

Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee

27 January 2012

Report of the Superintendant and Registrar



Report of Ian Staplin, Superintendant and Registrar to the Mountsett Crematoria Joint Committee

Purpose of the Report

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

Performance Update:

Number of Cremations: for the Period 1st September 2011 to 31st December 2011

2. The table below provides details of the number of cremations for the period 1st September 2011 to 31st December 2011 inclusive, with comparative data in the same periods last year:

	2009/2010	2010/2011	Change
	QTR3 [Sept- Dec]	QTR3 [Sept- Dec]	
SEPT	105	106	+ 1
OCT	89	93	+4
NOV	88	102	+14
DEC	95	113	+18
TOTAL	377	414	+37

Gateshead	128
Durham	238
Outside Area	48
Total	414

3. In summary, there were 414 cremations undertaken during 1st September 2011 to 31st December 2011, compared to 377 in the comparable period last year, an increase of 37.

Operational Matters

Mountsett Crematorium Pre-Payment Cremation Bond

4. At the meeting of the Mounsett Crematorium Joint Committee (30th September 2011), members agreed the issue of the Pre-Payment Bond be placed on the Agenda for the next meeting of the Joint Committee. Ongoing discussions with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) over a number of months have not provided a definitive answer to the question of FSA Registration being a requirement in order to operate the scheme.
5. It was also suggested at the previous meeting that we seek Legal advice on whether the previous decision can be revisited by the Joint Committee. Sarah Grigor, the Solicitor advising MCJC will be attending to address this issue and moving forward will be in attendance at all future meetings to advise on any constitutional and/ or legal matters.
6. The view of the DCC legal department remains that registration will be a necessary requirement to enable the scheme to be offered. Sarah Grigor, the Solicitor advising the MCJC has begun to collate the information and documentation that will enable her to proceed with a full registration application with the FSA. The FSA Registration Fee of £1500.00 have been included in the 2012/2013 Revenue Budget Estimate.
7. As Members will recollect the prepayment bond scheme would help to secure future business. This would be sold at a premium to the standard cremation charges, as it relates to future prices of cremation. It is suggested that this be £100 above the current total cremation fee plus a £20 administration fee which equates to a circa 20% premium, with this being reviewed annually at the same time as the other Fees & Charges. An overview on how the scheme would be operated is provided below.
8. The Cremation Bond would be issued in the name of the person who wished to be cremated at Mountsett Crematorium in the future and the Terms & Conditions of use would be that it was not transferable.
9. The potential "sales" numbers have been estimated based on informal discussions with Funeral Directors in the Durham area and with the MD of Golden Charter (one of the largest suppliers of Funeral plans that are marketed through independent Funeral Directors). Based on these discussions the expected range could be between 20 and 40 Pre- payment Cremation Bonds per month at a current (£480 + £100) £580 plus the admin fee of £20, providing an income of between £11,600 to £23,200 per month. All the Funeral Directors approached informally, would be very interested in purchasing a Bond for each of the pre-payment plans that they sell. No market research has been undertaken in the Mountsett area.

10. This money would be placed in receipts in advance and called upon during the year that the Bond was redeemed, before the "year end". The scheme would allow substantial cash prepaid Reserve to be built up, which would attract interest. This reserve would also protect from the redemption of Bonds in the future and the potential reduction of ongoing revenue.
11. The main benefit of offering this scheme to families is the opportunity for individuals/families to purchase their cremation in advance, reducing the financial burden on their family, which is particularly important at a time of general hardship for our communities.
12. The main benefit to Mountsett Crematorium is the securing of future cremations at a time when families are more cost conscious. A further advantage currently is the lower fees at Mountsett when compared to the immediate competition and this could also make the purchase of a Mountsett Crematorium Bond a very attractive proposition. This view reflects the service currently provided via the Bereavement Services Policy in relation to Cemeteries.
13. The risks are believed to be minor, given that the age profile of the majority of purchases of Pre-paid Funeral Plans are between their late 60's to early 70's. The demographics of the sold plans would however need to be monitored very closely. It may be necessary for the responsibility for such monitoring (along with the regular reviews of premium mark ups and the decision to suspend the offering of bonds should the risks associated be deemed too high) to be delegated to the Treasurer and Superintendent.
14. A table has been drawn up (at Appendix 2) to provide an indication of the perceived risk of providing this bond and selling it a premium. The table highlights that bonds up to a maximum of 12 years from the issue date would prove beneficial for the Crematorium Joint Committee, after that time they would become a financial risk.
15. One further risk is that of the rate of inflation increasing way above current predictions, leaving the bond fee looking very cheap. However, the 20% premium, front loaded at the point of sale, plus interest earned, indicates this risk to be low. There will also be an annual review of fees and charges that would take inflation into account and maintain the £100 premium mark up.
16. A risk assessment has been prepared and included in the Risk Register Report.

Green Flag Application

17. At the meeting of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee (30th September 2011), members agreed to enter Mountsett into the Green Flag Award in 2012 and a Management plan be developed for a meeting prior to entry outlining any future development.
18. A management plan has now been written (see Appendix 3), we have identified that there will be minimal investment required in the first year of applying as the majority of the works have been previously undertaken. These have been factored into the budget.

Memorial Plaques

19. A feasibility study has been carried out, specifically for the development of the crematorium grounds for the display of memorial plaques etc. The Joint Committee recently agreed to the sale of memorial plaques which are to be displayed on the outer walls of the chapel of remembrance. We have had talks with the company who produce the plaques and have produced a booklet for the sale of the plaques.
20. Just last week we have started to send out these booklets along with the book of remembrance literature to all applicants. It is envisaged that these will shortly be taken up by the recently bereaved.
21. Whilst initial steps have been undertaken in relation to the proposed Memorial Garden, it is the decision of the Superintendent & Registrar not to factor any potential sales from the memorials into the 2012/13 Income budget. It is considered that potential take up is difficult to forecast currently as a result of not having any facilities for such memorials previously

Recommendations and Reasons

22. It is recommended that Member of the Mountsett Joint Committee consider and agree:-

- The content of this report with regards to current performance of the crematorium.
- The current situation with regards to the Pre-Payment bond and progress working with DCC legal team
- The delegation of responsibility for the monitoring of demographics, review of premium mark ups and suspension of bond issues to the Treasurer and Superintendent & Registrar
- The current situation with regards to the Green Flag application.
- The current situation with regards to the sale of memorial plaques.

Contact: Ian Staplin, 01207 570255

Appendix 1: Implications

Finance

As identified in the report.

