

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Spennymoor Town Council, Town Hall, Spennymoor** on **Wednesday 27 June 2012 at 5.30 pm**

Present:

Councillor J Marr (Chair)

Durham County Council:

Councillors J Chaplow, N Foster, K Thompson and M Williams

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillor JV Graham

Apologies:

Apologies for absence were received from M Plews, J Blakey, G Holland, D Stoker and JL Wood

A1 Membership of the Joint Committee

The Clerk to the Joint Committee, Sharon Spence, opened the meeting and asked Members to note the change to the membership of the Joint Committee, with Councillor Amanda Hopgood being replaced by Councillor Kevin Thompson as a Durham County Council representative.

A2 Appointment of a Chair

The Clerk to the Joint Committee asked for any nominations for Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year. Councillor J Marr noted that the Constitution for the Joint Committee set out the wherever possible the Chairmanship and Vice-Chairmanship should alternate between the two constituent Authorities making up the Joint Committee. Accordingly, Councillor J Marr proposed Councillor M Plews for the position of Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor JV Graham seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor M Plews be appointed Chair for the ensuing year.

A3 Appointment of a Vice-Chair

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

Councillor M Williams proposed Councillor J Marr for the position of Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor JV Graham seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor J Marr be appointed Vice-Chair for the ensuing year.

COUNCILLOR J Marr in the Chair

The Vice-Chair noted the thanks of the Joint Committee for the contribution of Councillor A Hopgood and welcomed Councillor K Thompson as a new Member of the Joint Committee representing Durham County Council.

A4 Minutes

The Minutes of the Meeting held on 25 April 2012 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chair.

Councillor JV Graham asked whether the vacant Crematorium Gardener / Technician post had been filled. The Superintendent and Registrar, Alan José noted that more detail was contained within his report; however, the post had been filled and the new member of staff was settling in.

A5 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

A6 Report of the Superintendent and Registrar

The Superintendent and Registrar asked Members to note the performance figures from April 2012 to May 2012 and the comparison to the same period for 2011, highlighting that there was a net increase of 11 cremations, 365 with 124 from Durham and 241 from outside of the area.

Members also noted that the number of memorials sold had decreased slightly in comparison to the same period the previous year, with sales being approximately £2,000 less.

The Joint Committee were reminded that the vacancy for the Crematorium Gardener / Technician post had been filled with the new member of staff, Mr Lewis Baines, taking up the role on 14 May 2012.

The Superintendent and Registrar explained that Mr Stephen Tinkler was presented with a watch and a certificate recognising his 25 years in service at the Crematorium by Councillor J Marr on behalf of the Joint Committee.

Members were updated as regards the process of Job Evaluation as part of the implementation of new pay and grading structures linked to Single Status. Councillors noted that staff who wished to appeal the job evaluation outcome; they could do so within 25 days from receipt of their notification letter.

The Superintendent and Registrar noted that Lynne Lawton was presented with a token of recognition of her helpfulness by Funeralcare North East and that Ian Ramsay had now passed the final module of the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Diploma and would be presented with his Diploma Certificate by the President of the Institute in October. Members were referred to Appendix 5 to the report which contained a selection of some of many letters of thanks from users of the Crematorium citing the excellent levels of service.

The Joint Committee noted that the latest Cremator Replacement and Crematoria Redevelopment Project Update, Number 9, had been circulated to Members via e-mail and hardcopies were made available at the meeting.

The Superintendent and Registrar noted with some regret that there had been a further two thefts from the construction compound at the Crematorium, with several padlocks being broken and damage to the doors and frame to the Plant Room. Members learned that electrical components belonging to Norstead Limited, scaffolding belonging to IFZW and an amount of scrap metal had been stolen. It was added that the Police had made extensive enquires, however, so far they had not been able to trace the culprits. Members were reassured that the compound area was now free of any materials of value and the padlocks had been replaced with superior items.

The Superintendent and Registrar explained that Durham County Council's Health and Safety Officer, together with colleagues from the County Durham and Darlington Fire and Rescue Authority carried out a review of the Fire Safety Risk Policy and made several recommendations including changes to the fire safety curtain behind the catafalque door and a requirement for a new fire alarm panel and slave panel to be sited next to the main doors to the building. It was noted that the cost of which would be charged to the revenue budget, with sums being drawn from the major works reserves if not covered by corresponding under spends elsewhere during the year. Members also noted that water heaters in the public toilets required replacement in order to comply with health and safety regarding Legionella, with the sum being met from the maintenance budget.

