

26 April 2021

Performance and Operational Report

Report of Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager

Electoral division(s) affected:

Countywide

Purpose of the Report

1. To provide Members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee with the quarterly update relating to performance and other operational matters.

Executive summary

2. This report provides Members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee with a quarterly update of performance and operational matters at the crematorium.

Recommendation(s)

3. It is recommended that Members of the Mountsett Joint Committee:
 - a. Note the current performance of the crematorium.
 - b. Note the introduction of credit card payment facilities at the crematorium.
 - c. Note the cancellation of the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial & Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain.
 - d. Note the update with regards to the cremator replacement project.

Background

4. This report provides Members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee with an update of performance and operational matters at the crematorium since the last meeting of the Joint Committee.

Performance Update - Number of Cremations

5. The table below provides details of the number of cremations for the period 1 January 2021 to 31 March 2021 inclusive, with comparative data in the same periods last year:

	2019/20	2020/21	Change
January	135	145	+ 10
February	128	165	+ 37
March	103	177	+ 74
TOTAL	366	487	121

6. There were 487 cremations undertaken during the period, compared to 366 in the comparable period last year, an increase of 121 cremations for this period. The profile of where families came from can be seen below:

Gateshead	136
Durham	241
Outside Area	110
Total	487

7. The total number of cremations in 2020/21 was 1,758 compared with 1,399 in 2019/20, an increase of 359, which is due to the Covid 19 pandemic.
8. The 2020/21 budget was set at a prudent assumption of 1,300 cremations during the year. The actual number of cremations undertaken was therefore 458 more than the budget position. This is reflected in an over achievement of cremation fee income of £281,130 in year, which is included in the financial monitoring report.
9. The table below shows the comparative figures for the previous ten financial years:

Year	Cremations
2010/11	1,188
2011/12	1,258
2012/13	1,404
2013/14	1,191
2014/15	1,320

Year	Cremations
2015/16	1,300
2016/17	1,439
2017/18	1,396
2018/19	1,330
2019/20	1,399
2020/21	1,758

Memorials

10. The table below outlines the number and value of the memorials sold in the period January to March 2021 compared to the same period the previous year.

	Jan – March 2019/20		Jan – March 2020/21	
	Number	£	Number	£
Large Plaques	4	1,608	4	1,608
Small Plaques	9	2,349	13	3,393
Memorial leaves	0	0	7	700
Total	13	3,957	24	5,701

11. The number and value of memorials sold of 24 / £5,701 compares to 13 / £3,957 in the same period last year, which is an increase of 11 memorials sold and £1,744 year on year.

12. The table below identifies the total number and value of memorials sold during 2020/21 compared to 2019/20:

	2019/20 Total		2020/21 Total	
	Number	£	Number	£
Large Plaques	13	5,226	17	6,834
Small Plaques	44	11,484	59	15,399
Memorial leaves	0	0	9	900
Total	57	16,710	85	23,133

Operational Matters

Staffing

13. Members were updated at the last meeting with regards to the current Covid 19 situation that staff are faced with on a daily basis and they continue to demonstrate the high level of service that we can to the bereaved.

14. The staff continue to cope with the demands and are an asset to the Crematorium and I continue to thank them for their assistance during this difficult time.

Credit Card Payments

15. The crematorium does not currently offer a credit card payment option to members of the public wanting to pay for some of our services and we are regularly asked if the payment option is available.
16. Discussions have therefore been held with the Income and Support team regarding the crematorium offering this service and a chip and pin machine has been ordered for a monthly rental of £16 per month plus nominal processing fees. The cost can be absorbed within existing office budgets and this will provide an enhanced service to families.

Cremation & Burial Conference & Exhibition 2021

17. The Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain was due to be held at the Hilton Ageas Bowl, Southampton from 21 to 23 June 2021, however due to the pandemic has once again been cancelled.

Mountsett Cremator Replacement

18. Members will recall that updates have been given at previous meetings regarding the installation of the 2 new cremators with mercury abatement equipment to replace the existing cremators.
19. We still continue to run the temporary cremator which has been invaluable during Covid 19.
20. Members were also advised of a possible delay to the start of the project due to the travel restrictions currently imposed, however we continue to work with the cremator manufacturer regarding this issue.
21. I can inform Members that a revised start date has been confirmed and the revised timetable is set out below:

Description	Dates
Start on site	22 May
Site set up and removal of existing cremator no. 2 and its abatement kit etc.	22 - 25 May
Delivery and installation of cremator no. 2 and abatement equipment	1 June - 24 July
Commissioning and training	24 July - 21 August

Description	Dates
Removal of existing cremator no. 1 etc.	11 - 18 September
Installation of cremator no.1 and abatement equipment	18 September - 13 November
Commissioning	13 - 20 November
Handover	11 December

22. The Budget Strategy report in September 2020 detailed estimates of the cremator replacement and projected financing of the works. Further revisions to the designs have resulted in the following updated cost projections and funding:

Description	Original Budget (Sept 20) £	Revised Budget (April 21) £
Cremator Installation	1,206,400	1,220,200
Principal contractor costs and site works	76,756	80,056
Preliminaries	155,000	90,454
Statutory Fees and Emission Testing	21,250	250
Professional Fees	101,429	96,672
BCIS cost index and supplier bond	19,382	-
Optimism Bias (Contingencies)	93,650	74,382
Total Cost	1,673,867	1,562,014
Financed by:		
Contribution from Reserves	(380,466)	(380,466)
Loan Finance	(1,293,401)	(1,181,548)
Total Funding	(1,673,867)	(1,562,014)

23. Total projected costs have reduced from £1,673,867 to £1,562,014 resulting in the 10-year annuity loan from Durham County Council reducing to £1,181,548. The annual loan repayments of £150,641 reported to Members in September 2020 will subsequently reduce to £138,513 resulting in a £12,128 annual revenue saving in the medium term budget forecasts.

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Appendix 1: Implications

Legal Implications

As outlined in the report.

Finance

As identified in the report.

Consultation

None, however, Officers of Gateshead Council were provided with a copy of the report and given opportunity to comment/raise any detailed questions on the content of the report in advance of circulation to members of the Mountsett Crematorium.

Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications.

Climate Change

None.

Human Rights

There are no implications.

Crime and Disorder

There are no implications.

Staffing

As identified in the report.

Accommodation

There are no implications.

Risk

There is an ongoing risk with regards to the functioning of the new cremators.

Procurement

There are no implications.