

DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL

CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Committee Room 1A - County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 25 April 2018** at **2.00 pm**

Present:

Councillor L Maddison (Chairman)

Durham County Council:

Councillors D Bell, D Brown, P Jopling, S Quinn, J Shuttleworth and K Thompson

Spennymoor Town Council:

Town Councillors G Darkes and I Machin

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from J Chaplow, H Liddle, M McGaun, M McKeon and J Stephenson.

Councillor J Shuttleworth noted his apologies for missing a number of meetings. Councillor K Thompson noted thanks to the Bereavement Services Manager, Graham Harrison for his attendance at an event at Spennymoor Town Council.

2 Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2018 were confirmed as a correct record and were signed and initialled by the Chairman.

3 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

4 Quarterly Performance and Operational Report

The Bereavement Services Manager asked Members to note the performance figures from January 2018 to March 2018 and the comparison to the same period for 2017, highlighting that there was a net decrease of 5 cremations. It was noted there was a total of 671 for the three month period with the January to March 2018 profile breakdown showing 213 from Durham, 35 from Spennymoor and 423 from outside of the area.

Councillors were asked to note that the figure for the total number of cremations to 31 March 2018 was 2,294, compared to a prudent budget assumption of 2,200 cremations, representing an over-achievement in cremation fee income of £50,579. Members noted comparative figures for the previous eight financial years, noting an eight year average of 2,280 cremations.

The Bereavement Services Manager asked Members to note the number of memorials sold in comparison to the same period the previous year, a decrease of £2,325 in value terms.

The Joint Committee noted that a member of staff had applied for flexible working, which meant that they would reduce their hours by one day a week. It was added that another member of staff had also applied to reduce their hours by one day a week. The Bereavement Services Manager noted that it was therefore proposed that the Joint Committee consider covering the shortfall by creating either a 2 day a week part-time position or an apprentice post, with both options being able to be funded from existing budgets.

Councillors were asked to recall the 2018/19 Fees and Charges being approved at the last meeting of the Joint Committee, with an item being raised in terms of the £9.00 charge for Non-Viable Foetus (NVF), whereas children up to 16 years of age were free. It was added that this had historically been as cremations were organised via hospitals, though it was noted now this was via funeral directors. Members noted the low income generated from the NVF cremations and that it was proposed that the cost was amended to a nil cost with immediate effect.

The Bereavement Services Manager explained the necessary arrangements would be made as regards representation at the Joint Conference of the Federation of Burial and Cremation Authorities and the Cremation Society of Great Britain, to be held at the Hilton Newcastle/Gateshead from Monday 11 to Wednesday 13 June 2018.

The Bereavement Services Manager informed Members that the Recycling of Metals Scheme had generated a sum of £5,000 for Marie Curie and that arrangements had been made in respect of the cheque being presented to the charity. Members were reminded that at the last Committee it was noted that the current list of charity nominations was reaching its end and Members were asked to agree the list of charities and for any additional charities they wished to be included, noting that they needed to be bereavement related.

Councillor J Shuttleworth noted he felt it would be preferable to have an apprentice and that full-time was preferable to part-time, