONS APPRAISAL**

### **Option 1 – Do nothing**

- 2.4. The current partnership has run its term and a new delivery model is required so this is not a practical option.

**Option 2 – Dissolving the partnership**

- 2.5. This option would significantly reduce Camden’s access to cremation and specialist burial provision. It would also in turn negatively impact Islington by limiting their access to burial space.
- 2.6. This option would also require Camden to invest significantly in substantial infrastructure, compliance and memorial safety liabilities. This would increase costs, raise resident fees, reduce resilience and weaken statutory compliance.
- 2.7. This option is not recommended.

**Option 3 – A new Shared Partnership Agreement**

- 2.8. The model has operated successfully for more than 20 years and continues to deliver the intended benefits of the original merger, that include shared access to a combined 250-acre cemetery estate and a broader, more culturally responsive range of burial and memorial options.
- 2.9. This option is recommended. The rationale is set out in section 4 below.

**4. RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION**

- 4.1. Burial capacity across London is diminishing rapidly, with many boroughs facing long term provision constraints. ICCS remains comparatively well positioned, with existing capacity for new burials alongside wider opportunities for development within Islington and St Pancras and Trent Park. Burial ground expansions on both Camden and Islington land have increased capacity, while the development of memorial spaces has created dignified and accessible spaces for ashes interment. The introduction of above-ground mausolea and non-earthen vaults has further broadened the range of burial options, supporting diverse cultural needs and resident preferences.
- 4.2. A further success has been the growth of the Memorial Sales function. Initially delivered through Islington’s Local Authority Trading Company, iCo Ltd, this service has expanded steadily over the past seven years and is now operated directly by ICCS. It has become a key source of income, supporting increasing operational costs infrastructure renewal and the ongoing development of service options. A renewed agreement would formally incorporate the Memorial Sales function within the shared service, ensuring clear governance, accountability and transparency for this increasingly important area of work.
- 4.3. This wider (non- Camden or Islington resident) usage base contributes significantly to the financial resilience of the service, helping to maintain

competitive fees for residents of both boroughs who pay on average around 35% less across core service products as a result of the shared model.

- 2.10. Shared staffing, specialist equipment, compliance functions and operational planning create economies of scale that reduce the exposure of each authority to major capital liabilities and improve value for money. It ensures consistent service standards, coordinated infrastructure investment and safer, well-maintained cemetery environments.
- 2.11. Camden benefits in this shared arrangement through access to cremation facilities situated on Islington land, and from specialist burial provision such as the Trent Park Muslim burial area and non-earthen vaults that cannot be delivered within Camden's limited land footprint. Shared investment across the estate further reduces Camden's exposure to standalone capital liabilities and ensures a modern, inclusive and high-quality service for its residents.

## **5. WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPACTS / RISKS? HOW WILL THEY BE ADDRESSED?**

- 2.12. Renewing the agreement will ensure continued access to safe, well-maintained burial and cremation services for residents of both boroughs an increasingly important benefit given the severe shortage of burial space across London. By combining land, infrastructure and planning capacity, the shared service allows both councils to sustain a wide range of interment options, including faith-specific and non-earthen burial choices, alongside consistent service standards and reliable cremation provision.
- 2.13. A key operational risk is the ageing infrastructure of St Pancras & Islington Cemetery, where water networks, drainage systems, pathways and memorial structures require sustained investment. The joint financial model mitigates this risk by allowing income and reinvestment to be managed collectively, enabling major works without reliance on either council's General Fund.
- 2.14. The risks of not renewing the agreement would be sizeable. Each council would face reduced burial capacity, higher resident fees, fragmented planning, increased reliance on out-of-borough provision and heightened financial and reputational risks associated with ageing assets, memorial safety and service disruption.

## **6. CONSULTATION/ENGAGEMENT**

- 2.15. While a formal public consultation is not required, engagement with funeral directors, community representatives and faith leaders form a regular part of service delivery. This has directly informed the development of culturally sensitive burial areas, such as the Muslim

burial provision at Trent Park, ensuring that services remain aligned to community needs.

- 2.16. Internal engagement with Lead Members and senior officers from both councils confirms strong support for renewing the partnership.
- 2.17. Feedback from operational partners likewise indicates that the shared service continues to provide consistent, inclusive and high-quality services to bereaved residents.

