

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 26 September 2012** at **5.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor M Plews (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors G Holland

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors J Marr (Vice-Chair), JV Graham and JL Wood

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from N Foster, D Stoker, L Thomson and M Williams

A1 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held 27 June 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chair.

A2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

A3 External Auditor's Report

The Head of Finance – Financial Services, Paul Darby referred Members to the External Auditor's Report: Small Bodies Annual Return 2011/12 and accompanying letter from the Auditors, BDO LLP to the Treasurer of the Joint Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Members noted that an unqualified opinion was given on the accounts and no issues were highlighted by the Auditors. The Joint Committee was reminded that, as usual, copies of relevant Notices would be displayed at County Hall, Spennymoor Town Council and the Crematorium at South Road.

Resolved:

The External Auditor's Report was noted.

A4 Adoption of New Code of Conduct for Councillors

The Clerk to the Joint Committee, Sharon Spence reminded Members that recommendations within the External Auditor's Annual Audit Letter 2009/10 recommended that the Joint Committee adopt the Code of Conduct of the Lead Authority and to have a separate Declaration of Interest return annually for Members of the Joint Committee. The Joint Committee was advised that a new Code of Conduct had been adopted by Durham County Council on 25 July 2012 which also included an update to the Declaration of Interest to include Disclosable Pecuniary Interest and accordingly, the Joint Committee was asked to agree to the new Code of Conduct as set out at Appendix 2 (for copy see file of minutes) and for Members to complete a copy of the Pecuniary Interest Form.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Joint Committee adopts the Code of Conduct for Councillors as annexed as Appendix 2 to the report.
- (ii) That all Members of the Joint Committee complete a copy of the Notification of Pecuniary and Other Interests form and return to the Clerk.

A5 Review of Terms of Reference

The Clerk to the Joint Committee asked Members to note that previous Audit reviews had noted a recommendation to update the terms of reference for the Joint Committee, the Constitution of the Joint Committee, and at the last meeting it was agreed that each of the constituent Authorities considered a draft version prior to the Joint Committee making a final decision.

It was noted that an amended paragraph 13 had been submitted by Spennymoor Town Council, and Durham County Council (DCC) offered a slight amendment to that wording to give a final paragraph 13 that would read:

"13. When this agreement is silent the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee will operate within the procedure rules and financial regulations of the lead partner authority, Durham County Council, to ensure that the Central Durham Joint Crematorium Committee has effective and appropriate corporate governance arrangements and financial management arrangements in place, given the Committee's fiduciary duties in relation to the management of public resources, and Durham County Council will continue to be responsible for the management of the facility and for supporting the Joint Committee."

Members of the Joint Committee agreed to the amended paragraph 13, and for the Constitution to come back to the Joint Committee in January for final ratification once the constituent Authorities had considered the document.

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee considers and approves the updated Constitution at their next meeting, 23 January 2013.

A6 Report of the Superintendent and Registrar

The Superintendent and Registrar, Alan José asked Members to note the performance figures from June 2012 to August 2012 and the comparison to the same period for 2011, highlighting that there was a net increase of 39 cremations, 534 with 22 from Spennymoor, erroneously transposed into the row for Staindrop on the breakdown of cremations set out at Appendix 2

Members also noted that the number of memorials sold had decreased slightly in comparison to the same period last year, with sales being approximately £7,200. The Joint Committee noted that a Solicitor from DCC, Sarah Grigor was continuing to work in relation to the prepayment bond and had made application with the Financial Services Agency (FSA) for registration, which was expected to be processed in the next few months.

Councillors were pleased to note that following the successful joint bid between Durham Crematorium and South Road Cemetery in obtaining the Green Flag Award last year, the joint bid this year had also been successful, albeit with a high score of 75-79, a great achievement. Members noted that this was in addition to the award of Gold Star Status in the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management (ICCM) Accreditation last year.

The Superintendent and Registrar highlighted that during the period when moving from the old to new cremators, much of the time only two cremators were in operation, requiring overtime to be worked to ensure all work was completed. It was added that the new cremators increased cremation times, due to the more stringent emission controls, would be taken into account when preparing future budgets.

The Joint Committee recalled the joining of the Recycling of Metals Scheme and learned that a cheque was received from the ICCM in the sum of £4,000 to the "If U Care Share Foundation", which was presented to Samantha Taylor of the Foundation by the Chair and Superintendent on 27 June 2012. Members noted a letter of thanks was attached at Appendix 3. Members asked as regards the mechanism by which money was given to a particular charity and how that charity was chosen, with Councillor J Marr noting the Chyrelle Addams Breast Cancer Trust at Willington being a possible worthy recipient. The Superintendent and Registrar noted that the ICCM accepted a nomination annually and that initially the Chair and Superintendent and Registrar had negotiated as regards the Charity.

