

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

MOUNTSETT CREMATORIA JOINT COMMITTEE

AT A MEETING of the **MOUNTSETT CREMATORIA JOINT COMMITTEE** held at MOUNTSETT CREMATORIUM, DIPTON on **Friday 12th June 2009** at **10.00a.m.**

PRESENT

Members of the Committee

Durham County Council:

Councillors J. Hunter, O. Johnson, J. Nicholson, R. Ord, O. Temple, J. Wilson.

Gateshead Metropolitan Council:

Councillors K. Dodds, M. Ord, B. Richmond, M. Wallace

Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J. Docherty, M. Hodgson, B. Young, M. McNestry, P. Rowan.

A1 Election of Chairman for the Ensuing Year.

RESOLVED: that Councillor O. Temple be elected as Chairman of Mountsett Crematoria Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

A2 Declarations of interest

Councillor J. Wilson advised that as a Funeral Director it was likely that he may have the need to make declarations in the future given the nature of his employment.

A3 Minutes

RESOLVED: that the minutes of the meeting held on the 26th February 2009 be agreed as a correct record.

Matters Arising:-

The Superintendent advised that with regard to minute 13 of the previous minutes he could now confirm that an application had been made to investigate the high water charges. An update to members on this would be given at the earliest opportunity.

A4 Mountsett Crematorium Audit Report .

The Superintendent presented the report which outlined the findings of the audit. The audit was carried out in accordance with the Internal Audit Plan of 2008/09 to ensure that the controls in place for the administration of Mountsett Crematorium were operating efficiently and effectively.

He advised that all areas were determined as having full or significant levels of control in place and therefore were operating efficiently and effectively.

RESOLVED: that the content of the audit report for 2008/09 be noted.

A5. Risk Assessment.

The Internal Auditor presented the report which highlighted all associated risks and consequences, their likelihood and the possible impact these risks could have on Mountsett Crematorium.

He advised that 1 red risk had been identified through this process, in particular Job Evaluation and single status. He advised that risk controls were to be put in place to ensure that staff were informed of progress in this area and that information is shared at regular team briefings.

He advised members that the assessment was presented for acceptance and adoption.

The Chair raised a question relating to the red risk identified and asked to outline the current make-up of staff at Mountsett Crematorium. The Superintendent advised that there were 3 full-time members of staff, 1 part time and 1 part time cleaner.

The Chair then asked if the Superintendent was aware if any claims had been made under equal pay. The Superintendent advised that there had not.

RESOLVED: that the Risk Assessment be adopted.

A6. Statement of Accounts and Annual Return 2008/09

The Principal Accountant presented the report which outlined the statement of accounts for 2008/09 and sought Members' approval of Section 1 & 2 of the Annual Return.

He continued to run through the report outlining the requirement to prepare an Annual Return which must be approved by a resolution of the Joint Committee. He also advised that sections 1 & 2 shall be signed and dated by the Chairman of the committee.

The Principal Accountant advised that the accounts had been prepared in accordance with the CIPFA Code of Practice.

The Statement of Accounts was summarised as follows:

- Report of the Treasurer – this gave a brief summary of both the revenue and capital outturn of the Crematorium for 2008/09. The Principal Accountant advised that the surplus to be distributed to the Constituent Authorities for the year was £18k higher than budget, mainly due to £20k in additional Income. Gross expenditure was £2k over budget, partly due to the purchase of two new mowers which it had been agreed to purchase from Revenue, to be funded from the Repairs Reserve during the year. He further advised that the allocation to each authority was also detailed on page 2 of the report equating to 65% Derwentside and 35% Gateshead.
- Page 6 of the statement outlined the Income and Expenditure including comparative figures for 2007/08.
- Pages 7-12 outlined the financial position as at 31 March 2009.
- Pages 12-13 summarised the inflows and outflows of cash arising from transactions with third parties for revenue and capital purposes.

The Principal Accountant then referred members to Sections 1 & 2 of the Annual Return and advised members that if they were happy with the Statement of Accounts these two sections were required to be signed off by the Chairman.

Councillor Ord questioned how short term investments were defined. The Principal Accountant advised that any investment which lasted less than 364 days was considered short term.

Further discussion took place regarding short term investments and in addition the new finance system 'Oracle'. Councillor Ord asked if transactions via the "Oracle" system were taking place efficiently. The Principal Accountant advised that the Crematorium's transactions were still being processed through the legacy 'Agresso' system as the "Oracle" system had not yet been implemented throughout the ex-District Councils. The Principal Accountant advised that he would make enquiries regarding the implementation of the "Oracle" system and feed back accordingly.

Councillor Temple asked whether the interest earned by the Crematorium's Reserve balances had been adversely affected by the Council's "at risk" Investments with Icelandic Banks. The Principal Accountant explained that the interest was calculated using the average LIBOR rate during the year therefore the "at risk" sums do not affect the interest earned for the year.

RESOLVED: that members receive the Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009 and approve Sections 1 & 2 of the Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2009.

A7. Any Other Business

(i) The Superintendent circulated to members a copy of a letter received from the Phoenix Partnership who had recently undertaken a service of cremator equipment. They had advised that new VDU screens were required for 2 units.

He advised that a fund of £10,000 was set aside for repairs however this not going to be required following an inspection of the building. He therefore sought members' approval to purchase the two units from this fund.

RESOLVED: that the Superintendent be granted approval to purchase two VDU units from the building maintenance fund and 2 replacement flue gas sample probe systems.

(ii) The Superintendent advised that some complaints had been received with regard to the state of the grass cutting within the grounds of the crematorium. He advised that the County Council had a contract for the cutting of certain areas of grass within the grounds; the remainder was maintained by Crematorium staff.

He advised that the contractors were supposed to cut the grass every week however this had not been the case and the land had become very overgrown on a number of occasions.

He advised that a member of part-time staff from within his team was looking for full-time employment and it had been suggested that he could take on the role of cutting the whole area to bring his employment up to full time hours.

Although the Superintendent had some initial figures for the proposals members were of the opinion that a formal report should be brought to committee. Lengthy discussion ensued regarding the current contract and it was felt that the matter that the contract had not been fulfilled in its entirety should be investigated.

In conclusion it was **AGREED:** that the Superintendent write to Durham County Council stating the dates where agreed grass cutting had not been carried out and request that compensation be provided accordingly. It was further requested that the copy of the grass cutting and associated works contracts be brought to the next meeting of the committee for scrutiny.

It was further **AGREED:** that if a special meeting was required this could be arranged accordingly.

Conclusion of Meeting

The meeting closed at 10.41a.m.

Chair.