

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Committee Room 1A , County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 25 January 2023** at **2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor N Foster in the Chair

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Blakey, D Brown, S Quinn, K Robson, A Simpson, M Stead and M Wilson

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors C Maddison and S Gilling (substitute for D Ranyard)

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Chaplow, C Varty and Town Councillor D Ranyard.

The Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee passed on their best wishes to Councillor J Chaplow.

2 Substitute Members

Town Councillor S Gilling was substitute for Councillor D Ranyard.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 September 2022 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report

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

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar reported that there were 800 cremations undertaken during the period 1 September to 31 December 2022, compared to 841 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 41 cremations for the period. It was noted that 224 families were from Durham, 44 from Spennymoor and 532 families were from other areas. The number and value of memorial plaques sold were 82 / £21,214 compared to 88 / £22,591 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 6 memorials and £1,377 in income.

It was noted that Central Durham Crematorium was successful in retaining its Green Flag award for the eleventh year running. An application would be submitted for the 2023 award and progress would be reported back to future meetings.

Referring to the Recycling of Metals Scheme, it was confirmed that two charities can now be nominated, therefore, ManHealth and Teenage Cancer Trust have been nominated in the second round of nomination. A response was expected by the end of March 2023.

It was reported that a number of staff vehicles had been damaged by members of the public and clergy who were parking in the designated staff parking area. Subject to Members approval, it was proposed that a barrier access control system be installed to prevent unauthorised access to the staff car park. A cost of £7,220 would be required to fund the work which could be undertaken using the current year budget underspends.

St. Cuthbert's Hospice had requested that they be allowed to continue to provide a Christmas tree again in 2023. The Hospice supplies the tree and decorations at no cost to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee. St Cuthbert's managed to raise £57.55 from donations from the sale of decorations in 2022.

Following discussions regarding the issues relating to the staff park, the Joint Committee agreed that an access control system was required as people were clearly ignoring the staff parking signage. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar added that the system could be installed within 14 days.

Responding to a query relating to recycling metals, the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar explained that there was a specific section on the cremation paperwork for families who wanted metals to be returned.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current performance of the crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the continued success with regards to the Green Flag Award be noted.
- (iii) That the updated position with regards to the recycling of metals scheme be noted.
- (iv) That the installation of a barrier access control system to the staff car park be agreed.
- (v) That St Cuthbert's Hospice to provide a Christmas tree for 2023 be agreed.

6 Financial Monitoring Report - Position at 31/12/22, with Projected Revenue and Capital Outturn at 31/03/23

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee that provided details of the provisional outturn position for 2022/23 and the projected level of reserves and balances at 31 March 2023 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the April to December 2022 financial monitoring report and associated provisional revenue and capital outturn positions at 31 March 2023, including the projected year position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted.

7 Provision of Support Services 2023/24

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which sought approval of the proposed Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Support Service provision by Durham County Council to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee for the period April 2023 to March 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change advised that the proposed charge for 2023/24 was £37,110 and represented a 5% increase on the recharges levied in 2022/23, which took into account the impact of pay and price inflation for providing services.

Responding to a query from the Chair, the Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change confirmed that the 5% increase was in line with all Durham County Council's SLAs and factored in expenditure items.

Resolved:

That the Service Level Agreement attached at Appendix 2 for the year 2023/24 be approved.

8 Fees and Charges 2023/24

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out details of the proposed fees and charges for the Central Durham Crematorium for 2023/24 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change explained that the report sought to increase the fees and charges as shown at Appendix 2 of the report by £30 (3.92%) per cremation from £765 to £795, which was £77 below the average charges currently levied across the region.

Responding to a query, the Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change advised that once other crematoriums apply their fee increases for 2023/24, Central Durham Crematorium's proposed fee of £795 would remain the lowest in comparison with other neighbouring facilities.

Resolved:

That the proposed fees and charges at Appendix 2 effective from 1 April 2023, which sought to increase cremation charges by £30 (3.92%) per cremation from £765 to £795 be approved and be incorporated into the 2023/24 budget.

9 2023/24 Revenue and Capital Budgets

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out proposals with regards to the 2023/24 revenue and capital budgets for the Central Durham Crematorium (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

- (i) That the revenue and capital budget proposals contained within the report (as set out at Appendix 2) be approved;
- (ii) That the forecast level of reserves at 31 March 2024 (as set out at Appendix 2) be noted.

10 Any Other Business

The Chair agreed that in order to keep members informed, the next items of business could be reported.

Resomation Update

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar informed Members that Resomation facilities were being installed at Herrington and Sunderland Crematorium in March 2023. It was noted that the possibility for Members to view the facilities would be explored.

Weekend Cremation Services

The Chair informed Members of an increase in the number of cremations in December 2022 and advised that he was asked as Chair of Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee to agree for additional services to take place on a Saturday for a 4 week period. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar added that the increase was due to the mortuary backlog, and it was hoped after 4 weeks, levels would return to normal.

The Joint Committee asked the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar to pass on their thanks and appreciation to all the Crematorium staff.