

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in Mountsett Crematorium Meeting Room, Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton on **Monday 22 June 2015 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor O Temple (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Durham County Council

Councillors A Batey, C Hampson, I Jewell, O Milburn and T Nearney

Gateshead Council:

Councillors M Charlton, J Lee and M Ord

1 Election of Chairman to the Joint Committee

Resolved:

That Councillor O Temple be re-elected as Chairman for the ensuing year.

2 Election of Vice-Chairman to the Joint Committee

Resolved:

That Councillor K Dodds be re-elected as Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year.

3 Membership of the Joint Committee

Resolved:

That the membership for the year 2015/16 be noted.

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor K Dearden (Durham County Council) and Councillors D Davidson, L Green and P Ronan (Gateshead Council).

5 Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 April 2015

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 April were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

6 Declarations of Interest, if any.

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

7 Review of the Terms of Reference of the Joint Committee

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Clerk to the Joint Committee which provided details of the review of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee Constitution, which, in accordance with the Annual Governance Statement requirements is reviewed on an annual basis (for copy see file of minutes).

It was reported that the review had not highlighted any requirements for change to the current constitution and therefore reaffirmed the existing governance arrangements currently in place.

Resolved:

That the Constitution be reapproved following its review in accordance with Annual Governance Requirements, with no changes required.

8 Annual Governance Statement 2014/15

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year April 2014 to March 2015 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance (Financial Services) advised that Internal Audit had provided Substantial Assurance on the Joint Committee's System of Internal Control as reported at the previous meeting in April 2015 and that the Joint Committee had all the appropriate governance and control arrangements necessary to satisfy the requirements of the external auditors.

Resolved:

That the Annual Governance Statement be approved for consideration within the Annual Return and signed by the Chair as a true and correct record.

9 Revenue Outturn and Small Bodies Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources which sought approval of the Small Bodies in England Annual Return for Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee for the financial year ended 31 March 2015. The report further included details of the final outturn position against the approved budgets for 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance (Financial Services) proceeded to run through the financial outturn position for 2014/15 advising that the final outturn position was broadly in line with the provisional outturn position reported to the Committee in April. Details of significant variances by expenditure type were contained within the report together with details of the

outturn position for reserves and balances. A Balance Sheet was also appended to the report.

With reference to the Annual Return it was reported that the documents had been prepared in line with CIPFA guidance and was a statutory document.

Councillor Charlton raised a query regarding the £21,000 underspend and the delay of associated works under the premises heading. She subsequently asked whether this would now result in a lot of additional work being required to be undertaken during 2015/16. In response the Head of Finance (Financial Services) advised that this overall figure was as a result of underspending across a number of expenditure heads, where utility costs for example had been less than anticipated and provision for emergency repairs and maintenance works had not been required in year. He acknowledged that some of the underspend was as a result of delays in tarmacking works but that this was a managed position whereby a feasibility study was underway with regards to a potential larger project, details of which would be reported to the Committee in September. In the main underspending had been effectively managed and was due to a combination of factors and there was clear operational reasons where work was to be delayed into 2015/16.

Councillor Charlton further raised a query regarding interest on reserves. The Head of Finance (Financial Services) advised that the interest rate applied was based on the DCC average interest rate on short term investments. The rates being achieved were at historically low levels, as the base rate was so low and had been for a number of years. The rate achieved in 2014/15 was 0.4%. It was also noted that the rate of interest was the same across all pooled reserves. During the course of the year £3,029 had been earned on surplus funds invested short term by DCC on behalf of the Joint Committee.

Resolved:

- (i) That the revenue outturn position as at 31 March 2015, including the year end position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted.
- (ii) That the Small Bodies Annual Return for the year ended 31 March 2015 be approved.
- (iii) That the Small Bodies Annual Return be signed by the Chairman of the Joint Committee and Treasurer.

10 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Bereavement Services Manager which provided an update relating to performance and other operational matters (for copy see file of minutes).

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that 199 cremations had been undertaken during 1 April 2015 and 31 May 2015, compared to 210 in the comparable period last year, a reduction of 11 year on year.

With regards to the sale of memorial plaques it was noted that the number sold during the period was 3 (£1,215) compared to 6 (£2,369) in the same period last year and showed a decrease of 3 £1,154.

Moving on to operational matters it was reported that the Trainee Crematorium Attendant had now qualified as a cremator operator and would be continuing to learn other aspects of crematorium work, including front of house duties and operating the music system.

The Bereavement Services Manager further advised that a letter of thanks had been received from the Child Funeral Charity thanking Mountsett for their recent donation from the Recycling of Metals Scheme of £4,487.

Further details regarding the next Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) was provided and it was suggested that the Bereavement Services Manager and Chair attend on behalf of the Committee.

Councillor Charlton raised a query regarding the extension of car parking and asked what the current situation was regarding this work. In response the Bereavement Services Manager advised that a feasibility study was ongoing and it was hoped that this study, along with pricing, could be reported to the next meeting in September for consideration by the Joint Committee.

Councillor Batey added that she felt that the Joint Committee should congratulate the recently qualified Trainee Crematorium Attendant on their recent success and that the Joint Committee's well wishes be recorded within the minutes.

Resolved:

- (i) That performance for the period April / May be noted.
- (ii) That the progress of the Trainee Crematorium Attendant be noted.
- (iii) That the distribution of recycling income to the respective charity and recent letter of thanks be noted.
- (iv) To agree to the attendance of the Bereavement Services Manager and the Chair at the Annual Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Conference.

11 Forward Plan 2015/16

The Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out details of the suggested forward plan of meetings for the forthcoming year 2015/16 (for copy see file of minutes).

It was noted that due to the timing of the next ICCM conference the next meeting would now take place on 25 September 2015.

Resolved:

That the proposed schedule of meetings for 2015/16 be approved.