Staffing

There are no implications.

Risk

There are no implications.

Equality and Diversity Public Sector Equality Duty

There are no implications.

Accommodation

There are no implications.

Crime and Disorder

There are no implications.

Human Rights

There are no implications.

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.

Procurement

There are no implications.

Disability Discrimination Act

There are no implications.

Legal Implications

As outlined in the report.

Appendix 2: Bond Payback Period

Year	Amount B/F	Interest	PV	Cost	Inflation
0	£600	0.00%	£600	£ 500	3%
1	£600	1.00%	£606	£ 515	3%
2	£606	1.20%	£613	£ 530	3%
3	£613	1.50%	£622	£ 546	3%
4	£622	1.50%	£632	£ 563	3%
5	£632	2.00%	£644	£ 580	3%
6	£644	2.00%	£657	£ 597	3%
7	£657	2.00%	£670	£ 615	3%
8	£670	2.00%	£684	£ 633	3%
9	£684	2.00%	£698	£ 652	3%
10	£698	2.00%	£712	£ 672	3%
11	£712	2.00%	£726	£ 692	3%
12	£726	2.00%	£740	£ 713	3%
13	£740	2.00%	£755	£ 734	3%
14	£755	2.00%	£770	£ 756	3%
15	£770	2.00%	£786	£ 779	3%



MOUNTSETT CREMATORIA

GREENFLAG AWARDS

MANAGEMENT PLAN

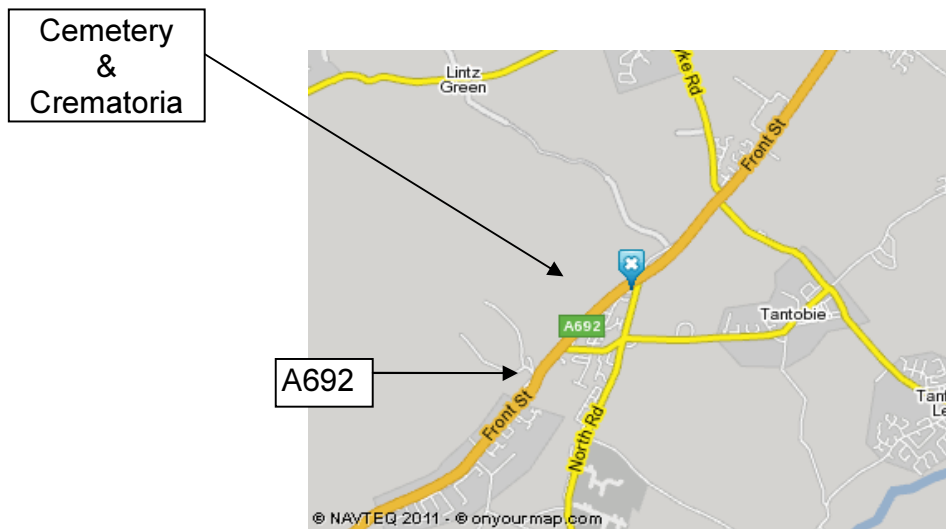


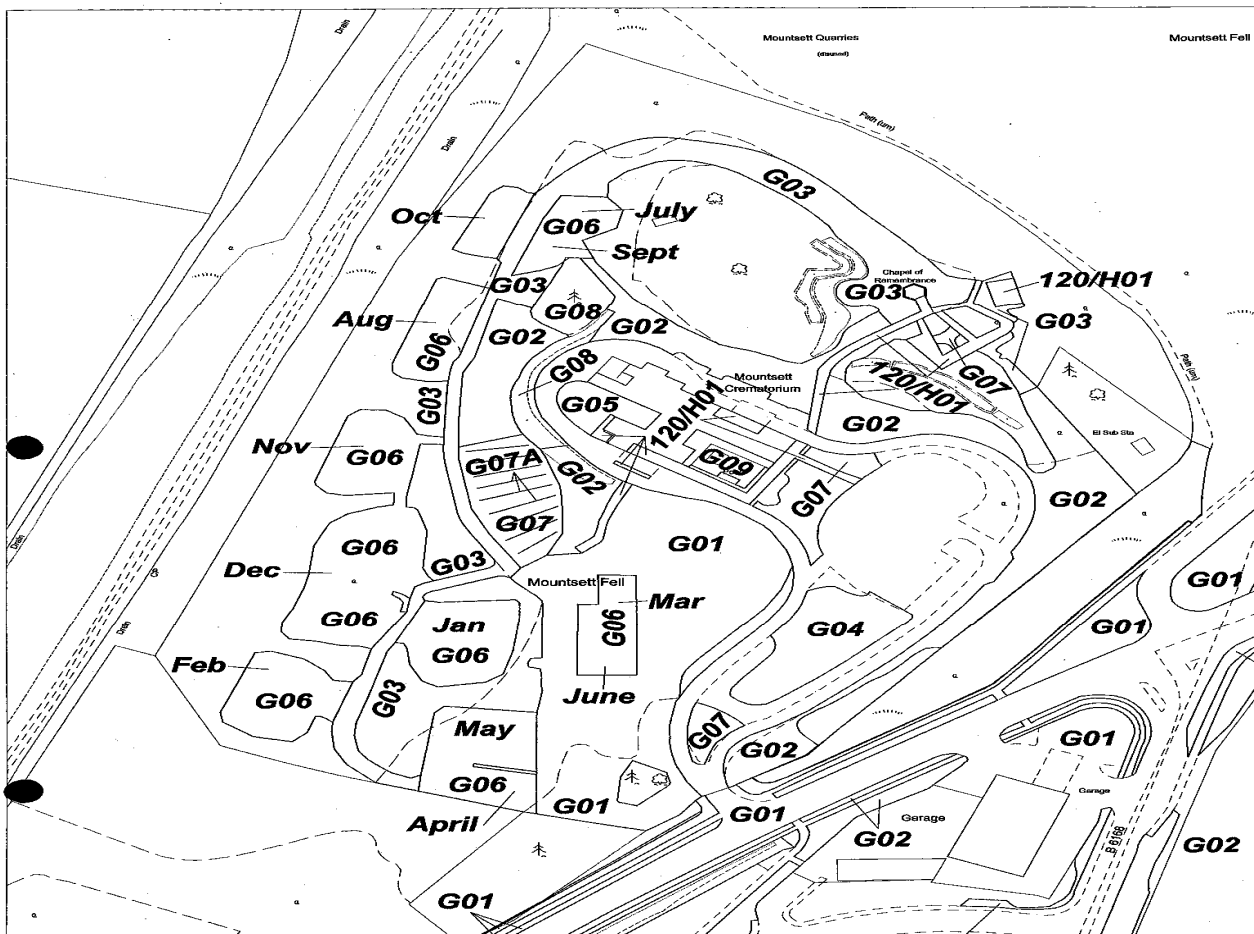
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1.1 Site Location

Site Name.	Mountsett Crematorium
Site Status.	Municipal Crematorium
County.	County Durham
Local Authority.	Durham County Council
Postcode	DH9 9JP
OS Grid Reference.	NZ 16491 54793
Total Site Area.	7.55 Hectare





Title : MOUNTSETT CREMATORIUM

1.2 Site Overview and History

About Us

County Durham is a large county with a wide range of settlements and landscapes. These pages give you an overview of the county and Durham County Council.

