

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in Chapel - Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton on **Monday 24 June 2019 at 9.30 a.m.**

Present:

Councillor O Temple in the Chair

Durham County Council

Councillors J Carr, J Charlton and C Hampson

Gateshead Council:

Councillors K Dodds, D Bradford (Vice-Chair), S Green, J Lee and M Ord

1 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Clerk informed the Joint Committee that Councillor S Robinson had replaced Councillor J Shuttleworth (Durham County Council) and Councillor M Charlton, who had previously served on the Joint Committee, had replaced Councillor C Buckley (Gateshead Council).

Resolved

That the Committee note the revised membership for 2019/20.

2 Apologies

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillors A Bainbridge, A Batey, O Milburn, S Robinson, B Stephens (Durham County Council) and L Green (Gateshead Council).

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest in relation to any items of business on the agenda.

4 Appointment of Chair

Councillor K Dodds nominated Councillor O Temple for the position of Chair to the Joint Committee. The nomination was seconded by Councillor J Charlton.

There being no further nominations, it was **unanimously resolved:**

That Councillor O Temple be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor O Temple in the Chair

5 Appointment of Vice-Chair

The Chair sought nominations for Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. Councillor C Hampson nominated Councillor D Bradford for the position of Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee. The nomination was Seconded by Councillor M Ord.

There being no further nominations, it was **unanimously resolved:**

That Councillor D Bradford (Gateshead Council) be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

6 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2019 were agreed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

7 Changes to Constitution / Terms of Reference

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Clerk which provided details of a proposed revision of the Joint Committee Constitution relating to substitutes. The Constitution was reviewed on an annual basis in accordance with the Annual Governance Statement (for copy see file of Minutes).

The proposal to provide for substitute members had arisen following the cancellation of a meeting of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee as a result of it being inquorate. Unlike most local authority meetings, there was no provision for a Committee member to nominate a substitute at present. The proposed change to the Constitution had been agreed by the full Council of Durham County Council and the relevant clause had been incorporated into the revised draft Constitution. The effect of the clause would allow for a member of the joint committee to nominate a substitute to attend a meeting on their behalf if they were unable to attend, providing that the Clerk was notified of the nominated substitute, in writing by 4pm on the day before the meeting. Substitutes would be entitled to speak and vote on all items of business. A member may only nominate a substitute from the same relevant authority of which they are a member.

Councillor K Dodds commented that the Clerk inferred that a substitute member should be from the same relevant authority but also felt that it should be explicitly stated that the representative should be from same political party, given that the

membership of the Joint Committee was calculated using the political balance of both Durham County Council and Gateshead Council.

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services informed the Committee that he had spoken to the Head of Legal and Democratic Services of Durham County Council and it was expected that a member would seek a substitute from within their own political party, with inference being more on an expectation, without being explicitly stated in the Constitution.

Councillor K Dodds informed the Clerk that he would follow-up the query with the Head of Legal Services at Gateshead Council.

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 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services and the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the period April 2018 to March 2019 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The AGS had been prepared in accordance with CIPFA and SOLACE best practice guidance and formed part of the Annual Return for the Joint Committee. The AGS demonstrated how the Joint Committee complied with the requirements of auditing regulations in relation to the annual review of the effectiveness of its system of internal control against seven assertions relating to good governance, financial management and internal control. There were no significant governance issues or matters to disclose in the AGS.

Resolved

- i. That the Joint Committee note the content of the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement; and
- ii. That the Chair and Treasurer be authorised to sign the 2018/19 Annual Governance Statement as part of the consideration of the Joint Committees Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2019.

9 Revenue Outturn and Joint Committees Annual Return for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2019

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services, Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer

to the Joint Committee which sought approval of the Joint Committee Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) for the financial year ended 31 March 2019, including details of the final outturn position against the approved budgets for 2018/19 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services advised that the final outturn position was broadly in line with the provisional outturn position reported to the Joint Committee on 29 April 2019, with only very minor changes across a number of budget levels. Details of any significant variances and the reasons by subjective analysis were detailed in the report.

Resolved

- i. That the revenue outturn position as at 31 March 2019, including the year end position regarding reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted;
- ii. That Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2018/19 of the AGAR for the financial year ended 31 March 2019 be approved;
- iii. That Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2018/19 of the AGAR be approved; and
- iv. That the Chair, Clerk and Treasurer be authorised to sign the AGAR for the financial year ended 31 March 2019.

10 Mountsett Crematorium Performance and Operational Report

The Joint Committee noted a report of the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar which provided an update of performance and operational matters at the crematorium (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Joint Committee noted that there had been 236 cremations undertaken in 2018/19 compared to 243 the previous year which related to an exceptionally high number of deaths in April 2018, in line with national trends which accounted for the decrease in numbers.

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar informed the Joint Committee that there had been one less memorial sold in the period to 31 May compared to the same period in the previous year.

The Joint Committee noted that the Institute of Cemetery and Cremation Management Learning Convention and Exhibition would be held from 23-25 September 2019 near Kenilworth. The Chair informed the Joint Committee that he did not wish to attend the event, as he had attended previously, however, he was happy for another Member to attend this beneficial event, along with representatives from around the country. Any expressions of interest were to be forwarded to the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar.

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar informed the Joint Committee that document retention and scanning/secure storage had been agreed in January

2019 following an audit recommendation. Since that time, discussions had taken place with Box It, who were successful in tendering for the works. Unfortunately following testing, Box It were unable to accommodate the scanning of the records to the print quality required with some of the documentation being unreadable. Additionally, the documents were not returned in the order required. Following further discussion, it was confirmed that the costs to carry out the work to store records in the order required would double the cost of the work. Since then, discussions had been held with the NHS would could accommodate the work. Testing had returned successful results in terms of quality and collation of the records. This would also incur additional costs of £1161 which had been factored into the 2019/20 revenue outturn projections. Internal audit had confirmed that this was an acceptable solution.

11 Forward Plan 2019/20

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which proposed a forward plan of meetings for the forthcoming year (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Head of Finance and Transactional Services informed the Joint Committee that the schedule followed a similar pattern of meetings as previous years with meetings in September (to consider the service asset management plan), January 2020 (to set the annual budget and fees for the financial year) and April (to consider the AGS and provisional outturn report). There was provision for the Joint Committee to call an urgent meeting should the need arise.

12 Exclusion of the 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 information as defined in Paragraphs 3 and 5 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the said Act.

13 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2019 were agreed as correct record and signed by the Chair.

14 Update Report on Cremator Replacement and Contingency Planning

The Joint Committee noted a report of the Corporate Director of Regeneration and Local Services which provided the current position and progress on the cremators replacement and contingency planning (for copy see file of Minutes).