

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Tuesday 28 September 2021 at 2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor A Batey (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors V Andrews, B Bainbridge, J Charlton, A Hanson, P Heaviside, K Rooney, M Walton and S Quinn (substitute for C Hampson)

Gateshead Council:

Councillors D Bradford (Vice-Chair), D Burnett, K Dodds and M Ord

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor C Hampson (Durham County Council) and Councillors L Green and S Green (Gateshead Council).

2 Substitute Members

Councillor S Quinn was substitute for Councillor C Hampson.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 28 June 2021 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 External Audit Annual Review of the Return for the year ended 31 March 2021

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which presented the External Auditors (Mazars LLP) Annual Review of the Joint Committees Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager advised that the audit had now been completed and it had not highlighted any material weaknesses around the Joint Committees system of internal control and accounting statements and no exceptions to the Return had been reported.

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee approve the Joint Committees Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2021 including the External Report 2020/21 Certificate.

6 Performance and Operational Report

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar which provided an update relating to performance and other operational matters (for copy see file of minutes).

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager informed the Joint Committee that meetings would be held at Mountsett Crematorium when it was safe to do so and Members of the Joint Committee would be invited to take a tour of the facilities.

Mountsett Crematorium had successfully obtained the Green Flag Award for the tenth year running and have been awarded Gold Star Status in the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Accreditation.

In relation to performance, the Neighbourhood Protection Manager reported there were 345 cremations undertaken during the period 1 June 2021 to 31 August 2021, compared to 358 in the comparable period last year. There were 13 less cremations undertaken in the period June to August 2021 compared to the same period last year. The sale of memorial plaques had increased with a further 9 memorials being sold in comparison to the same period the previous year.

The cremator replacement project was ongoing, one cremator had been replaced and the second cremator was due to be completed by the end of the year.

In relation to the Recycling Metals Scheme, a cheque for £10,000 was presented to Age UK on 10 September 2021 by the Chair and the Vice Chair of the Joint Committee. It was noted that a second round of nominations had been released. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager added that charities have been awarded £200,000 over the last two-year period.

Referring to the recycling metal scheme, Councillor Burnett asked for clarification regarding the nomination process. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager confirmed that the Joint Committee considers nominations and advised that any further nominations should be submitted to the Bereavement Services Manager. It was noted that details of nominations received would be provided at the meeting in January 2022.

The Chair added that the money awarded to Age UK would go towards funding a project set up to help elderly residents in local communities who had been socially isolated due to the Covid pandemic.

Resolved:

- (a) That the current performance of the crematorium be noted;
- (b) That the updated position with regards to the Green Flag scheme be noted;
- (c) That the updated position with regards to the recycling of metals scheme be noted;
- (d) That the progress with regards to the cremator replacement be noted;
- (e) That the content of the Service Asset Management Plan attached at Appendix 2, which will be factored into budget planning in 2022/23 and beyond be noted and agreed.

7 Financial Monitoring Report - Position at 31/08/21, with Projected Outturn at 31/03/22

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the provisional outturn position for 2021/22 and the projected level of reserves and balances at 31 March 2022 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

8 Risk Register Update 2021/22 - 1

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the outcome of the half-yearly risk review in August 2021 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the contents of the report and updated position be noted.

9 Internal Audit Charter

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Interim Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager which sought agreement on the revised Internal Audit Charter to take immediate effect and to be applied to reviews undertaken as part of the Internal Audit plan for 2021/22 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee approve the Internal Audit Charter as attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

10 Annual Review of the System of Internal Audit

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Interim Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the review of the effectiveness of the Durham County Council Internal Audit Service, which was carried out by Durham County Council's Audit Committee in June 2021 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee note the information provided demonstrates the efficiency and effectiveness of the Durham County Council Internal Audit Service.

Signed.....Councillor A Batey (Chair of the Joint Committee)

Date: 31/01/2022