What is Durham County Council?

Durham County Council is made up of an elected assembly of 126 councillors' accountable to almost 500,000 people in County Durham. The council is responsible for providing a wide range of public services to the people of the county.

The council also represents and promotes the interests of County Durham when dealing with regional, national and international affairs. Through effective local government, Durham County Council allows local people to look after their own affairs and to decide how and where money is best spent in their area.

The council's powers and responsibilities are determined by Parliament with county council elections held every four years. The most recent election was held in May 2008 and the next one is expected to be held in 2013.

Constitution and Structure

Durham County Council is a 'unitary' council. This means that it provides the majority of local authority services in County Durham. We work with a range of partners to provide our services in the best possible way.

The County Council's decision-making structure consists of a Cabinet of ten councillors' which sits on a fortnightly basis to make decisions to implement the council's policies and budgets. An Overview and Scrutiny Committee examines Cabinet's decisions while the full council of 126 councillors' ratifies Cabinet's decisions.

Major issues to be discussed are published in Cabinet's forward plan which describes the decisions to be made, who is responsible for making them and when. By law, Cabinet is not allowed to make some decisions. So in addition to Cabinet we have Regulatory Committees to make decisions on issues such as planning and highways.

The decision-making structure is designed to make the council's processes more transparent with meetings of the council and Cabinet being open to the public. Members of the public can also ask questions to the Council which will be answered at full Council meetings.

Our [Area Action Partnerships](#) involve our partners, local people and organisations in the council's work, to allow various public, voluntary and community organisations as well as individuals to have a say in how local services are provided to their area.

Services

We provide services to all parts of the county to meet the needs of our residents and help everyone in County Durham to achieve their ambitions.

Durham County Council is made up of six service areas - Assistant Chief Executive's Office; Adults, Wellbeing and Health; Children and Young People's Services; Neighborhood Services; Regeneration and Economic Development; Resources - which are responsible for providing a wide range of services for the people of County Durham.

Where Did We Come From?

Throughout history, County Durham has been strategically important to settlers ranging from the Romans to the Anglo Saxons and Normans. Northumbria became the leading centre of the Christian church in Britain with the foundation of Durham Cathedral in 1093 acting as a lasting reminder of the County's legacy to Christian worship in Britain.

Following the Norman Conquests, William the Conqueror invested the Bishops of Durham with combined secular and spiritual powers to control the modern counties of Cleveland, Durham and Tyne and Wear. The Prince Bishops levied taxes, raised armies, minted money, controlled the courts and were effectively 'kings' of North East England until their powers were dramatically diminished by Henry VIII in 1536.

In the 18th and 19th centuries, County Durham became a world leader in the Industrial Revolution, with the county's development based upon coal and iron production. The area's influence on the world was demonstrated by the development of the world's first passenger steam railway at Stockton and Darlington in 1825.

Durham County Council was established, along with other county councils in England and Wales, in 1888 and started life with a small Conservative majority, unlike its present and long-standing Labour majority.

Where Are We Now?

Arising from its background of historical importance and a rich cultural heritage, Durham County Council's vision is focused around an 'An Altogether Better Durham', and is made up of two components: to have an Altogether Better Place, which is Altogether Better for people.

This vision helps to provide a framework which guides all of our plans and programmes which will turn our vision into a reality. This will be achieved through organising our actions for improvement into a structure made up of five priority themes:

Altogether Wealthier

Focusing on creating a vibrant economy and putting regeneration and economic development at the heart of all our plans;

Altogether Healthier

Improving health and wellbeing;

Altogether Safer

Creating a safer and more cohesive county;

Altogether Better for Children & Young People

Enabling children and young people to develop and achieve their aspirations and to maximise their potential in line with Every Child Matters;

Altogether Greener

Ensuring an attractive and 'liveable' local environment, and contributing to tackling global environment challenges;

This vision is shared by our partners and forms the basis of the new [Sustainable Community Strategy](#).

County Durham has nearly 500,000 people living in 219,000 households. The county covers an area of 223,260 Hectares with 12 major centres of population including Durham City, Chester-le-Street, Newton Aycliffe, Consett and Peterlee.

Continued investment and the arrival of a range of new hi-tech businesses including telecommunications, advanced electronics and pharmaceutical and bio-tech companies have helped industry to diversify and grow in the county. Businesses in County Durham are adding to the success of the economy not only within the county but also in the North East of England and the rest of the country.

Durham County Council in Numbers

(As of April 2010)

- 22,000 people work for Durham County Council
- We dispose of 260,000 tonnes of household waste
- There are 310 schools in the county
- There are 39 branch libraries
- We run three museums
- We have 126 county councillors
- 69 Labour councillors
- 23 Liberal Democrat councillors
- 10 Conservative councillors
- 21 Independent councillors (16 Durham Independents five DCC Independent Group)
- Three Local Liberals
- Durham County Council has a budget of around £1.2 billion

County Durham in Numbers

(As of April 2010)

- 493,500 people live in County Durham
- 38,000 people live in the City of Durham
- There are 219,000 households in the county
- The county covers an area of 223,260 Hectares
- There are 12 major centres of population (over 5,000 people)
- The average age of people in County Durham is between 35 and 39 years old

- 53 miles of motorway run through the county
- Durham City is 265 miles from London and 125 miles from Edinburgh
- 142,000 Hectares of the county is agricultural land
- There are 190 ancient monuments in the county
- 25% of working people are employed in manufacturing in County Durham
- 67% are employed in the service sector

Mountsett Crematorium a Place With Outstanding Views:

The crematorium is nestled on the outskirts of Dipton on the (A692) and serves the residents of the whole of County Durham and Gateshead. The land the crematoria was built on was initially a quarry. The crematorium was dedicated on the 23rd July 1966 by the Bishop of Jarrow (the Rt. Rev A.K.Hamilton M.A.) and is owned and operated by a Joint Committee on behalf of Durham County Council and Gateshead Council. The first cremation took place on the 1st August 1966.

