

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL
MOUNTSETT CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in the Saltwell Room, Civic Suite, Gateshead Council on **Thursday 31 January 2013 at 10.00 am**

Present:

Councillor O Temple (Chair)

Durham County Council

Councillors A Bainbridge, J Hunter and J Nicholson

Gateshead Council:

Councillors M Charlton, J Lee, K Dodds (Vice-Chair), M Ord, D Davidson and P Mole

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Docherty, O Johnson, M Hodgson and B Stephens (Durham County Council) and Councillors P Ronan (Gateshead Council).

2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 5 October 2012

The minutes of the meeting held on 5th October 2012 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

3 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

4 Quarterly Report of the Bereavement Services Manager.

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

Members noted the performance figures from September 2012 to 31 December 2012 which highlighted that there was a net increase of 54 cremations on the comparable period last year.

Performance was further reported in respect of the sale of memorials sold and it was noted that, 14 plaques had been sold during the period September -December 2012/13 equal to £4592.00 income.

Moving on to report on staffing it was reported that the Superintendent and Registrar's post was now vacant following a period of long term absence. It was noted that a full report

outlining the options available to the joint committee would be presented for consideration at the next meeting in April 2013.

Details were then provided regarding the completion of the job evaluation scheme. Changes to staff's terms and conditions had been implemented from 1 January 2013 and any financial impact had been factored into the financial monitoring report which would be reported later in the meeting.

Moving on to report operational matters the Superintendent and Registrar reported that the DCC Solicitor had now submitted the application for FSA registration in relation to the Pre-Payment Bond scheme. It was noted that this application had now been approved and further proposals could now be considered by the Joint Committee at their meeting in April 2013.

The Bereavement Services Manager then went on to provide details of the Joint Conference of Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain which was to be held from 1 – 3 July 2013. It was proposed that the Bereavement Services Manager and Chair to the Joint Committee attend the event at a cost of £495 per person.

Further information was reported in respect of the Green Flag Award and it was noted that an application for 2013 was to be submitted, details of the application would be reported to a future meeting.

Moving on to provide an update in respect of the recycling of metals scheme, it was noted that subject to members approval, the Chair had suggested that the next round of money to be donated from the recycling of metals, be given to St Oswald's Hospice, Gosforth. It was further suggested that if no further nominations were put forward for future donation recipients, then the Chairman may select his/her chosen charity for the year. It was agreed that the next round of money would be donated in order of charities as per Appendix 3.

The Bereavement Services Manager went on to provide detail relating to the replacement of cremators and installation of mercury abatement plant and it was noted that full details would be presented within the feasibility study at a future meeting.

Details were then reported in respect of work which had been completed to date as highlighted in the Service Asset Management Plan and the works which were currently programmed and scheduled to be completed by the end of March 2013.

Councillor Charlton raised a query regarding the cost of the conference and whether this included travel. In response the Bereavement Services Manager advised that the cost as reported covered the conference and accommodations costs only. Councillor Dodds commented that he had found conferences to be very useful in the past and agreed that the Chair and Bereavement Services Manager should attend.

In relation to the job evaluation scheme, Councillor Temple advised that he had been contacted in his capacity as Chair of the Joint Committee by an affected employee who had raised concerns regarding an employment matter which was unique to former Derwentside employees of the Crematorium and the way in which bonus payments were

made. The changes under job evaluation were resulting in a loss of income to the individual in the region of £2,000 per annum.

Further advice as to how to respond to this employee was sought. The Clerk to the Joint Committee advised that this was matter for DCC as the employer, to discuss with the individual.

Councillor Dodds commented that he agreed that the Crematorium Joint Committee should distance themselves from the situation and forward the concerns to the appropriate officer within DCC to respond accordingly. It was also suggested that the individual should seek their own representation via a Union or alternative.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report with regards to current performance of the crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the Chair and Bereavement Services Manager attend the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Conference.
- (iii) In the absence of future nominations for future recycling income that the Chairman's charity shall benefit.
- (iv) That the Chair of the Joint Committee shall forward the concerns of an affected employee of job evaluation, to the appropriate officer within DCC.