## **7. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.18. There are a range of relevant powers that could be used to support the actions required to action the Recommendations. A number of especially relevant powers are listed below but there are others which could potentially be utilised.
- 2.19. Section 214 of the Local Government Act 1972 provides that London borough councils are designated burial authorities and are required to provide and maintain cemeteries whether within or outside the borough lines. The management and operation of local authority cemeteries is governed by the Local Authorities' Cemeteries Order 1977 (as amended by the Local Authorities' (Amendment) Order 1986). The Council is empowered to take associated actions conducive or incidental to exercise of these powers subject to some qualifications.
- 2.20. Under Section 101 (1) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Council may arrange for the discharge of its functions by another local authority or jointly with another local authority. This may provide the legal basis for entering into a shared service arrangement including lead-authority models.
- 2.21. Section 1 of the Localism Act 2011 confers on the Council a general power of competence to do anything that individuals generally may do, subject to statutory limitations. This power supports the Council's ability to deliver services in a flexible and collaborative manner in the interest of its communities.
- 2.22. In addition, the Local Authorities (Goods and Services) Act 1970 enables local authorities to supply goods and services to another local authority, which may be relied upon where services are provided on a reciprocal or chargeable basis.
- 2.23. In exercising its functions and in taking the decision sought in this report, the Council must comply with the public sector equality duties under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010. This requires the council to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a

protected characteristic and those who do not. Equality implications have been considered as part of the development of this proposal.

## **8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS**

- 2.24. This report sets out a proposal to renew the shared partnership arrangement between Camden Council and Islington Council for the continued joint delivery of cemetery and cremation services through the Islington and Camden Cemetery Services (ICCS) for a further 10 year period.
- 2.25. Islington Council acting as Lead Authority will be responsible for the financial Management of the service through a ring-fenced trading account
- 2.26. All income generated from cemetery and cremation services, including memorial-related income, will be paid into this trading account and used to fund service delivery, infrastructure investment and service improvements across the shared estate.
- 2.27. Camden Council and Islington Council shall each draw-down of £0.185m from the Trading Account per annum. These annual client contributions shall continue for the duration of the agreement and will be subject to review at agreed points during the term.
- 2.28. The expected income in 2026/27 and the next 10 year period is £0.185m against an income target of £0.211m, leaving a minor pressure of £0.026m. The pressure is due prior period budget adjustments and will be absorbed by the service.

### Maintenance and Repairs

- 2.29. Although Memorial management will remain the responsibility of the ICCS service. Camden will retain Memorial management responsibilities for Hampstead Cemetery.
- 2.30. It must be noted that Minor works (routine repairs and maintenance) below an agreed financial threshold of £.005m excluding VAT, will be delivered by Islington and funded through the trading account. However, major works will remain the responsibility of the council that owns the relevant building, unless separately agreed through an approved capital programme. Any emergency works required to protect public safety may be undertaken by Islington, with costs recovered in accordance with the agreement.
- 2.31. Each council will remain responsible for its own retained costs, including capital charges, insurance and central overheads relating to the land and buildings it owns.

- 2.32. Fees and charges will continue to be recommended jointly by the ICCS Board and agreed by Camden Council on an annual basis.

## **9. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 This proposed shared service partnership would manage 131ha of Camden land. This land is largely vegetated and in part very mature providing valuable environments and tree specimens.
- 9.2 The extensive areas of permeable ground and established vegetation support sustainable drainage, helping to reduce surface water runoff and improve resilience to extreme weather events. The service also offers natural and woodland burial options, supporting lower impact end-of-life choices that require less hard landscaping and infrastructure, allowing the services burial land to be managed in a way that enhances biodiversity and long-term ecological value.
- 9.3 In relation to cremation, ICCS has invested in modern plant and emissions control technology to minimise environmental and air quality impacts. The crematorium is fitted with advanced flue gas abatement, including a NOx filtration system, which significantly reduces emissions and supports compliance with tightening environmental standards. Ongoing investment in crematorium infrastructure is planned to ensure continued improvements in energy efficiency, emissions performance, and operational resilience.
- 9.4 Overall, the shared service supports both councils' climate and environmental objectives by protecting large areas of green space, promoting sustainable burial options, investing in cleaner cremation technology, and enabling coordinated long-term management of land and infrastructure across the estate.

## **10. TIMETABLE FOR IMPLEMENTATION**

- 10.1. Following Cabinet approval, officers will begin detailed discussions on the specific terms of the partnership agreement and complete the formal steps to put it in place.

## **11. APPENDICES**

Appendix A – Heads of terms

**REPORT ENDS**