The public may visit the Crematorium office to view the crematorium registers in person. In this case it is advisable to telephone in advance to make an appointment.

Bereavement Staffing

During opening hours Bereavement Services staff are available to assist the public, and there are full time staff present every working day. The Crematorium is managed and maintained by directly employed personnel.

Opening Times

The Crematorium office is open Monday to Friday from 9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The Building is open for viewing the Book of Remembrance 365 days a year.

	Summer (Mid March-End of September)	Winter (October-Mid March)
Monday to Thursday	9.00 a.m. to 6.00 p.m.	9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.
Friday	9.00 a.m. to 5.00 p.m.	9.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m.
Saturday	9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.	9.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.
Sunday	10.00 p.m. to 1.00 p.m.	10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m.
Bank Holidays	10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.	10.00 a.m. to 2.00 p.m.

Bereavement Services are currently improving their standards and are determined to raise their profile and reputation. The development of a management plan will assist in this drive, through the identification of the main aims and objectives of the County Council and how they relate to the effective management of their cemeteries.

In line with the Strategic Aims of the Authority, the following Objectives have been reviewed and agreed for the development of the service both now and into the future. The development of these objectives have been identified as capitalising on our strengths, while attempting to remove any perceived weaknesses. Awareness of these effects will impact upon service provision, by allowing the department to adapt to change quickly, thereby providing for the

needs of the customer. A summary of the main aims related to the cemetery service, are as follows:

- To provide a quality service at an affordable cost.
- To improve cleanliness and improve environmental awareness.
- Lead Innovation by implementing Agenda 21 environmental initiative.
- Review of current costs and procedures related to the industry memorialisation issue.
- Responsible to residents by seeking their views on the cemetery service.

In setting out to achieve the service aims, the County Council has ensured that adequate funding is available to maintain the quality and the fabric of the crematorium to a high standard, which recognises its value as an open space. The Management Plan sets out how these standards are being achieved, through current practices. The primary aim is that Mountsett Crematorium shall remain a peaceful, safe, clean and aesthetically pleasing place for the bereaved. Any visitor who may wish to come to the crematorium shall be presented with an open space and surroundings that are safe, clean, peaceful, reverent and relaxing, which is effectively managed by the authority.

Although the County Council's Cemeteries and Crematoria have had a varied history in the past, the service now has a high reputation for providing a well maintained environment, customer friendly service and proactive solution in how it manages its cemeteries and Crematoria. However, more hard work has been done, as all services within a local government environment, need to consistently monitor and review its service functions if it wants to remain effective in its management responsibilities and efficient in its provision.

Service quality is about the delivery of a service to the specified standards and ensuring that customers have the necessary information to judge the service. Mountsett, like the other cemeteries and crematoriums have adopted the department's service quality aim, which is defined by the County Council as:

- **To provide a sensitive, respectful service fitting for the bereaved.**
- **To ensure that sympathetic, supportive and confidential advice is given to the recently bereaved on funeral service arrangements and give assistance in co-ordinating the funeral process if required.**
- **To provide consistent high quality standards of maintenance in cemeteries across County Durham, working to maximise value for money.**
- **To ensure the proper respect of all Council cemeteries with fair Rules and Regulations, which are explained to bereaved and cemetery visitors.**
- **Fair and sensitive enforcement where Rules and Regulations are not followed and used as a last resort.**

There is one main pedestrian and vehicle access to the crematorium.

Within the Crematorium there are:

Ladies and Gents toilets
Disabled toilets
Waiting area

Store area
Mess facilities
Water Points
Memorial gardens
An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is fitted in the chapel.
Recycling facilities
Litter bins
Cremated remains sections

1.3 Distinctive Site Features

The Crematorium

The Crematorium, designed by Charlton & Crowther 21 Bond Street, Leeds, is a letter T shape, giving panoramic views over the meadowland surrounding the building and of the distant woodland surrounding the site. The Chapel has seating for approximately 120 people, with standing room for a further 100. The Crematorium was opened in August 1966. Service times are on every 45 minutes, giving time for the Chapel to be tidied between each funeral service.



Monthly Plots

The original layout consists of Monthly sections for carrying out burials as all cremated remains are interred and not scattered, over the years to meet public demand the areas were extended.



Book of Remembrance Building

The Book of remembrance building was designed and built by Charlton & Crowther 21 Bond Street, Leeds. This is a hexagonal building which incorporates the book of Remembrance along with a book view system which is touch screen to enable the whole book of remembrance to be viewed. The controls are easily understood and full instructions are on screen. All calligraphy for the book of remembrance is done by F.G.Marshall of Banstead, Surrey. There is also a facility available for the bereaved to place flowers within the building and vases are supplied with water.



Entrance Gateway

The access into the entrance is extremely good and clearly signposted. This comprises of an open entrance with no gates allowing access at all times.



Main Drive

The main drive is a single vehicle access route into the crematorium which is maintained to a very high standard and the driveway through landscaped grounds leads to car parking adjacent to the main buildings. Access to all areas is very good.



Floral Tribute area

The Floral tribute area adjacent to the book of remembrance where flowers from the funerals are placed, this provides a peaceful environment within the Crematorium Gardens of Remembrance for quiet contemplation.

The area is a garden for all seasons, spring, summer, autumn and Winter, and this theme has been reflected in the design.



2.0

Management of Site



Durham County Council

Green Flag Award Management Plans

Forward from Oliver Sherratt, Head of Direct Services, Durham County Council.

Good quality parks and green spaces form an important part of Durham County Council's programme to build stronger, healthier, more sustainable communities. The Council is committed to providing sites that provide accessible high quality green space for the people of County Durham to enjoy peaceful recreation and sporting activities.

Durham County Council recognises that the Green Flag Award has now become the national benchmark against which the quality of public parks and green spaces can be measured and improved. The award is also an excellent staff motivator and morale booster. The receipt of a Green Flag is a great achievement for the staff who display great enthusiasm and commitment to ensuring the local community enjoy the best possible facilities.

Durham County Council is fully supportive of the Green Flag Award. We intend to build upon past successes and use the scheme as a major catalyst / driver to improve our green space infrastructure over the next few years. The scheme is a good example of where the Council can demonstrate its commitment to listen and engage with local people and at the same time develop a safe, clean and green sustainable future for the county.

