

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At the Annual Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Durham Crematorium, South Road, Durham** on **Wednesday 28 June 2017** at **5.30 pm**

Present:

Durham County Council:

Councillors D Brown, J Chaplow, K Corrigan, P Jopling, M McKeon, S Quinn, J Stephenson and K Thompson

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillor L Maddison

1 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Clerk to the Joint Committee, Laura Renaudon, noted changes to the Membership of the Joint Committee following recent elections and the Annual Meetings of the two constituent Authorities. Those Officers and Members present introduced themselves and the Membership for the Joint Committee was confirmed as:

Durham County Council: D Bell, D Brown, J Chaplow, P Jopling, H Liddle, M McGaun,
M McKeon, S Quinn, J Shuttleworth, K Thompson, K Corrigan and J Stephenson

Spennymoor Town Council: G Darkes, I Machin and L Maddison

Resolved:

That the change in the 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 would normally require this to be the outgoing Vice-Chairman, however, the previous Vice-Chairman was not returned at the recent elections. It was added that, wherever possible, the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship alternated between the two constituent Authorities. As last year Durham County Council held the Chairmanship and Spennymoor Town Council held the Vice-Chairmanship, the position of Chairman would be for a Spennymoor Town Council Member.

Accordingly, Town Councillor L Maddison was proposed for the position of Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Town Councillor L Maddison be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

COUNCILLOR L Maddison in the Chair

3 Appointment of the Vice-Chairman for the ensuing year

The Chairman thanked Members for their support and 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 J Chaplow was proposed for the position of Vice-Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

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

4 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Bell, H Liddle and J Shuttleworth and Town Councillors G Darkes and I Machin.

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 April 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chairman.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager, Ian Hoult referred to Minute 4, Quarterly Performance and Operational Report, noting the long service of two of the Officers working at Durham Crematorium. He explained that, as the Service Manager with responsibility for the Council's Crematoria, he took great comfort that the strong reputation that had been built up as regards Durham Crematorium was in safe hands. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted that while there had been a lot of investment and change at Durham Crematorium, the performance of the facility and quality of the service had not been negatively affected by those works, a testament to the frontline staff providing excellent customer service for our residents.

Members were asked to thank the Crematorium Attendant, Mr Stephen Tinkler who had worked at Durham Crematorium for 30 years.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained that the Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison, had worked within Local Authorities for 30 years, with his current role also encompassing the management of the Council's other Crematorium, Mountsett Crematorium at Dipton, as well as those cemeteries operated by the Authority.

Members were asked to thank the Bereavement Services Manager, for his 30 years of service.

The Chairman thanked the Neighbourhood Protection Manager, asked the Members of the Joint Committee to show their appreciation for the Officers' long service, and suggested that a letter of thanks from the Joint Committee be sent to the two Officers.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Minutes of the meeting held 26 April 2017 be agreed as a correct record be noted.
- (ii) That a letter thanking those Officers with 30 years' service be prepared and sent on behalf of the Joint Committee.

6 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

7 Annual Constitutional Review

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.

Councillor D Brown noted that there were several references to the former City of Durham Council and asked whether this should be amended to reflect that, following Local Government Reorganisation in 2009, Durham County Council was one of the two constituent Local Authorities represented on the Joint Committee. The Clerk to the Joint Committee noted that those references were to previous arrangements and an Agreement between the former City of Durham Council and Spennymoor Town Council. She added that the Agreement as set out at Appendix 2 superseded previous agreements.

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 Annual Governance Statement 2016/17

The Joint Committee considered a Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Resources / Treasurer to the Joint Committee and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which provided details of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year April 2016 to March 2017 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services, Paul Darby reminded Members that the AGS was prepared in line with CIPFA and SOLACE guidance and formed part of the 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, noting “substantial assurance”. There were no significant governance issues or matters worthy of disclosing in the AGS.

It was added that the AGS looked to answer seven assertions relevant to the Joint Committee, as set out within the report and the AGS at Appendix 2, providing evidence of how the Joint Committee and Crematorium satisfy those assertions.

Resolved:

That the Annual Governance Statement be approved for consideration as part of the Joint Committee’s Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2017 and that the Chairman and Treasurer be authorised to sign the Statement.

9 Revenue Outturn & Joint Committees Annual Return for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2017

The Joint Committee considered a Joint Report of the Corporate Director of Resources / Treasurer to the Joint Committee and the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which sought approval of the Joint Committees Return, with the report also including details of the financial outturn position against approved budgets for 2016/17 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services referred Members to the financial outturn position for 2016/17, advising that the final outturn position was broadly in line with the provisional outturn position, with a minor decrease in the overall net income for the year. Details of significant variances were contained within the report and duly noted. Members were reminded that in terms of capital works, while the canopies had been completed, some works had carried over into the next financial year, as set out at paragraph 9 of the report.

The report also included details of the updated position in terms of reserves and balances held and it was added that the Major Capital Works reserve was maintained in line with agreed policy.

With reference to the Joint 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 the balance sheet was attached at Appendix 2 of the report.

Councillor K Thompson noted that the report set out a healthy financial position, however asked as regards the amount required to be in reserves to cover the cost of cremator replacement. The Head of Finance and Transactional Services noted that Members may recall that the scheme of works carried out at Durham Crematorium included elements other than cremator replacement, such as building extensions and car park works, and that it was felt that the level in reserves was approaching the amount required to cover cremator replacement, estimated to be approximately £1 million.

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services added that he would prepare a strategy paper for the September meeting outlining the position in terms of fees and charges. He noted that for this year, the Joint Committee had agreed not to increase its fees as Mountsett Crematorium was to undertake improvement works, reciprocating Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee's decision not to increase their fees while Durham had undertaken improvement works. The Head of Finance and Transactional Services explained that, in the context of the fees at Durham and Mountsett being the lowest in the North East, Members may wish to look at the options in terms of fees and charges, perhaps with more dividend for each of the constituent Authorities. He added that with the Strategy Paper would provide Members an opportunity to look at this, in the context of the Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP), prior to budget setting in January 2018.

Councillor P Jopling asked what differences existed between cremator equipment and mercury abatement equipment.

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services explained that the current cremators at Durham Crematorium were fitted with mercury abatement equipment, and this meant they were not subject to paying into CAMEO (Crematoria Abatement of Mercury Emissions Organisation), a system akin to landfill diversion/landfill tax whereby those not abating mercury emissions would pay an amount into the scheme per cremation.

The Chairman noted she would be very interested in a strategy paper as described by the Head of Finance and Transactional Services, and looked forward to the Joint Committee receiving the report at its September meeting.

Resolved:

- (i) That the revenue and capital outturn position as at 31 March 2017, including the year-end position with regards reserves and balances of the Joint Committee, together with the Balance Sheet as at 31 March 2017 be noted.

- (ii) That Section 1 - Annual Governance Statement 2016/17 of the Joint Committees Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2017 be approved.
- (iii) That Section 2 - Accounting Statements 2015/16 of the Joint Committees Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2017 be approved.
- (iv) That the Chairman, Treasurer and Clerk sign the Joint Committees Annual Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2017.
- (v) That a Strategy Paper be prepared for consideration by the Joint Committee at its meeting in September 2017.

10 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report

The Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison asked Members to note the performance figures from 1 April 2017 to 31 May 2017 and the comparison to the same period for 2016, highlighting that there was a net decrease of 6 cremations year on year. It was noted there was a total of 375 for the three month period with the April to May profile breakdown showing 115 from Durham, 26 from Spennymoor and 234 from outside of the area.

Members were asked to note that the number of memorials sold was the same when comparing to the same period the previous year, however, those sales represented an increase of income, being £3,007 more than the comparable period last year.

The Joint Committee noted that the vacant Cremator Operative post had been advertised internally at both Durham County Council and Spennymoor Town Council and interviews had been held on 13 June 2017. The Bereavement Services Manager explained that the previous Trainee Cremator Operative had been successful and would take up the post shortly.

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 25 to 27 September 2017 in Oxfordshire, had been made for the Bereavement Services Manager and the Chairman.

Councillors noted that the Recycling of Metals Scheme had generated a sum of £5,000 for the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Charity (SANDS) and that as there had not been the opportunity to present the cheque due to the election period, arrangements would be with the Chairman in this regard.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current performance of the Crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the appointment with regards to the Crematorium Operative 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 2017 be noted.
- (iv) That the distribution of recycling income to the respective charity be noted.

11 Forward Plan 2017/18

The Joint Committee considered a Report of the Corporate Director of Resources / 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 2017/18.

The Head of Finance and Transactional 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, an example being the strategy paper as previously mentioned.

Resolved:

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

12 Member Training

The Chairman noted she felt that training for Members of the Joint Committee would be useful and asked that this be arranged.

Councillor J Chaplow asked as regards the adjacent burial site and the Neighbourhood Protection Manager explained that while the matter was outside of the remit of the Joint Committee, the matter was being addressed in a thorough and correct manner and Members would be informed as regards developments through the correct channels.