

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Durham Crematorium, South Road, Durham** on **Wednesday 26 June 2013 at 5.30 pm**

Present:

Durham County Council:

Councillors D Bell, A Bonner, J Chaplow, P Conway, K Corrigan, N Foster and M Simmons

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors JV Graham, J Marr (Vice-Chairman) and GD O'Hehir

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from J Buckham, B Moir, M Plews, D Stoker and K Thompson

1 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Clerk to the Joint Committee, Sharon Spence, opened the meeting and asked Members to note that following Local Government elections the membership of the Joint Committee was now:

Durham County Council: Councillors D Bell, A Bonner, J Buckham, J Chaplow, P Conway, K Corrigan, N Foster, B Moir, M Plews, M Simmons, D Stoker and K Thompson

Spennymoor Town Council; Councillors JV Graham, J Marr and GD O'Hehir

Resolved:

That the new membership of the Joint Committee be noted.

2 Appointment of the Chair

The Clerk to the Joint Committee asked for nominations for Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. Members were reminded of the Constitution of the Joint Committee and the convention that, wherever possible, the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship should alternate between the two constituent Local Authorities making up the Joint Committee.

Accordingly, Councillor P Conway proposed Councillor J Marr for the position of Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor N Foster seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor J Marr be appointed Chair for the ensuing year.

COUNCILLOR J Marr in the Chair

3 Appointment of the Vice-Chair

The Chair asked for nominations for Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. Councillor JV Graham proposed Councillor M Plews for the position of Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor GD O'Hehir seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor M Plews be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

The Chair noted the thanks of the Joint Committee for the contribution of the previous Members of the Joint Committee, welcomed the new Members and gave an opportunity for them to introduce themselves to each other and Officers of the Joint Committee.

4 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 April 2013 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chair.

5 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

6 Report of the Superintendent and Registrar

The Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison asked Members to note the performance figures from April 2013 to May 2013 and the comparison to the same period for 2012, highlighting that there was a net increase of 28 cremations, with a total of 393, with 115 from Durham and 278 from outside of the area.

Members were also asked to note that the number of memorials sold had increased in comparison to the same period the previous year, with sales being £5,937.05 greater than the comparable period last year.

The Joint Committee was informed that the vacant position of Superintendent and Registrar had been advertised internally at both Authorities and as no suitable applications were received the position was advertised externally through the usual channels and trade press with the deadline for applications being 4 July 2013. Members noted that the interview process, involving both the Chair and Vice-Chair on behalf of the Joint Committee, would begin the 11 July 2013. The Bereavement Services Manager referred to the last meeting of the Joint Committee where it was agreed for a Business Administration Apprentice post to be established. It was explained that the job description for the role had been completed and recruitment would take place during July.

The Joint Committee noted that arrangements had been made for the Chair, Vice-Chair and the Bereavement Services Manager to attend the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management (ICCM) Learning Convention and Exhibition 2013 being held 30 September – 2 October 2013 at the Forest Pines Hotel, North Lincolnshire.

The Bereavement Services Manager noted the presentation in February by the then Chairman of the Durham County Council, Councillor L Marshall, of the Chairman's Medal, to Geoffrey Gregg, who had played the organ at the Crematorium Chapel on a voluntary basis, most Sunday afternoons for the last 16 years.

The Joint Committee were informed of the Open Evening held on 20 May 2013, which served as an opportunity to thank the outgoing Superintendent and Registrar, Alan José for his 24 years of service to the Crematorium and to provide information on the proposals as regards the Crematorium moving forward to Funeral Directors, Clergy and Funeral Celebrants.

Resolved:

That the Joint Committee note:

- (i) The update report in relation to current performance of the Crematorium.
- (ii) The update as regards the current recruitment exercises.
- (iii) The arrangements for representation at the ICCM Conference.
- (iv) The award of the Durham County Council's Chairman's Medal to Geoffrey Gregg.

7 Forward Plan 2013/14

The Head of Finance - Financial Services, Paul Darby referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining a proposed Forward Plan of meetings for the Joint Committee for the 2013/14 cycle (for copy see file of minutes).