Councillor G Holland noted the excellent opportunity afforded by the recycling scheme to be able to help charities; however, he added that there was a need to guard the reputation of the Joint Committee and for a clear mechanism to be in place as regards the charity being nominated. The Chair noted that it should be for the Committee to choose and the Superintendent and Registrar noted that this could be included within his Report at the next meeting of the Joint Committee.

Councillors were referred to the Cremator Project update and noted that the project had been completed on time and within budget, indeed with a small underspend of approximately £2,500.

Members also noted that the independent testing of the new cremators had been carried out by Catalyst Environmental over a two week period in July 2012 and the equipment was showing a 97-99% reduction in the levels of mercury being emitted, meaning Durham Crematorium was fully compliant with the Statutory Guidance issued by the Department for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) which would become law on 1 January 2013.

The Superintendent and Registrar asked Members to recall the Green Energy Proposals reported to the Joint Committee on 27 June 2012 and note that a Project Team consisting of the current project team, together with experts in the field would be formed in October and an Interim Report as regards utilising waste heat would be brought to the Joint Committee in January 2013.

Councillors were asked to note the dates of the Annual Conference of the ICCM, 1 to 3 October 2012, and that the necessary arrangements had been made for the attendance of the Chair and the Superintendent and Registrar.

The Joint Committee recalled that last year, a Christmas tree was placed in the waiting room at the Crematorium enabling a facility for members of the public to write a personal tag and place in on the tree, with St. Cuthbert's Hospice providing the tree, lights, tags and decorations and generating £183.00 from a collection box. Members noted that St. Cuthbert's Hospice had again approached the Superintendent and Registrar to place a tree at the Crematorium this year, noting that no other charities had requested to do so. Members asked how charities would be made aware of this opportunity and the Superintendent and Registrar noted that this had been raised previously, however several other Members noted that given the cost of the tree and decorations in comparison to the amount raised, perhaps only certain charities already ready to place a tree would be interested in doing so.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

A7 Financial Monitoring Report - Spend to 31/08/12 and Projected Outturn to 31/03/13

The Head of Finance – Financial Services referred Members to Financial Monitoring Report, as set out in the usual format, for the period to 31 August 2012 and with projected outturn to 31 March 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee noted that the income and expenditure were in line with the budget and variances were such that projections were for a slight surplus. Members noted a projected Reserve of £989,171 at the year end giving a strong financial position and reiterated the comments of the Superintendent and Registrar in noting that the Cremator Replacement Project had come in on time and on budget, under by approximately £2,500.

Councillor G Holland asked what a prudent level of reserves would be, given the figures as presented in the report being substantial. The Head of Finance – Financial Services indicated that with the cyclic nature of replacement of the cremator equipment every 20 years or so, and the fabric of the building requiring works periodically then there would always be a need to be able to have reserves that would enable these works to be undertaken as required to enhance the Crematorium as an asset. It was added that the Superintendent and Registrar was working on a Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) to include issues of capacity within the Chapel amongst others and that this could be considered in the future by the Joint Committee with the level of reserves being important in being able to carry any proposals forward. The Superintendent and Registrar added that increased space within the Chapel had been raised as an issue at the recent open day and in surveys of users, and the Head of Finance – Financial Services reminded Members that an option to include such works had not been affordable in conjunction with the cremator replacement, however, a SAMP, Masterplan and feasibility study as regards any works would come back to the Joint Committee with all the necessary details and risks associated being set out.

The Chair thanked the Head of Finance – Financial Services and his team for their work.

Resolved:

- (i) That the April to August 2012 Revenue Spend Financial Monitoring Report and associated Provision Outturn position at 31 March 2013 be noted.
- (ii) That the Cremator Replacement Project and Redevelopment Capital Project spend and associated outturn be noted.

A8 Risk Register Update 2012/13

The Head of Finance – Financial Services asked Members to note the Risk Register Update 2012/13 report, the Joint Committee to consider updates on a 6 month basis. Members recalled that the report set out Strategic Risks and Operational Risks and that risks were regularly reviewed by the DCC Risk Management Team.

It was noted that the main risk of the Cremator Replacement Works and the legislation as regards mercury abatement was now closed as the works and testing had been completed. Councillors noted that there was one outstanding action as regards an operation risk, set out at Appendix 4, though this risk would be addressed by the time of the next 6 month review.

Members noted the strong risk management culture that was in place and that this had lead to the Strategic risks and the Operational risks, other than the one outstanding action, as being considered as tolerable.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee note the content of the report and the updated position following the January review.
- (ii) That the Risk Registers are kept up-to-date and continue to be reviewed by the Joint Committee on a half yearly basis, the next one to be completed in June 2013.