

## DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton, Stanley, Durham** on **Friday 29 September 2017** at **3.30 pm**

**Present:**

**Councillor O Temple (Chairman)**

**Members of the Committee:**

**Durham County Council**

Councillors A Bainbridge, J Carr, J Charlton, C Hampson and O Milburn

**Gateshead Council:**

Councillors M Charlton

### **1 Apologies for Absence**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor A Batey.

### **2 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest.

### **3 Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 June 2017 were confirmed as a correct record and signed and initialled by the Chairman, subject to typographical errors on page 1 being amended on to read:

“That Councillor K Dodds be appointed as **Vice-Chairman** of the Joint Committee...” and;  
“The minutes of the meeting held on 28 April 2017 were **confirmed** as a...”

### **4 External Auditor Annual Review of the Return for the Year Ended 31 March 2017**

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and Corporate Director Resources / Treasurer to the Joint Committee which presented the External Auditors (Mazars LLP) Annual review of the Joint Committees Return for the year ended 31 March 2017 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Real, Philip Curran advised that the audit had now been concluded, adding that there had been no material weaknesses highlighted around the Joint Committee’s system of internal control.

## **Resolved:**

That the Joint Committee approve the Joint Committee's Return for the year ended 31 March 2017 including the External Report 2016/17 Certificate.

## **5 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report**

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

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that during the period 1 June– 31 August 2017 there were 350 cremations undertaken and increase of 8 on the comparable period last year. He further reported that the number of plaques during the period was 19 (£6,540) which was an increase of 7, representing an increase of £2,724 year on year.

The Bereavement Services Manager further reported that the Crematorium had been successful in retaining the Green Flag Award for the sixth year running and was testimony to the dedication of the staff. This award was in addition to the Gold Star Status awarded by the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management.

It was also reported that the national recycling of metals scheme had produced a surplus of £350,000 from the 2017/18 collection. It was noted a cheque in the sum of £5,000 had been presented to Coping with Cancer North East and that a further cheque in sum of £5,000 for the Stillbirth and Neonatal Death Society (SANDS) had been received, with arrangements being made for the presentation to charity.

Members further noted progress in respect of the replacement of cremators and installation of mercury abatement equipment. It was reported that Direct Services were progressing well, and ATI were due to begin work on site on 3 October 2017, however due to industrial action, they would begin 10 October 2017. The Bereavement Services Manager went on to provide a brief update on the Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) including the planned crematorium improvement works.

The Chairman thanked the Officer and asked for any questions from the Joint Committee.

Councillor J Charlton asked who decided upon the charities to receive donations from the recycling of metals scheme. The Bereavement Services Manager explained that a list of charities had been compiled, following feedback from Members of the Committee, and that list was worked down until all had received support, then it would return to the top of the list. It was added that should Members have any proposals for appropriate charities to be added to the list they could let the Bereavement Services Manager know.

The Bereavement Services Manager noted that while attending the recent Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2017 he had the opportunity to view a video showing the recycling of metals process and the reasons why it was carried out. He added he felt this may be beneficial for Members information, the Bereavement Services Manager noted he would look into how this may be achieved.

Councillor M Charlton noted that the SAMP set out redecoration for the Crematorium being 2021, she asked if redecoration should not be carried out sooner. The Bereavement Services Manager noted that redecoration works were scheduled for this year, with 2021 being the next time after that.

Councillor O Milburn asked as regards the repairs to the Chapel, the Bereavement Services Manager noted that there would be the requirement of specialist to carry out works to the stained glass windows and roof.

**Resolved:**

- (i) That the current performance of the crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That the continued success with regards to the Green Flag Award be noted
- (iii) That the current round of money available under the recycling of metals scheme be noted.
- (iv) That the current position with regard to cremator replacement be noted.
- (v) That the content of the Service Asset Management Plan be noted and agreed.