Members were referred to the key reports and documents that would be brought to Joint Committee throughout the cycle, and reminded that should any urgent matter arise then, upon consultation with the Chair and Vice-Chair; a Special Meeting may be called.

Councillor N Foster noted that, as there were a number of new Councillors on the Joint Committee, it was perhaps an appropriate opportunity to canvass Members on what time they wished the meetings of the Joint Committee to be held. Councillors agreed and asked the Clerk to the Joint Committee to write to Members in due course on this matter.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Members of the Joint Committee note and approve the Forward Plan.
- (ii) That the Clerk to the Joint Committee writes to Members seeking views on the start times for the meetings of the Joint Committee.

8 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement

The Head of Finance - Financial Services referred Members to the report within the agenda papers setting out the 2012/13 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for Durham Crematorium, to form part of the Statement of Accounts and Small Bodies Return for the Joint Committee (for copy see file of minutes). It was added that the information within the AGS included:

- Scope of responsibility of the Joint Committee.
- The purpose of the Governance Framework and the Framework itself, including setting out the processes of internal control and financial management by which the Joint Committee directs and controls its functions.
- Review of effectiveness, details of the review of the Governance Framework, informed by the work of Internal Audit, Superintendent and Registrar, External Auditors and other review Agencies and Inspectorates.

The Joint Committee were asked to note that substantial assurance had been provided by the Internal Audit Manager as part of the annual audit, and that this and the reports and the governance reports throughout the year could be relied on as providing good assurance. It was added that the Annual Governance Statement, subsequent to agreement Members would be signed on behalf of the Joint Committee by the Chair and the Treasurer to the Joint Committee, Don McLure.

Resolved:

That the Members of the Joint Committee approve the Annual Governance Statement 2012/13 for consideration within the Statement of Accounts and Annual Return.

9 Revenue Outturn, Small Bodies Return and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013

The Head of Finance - Financial Services referred Members to the report within the agenda papers setting out the Revenue Outturn, Small Bodies Return and Statement of Account for the Year ended 31 March 2013 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee were asked to note that the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts had been prepared in accordance with CIPFA requirements and the Accounting Code of Practice. Members learned that there had been a £5,813 improvement in the previous forecast net income for the year, in comparison to the provisional outturn, and the total net income was £458,469. The Joint Committee were informed of the Reserves Policy that had been agreed at the last meeting in April that formalised arrangements whereby surplus income was transferred into the Major Capital Works Reserves. The Joint Committee noted the variances as set out within the report and Members were asked to take comfort in the strong financial position for the future.

Councillor P Conway asked why the distribution of surplus to the two constituent Authorities was identical for 2011/12 and 2012/13 and whether it was a fixed amount based upon an 80:20 ratio, Durham County Council to Spennymoor Town Council. The Head of Finance - Financial Services noted that both Durham County Council and Spennymoor Town Council had income from the Crematorium set out within their budgets and that the levels were that set pre-Local Government Reorganisation. It was added that since that time, while fees had increased, additional generated income had been transferred to reserves, also noting the cremator replacement works that had been carried out. The Head of Finance - Financial Services added that once the Reserves were built up sufficiently to provide for any future works, they would be an opportunity for the Joint Committee to look at increasing the distribution to the constituent Authorities. Councillor P Conway asked whether the reserves would be drawn upon to ensure the distribution to the constituent Authorities would be maintained at those set levels should there be underperformance in relation to income. The Head of Finance - Financial Services noted that the traditional strong performance of the Crematorium and prudent budget setting process meant that was unlikely to occur, however, should it appear that income was underperforming, Officers would look to bring a report to the Joint Committee to its meeting in January, liaising with the constituent Authorities as appropriate.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Members of the Joint Committee note the April 2012 to March 2013 Income and Expenditure within the Revenue Financial Monitoring Report and subsequent year balance of reserves.
- (ii) That the Members of the Joint Committee approve the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2013.
- (iii) That the Chair and Treasurer sign the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts.