

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held at Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton on **Monday 29 April 2024 at 9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor J Charlton (Chair)

Durham County Council

Councillors V Andrews, A Hanson, P Heaviside and K Rooney

Gateshead Council:

Councillors L Green (Vice-Chair), D Bradford, A Geddes, F Geddes, S Green and M Ord

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors C Hampson, M Walton and K Dodds.

2 Substitute Members

There were no substitute Members.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2024 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5 Performance and Operational Report

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

The Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar reported that 347 cremations were undertaken during the period 1 January to 31 March 2024 which was 63 cremations less compared to the comparable period last year. It was noted that 196 families were from Durham, 95 from Gateshead and 56 families were from other areas.

The total number of cremations in 2023/24 was 1,370 compared to 1,445 in 2022/23, which was a decrease of 75 cremations.

The 2023/24 budget was set at a prudent assumption of 1,300 cremations during the year. The actual number of cremations undertaken was therefore 70 more than the budgeted position. This was reflected in an over achievement of cremation fee income of £32,290 which was included in the budgetary control report.

The total number of direct cremations for 2023/24 was 62, a decrease in 5 direct cremations compared to the previous year.

The number and value of memorial plaques sold were 23 / £5,704 compared to 25 / £5,306 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 2 memorials sold and a small increase of £398 in terms of income.

With regards to staffing, a casual relief crematorium attendant had left the Authority and the remaining relief was covering a 10-month crematorium attendant appointment who had been appointed as Bereavement Officer. Following a recruitment process, two casual relief crematorium attendants had been appointed and commenced their duties on 2 April 2024.

It was reported that the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain would be held at the Winter Gardens, Blackpool from Monday 24 to Wednesday 26 June 2024. As in previous years, arrangements would be made for the Bereavement Services Manager to attend the conference.

With regards to the Recycling of Metals Scheme, it was noted that the Chair of the Joint Committee presented the nominated charities, Marie Curie and Coping with Cancer North East with a cheque for £7,000.

In response to a query from the Chair with regards to the casual relief posts becoming permanent positions, the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised that this would be subject to available funding.

Resolved:

That the recommendations in the report be noted.

6 Financial Monitoring Report - Provisional Outturn as at 31 March 2024

The Joint Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and the Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee that provided details of the

provisional outturn position for 2023/24 and the projected level of reserves and balances at 31 March 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Responding to a query from the Chair regarding EV charging, the Bereavement Services Manager and Registrar advised that £5.64 was received in the last period.

Resolved:

That the April 2023 to March 2024 financial monitoring report and associated provisional revenue outturn positions at 31 March 2024, including the projected year position with regards to the reserves and balances of the Joint Committee be noted.

7 Risk Register Update 2023/24 Review 2

The Joint Committee received a joint report of the Corporate Director of Neighbourhoods and Climate Change and Corporate Director of Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee that provided details of the outcome of the half-yearly risk review in March 2024 (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the content of the report and the updated position be noted.

8 Annual Internal Audit Report 2023/24

The Joint Committee received a report of the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager that provided an opinion which made conclusions on the overall adequacy and effectiveness of the Committee's framework of governance, risk management and control (for copy see file of minutes).

The Principal Auditor advised that the report provided a 'Substantial' overall assurance opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and internal control arrangements operating across the Joint Committee in 2023/24 and the 'Substantial' opinion identified that there was a sound system of control.

Responding to a query from the Chair regarding invoice payments, the Principal Auditor advised that significant improvements had been made on last years figures and they continued to improve.

Resolved:

That the content of the Annual Internal Audit report and the overall 'Substantial' opinion provided on the adequacy and effectiveness of the governance, risk management and control environment for 2023/24 be noted.