Oliver Sherratt
Head of Direct Services
Durham County Council

2.1 Mission Statement

**Mountsett Crematoria
Management Plan**

Statement from Durham County Council

1. We confirm that this is the Management Plan for Mountsett Crematorium, and that it was formally adopted by ourselves on 1st April 2011.
2. We agree to uphold the standards of management and maintenance indicated within this document and to amend the document as necessary.

Signed

For and behalf of Durham County Council

Aims of the Management Plan

The main aims of the management plan are to:

- Outline the manner and method of management and maintenance for the crematorium in order to safeguard its values and provide a pleasant experience for its users.
- To consolidate all relevant information to the crematorium for ease of access in the future.
- To provide a benchmark on which the standard of delivery and performance of management and maintenance can be measured in the future.
- To be a flexible document which can be periodically reviewed and revised depending on its overall success and compliance with current guidelines.

Content of the Management Plan

This management plan summarises the background and context of the Crematorium. It outlines the management structure of personnel who are to be involved in the future of the Crematorium, the maintenance works required to maintain the Crematorium in accordance with the financial plan proposed to achieve them. It also contains relevant policies and procedures adopted by the County Council.

Review of the Management Plan

The management plan is reviewed in December by the Bereavement Services Manager.

2.2 Health, Safety & Security

A Healthy Environment

There is a wealth of information available on the physical and psychological health benefits associated with open green spaces. Bereavement Services recognises that the Crematorium contributes to the "enhanced well-being" of visitors. The site management and improvement action plan addresses this provision by ensuring that the site offers appropriate opportunities to provide a holistic health benefit to local residents and visitors.

Contact with nature is seen by many as a way of reducing the harm that can result from urban living, especially in built up areas such as those surrounding the Crematorium site. The physical environment at Mountsett can be seen to counter the effects of stress, by providing local residents with an opportunity for quiet time amidst nature, away from the stresses of urban life. The site caters well for this informal interaction with biodiversity, as discussed in relation to conservation at Mountsett Crematorium.

The health and safety of visitors to, and staff working at Mountsett Crematorium is given the highest priority.

Training - All staff receive training to enable them to carry out all tasks asked of them. This ranges from on site instruction to a training course or qualification, as determined through appraisals and one to ones.

Communication - There are many avenues for communication of Health and Safety issues. These include the quarterly Health and Safety Forum that all safety representatives attend, team briefings, health and safety notice boards, CRM, staff appraisals and verbal briefings.

Co-operation - All staff are required to comply with health and safety measures and managers are encouraged to promote a positive safety culture.

Monitoring - Accident and incident reporting provides a means of reactive monitoring, whereas monthly inspections carried out as part of the active monitoring. All reporting is presented at the Health and Safety Forum.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) - There is a minimum standard of equipment required for grounds maintenance staff. All other PPE required is supplied and must be worn when completing tasks. Damaged or worn PPE is replaced.

Vehicles, Machinery and Tools - All equipment must be regularly serviced and repaired and all staff are trained on equipment that they are required to use.

Chemicals – Bereavement Services complies with the Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 1994 and therefore all chemical use is strictly controlled.

Manual handling - All efforts are made to reduce manual handling problems and risk assessments are carried out.

Welfare – Mountsett Crematorium comply with the Workplace Health, Safety and Welfare Regulations 1992 and are inspected on a monthly basis.

First Aid – Mountsett Crematorium has at least one person trained in first aid and the site has a fully stocked first aid kit. It is the responsibility of the Superintendent & Registrar to ensure that the first aid kit is fully stocked.

Emergency Procedures - Emergency procedures are displayed on site and all staff is required to be familiar with these. All managers must ensure that they are familiar with fire prevention and understand the use of various types of extinguishers.

Fire extinguishers are checked annually by manufacturers.

Raising health and safety concerns-All staff are encouraged to raise health and safety issues with their manager or with the health and safety representatives who can raise concerns at the quarterly Health and Safety Forum.

Equipment

There is a recognised procedure for the issue repair and maintenance of machinery tools and equipment. Any machines issued for use shall be documented on a Daily works sheet. It shall be the responsibility of the operator(s) to ensure that machines are returned in good working order.

In the case where grass-cutting machinery has developed a fault during the working day, operators will assess if the fault can be rectified by them and if so, the work shall be carried out and recorded on the Depot Minor Repair Form. If not, it shall be returned to the Depot and booked in with the garage section.

Risk Assessments

Risk assessments are carried out in accordance with the risk assessment register which is maintained centrally and which flags up which assessments require updating. Most risk assessments are updated annually and some every two years. Staff have remote access to the current versions of the assessments and can download them from the council's network.

Cleanliness standards within the Crematorium are monitored on a weekly basis. The toilets are checked and cleansed daily. The driveway and paths are swept weekly. Equipment, planting and features in the Crematorium are monitored on a daily basis to assess their condition, with remedial works carried out as necessary in order to ensure compliance with current standards and their maintenance to a high standard.

Dog Fouling

In Durham there is a countywide campaign called "Bag it and Bin it" to encourage dog owners to pick up dog fouling and dispose of it safely. Dog owners who do not bag and bin dog fouling can face a fine of £80. Durham County Council employs Dog enforcement / Education Officer to police the fouling of public areas. The enforcement officer visits the Cemetery on a weekly basis and when called out by the Cemetery team.

Disability Discrimination Act

The County Council has a positive attitude to ensuring compliance with the act and there is access to all areas of the site. The building is wheelchair accessible and there is a disabled toilet and also a wheelchair available on site. An induction loop system for the hard of hearing is also fitted in the chapel.

All work and activities carried out within the Crematorium are done in accordance with the Council's Corporate Health and Safety Policy and, Directorate Policy. This can be seen in **Appendix 3.5**.

The entrance to the chapel and exit from the chapel are both monitored by C.C.T.V.

The Crematorium Superintendant and Registrar carries out monthly inspections of the crematorium and documents the findings on a Monthly Inspection Sheet. This monthly inspection process enables any problems to be identified and appropriate remedial work to be actioned quickly via our in house direct service team.

An example of a Monthly Inspection Sheet can be seen in **Appendix 3.5**.

Clear Signage Throughout

Visitors to the Crematorium are greeted by an information board. This is located just inside the entrance way and includes a key, denoting the layout of the Cemetery and additional information.