The Joint Committee also noted that upon receipt of a complaint from a member of the public as regards the disabled toilets, advice was sought to ensure the facility met with requirements. Members noted that estimates were being sought for the works and the cost met by the maintenance budget. Councillors were reminded that during the 15 months of the major works taking place, very few complaints of any sort had been received.

The Superintendent and Registrar explained that a number of Funeral Directors and members of the Clergy had noted the improvements to facilities, such as toilets, private vestry and room containing the Book of Remembrance.

In addition, a Funeral Director from the area (Stuart Wright) had written to the Superintendent and Registrar in this regard and a response was given, both set out within the agenda papers. Members noted that the main points related to the relatively small size of the Chapel, the position of the Book of Remembrance, the height of the entrance doors, the old Chapel of Rest being used as a possible overflow from the main Chapel subject to removal of the existing doors and improvements to the toilet facilities. The Joint Committee were informed that in order to best determine the requirements of users of the Crematorium, a survey of the existing facilities would be carried out at the opening of the new Crematory in September. Members noted that Funeral Directors, Clergy and Funeral Celebrants would be able to give their views as regards improvements and feed into an updated Asset Management Plan to be brought back to Members at a future meeting.

The Superintendent and Registrar added that Durham County Council Solicitor, Sarah Grigor was still working with the Financial Services Authority (FSA) as regards the Pre-Payment Bond scheme, the scheme currently remaining unimplemented.

Councillors noted that as previously agreed by the Joint Committee, a Feasibility Study would be undertaken as regards Green Energy and a Project Team, including experts in this field, would be formed in August/September 2012 to explore the possibilities that may allow further use of the waste heat, with an interim report to come back to the Joint Committee in January 2013.

The Chair thanked the Superintendent and Registrar and asked Members if they had any questions.

Councillor J Graham asked whether any future improvements that were proposed would be subject to a formal Tender or would be carried out by the County Council's Direct Services. The Superintendent and Registrar noted that indicative costs would be sought in the first instance then reported back to the Joint Committee for Members to then decide upon. Councillor N Foster noted that works would be carried out in the most cost effective method, concurred with the comments made by the Funeral Directors as regards the room containing the Book of Remembrance and added that it may be worth looking at proposals of green energy after the new cremators have been operating for a year. The Superintendent and Registrar noted a single cremator generated sufficient heat to be used by the Crematorium and Members would be presented with options for the use of the additional heat at a future meeting.

The Chair added that, at various conferences, he and the Superintendent and Registrar had witnessed demonstrations of electronic Books of Remembrance, some with swipe card technology.

Councillor J Graham noted that Appendix 2 to the Superintendent and Registrar's report still did not separate out the "Durham" and "Spennymoor" figures. The Superintendent and Registrar noted that this was the case, with the figures having been recorded for that period such that they were reported together.

It was added that now figures were recorded separately and the appropriate figures to be given for the period June 2012 onwards.

Resolved:

That the update report be noted.

A7 Forward Plan 2012/13

The Principal Accountant, Durham County Council, Joanne McMahon referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining a proposed Forward Plan of meetings for the Joint Committee for the 2012/13 cycle (for copy see file of minutes).

Resolved:

That the Forward Plan be approved.

A8 Review of the Terms of Reference for the Joint Committee

The Clerk to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining a proposed revised and updated Constitution for the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Members were reminded that following audit reviews it was recommended that the Joint Committee undertake a review and update its Terms of Reference.

The Joint Committee noted that there was additional information setting out the terms used within the document; representation of each of the constituent Authorities, with any Member only representing the Authority which appoints them first; the Chair and Vice Chair alternating between the constituent Authorities annually wherever possible; quorum; setting out that substitutes were not permitted; and further notes regarding voting.

The Clerk to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee explained that the draft was for Members to consider and comment upon prior to the final draft going to each of the constituent Authorities for ratification.

Councillor J Graham referred to paragraph 13 within the draft document and asked as regards what was meant by "silent". The Clerk to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee explained that this referred to where the new draft document did not explicitly set out a procedure; the principal Authority's procedure rules would be followed.

The Clerk to Spennymoor Town Council, Pauline Waterson noted that as regards the proposals within the draft document, there were no major issues other than paragraph 13. The Clerk to the Spennymoor Town Council noted the reason being the reference to Durham County Council's Constitution when not set out explicitly in the document for the Joint Committee. The Clerk to Spennymoor Town Council added that this had implications as regards the awarding on contracts as per the County Council's contract procedure rules, for example awarding contracts for civil engineering works to the County Council's Direct Services and, accordingly, she would be advising Spennymoor Town Council of some changes to the draft document that they may wish to consider.

