

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Chapel - Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton** on **Monday 29 April 2019** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor O Temple (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:
Durham County Council

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

Gateshead Council:

Councillors J Lee and M Ord

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors J Shuttleworth (Durham County Council) and Councillors C Buckley, L Green and S Green (Gateshead Council).

2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2019 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest submitted.

4 Mountsett Crematorium Performance and Operational Report:

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

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that 349 cremations had been undertaken during the period 1 January 2019 to 31 March 2019, in comparison to 420 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 71 year on year.

The total number of cremations in 2018/19 was 1,330 compared with 1,396 in 2017/18, a decrease of 66 year on year. However, it was noted that a prudent assumption of 1,300 cremations would be undertaken during the year resulting in the actual number being 30 more than the budgeted position and was reflected in an overachievement of cremation fee income of £18,048 in year.

Moving on, it was reported that during the period the number of value of memorials sold was 15 / £4,479 compared to 4 / £1,185 in the same period last year, a year on year increase of 11 / £3,294.

An update was then provided to the Joint Committee on operational matters. In relation to staffing, the Bereavement Services Manager advised that an appointment had now been made to the new Crematorium Attendant post and it was further proposed that in order to ensure adequate relief cremator operators were in position, a further advert be placed.

Details were then provided, with regard to the next Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain to be held Monday 1 – 3 July 2019.

It was reported that a cheque for £7,000 had been received relating to the recycling of metals scheme and had been forwarded to Winston's Wish Charity. The Great North Air Ambulance had been nominated to receive the next distribution of funds.

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that further to discussions at a previous meeting, a dedicated website for the crematorium had now been developed and required populating with relevant information. It was expected that the site would be ready to go live in June 2019 and members would be notified once this had been done.

In conclusion the Bereavement Services Manager noted that further to recommendations made by internal audit regarding a procurement exercise to be undertaken to supply entries into the Book of Remembrance in order to ensure value for money whilst maintaining quality. The procurement exercise has now been completed and the original company were successful in retaining the work at a slightly cheaper price.

Councillor Charlton asked whether there had been any long-term employee absence related to stress. The Bereavement Services Manager advised that there had not.

Resolved:

- i) That the current performance be noted.
- ii) That the current situation with regards to the crematorium attendant's post be noted.

- iii) That the attendance at the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities be noted.
- iv) That the distribution of recycling income to the respective charity be noted.
- v) That the updated position with regard to the website development be noted.
- vi) That the continuation of the current supplier with regards to the Book of Remembrance be noted.

5 Financial Monitoring Report - Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2019

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which presented details of the provisional outturn position for 2018/19 and the projected level of reserves and balances at 31 March 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services advised that the projected revenue outturn was a surplus (before transfers to reserves and distribution of surpluses to the partner authorities) of £424,643 against a budgeted surplus of £304,314, £120,329 more than the budgeted position. Therefore, contributions to the earmarked reserves were £120,329 more than originally budgeted.

It was further noted that in line with the MCJC Reserve Policy, a transfer to the General Reserve of £13,755 was required. The retained reserves of the MCJC at 31 March 2019 were forecast to be £347,149 along with a General Reserve of £278,055, giving a forecast total reserves and balances position of £625,204 at the year end.

Resolved:

That the April 2018 to March 2019 financial monitoring report and associated provisional revenue outturn position at 31 March 2019, including the projected year position with regards to the reserves and balances of £625,204 at the year end.

6 Risk Register Update 2018/19

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Local Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provide an overview of the outcome of the half-yearly risk review in March 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.

7 Annual Internal Audit Report 2018/19

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager which presented the Annual Internal Audit Report for 2018/19 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the overall 'Substantial' opinion provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Council's control environment for 2018/19.

8 Exclusion of Press and Public

Resolved:

That under Section 100 A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt info as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

9 Update Report on Cremator Replacement and Contingency Planning

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director Regeneration and Local Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided an update on the cremator replacement and contingency planning since the last meeting (for copy see file of Minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report be noted.