An information notice board has been erected just outside the crematorium building, and this contains information on services, emergency contacts etc.



Each section within the Crematorium is clearly marked to assist people in trying to locate graves, and the toilets are also clearly signposted.



SEE APPENDIX 3.4 AND 3.5 FOR INFORMATION ON THE COUNCIL HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY AND RISK ASSESSMENTS.

2.3 Maintenance of Equipment, Buildings and Landscape

The infrastructure or 'built environment' is maintained and managed separately from the Horticultural and grounds maintenance elements. Day to day (re-active repairs) is carried out as and when required and usually undertaken by the Highways or Building Services Sections of the Council. In certain circumstances the Council use specialised contractors, such as replacing palisade fencing cremator repairs etc.

Major works to areas such as pathways and buildings are met from the County Council capital programme and / or external funding if available. Bids for funding take place annually this requires medium to large projects to be designed and costed a year in advance.

Pathways

The site has a loop road and tarmac path networks. Repairs to paths are carried out as and when necessary.

Buildings

There are two buildings that the public have access to within the crematorium. The Crematorium, this building has ladies and gent's public conveniences. The Crematorium, designed by Charlton & Crowther 21 Bond Street, Leeds, is a letter T shape, giving panoramic views over the meadowland surrounding the building and of the distant woodland surrounding the site. The Chapel has seating for approximately 120 people, with standing room for a further 100. The Crematorium was opened in August 1966. Service times are on every 45 minutes, giving time for the Chapel to be tidied between each funeral service.

The style, character and condition of the building are in keeping with the crematorium. The maintenance of the buildings and structures such as the depot buildings is undertaken by the Asset Management Team within Durham County Council. A survey is currently being carried out of all council owned properties including those within crematoriums. This is designed to give an exact report on the condition of each individual building and what it would cost to completely restore each one to achieve its practical use. At present it is financially unviable to carry out all of the repairs in one go so the council is currently prioritising those buildings most at risk, and then ensuring that the remaining buildings do not fall into any further disrepair. Overall the buildings such as the depot buildings do not have a set maintenance schedule, more of a reactive response to problems as and when they arrive. However, fortunately the buildings within the crematoria are in relatively good condition and continue to serve their purpose safely.

Parking

An internal car park is situated to the right of the main chapel building for access to the crematorium to hold approx 55 cars with spaces designated for disabled parking.

Maintenance and Servicing of Grounds Care Vehicles, Machinery and Equipment

All machinery and equipment used by the Bereavement Services team are serviced in accordance with the Transport Manager's specifications and recommendations.

The Schedule of Maintenance Table is a guide as to what maintenance tasks are carried out as routine. These tasks are done as part of the annual works programme for the crematoria. Based on the old CCT contract it forms the basic maintenance schedule for the site. However, certain minor tasks such as weed spraying have been removed as part of the Council's environmental sustainability policies, and has freed up more man hours. In addition, there are times, where for example, the edging off of beds may not be required and although scheduled, the operational staff are able to omit that task to concentrate on additional areas requiring maintenance without detracting from the overall maintenance of the crematorium.

SEE APPENDIX 3.3 FOR WORKS PROGRAMME

2.4 Litter, Cleanliness and Vandalism

Clean and Well Maintained

The Crematorium is maintained by directly employed staff to a specification whereby tasks are carried out as required in accordance with sound horticultural practices. The Bereavement Services Manager is responsible for all aspects of Management including maintenance operations.

These operations would be as follows:-

1. The regular maintenance to a high standard of lawn and grass areas; hedges; and other planted areas.
2. The planting, establishment and maintenance of bedding schemes.
3. The planting of new and replacement trees, shrubs, hedges, herbaceous perennials, bulbs and sowing seed of annuals, biennials and perennials at the times required.
4. Routine winter maintenance tasks such as leaf clearing and pruning.
5. The reinstatement as necessary of grassed areas.
6. Site security, the opening and closing of all sites as necessary.
7. Sweeping and keeping clean and weed free all paths, paved areas and hard surfacing.
8. Removal of all litter, leaves and arising from the sites to a tip or compost site at the depot.

Sweeping and Cleaning

Litter collection is required daily and forms part of the routine duties as part a daily inspection of the site throughout the year.

Mechanical sweeping of certain roads will be requested in certain circumstances. Or otherwise hand sweeping as necessary. Duties are shown at Appendix 3. Litter bins are checked and emptied at least twice a week and more if required. Loose litter to be removed as when required.

Graffiti Removal & Vandalism

The County Council believes that to create an environment where users feel safe, secure and are not afraid to enter the cemetery it is necessary to remove all graffiti as it arises.

Required standard:

- All Graffiti and Fly Posting must be removed immediately when it occurs
- Graffiti removal where possible must be carried out using environmentally acceptable products that do not cause harm to either the operator or users of the Crematorium.
- Material damages are repaired as soon as possible.

2.5 Environmental Sustainability

What Are We Doing?

The principles followed in protecting the crematorium environment are to reduce, re-use or if necessary dispose of waste in a sustainable manner. These principals are adopted by the staff.

Mountsett Crematorium utilises a management plan which reflects the aspirations of Local Agenda/Action 21. This ensures that the aspirations of sustainable environmental development are addressed throughout all operations. The Bereavement Services Team actively pursue ways of ensuring sustainable environmental development within the crematorium grounds itself but also through corporate Council processes, for example, procurement.

Bedding Displays

All displays are designed by the Bereavement Services Manager and his staff contribute to the design. Trials using non peat composts have taken place and we will continue to move away from the use of peat based composts where this practical to do so. However not all plants will thrive in non peat based composts. The plants are grown and supplied from the Council's plant nursery situated at the Annfield Plain Depot. The Bereavement Services team are continually exploring alternative options to using peat-based products.

All bedding planted within the crematorium will be grown in peat free compost in 2012 having previously been grown in 40% peat free compost. All plants are produced at the Councils own nursery approximately 4 miles from the crematorium.

Trials for using reduced and peat free compost began in 2006 at Blackhill & Consett Park. Although the coir based compost costs more and plants need more watering & feeding, the Council is committed to reducing / eliminating peat use within it's Green Flag Parks and Crematoria.

Maintenance arrangements encourage the minimal use of pesticides. Where pesticide use is unavoidable the chemicals used are of a non-residual nature. The herbicide used at Mountsett is Glyphosate, a herbicide which is deactivated upon contact with soil, therefore reducing harm to the environment. Where herbicides are used, they are applied as spot treatment, rather than blanket sprayed. All staff are trained and certified for this particular operation.