5 Review of Joint Committee's Terms of Reference - Verbal update by the Clerk to the Joint Committee

The Clerk to the Joint Committee advised that the revised Terms of Reference had now been agreed in principle by both Durham County Council and Gateshead Council. The revised terms of reference would be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee for approval and adoption.

Resolved:

That the verbal update be noted.

6 Risk Register 2012/13 - Update

The joint committee considered a report of the Bereavement Services Manager which provided an update on the current position with regards to the Risk Register of the Mountsett Crematorium Committee, in accordance with the arrangements established for the routine reporting of risk issues (for copy see file of minutes).

It was reported that the Risk Register had been reviewed in January 2013 in accordance with the Durham County Council methodology / approach to Risk Management and updated accordingly.

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that due to the long term absence of the Crematorium Manager at Mountsett this had impacted on service delivery and increased workload for staff. This had as a result increased the net impact and likelihood of risks 4 and 10. Actions had been now put in place to mitigate those risks and once complete should reduce the net risk scores.

Only one other operational risk had an outstanding action Risk 8 “Slips, trips and falls”, however since the last meeting, training in this area had now been completed which had reduced the risk to a tolerable level.

Resolved:

- (i) That the content of the report and updated position be noted.
- (ii) The risk registers be continually kept up to date and reviewed by the Joint Committee on a half yearly basis.

7 Financial Monitoring Report 2012/13: Spend to 31/12/12 and Projected Outturn to 31/03/13

The joint committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources & Treasurer to the Joint Committee, which set out details of income and expenditure in the period 1 April 2012 to 31 December 2012, together with the forecast outturn position for 2012/13, highlighting areas of over/underspend against the revenue budgets at a service expenditure analysis level (for copy see file of minutes).

The report further set out details of the funds and reserves of the Joint Committee at 1 April 2012 and the projected position at 31 March 2013, taking into account the forecast financial outturn projection of income and expenditure this year.

The Principal Accountant then went on to advise that the projected outturn was showing a forecast surplus (before transfers to reserves and distribution of surpluses to the partners authorities) of £304,819 at the year end against a budgeted surplus of £270,448, which was £34,371 more than the budgeted position. Reasons for significant variances were detailed within the report.

It was highlighted that there was a significant increase in income projected within 2012/13 mainly due to the number of cremations carried out throughout the year.

With regards to earmarked reserves it was noted that the earmarked reserves projection at 31 March 2013 was £589,818, an in year increase of £144,035 or approximately 32% in year. This was in line with the previously agreed strategy of the Joint Committee.

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

8 Fees and Charges 2013/14

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director: Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out details of the proposed Fees and Charges for Mountsett Crematorium for 2013/14 (for copy see file of minutes).

Details of the proposed charges were detailed within the report alongside comparable charges imposed by Crematorium's within the North east area.

Councillor Hunter raised a query with regards to the adult cremation age, he commented that he understood the adult age to be from 18 years not 16 as stated within the schedule of fees. In response the Bereavement Services Manager advised that adult cremation charges came in from the age of 16 years.

Resolved:

- (i) That the proposed fees and charges be noted and approved with effect from 1 April 2013.
- (ii) That revised fees and charges be incorporated into the 13/14 budget.

9 Provision of Support Services 2013/14

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which presented for approval a proposed Service Level Agreement (SLA) for Support Service provision by Durham County Council to the Mountset Crematorium Joint Committee for the period April 2013 to March 2014 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant advised that the SLA covered the following functions:

- Management Services
- Financial Services
- Administration Services
- Payroll Services
- Human Resources Services.

It further included charges relating to additional work related to the Asset Management Plan.

Resolved:

That the Service Level Agreement for the year 2013/14 be approved.

10 2013/14 Revenue Budget

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director, Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director, Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out proposals with regards to the 2013/14 revenue budget for the Mountset Crematorium (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Accountant advised that the detailed budget proposals were contained within the report and it was further reported that the budget did take into consideration, one off premises costs, which would not feature in future year's budgets.

Resolved:

- (i) That the budget proposals as outlined within the report be noted and approved.
- (ii) That the forecasted level of reserves and balances at 31 March 2014 be noted.