

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in Council Chamber, County Hall, Durham on **Thursday 21 April 2011 at 11.00 am**

Present:

Councillor

Members of the Committee:

Durham County Council

Councillors A Bainbridge, J Docherty, M Hodgson, O Johnson and J Nicholson

Gateshead Council:

Councillors K Dodds (Vice-Chair), P Ronan and D Davidson

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from:-

Durham County Council

Councillors O Temple, J Hunter, B Stephens and J Wilson

Gateshead Council

Councillors M Gannon, M Ord, J Hamilton and M Wallace

1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th February 2011

The minutes of the meeting held on 4th February 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

3 Financial Monitoring Report - Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2011

The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support, Neighbourhood Services presented the report which set out details of income and expenditure in the period 1 April to 31 March 2011, the provisional outturn position for 2010/11, and highlighting areas of over / underspend against the revenue budgets at a service expenditure analysis level.

The report further detailed the funds and reserves of the Joint Committee at 1 April 2010 and the position at 31 March 2011, taking into account the provisional outturn projection of income and expenditure during the year.

Provisional Outturn was showing a surplus (before transfers to reserves and distribution of surpluses to the partner authorities) of £257,941 at the year end against a budgeted surplus of £244,890 (before transfers to reserves and distribution of surpluses to the partner authorities), £13,051 more than the budgeted position. Significant variances by subject analysis were then detailed as follows:-

Employees

A provisional underspend of £3,868 was reported based on current staffing levels. This was mainly due to the base budget assuming a 1% pay award (£884) which did not materialise. In addition to this, were savings of (£926) arising from revised winter working patterns and reductions in holiday cover payments (£2,098).

Premises

A provisional overspend of £20,907 was reported in respect of:

- Additional and unbudgeted premises repairs and maintenance costs (car parking resurfacing and fence works) had resulted in a £19,450 overspend in the year.
- Landscaping resulted in an overspend of £2,340.
- NNDR was forecast to exceed the budget by £3,747, this had also been altered in the 2011/12 budget.
- Utility costs (gas, electric and water) budgets were underspent by (£5,500)

Supplies and Services

An underspend of £19,103 on supplies and services expenditure was mainly due to:

- The Wesley Music system cost £2,300 more than the budget sum.
- The Mercury Abatement provision (£10,680), was not required during 2010/11 as payments would not be required during 2012/14.
- An element (£6,000) of the budget provision for Book of Remembrance purchase and calligraphy costs had not been required during 2010/11
- Postage, printing and stationary savings of (£2,200).
- Equipment budget savings of (£2,500).

Agency & Contracted

The underspend of £12,470 on Agency and Contracted expenditure was a result of Grounds Maintenance being undertaken by Crematorium staff rather than by staff employed within DCC Street Scene Area North.

Income

The previous outturn reported that whilst the 2010/11 budget assumed there would be 1,172 cremations in 2010/11, trend data in the first 9 months and discussions with local funeral directors, suggested a total of 1,114 cremations during 2010/11, resulting in an expected reduced income of £27,260 during the year. However in the final quarter this position had improved and cremation numbers had rebounded to an outturn of 1,168 cremations, giving a reduced budget pressure of £1,705.

Earmarked Reserves

Additional premises costs in relation to car park resurfacing, replacement fencing and landscaping, had previously been approved as being met from the Repairs

Reserve. This had resulted in a necessary contribution from the reserve of £24,110 rather than a contribution of £15,000 into the reserve as budgeted.

The contribution of £65,000 originally budgeted to the Cremator Reserve had increased to £117,161, as a result of savings made within the Supplies and Services, Agency and Contracted and Employees budget area resulting in a year end reserve of £277,573.

In conclusion it was reported that overall the earmarked reserves balance as at 31 March 2011 is forecasted to be £291,010, an in year increase of £93,051 or approximately 47% over the balances held at 31 March 2010.

Resolved: that the April 2010 to March 2011 Revenue spend financial monitoring report and associated provisional outturn position 2010/11 be noted.

PART B

Items during which it is considered the meeting will not be open to the public (consideration of exempt or confidential information)

4 Report of the Superintendent & Registrar

The Superintendent & Registrar presented the report which provided members with a quarterly update in relation to performance and other operational matters (for copy see file of minutes).

Fees & Charges Update

It was reported that at the last meeting of the committee in February 2011 a proposal was made by members to withdraw fees in respect of Non Viable Foetus. The proposal to levy a £9 charge was questioned in the context of any stillborn and children (not exceeding 16 years) cremations being free of charge. Whilst it was noted that fees had been harmonised with Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee, members resolved to remove the £9 fee at Mountsett.

Following the meeting further discussion took place with the Superintendent & Registrar of Central Durham Crematorium, who advised that any fees in respect of the cremation of Non Viable Foetus were levied against local Health Trusts rather than the bereaved families.

Therefore taking into account the above Members were asked to reconsider re-instating the £9 fee.

Performance Update

The Superintendent & Registrar then went on to update members on performance.

With regard to the number of cremations undertaken during the period 1 January 2011 to 31 March 2011 inclusive, it was noted that there had been 369 cremations undertaken in the quarter compared to the comparable period last year an increase of 77. The total number of cremations to 31 March 2011 was 1,168 compared with 1,212 in the previous year, this being a reduction of 44. The outturn compared previously to the reported annual forecast position of 1,114.

Operational Matters

Repairs and Maintenance:

With regard to repairs and maintenance it was reported that works to complete resurfacing of the car park and perimeter fence had now been completed. Work had come in under budgeted value, however had been delayed for a period due to the adverse weather over winter months.

Health and Safety:

As reported at the last meeting a safety walkway was to be installed above the ceiling to allow for safe access when engineers were working on the cremators. The work had been commissioned although a start date was awaited. The costs of the associated works was £1,445.04

Recycling of Orthopaedic Implants and Non-Ferrous Metals:

Delivery of the containers to store the recycled metals was awaited following agreement at the last meeting to participate in a scheme to reduce the Carbon footprint of the crematorium.

Potential for a Memorial Garden:

A business case was in the process of being developed and meetings had taken place with DCC staff who would provide further details including plans and costings for the project at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

Resolved:- that Members noted the contents of the report with regards to current performance of the crematorium. In addition note and approve the proposed Non Viable Foetus cremation fee; and note updates in respect of Repairs and Maintenance, Health and Safety, Recycling of Orthopaedic Implants and Non-Ferrous Metals; and the potential for a Memorial Garden.