Plastic containers used in the growing of bedding plants for the site are either reusable or recyclable and are returned back to the nursery complex.

Cultivation, mulching and ground cover practices, which reduce the evaporation of water from soils, have also been deployed.

Leaf litter is collected for composting and all shrub and tree prunings are processed through wood chippers in order to reduce the need for composting off site.

Grass cuttings from all section are not collected and are left on site. Prestige areas are boxed off, collected and stored in a designated green waste area at the Morrison Busty Depot.

The County Council is committed to providing a good example to those who use/visit the Crematorium, by using techniques that promote sustainability. The Bereavement Services Team are committed to actively researching and promoting new initiatives in the field of sustainable resource management.

Naturalised Areas

There is an abundance of flora and fauna at present; Blackberries/rasberries, crab apples etc, and consideration will be given to identify an area in the form of a wild flower area.



The trees within the Crematorium have been formally inspected. A visual inspection is carried out by the Crematorium Superintendent and Registrar, and any concerns regarding any of the trees are reported to ensure that any maintenance or remedial work is carried out in a timely manner.

A schedule of tree species which can be found in the Crematorium can be seen in **Appendix 3.6**.

Sustainable Environmental Development Objectives

In order to ensure that Mountsett Crematorium contributes to a sustainable environment the following objectives have been developed:

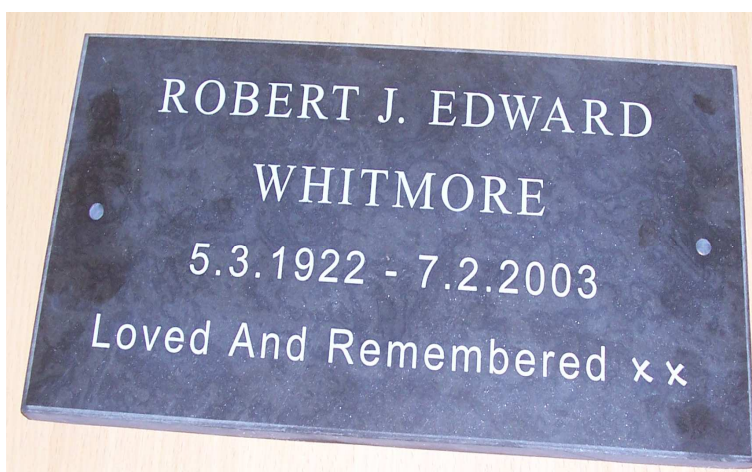
1. Continue to minimise the application of pesticides.
2. Where possible encourage the use of physical / cultural forms of weed control.
3. To provide additional biodiversity areas within the Crematorium in line with the Council's policy to benefit wildlife.
4. Carry out regular reviews of all management operations and projects in line with sustainable development objectives of the Council.
5. Ensure robust designs are used for new furniture, where appropriate using recycled or sustainable sources/materials
6. Identify potential sources of funding to ensure appropriate, innovative sustainable projects can be identified and developed.

Recycling of Metals

As of 2011 we introduced the above scheme to seek consent for the sensitive recycling of metals. Arrangements are in place with the ICCM to ensure the highest standards of collection are maintained. The improved arrangements for dealing with metals will not cost the bereaved and may raise a small amount of money from the process. The ICCM has assured all crematoria that any monies raised from this process will be donated to death related charities such as the Heart Foundation and Cancer Research.

Memorial Plaques-Garden of Remembrance

A move towards decreasing the carbon footprint of the Crematorium and having sustainable working practices in place have begun. We now have in place a contract for the supply of memorial plaques from a UK based company. It is anticipated that we will start to provide these in 2012.



2.6 Conservation of Nature and Heritage

Biodiversity

The enhancement of our local environments using biodiversity, as part of a wider agenda to encourage more sustainable practices, has become a very important issue across the work of the County Council. The role of local government and the services we deliver is a fundamental medium in this process. This is reflected in the actions of the Bereavement Services Team.

Biodiversity areas are being introduced throughout Durham County Council. This year, one small section of Mountsett crematorium will be established as a biodiversity area, and as part of the ongoing programme to increase the amount of land included as biodiversity areas, more additional sections will be identified to establish as wildlife meadows.



The objectives for the change in management are:-

- Environmental – focusing on biodiversity and the benefits to wildlife reduction in mowing regimes result in a reduction to carbon emissions and fuel.
- Economic – reduction in labour throughout the growing season allowing for reallocation of resources.
- Social – the improvement of people's environment and consequent enhancement to their quality of life.

Ecologically, the Crematorium site provides a bio-geographical island within the built up urban surrounds. The site can act as a biological stepping-stone for mobile species, between the wider countryside on the outskirts of the village centre.

In order to pro-actively conserve and enhance the biodiversity benefits of Mountsett Crematorium, the Bereavement Services Team have introduced small scale nature conservation projects of low intrusive impact, yet broad conservation outcomes. This work includes the placement of bird nesting and bat roosting boxes.

The Crematorium also contains a number of magnificent standard trees which in their own right support a range of wildlife species from fungi, invertebrates and nesting birds.

These trees are managed sympathetically to ensure that the aesthetic and biodiversity values are not compromised.

Created as a response to Local Agenda 21 the former Derwentside District Council's "Sustainable Derwentside Strategy" promotes the enhancement of local biodiversity and encourages the planting of native species in Durham County Council region.

Extensive tree and shrub management carried out in the crematorium have now served to greatly increase the species diversity within the crematorium, as well as providing a range of different types of habitat.

Ornamental tree and shrub planting provides a variety of habitats, with all plant species used chosen to ensure that they would have been available when the crematorium was originally laid out.

2.7 Community Involvement

Durham County Council recognises the very important and significant contribution that community group's involvement can make to cemeteries and open spaces and actively encourage this involvement.

A civic pride officer has recently been appointed to work in the Street scene North area. Part of the remit of the post holder will be to work with local communities to try and encourage greater partnership working across all areas.

The first Open Day at Mountsett Crematorium was held on 20th October 1991 with 150 visitors in attendance on that day. Since that time, many open days have been held.

It is hoped that a Friends of the Crematorium Group can be developed and that local schools and youth groups can become involved carrying out projects within the crematorium as identified in the action plan (see Appendix 3.2).

Local schools groups are encouraged to participate in environmental and historical issues. The involvement of local school children and young people provides a perception of value to the area, which in turn may result in a reduction of vandalism and anti social behaviour.

Quarterly meetings are held with Funeral Directors/Clergy to address any topical issues or requirements.

Current plans include inviting local school children to participate in wild flower seed planting during April / May 2012 as part of the initial biodiversity area within the cemetery. We feel it is important for children to develop an awareness and appreciation of the Crematorium from an early age.

We also are looking to work with the Probation Service Pay Back Scheme, including painting the entrance gates and railings, and re-surfacing wooden seats and fencing.

In order to ensure and increase public accessibility of our historic Crematorium records, a database is currently being developed with regards to making certain information available on our website. This enables people to search for family information at their own convenience.

2.8 Marketing

The sensitive nature and the purpose of the site does not consent to mainstream active marketing as would be associated with some other public open spaces as it would be inappropriate to do so. However the Council and Bereavement Services Team do ensure that appropriate marketing does happen.

The crematorium is promoted from the Morrison Busty Depot office and the Mountsett Crematorium office, with information also available from Durham County's 'one stop' shop service, notice boards, with contact available by telephone to the main office, or the department's office.

The Crematorium has a page on the County Councils Web site which is used to convey information to the public about what is happening in relation to the crematorium as a whole

http://www.durham.gov.uk/community_and_living/births, deaths and marriages/deaths, funerals and cremations.

Durham County News
Cemetery Leaflets
Durham County Council Website

Web Site Links

www.durham.gov.uk this link will take you to the Green Flag page which gives the current Green Flag 2010 sites and further information on all Green Flag Award winning sites are currently being updated.

www.greenflagaward.org.uk

There are many people from outside the district who choose to be cremated at Mountsett Crematorium; this is due to public awareness of the high standards which are maintained at the Crematorium.

As part of the Council's on-going commitment to improving services, visitors to Mountsett crematorium are given the opportunity to comment on the Crematorium, via customer satisfaction surveys, the results of which are used to drive and inform increased service improvements.

2.9 Overall Management

Management of Bereavement Services

Future management of Mountsett Crematorium will be based on achieving the following objectives:

Objective 1: To provide a service that meets the needs of the bereaved.

Objective 2: To provide an attractive and welcoming crematorium.

Objective 3: To provide a healthy, safe and secure crematorium.

Objective 4: To provide a clean and well maintained crematorium.

Objective 5: To protect and enhance the environment for future generations.

Objective 6: To encourage community involvement.

Objective 7: To provide a well managed crematorium.

Resources

Staffing

The Bereavement Services section comprises the following posts:

Bereavement Services Manager

Superintendent and Registrar's-2 full time

Assistant Superintendent and Registrar-1 full time

Cemetery coordinator – 1 full time

Technical officers –Mobile -1 full time

Technical Assistants Admin Officer – 2 full time

7 x Gravedigger/Gardeners

4 x Gardener/Gravedigger

6 x Cremator operators

The operational team is well trained, fully qualified, competent and multi-skilled allowing a great deal of flexibility in meeting the demands of the service and enabling value for money to be demonstrated by undertaking many of the repair and maintenance aspects themselves (a copy of the staff training records are held at the depot located at Annfield Plain).

Whilst the two crematoriums have dedicated staff present at all times.

Bereavement Services will use the opportunity during the annual budget process to increase staffing where this can be justified.

The Council prides itself in being able to use the site as a medium to deliver customer excellence and ensure that the Crematorium is “a place for respect and quiet reflection”.

The Crematorium is managed by Durham County Council and has been the focus of a programme of planned improvements which have been underway for some time.

A rolling action plan of works has been developed by the bereavement services who meet regularly to monitor improvement progress. This ensures that ongoing improvements continue as planned and existing high standards are thoroughly maintained.



Regular meetings are held to discuss issues relating to Mountsett Crematorium which are managed by the County Council. The Cemetery Working Group comprises the Bereavement Services Manager; Crematorium superintendant and registrars, Cemetery coordinator; Technical officer mobile. Having such a broad range of attendees ensures that all management aspects of the Crematorium are covered comprehensively, from the administrative function through to daily grounds maintenance. The current Action Plan ensures that customer excellence still maintains a high profile.

The Council's Direct Services works depot located at Annfield Plain, is the main Administration Office for Bereavement Services and some of its employees, as well as Mountsett office carrying out the Administration on behalf of its site.

The crematorium caters for the interment of cremated ashes, and manages to cater for the needs of the community, irrespective of residency, religious beliefs, or ethnic origin. The aim of the service is to ensure that the Crematorium and Office at Annfield Plain is effective in its service provision and provides an efficient service to the community. There are many legal requirements and constraints relevant to the management of any crematorium, with the main framework encompassed within the *Code of Cremation Practice*; we aim to provide for all parts of a modern community, no matter what their denomination, religion or beliefs. The service will also cater for special requirements within acceptable reason, in order to provide a sense of ownership and individuality to the wishes of the

family or bereaved. The office staff based at Mountsett provides impartial advice and information regarding the crematorium and its operations. This will include details concerning the cremation process, funeral directors, locations, memorial choice and all associated costs.

Mountsett Crematorium is the location for part of the County Councils cremation records and registers, which the public may view upon request. The registers are maintained and stored within a designated record room and secured within large fireproof safes.

The service provided at Mountsett Crematorium will allow for cremations on a Monday through to a Saturday morning, where all the necessary paperwork has been received in time. The office operates from a Monday through to a Friday inclusive (09.00hrs – 16.00hrs). Cremation operations at Mountsett are managed in line with the industry requirements for Crematoriums.

Financial

Funds available for Mountsett Crematorium are prioritised out of the overall Crematorium budget held to allow the two joint committees to have an overview of this budget. Excluding contractual and no contractual routine grounds maintenance the expenditure within Mountsett on improvements and repairs, e.g., to paths was £20,000 in 2011/ 12.

Plan Review

Following its adoption this management plan is used as a working document to guide the management of the Crematorium and is reviewed and amended every twelve months.

At the time of review all changes to relevant policies, maintenance operations and financial circumstances should be incorporated into the plan.

With regard to the performance specification and maintenance programme, any necessary amendments will be incorporated into the plan as and when required.

Monitoring

The performance specification included within this plan is used as a guide for the monitoring of the standard of maintenance being carried out within the Crematorium. Regular site inspections are made to review ongoing maintenance works, with the maintenance programme and performance specification being amended should the need arise.

SEE 3.1 FOR MANAGEMENT STRUCTURE AND 3.2 FOR THE YEAR PLAN.

Please note: the Appendices referred to with the body of the application above can be made available for members perusal if required