

## **DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

### **CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE**

At the Annual General Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Committee Room 1B, County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 24 June 2015** at **2.00 pm**

#### **Present:**

##### **Durham County Council:**

Councillors D Bell, J Chaplow, P Conway, N Foster, B Kellett, M Simmons, D Stoker and K Thompson

##### **Spennymoor Town Council:**

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

#### **1 Membership of the Joint Committee**

The Clerk to the Joint Committee, Laura Renaudon, noted changes to the Membership of the Joint Committee following the Annual Meetings of the two constituent Authorities. It was added that Councillor B Kellett was a new representative for Durham County Council and Councillor P Lawton was a new representative for Spennymoor Town Council.

#### **Resolved:**

That the changes in Membership of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee be noted.

#### **2 Appointment of the Chairman for the ensuing year**

The Clerk to the Joint Committee asked for nominations for Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year noting that the terms of reference required this to be the outgoing Vice Chairman.

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

#### **Resolved:**

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor JV Graham be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

**COUNCILLOR JV Graham** in the Chair

### **3 Appointment of the Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year**

The Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year noting that, as per the terms of reference, this should be a Member from Durham County Council. Councillor G O'Hehir proposed Councillor M Plews for the position of Vice-Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor J Chaplow seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

#### **Resolved:**

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

### **4 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Bonner, K Corrigan, P Lawton, B Moir and M Plews (Durham County Council) and P Lawton (Spennymoor Town Council).

### **5 Minutes of the meeting held 22 April 2015**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2015 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chairman.

### **6 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

### **7 Review of the Terms of Reference**

The Clerk to the Joint Committee referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining the Terms of Reference for the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Members were reminded that following audit reviews it was recommended that the Joint Committee undertake an annual review of the Terms of Reference and update as necessary. It was explained that there were no proposed changes to the Terms of Reference at this time.

#### **Resolved:**

That the Members of the Joint Committee note the Review of the Terms of Reference and reapprove the Constitution as set out in Appendix 2 to the report.

## **8 2014/15 Annual Governance Statement**

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.

The Head of Finance – Financial Services, Paul Darby reminded Members that the AGS was prepared in line with CIPFA and SOLACE guidance and formed part of the Small Bodies in England Annual Return for the Joint Committee. Councillors were reminded that the AGS set out the governance framework for the Joint Committee and was informed by the views of Internal Audit, which had been set out in the report to the Joint Committee in April. There were no significant governance issues or matters worthy of disclosing in the AGS.

### **Resolved:**

That the Annual Governance Statement be approved for consideration as part of the Small Bodies in England Annual Return 2014/15 and that the Chairman be authorised to sign the Statement.

## **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 Return, with the report also including details of the financial outturn position against approved budgets for 2014/15 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance – Financial Services referred Members to the financial outturn position for 2014/15, advising that the final outturn position was slightly improved in comparison with the provisional outturn position. Details of significant variances were contained within the report and duly noted. The report also included details of the improved position, why this had occurred and updated position in terms of reserves and balances held. It was added that the Major Capital Works reserve was maintained in line with agreed policy and Members were reminded of the use of reserves to accelerate the improvement works ongoing at the Crematorium.

With reference to the Small Bodies Return, it was highlighted that this was a statutory return and once agreed and signed by the Chairman, Treasurer and Clerk it would be submitted to the Joint Committee's External Auditors accordingly. Members were also asked to note a simple balance sheet was included in the report, as discussed at the meeting held last September.

Councillor D Stoker noted the excellent performance of the Crematorium and asked whether the reserves were "ahead of the curve" in terms of providing the necessary funds to enable cremator replacement and whether it would be possible for the constituent Authorities to look to a possible increased in the distributed surplus.

The Head of Finance – Financial Services noted that the Joint Committee had previously agreed to maintain the current level of fees and charges and also had agreed to utilise the Major Capital Works reserve to accelerate the improvement works ongoing at the Crematorium. It was noted that the cost of replacing of cremators would be in the region of £1 million and therefore there needed to be sufficient reserves to cover this and the costs of any associated works. It was added that on this basis, there were currently no proposals to change to the distribution of surplus to the constituent Authorities.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the revenue outturn position as at 31 March 2015, including the year-end position with regards reserves and balances of the Joint Committee, together with the Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2015 be noted.
- (ii) That the Small Bodies in England Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2015 be approved.
- (iii) That the Chairman, Treasurer and Clerk sign the Small Bodies in England Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2015.

**10 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report**

The Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison asked Members to note the performance figures from 1 April 2015 to 31 May 2015 and the comparison to the same period for 2014, highlighting that there was a net decrease of 17 cremations year on year. It was noted there was a total of 353 for the three month period with the April to May profile breakdown showing 109 from Durham, 18 from Spennymoor and 226 from outside of the area.

Members were asked to note that the number of memorials sold had decreased in comparison to the same period the previous year, with sales being £2,815 less than the comparable period last year.

The Joint Committee noted the continuing issue in respect of a long-term sickness and was reminded of the arrangements put in place for Durham County Council to provide assistance until such time as the employee returned to work.

The Joint Committee noted that the usual arrangements as regards attendance at the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Learning Convention and Exhibition, to be held 28 September to 30 September 2015, had been made for the Bereavement Services Manager and the Chairman.

Councillors noted that the Recycling of Metals Scheme had generated a sum of £4,487 for Macmillan Cancer Support and that a cheque had been presented to the organisation by Councillor M Plews, Councillor JV Graham and the Bereavement Services Manager. Members noted a letter of thanks from the organisation attached to the report at Appendix 3.

The Bereavement Services Manager reminded Members of the recent circulation of Project Update No.7 in relation to the Crematorium Improvement Works, also attached at Appendix 4 for information.

The Joint Committee noted that Phase 3 works had commenced the weekend of 11 April 2015 and the majority of the works would be undertaken over subsequent weekends. Members noted works were progressing well and Funeral Directors were advised of the arrangements in place and continued to be supportive of the investment and improvements being made.

Councillor B Kellett noted a row within the table at Appendix 2 to the report was labelled "Morocco", albeit with no number of cremations listed against it. The Bereavement Services Manager explained that a service had taken place previously with the country of origin had been Morocco.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the current performance of the Crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the continued long term sickness absence and arrangements put in place be noted.
- (iii) That the attendance of the Chairman and the Bereavement Services Manager at the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Learning Convention and Exhibition 2015 be approved.
- (iv) That the distribution of recycling income to the respective charity be noted.
- (v) That the progress of Phase 3 works be noted.

## **11 Forward Plan 2015/16**

The Joint Committee considered a Report of the Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out proposals in respect of the Forward Plan of meetings of the Joint Committee for the municipal year 2015/16.

The Head of Finance – Financial Services advised that the list of business to be conducted by the Joint Committee was not exhaustive and further items of business may be considered throughout the course of the year. It was added that the meeting in September 2015 was proposed to be held on 23 September, to avoid the ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2015 as mentioned at Item 10, and held at 5.30pm at Durham Crematorium, South Road, Durham, to afford Members the opportunity to view the completed Crematorium Improvement Works.

**Resolved:**

That the proposed schedule of meetings as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.

## **12 Traffic Speeds - South Road, Durham**

The Chairman noted that Councillor D Stoker had approached him with a matter concerning traffic speeds at South Road, Durham. Councillor D Stoker thanked the Chairman for the opportunity to update Members of the Joint Committee on this issue.

Councillor D Stoker noted he was the Local Member for the area that included Durham Crematorium, located off South Road, Durham. Councillor D Stoker added he had been active over the last 2-3 years in respect of attempting to reduce traffic speeds along South Road, noting the current speed limit was 40mph.

Members were reminded of the layout of the road, namely the blind turn when approaching from the direction of the New Inn and a hump in the road, with a curve in the road when travelling in the opposite direction. Councillor D Stoker noted there had been several accidents on this stretch of the road and that he had spoken to Durham County Council Officers in relation to the dangers of fast moving traffic coming upon slow moving funeral corteges approaching the Crematorium.

Councillor D Stoker noted that calls for a reduction in the speed limit had been refused 2 years ago, however, in light of approved development at the former Mount Oswald Golf Course he felt that it may be appropriate for the issue to be revisited. Councillor D Stoker reminded Members that there were several properties and entrances along this stretch of road, including: the Botanical Gardens: Park and Ride facility; Durham High School; Durham Crematorium; in addition to 3 entrances to the new estates being built. Councillor D Stoker asked, if the Joint Committee was so minded, whether a letter of support from the Joint Committee in favour of a reduction in the speed limit along this stretch of road may help highlight the issue.

Councillor N Foster offered the view that the Joint Committee ought not to initiate the process and that there were appropriate processes to be followed in respect of proposals for changes to speed limits, and representations could be made if the Highways Authority were to choose to consult on any proposed speed limit reductions.