Councillor N Foster added that he could not envisage a situation such that paragraph 13 would need to be used, however, the issue as regards Direct Services being awarded the contract for civil engineering works was discussed and agreed by the Joint Committee. The Chair noted that the Clerk to Spennymoor Town Council was looking from the perspective of protecting the Town Council's position and that each Authority would have a chance to look at the draft document in due course.

Councillor M Williams asked why the notice for termination of the agreement by either party was a year. The Clerk to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee noted that this was already within the existing agreement and was standard for this type of joint arrangement.

The Superintendent and Registrar added that changes in regulations meant that there would need to be a slight amendment to paragraph 15 to refer to the latest legislation, namely The Cremation (England and Wales) Regulations 2008.

Resolved:

- (i) That the draft Agreement be noted.
- (ii) That the draft Agreement be considered by each of the constituent Authorities and a Final Draft come back to the Joint Committee in due course.

A9 Internal Audit Report - Asset Register

The Principal Accountant referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining the Internal Audit Report - Asset Register for Durham Crematorium (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee noted that last year, the Auditors, BDO had asked for an Asset Register for the Crematorium and this was prepared and checked against the Crematorium itself and the register was confirmed as a true reflection of the assets held by the Crematorium.

Resolved:

That the Internal Audit Briefing Note regarding the Asset Register be noted.

A10 2011/12 Annual Governance Statement

The Principal Accountant referred Members to the report within the agenda papers setting out the 2011/22 Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for Durham Crematorium as part of the Small Bodies Return (for copy see file of minutes). It was added that further information additional to the previous year related to:

- Identifying and communicating Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee's vision of its purpose and intended outcomes for citizens and service users.
- Reviewing Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee's vision and its implication for its governance arrangements.
- Reviewing and updating financial instructions and supporting procedure notes/manuals, which clearly define how decisions are taken and the processes and controls required in managing risks.
- Conforming with the governance requirements of the CIPFA Statement on the role of the Chief Finance Officer.

The Joint Committee were asked to note that substantial assurance had been provided from the Annual Governance Statement.

Resolved:

That the Annual Governance Statement for consideration within the Statement of Accounts and Annual Return, be approved.

A11 Revenue Outturn & Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2012

The Principal Accountant referred Members to the report within the agenda papers setting out the Revenue Outturn and Statement of Account for the Year ended 31 March 2012 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee were asked to note that the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts had been prepared in accordance with CIPFA requirement and Code of Practice.

Members learned that against the prudent revenue budget, there had been an increase of £77,546 in revenue and that, as previously agreed, this would go into the Major Works Reserves.

It was explained that there was a slight revision to paragraph 1.28 "Major Capital Works Reserve", an additional sentence to read:

"Additional surplus transfers will continue into the Major Capital Works Reserve, until its balance totals £1.0m, following which the Joint Committee will undertake a further review of its policy".

The Joint Committee noted the significant variances as set out within the report and was updated as regards the Cremator Replacement and Redevelopment Project, which was on budget.

Resolved:

- (i) That the April 2011 to March 2012 Income and Expenditure within the Revenue Financial Monitoring Report and subsequent year balance of reserves be noted.
- (ii) That the proposed treatment of reserves, including the addition at paragraph 1.28 of the Notes to the Financial Statements within the Statement of Accounts be approved.
- (iii) That the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2012 be approved.
- (iv) That the Chair and Treasurer sign the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts.

A12 2011/12 Small Bodies Return

The Principal Accountant referred Members to the final report within the agenda papers setting out the Small Bodies Return for the year ended 31 March 2012 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee were asked to note that the Annual Return, Statement of Accounts and Annual Governance Statement fed into the Small Bodies Return and that the Chair would need to sign the Small Bodies Return on behalf of the Joint Committee and the Return would need to be submitted to the Auditors, BDO.

Councillor J Graham asked whether the reserve amount was generating interest. The Principal Accountant noted that interest was generated and was reinvested into the reserve.

Resolved:

- (i) That the Small Bodies Return be noted.
- (ii) That the Chair sign the Small Bodies Return on behalf of the Committee and the Small Bodies Return be submitted to the Auditor, BDO.