

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held at **Durham Crematorium, South Road, Durham** on **Thursday 28 April 2022** at **5.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Chaplow (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Blakey, D Brown, B Kellett (substitute for C Varty) S Quinn, K Robson, A Simpson and M Stead

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors N Foster (Vice-Chair), C Maddison and D Ranyard

Prior to the meeting the Chair, on behalf of the Joint Committee expressed appreciation to all the Crematorium staff for their excellent work and professionalism during an extremely difficult time.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from County Councillors K Fantarrow, A Surtees, C Varty and M Wilson.

2 Substitute Members

County Councillor B Kellett was substitute for County Councillor C Varty.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 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 an update relating to performance and other operational matters (for copy see file of minutes).

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar provided a summary of the performance figures from 1 January to 31 March 2022 in comparison to the same period for the previous two years. It was noted that the total number of cremations in 2021/22 was 2,306 compared with 2,738 in 2020/21, a decrease of 432 cremations, which was due to the Covid pandemic peak in 2020/21. There had been an increase of 27 memorials sold in the same period last year and £5,284 in terms of income generated.

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar reported that webcasts of services for families who were unable to attend was still popular and advised that they had been able to reduce some associated costs which had been passed onto families.

Members were advised that the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain was being held at the Hilton Ageas Bowl, Southampton from Monday 20 to Wednesday 22 June 2022. Arrangements could be made if any Member wished to attend the conference.

With reference to the Recycling of Metals Scheme, the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised that the closing date for the new round of charity nominations was midnight on 1 July 2022. It was noted that one nomination had been received and if members would like to nominate any other charities, they should forward nominations to the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar.

Referring to the joint conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain, the Chair asked if any members wished to attend the conference. It was suggested that the Chair and Deputy Chair attend the conference. Councillor Blakey offered to go if the Deputy Chair was unable to attend. The Chair added that the last conference was very informative and the new technology that was presented would provide families in County Durham with more choice.

County Councillor S Quinn queried the impact of Coundon Crematorium with regards to cremation figures. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised there was very little impact on figures. Councillor Quinn added that families were not aware that Durham Crematorium provide a more value for money service and suggested it was something that should be promoted.

Resolved:

- i) That the current performance of the crematorium be noted;
- ii) That the date of the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of

Great Britain be noted and the Bereavement Services Manager be informed of any representation from the Joint Committee;

- iii) That the response from Chyrelle Addams Cancer Support Trust be noted.

6 Financial Monitoring Report - Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2022

The Joint Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee that 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).

The Finance Manager, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change reported that revenue outturn was surplus of £1,111,676 against the budgeted surplus of £1,022,157, £89,519 more than the budgeted position. Earmarked reserves were £191,772 more than originally budgeted, mainly due to additional cremation income received during the year and some capital schemes being carried forward to the next financial year. The retained reserves were forecast to be £1,728,774 along with a General Reserve of £531,675, giving a forecast total reserves and balances position of £2,260,449 at the year end.

Responding to a query from Town Councillor N Foster regarding the rise in fuel prices, the Finance Manager advised that the budget position included allocations in line with the Councils predictions of a 40% increase in electricity and 60% gas increase. He advised there was a healthy reserve, however the situation would be kept under review.

Resolved:

That the April 2021 to March 2022 financial monitoring report and associated provisional revenue and capital outturn positions at 31 March 2022, including the projected year position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted.

7 Risk Register Update 2021/22 Review 2

The Joint Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee that provided details of the outcome of the half-yearly risk review in March 2022 (for copy see file of minutes).

Responding to a question from Town Councillor D Ranyard, the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised that trees on site were inspected annually and a full survey had recently been carried out.

Resolved:

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

8 Annual Internal Audit Report 2021/22

The Joint Committee received a report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager that provided an opinion which makes conclusions on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Committee's Framework of Governance, Risk Management and Control (for copy see file of minutes).

The Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager advised that the report provides a 'Substantial' overall assurance opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control arrangements operating across the Joint Committee in 2021/22 and the 'Substantial' opinion identifies that there is a sound system of control.

Town Councillor D Ranyard referred to the best practice recommendation identified during the audit and asked if the issue with the system double counting the number of cremations had been resolved. The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar confirmed that the issue with the software had been resolved and added that manual recording would continue.

Members congratulated the Crematorium staff on receiving the 'Substantial' assurance opinion and thanked the Audit Team for the work carried out during the audit process.

Resolved:

That the content of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the overall 'Substantial' opinion provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control environment for 2021/22 be noted.