

**4 October 2013**



**Mountsett Crematorium Performance  
and Operational Report**

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**Report of Graham Harrison, Bereavement Services Manager**

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**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 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013**

2. The table below provides details of the number of cremations for the period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013 inclusive, with comparative data in the same periods last year:

	<b>2012/2013</b>	<b>2013/2014</b>	<b>Change</b>
	Period [June- August]	Period [June- August]	
June	85	99	+ 14
July	128	84	- 44
August	119	103	- 16
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>286</b>	<b>- 46</b>

Gateshead	88
Durham	162
Outside Area	36
<b>Total</b>	<b>286</b>

3. In summary there were 286 cremations undertaken during 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013, compared to 332 in the comparable period last year, a decrease of 46 cremations, which was primarily in July.
4. The decrease in the number of cremations in this period offsets increases in April and May as reported in the June meeting where there was 40 more cremations than in April and May last year. There is no cause for concern at present and a similar decrease in numbers at Durham crematorium has been observed, we continue to closely monitor usage, with prudent assumptions built into budgets and forecasts. Previous year trends identify that Qtr 3 and Qtr 4 numbers increase the overall outturn and therefore the financial outturn assumes an additional 32 cremations to budget to be undertaken during the year.

## Memorials

5. The table below outlines the number and value (exc. VAT) of the memorials sold in period 1 June 2013 to 31 August 2013 compared to the same period the previous year (2012); however memorial plaques were only introduced in August of 2012.

	Period [June-August] 2012		Period [June-August] 2013	
	Number	£	Number	£
Large Plaques	4	1,312.00	3	984.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>£1,312.00</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>£984.00</b>

6. In overall terms the number and value of memorials shows a decrease between periods of 1 / £328.00. based upon this information, the year-end outturn considers a projected reduction to budget in plaque sales. This is reported in the Financial Monitoring report later on the agenda.

## Operational Matters

### Green Flag Application

7. The Green Flag Award is a nationwide recognition of a good quality parks and green spaces, and a sign to visitors that its sites are well maintained and well managed with excellent facilities. Once again this year Mountsett Crematorium was successful in obtaining a Green Flag Award for the second year running which is a great achievement.
8. This award is testimony to the dedication of the staff working at the Crematorium and comes on top of the award of Gold Star Status in the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Accreditation.

### Crematorium Staffing

9. Two members of staff have indicated that they are wish to enrol on the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management Diploma Course. This course helps us build skills within the team and provide greater resilience and opportunities for succession planning going forwards. The cost associated with this diploma course is £90 each to enrol as Associate members of the Institute and £1,785 each to achieve an I.C.C.M. certificate within two years. These costs have been factored into the 2013/14 financial outturn report. Further studies and associated cost will need to be met in order to progress to achieve the full diploma should these staff progress to the next stage.
10. Members will recall that, at the meeting held on 14 June 2013, it was agreed (to further ensure business continuity for the longer term) to employ a Business Administration Apprentice. Interviews for the apprentice position were held on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> September 2013; we offered this post to two separate candidates, who subsequently turned the role down due to having to travel. I have therefore arranged to have this position re-advertised and it is anticipated that an appointment can be made by December 2013.

11. As Members will also recollect, at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2013, following discussions, it was proposed that a replacement for the Superintendent and Registrar be sought
12. Interviews for the Superintendent and Registrar's position were carried out on 15<sup>th</sup> July 2013. Two people were interviewed, however it was felt that they were unsuitable for this position and a separate report considering the next steps and options available is included on the Agenda.
13. Finally at the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> June, approval was also given for a number of Relief Crematorium Attendants positions to be advertised. As a result, one person was shortlisted for interview, however they did not attend. In addition, approval was also given for a Crematorium Attendant position be advertised. I am currently in the process of drafting the advertisement. The post is temporarily being undertaken a member of staff from DCC Clean and Green Service.

### **Recycling of Metals Scheme**

14. The recycling of metals scheme has produced a further surplus of £250,000 nationally for the autumn 2012 collection.
15. At the meeting held on 25th April 2013 it was agreed that Age Concern be nominated for the next available distribution of funds, therefore the nomination has been submitted and I am awaiting a response. To date £8,333 has been distributed to 2 local charities since joining this scheme. As Members may recollect a programme of charities was agreed for any future funding that becomes available.

### **Mountsett Crematorium: Replacement of Cremators and Installation of Mercury Abatement Plant**

16. As members will recollect a cremator reserve was established in 2003/04 in order to build up funds in order to finance new cremators when required. This item of works was also included in last years Service Asset Management Plan and the 2013/14 year end Cremator Reserve is projected at £402,656.
17. At the last meeting, members agreed to undertake a Feasibility Study to look at all options to move this project forward over the coming years.
18. Due to the number of cremations currently being undertaken and following the success of the recent crematorium extension at Durham Crematorium (which remained operational during these works) it is felt that Mountsett Crematorium should remain fully operational whilst this project was being undertaken.
19. The current layout of the crematorium dictates how the new equipment will need to be housed without ceasing services. It is suggested that an extension to the side of the building, housing the cremators be erected. This is required due to the increased size of the mercury abatement equipment and other specialist equipment.
20. A full extension to the side of the current crematory would result in the loss of light into the chapel area, therefore the alternative proposal is to construct an external courtyard between the committal room and the chapel in order to maintain the natural light.

