

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in Chapel - Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton on **Wednesday 28 June 2023 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Durham County Council

Councillors J Charlton, C Hampson, S McMahon, S Robinson, K Rooney and M Walton

Gateshead Council:

Councillors L Green, S Green and M Ord

1 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Lawyer confirmed the membership of the Joint Committee for 2023/24 and noted that two vacancies were to be filled by Gateshead Council.

Resolved:

That the Membership of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee for the ensuing year be noted.

2 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors G Binney, A Hanson, P Heaviside and D Oliver (Durham County Council) and Councillor K Dodds (Gateshead Council).

3 Substitute Members

Councillor S McMahon was present as substitute for Councillor A Hanson.
Councillor S Robinson was present as substitute for Councillor P Heaviside.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Appointment of Chair

Councillor L Green nominated Councillor D Bradford (Gateshead Council) for the position of Chair to the Joint Committee. S Grigor, Lawyer (Litigation) clarified that this was not a valid nomination as Councillor D Bradford was not present at the meeting.

Councillor C Hampson nominated Councillor J Charlton for the position of Chair to the Joint Committee. The nomination was seconded by Councillor M Walton.

It was **unanimously resolved**:

That Councillor J Charlton be elected as Chair of the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor J Charlton in the Chair

6 Appointment of Vice-Chair

The Chair sought nominations for Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

Councillor S Green nominated Councillor L Green for the position of Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee. The nomination was Seconded by Councillor J Charlton.

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

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

7 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2023 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

8 Changes to Constitution/Terms of Reference

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Clerk which provided details of a review of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee's Constitution, in accordance with the Annual Governance requirements (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Lawyer advised that the review had not highlighted any requirements for change to the current constitution and therefore reaffirmed continuation of the existing Constitution and governance arrangements set out within.

The Chair highlighted that the Constitution stated that the Crematorium site was vested 60% in Durham County Council and 40% Gateshead Council and questioned why the monetary split was 65/35. P Curran, Finance Manager explained that the Constitution does not specify what the monetary split should be but agreed to seek clarification and report back to the Joint Committee.

Resolved:

That the Constitution as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be reapproved following a review being completed in accordance with Annual Governance Statement requirements.

9 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out details of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year April 2022 to March 2023 (for copy see file of Minutes).

The Finance Manager advised that the AGS was presented for approval as part of the consideration of the Joint Committee's Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023.

Resolved:

- i) That the content of the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement be noted
- ii) The Chair and Treasurer approve and sign the 2022/23 Annual Governance Statement as part of the consideration of the Joint Committees Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023

10 Revenue Outturn & Joint Committee's Annual Return for the Financial Year Ended 31 March 2023

The Joint Committee considered a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which sought approval of the Joint Committees Annual Return (attached at Appendix 3) for Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee for the financial year ended 31 March 2023. The report further included details of the final outturn position against the approved budgets for 2022/23 (for copy see file of Minutes).

Councillor Walton referred to para 15.3 and asked whether the medical referee was a fixed cost or if it varied. The Neighbourhood Protection Manager confirmed that

the cost was fixed and the increase in expenditure was due to the increased number of cremations.

Resolved:

- i) That the revenue outturn position as at 31 March 2023, including the year end position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted.
- ii) Approve Section 1 – Annual Governance Statement 2022/23 of the Joint Committees Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 (attached at Appendix 3).
- iii) Approve Section 2 – Accounting Statements 2022/23 of the Joint Committees Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 (attached at Appendix 3).
- iv) The Chair, Clerk and Treasurer sign the Joint Committees Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the financial year ended 31 March 2023 (attached at Appendix 3).

11 Mountsett Crematorium Performance and Operational Report

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

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager reported that there were 234 cremations undertaken during the period 1 April 2023 to 31 May 2023, compared to 246 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 12 for the period.

With regards to the sale of memorial plaques the number and value of memorials sold of 27 / £6,764, compared to 13 / £2,568 in the comparable period last year, an increase of 14 memorials sold (£4,196).

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager informed members that two relief members of staff had been appointed to assist in the operational areas of the crematorium and were currently undertaking training in all aspects of the roles within the crematorium.

The Neighbourhood Protection Manager noted that the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition was to be held from 18-20 September 2023 and would hopefully be attended by the Bereavement Services Manager and the Chair of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee. He explained that two conferences were held each year and were a great opportunity for learning and development.

Resolved:

- i) That the current performance of the crematorium be noted.
- ii) That the update with regards to staffing be noted.
- iii) That the attendance at the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management ICCM Learning Convention and Exhibition 2023 be noted.

12 Forward Plan 2023/24

The Joint Committee considered a report of the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out a suggested forward plan of meetings of the Joint Committee for the forthcoming year.

Resolved:

That the content of the report and forward plan of meetings be noted.

13 Other business

Councillor Hampson noted the donation of £6,000 that the Joint Committee had previously donated to Red Sky Foundation and shared a positive story describing how the charity had supported a local family.