**6 Financial Monitoring Report: 2017/18: Position at 31/08/17 with Projected Outturn to 31/03/18**

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and the Corporate Director of Resources/Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out details of income and expenditure in the period 1 April 2017 to 31 August 2017, together with the provisional outturn position for 2017/18, highlighting areas of over/underspend against the revenue budgets at a service expenditure analysis level.

The report further detailed the funds and reserves of the Joint Committee at 1 April 2017 and forecast outturn position at 31 March 2018, taking into account the provisional financial outturn (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager noted that there had been an increase in cremations during the period which had led to an increase in income of approximately £88,000. Members noted that the earmarked reserves would be used to fund the cremator replacement works and it was forecast that £1,603,524 would be used for those capital works. It was added that the forecast reserves and balances at the year-end was £303,670.

Councillor M Charlton asked if the increase in cremation was due to an increase in the death rate. The Bereavement Services Manager noted that the relationship was more in terms of birth rate and related to the "baby boomer" generation.

**Resolved:**

That the Joint Committee note the April to August 2017 revenue spend financial monitoring report and associated provisional outturn position at 31 March 2018, including the projected year end position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee.

**7 Risk Register 2017/18 - Update**

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and the Corporate Director of Resources/Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided an update on the current position with regards to the Risk Register of the Mountsett Crematorium (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Finance Manager noted that the report set out the service risk and a health and safety risk register, maintained in accordance with the County Council's methodology and approach to risk management. It was noted that since the previous risk update in April 2017, the three-year, in-depth review of health and safety risks had been undertaken by the Bereavement Services Manager, supported by the Council's Occupational Health and Safety Team.

Members noted that one issue had been highlighted and this led to a recommendation that a fire-proof door be installed in the ashes store room. It was added that this would be implemented by the Bereavement Services Manager as part of the current building works, to be completed by December 2017.

Councillor M Charlton asked as regards the phrase "tolerate" in conjunction with several risks. The Finance Manager noted they were such that the chance was remote and therefore they were tolerated. The Bereavement Services Manager added that in the example of pandemic flu, there was a contingency plan in place and therefore this was "tolerate". The Chairman noted "Treat, terminate, tolerate, transfer", the "four Ts" in respect of risk control planning.

Councillor J Charlton asked if the fire door would be new, the Bereavement Services Manager noted it would be included as part of the Phase 2 works.

#### **Resolved:**

- (i) That the following risk be added to the service risk register, to reflect all risks in the health and safety risk register, '*Serious breach of health and safety legislation*';
- (ii) That the detailed health and safety risk register no longer be included in the half-yearly update report to the Crematorium Joint Committee;
- (iii) That Members of the Crematorium Joint Committee note the content of this report and the updated position; and
- (iv) That the service risk register continues to be reviewed by the Crematorium Joint Committee half-yearly.

#### **8 Internal Audit Charter**

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Chief internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager which provided details of the revised Internal Audit Charter (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Chief internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager, P Bradley explained that this was an update to the Internal Audit Charter, and was prepared in line with the Public

Sector Internal Audit Standards (PSIAS) that came into effect from April 2013. He added that the revised Charter now included the “mission” of Internal Audit in terms of safeguarding and the issues of risk and fraud, combined within a mission statement.

**Resolved:**

That the Joint Committee approve the revised Internal Audit Charter as attached at Appendix 2 to the report.

**9 Annual Review of the System of Internal Audit**

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and the Corporate Director of Resources/Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the review of the effectiveness of the Durham County Council Internal Audit Service, which was carried out by the County Council’s Audit Committee in June 2017 (for copy see file of Minutes).

It was highlighted that this was the usual annual review and Members were reminded of a peer review carried out by Newcastle City Council in April and May 2016 which had concluded “that Durham County Council’s Internal Audit Service conforms to the requirements of the PSIAS”, previously presented to the Joint Committee in September 2016.

**Resolved:**

That the contents of the report and review of the efficiency and effectiveness of the Durham County Council Internal Audit Service be noted.