21. A range of internal works (listed below) have been considered during the feasibility study:
- a. Blocking up of existing windows to the North and South of the new extension.
  - b. Refurbishment of the existing office.
  - c. The installation of a retro fit shower unit to the existing staff toilets.
  - d. The removal of the existing cremators making good to walls, floors existing flue and the creation of a control room.
  - e. Conversion of the fan room to a cremation remains store.
  - f. Increase in size of catafalque.
  - g. Install new cremators and Mercury abatement equipment
  - h. Weather seals to the main entrance door to the chapel area.
22. In addition, Northern Power grid will need to upgrade their main electricity supply to the Crematoriums main switchgear. This entails the installation of a substation and the upgrade of the underground distribution cable.
23. A Feasibility study has now been carried out and 3 options have been identified for Members consideration. These drawings can be found in appendix 2 & 3.

### Option 1

24. The Proposal is for a 143m<sup>2</sup> extension providing accommodation for the committal room, cremator room and the electric generation room which will be constructed to the west of the existing chapel.

Pro,s	Con's
Greater floor area	Costly
New enclosed control room	May need to reduce services during construction
Introduction of shower facilities	Risk to business
Heat exchanger to heat building	
Increased storage space	

**Total estimate is £2,522,314 (at current prices)**

### Option 1A

25. The removal of the electric generation room can be omitted from the above scheme if it is unable to be progressed and the overall extension decreased in size to 127m<sup>2</sup>.

**Total estimate is £2,139,690 (at current prices)**

## Option 2

26. The Proposal is for a 127m<sup>2</sup> extension providing accommodation for the committal room and cremator room. This option also includes the power generation costs but essentially reduces the size of the building at the cost to parts of the internal rooms.

Pro,s	Con's
Greater floor area	Smaller mess facilities
New enclosed control room	Costly
Introduction of shower facilities	May need to reduce services during construction
Heat exchanger to heat building	Risk to business
Increased storage space	

**Total estimate is £2,494,108 (at current prices)**

### Indicative Capital Financing Costs

27. In terms of financing any further redevelopment of the crematorium the options available would include utilisation of earmarked reserves and balances and / or prudential borrowing. Prudential borrowing via Durham County Council over a 10 year period would equate to annual charges of around 10% of the gross capital costs (prudent estimate). If the scheme was wholly financed from prudential borrowing then annual costs, which would need to be accommodated in the revenue budget, would be as follows based on the current prices and borrowing portfolio:

- Option 1      £323,598
- Option 1A    £293,622
- Option 2      £321,390

### Service Asset Management Plan

28. A report on our first Service Asset Management Plan was given to Members on 15 June 2012. This has now been amended and can be found in Appendix 4 to provide further direction and budget pressures for the future. The SAMP will need to be refined in line with any decisions taken on redevelopment of the crematorium.

29. The Service Asset Management Plan is split into 4 elements and includes the crematorium improvement works identified above:

Urgent essential work that have not been included within Crematorium improvement works, feasibility studies have now been estimated to the sum of £62,590, which includes a contingency sum, design & management fees and other fees & charges. These have been budgeted for within the 2013/14 planned maintenance revenue budget. Works include:

- Repair paths and external pedestrian paved area
- Upgrade and paint handrail
- Renew South perimeter fence
- Replacement of water heaters
- Repair external stone walls
- Mastic repair external windows and doors

- Safety film required to curtain wall
- Renew rainwater pipe
- Replacement of carpets throughout
- Replacement of curtains in chapel area
- Provide order of service from Wesley system
- Provide tribute screens for service
- Carry out re-lining of cremators
- Carry out re-lining of hearths

Members should note that there is sufficient capacity within the 2013/14 budget to cover the essential works listed above and the projected outturn assumes that these works are progressed.

As previously highlighted in the report longer term improvement works have been estimated to maximum of £2,522,314. These works include:

- Carry out extension to Crematorium
- Carry out upgrade to electricity supply
- External works and drainage
- Mechanical and electrical
- Supply and installation of new cremators and Mercury abatement equipment.

Further desirable works, which have not been included within the Crematorium improvement works valuation; have been estimated to the sum of £161,527. These works include:

- Carry out improvements to flagged area
- Carry out improvements to catafalque doors
- Provide internal tribute screen for services
- Re-placement of seating within chapel area
- Tarmac roads and car park
- Carry out car park extension
- Carry out roadway extension
- Purchase of grass cutting equipment
- Re-Decoration Works
- Carry out Re-lining of cremators
- Carry out Re-lining of hearths

Longer term desirable works have also now been costed to the sum of £169,000 and include:

- Re-Decoration Works
- Provide memorial wall
- Carry out Re-lining of cremators
- Carry out Re-lining of hearths

30. The level of spend in these areas will determine the procurement approach which will need to be applied, for example any works on goods and services which exceed £173,934 will require a European procurement exercise in line with the Public Contracts Legislation 2006. Works under this threshold will be conducted in line with the lead authority's contract procedure rules.

31. For those works where capacity and capability exists within the member authorities, the Joint Committee could undertake either of the following procurement routes:-

32. Members have two options to procure these works:

**a) Competitive tender**

A procurement exercise undertaken as outlined above

**b) In House Delivery**

The in house delivery option does not require a procurement exercise to be undertaken and would provide commitment to the delivery of the projects on or within the estimated costs prepared by the Client's Quantity Surveyor (based on the tender drawings and specifications) and using bench mark indices to ensure competitive pricing and value for money.

The programme and costs have been based on Option B being adopted.

Recent quotes from Direct Services have been very competitive and major works to Durham Crematorium including the recent extension and car parking facilities have recently been undertaken using Direct Services which have come within budget and successfully completed using a partnership approach..

**Recommended:**

33. It is recommended that Members of the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee:

- Consider the current performance of the crematorium.
- Consider the current performance regarding Memorial sales.
- Note the continued success with regards to the Green Flag Accreditation.
- Note the national surplus from the recycling of metal scheme.
- Consider the progress made regarding the Feasibility study and preferred option for further work.
- Consider and approve the content of the Draft Service Asset Management Plan attached at Appendix 4.

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**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.



