

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

At a Meeting of **Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Mountsett Crematorium Meeting Room, Mountsett Crematorium, Dipton** on **Friday 13 June 2014** at **9.30 am**

Present:

Councillor O Temple (Chairman)

Members of the Committee:

Durham County Council

Councillors K Dearden, O Milburn and T Nearney

Gateshead Council

Councillors K Dodds (Vice-Chairman), M Charlton, P Ronan, D Davidson and J Lee

1 Apologies

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors A Batey, I Jewel and B Stephens (Durham County Council) and Councillor P Mole (Gateshead Council).

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest submitted.

3 Appointment of Chairman

The Solicitor present, Catherine Burgess, representing the Clerk to the Joint Committee, asked for nominations for Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year.

Accordingly, Councillor K Dodds proposed Councillor O Temple for the position of Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor P Ronan seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

That by unanimous agreement, Councillor O Temple be appointed Chairman for the ensuing year.

COUNCILLOR O Temple in the Chair

4 Appointment of Vice-Chairman

The Chairman asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year noting that, as per the terms of reference, this should be a Member from Gateshead Council. Councillor P Ronan proposed Councillor K Dodds for the position of Vice-Chair to the Joint Committee for the ensuing year and Councillor J Lee seconded the proposal. No further proposals were made.

Resolved:

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

5 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 April 2014 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor M Ord in the attendance and Councillor O Milburn's apologies.

6 Review of the Terms of Reference

The Chairman referred Members to the report within the agenda papers outlining the Terms of Reference for the Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee (for copy see file of minutes).

Members were reminded that following audit reviews it was recommended that the Joint Committee undertake an annual review of the Terms of Reference and update as necessary.

Resolved:

That the Members of the Joint Committee note the Review of the Terms of Reference.

7 Annual Governance Statement 2013/14

The Joint Committee considered a Joint Report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which provided details of the Annual Governance Statement (AGS) for the year April 2013 to March 2014.

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhoods, Philip Curran advised that the Internal Audit had provided Substantial Assurance on the Joint Committee's system of internal control as reported at the previous meeting held in April 2014 and the AGS was prepared to form part of the Statement of Accounts and Small Bodies Return for the Joint Committee.

Councillors were asked to note the main changes as set out within the AGS included:

- Adopting the Durham County Council's (DCC) rules as regards HR policies, hospitality and the revised DCC Single Equality Scheme, including strengthen Equality Impact Assessments
- Review of Corporate Induction Programme, review of the grievance procedure and the appointment of a Business Administration Apprentice
- The appointment of new DCC Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager, together with the realignment service and fraud awareness training for Senior Officers.

Resolved:

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

8 Revenue Outturn, Small Bodies Return and Statement of Accounts for the Year Ended 31 March 2014

The Joint Committee considered a Joint Report of the Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services and Corporate Director Resources which sought approval of the Small Bodies Return and supporting Statement of Accounts for Mountsett Crematorium Joint Committee for the financial year ended 31 March 2014. The report further included details of the outturn position against approved budgets for 2013/14 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhoods proceeded to run through the financial outturn position for 2013/14 advising that the final outturn position was broadly in line with the provisional outturn position. Details of significant variances were contained within the report and duly noted.

With reference to the Annual Return and Statement of Accounts it was reported that the documents had been prepared in line with CIPFA guidance and was a statutory document. The following report sought the approval and signing off of both documents.

Councillors asked as regards the additional cost in relation to the surcharge paid to CAMEO, originally to be £25.00 per cremation. The Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison noted that the £25.00 was the original estimated surcharge as indicated by CAMEO, however the numbers of those participating in the CAMEO scheme had led to an actual surcharge of £50.52 per cremation. The Finance Manager – Neighbourhoods added that the additional costs had an element that related to 2012/13 cremations, and that the revised surcharge had been used in order to factor for budgets moving forward.

Resolved:

- (i) That the April 2013 to March 2014 Income and Expenditure within the Revenue Financial Monitoring Report and subsequent year balance of reserves, be noted.
- (ii) That the Small Bodies Annual Return and Statement of Accounts 2013/14 be approved.
- (iii) That the Small Bodies Annual Return be signed by the Chairman of the Joint Committee.

9 Quarterly Report of the Bereavement Services Manager

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

With regards to performance, the Bereavement Services Manager advised that during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2014, 209 cremations had been undertaken, which was a small reduction in comparison to the same period 2012/13 (215 cremations). The Bereavement Services Manager explained that upon speaking to Funeral Directors they had confirmed that there was a general downward trend in numbers, however, the Funeral Directors reiterated that they valued the facility and staff at Mountsett Crematorium. It was added that the situation as regards the numbers of cremations would be monitored closely and reported accordingly.

The Bereavement Services Manager advised that during the period 1 April 2014 to 31 May 2014, 6 memorial plaques had been sold an increase of 3 in comparison to the same period in the previous year.

Details were then provided regarding the Institute of Cemetery and Crematorium Management (ICCM) Learning Convention and Exhibition 2014 which was to be held on 29 September to 1 October 2014. The Bereavement Services Manager and Chairman of the Joint Committee would attend the event.

The Bereavement Services Manager provided an update in respect of staffing issues. He advised that the position of Trainee Crematorium Attendant had been filled and the member of staff was undertaking the Cremator Technician's qualification course. Members were reminded that at the last meeting Councillors had been informed that Business Administration Apprentice had resigned. It was noted that the reserve candidate had been contacted and a start date was being negotiated.

The Joint Committee noted that following discussions with the DCC publicity team, a draft brochure had been produced. The Bereavement Services Manager noted that the draft would be presented to the Chairman and Vice-Chairman for review and sign-off, with a final version to be brought to the next meeting of the Joint Committee for information.

Members noted the latest information as regards the recycling of metals scheme, a cheque in the sum of £4,412 having been presented to the British Heart Foundation by the Vice-Chairman and the Bereavement Services Manager on 12 May 2014.

The Bereavement Services Manager concluded by noting the Service Asset Management Plan (SAMP) works that had been carried forward from 2013/14. It was explained that the majority had been completed, with the replacement of the boundary fence to be carried out over the summer months.

Councillor T Nearney thanked the Chairman and the Bereavement Services Manager for taking forward the wishes of the Joint Committee in relation to the brochure. The Chairman added that the majority of cremations for the period appeared to be from the Gateshead area, rather than Durham.

The Bereavement Services Manager noted that the advertising by Funeral Directors was in the local area predominately, however, he would continue to monitor cremation numbers.

Resolved:

That the content of report and subsequent updates be noted.

10 Forward Plan 2014/15

The Joint Committee considered a Report of the Corporate Director Resources and Treasurer to the Joint Committee which set out proposals in respect of the Forward Plan of meetings of the Joint Committee for the municipal year 2014/15.

The Finance Manager – Neighbourhoods advised that the list of business to be conducted by the Joint Committee was not exhaustive and further items of business may be considered throughout the course of the year.

Resolved:

That the proposed schedule of meetings as set out in Appendix 2 of the report be approved.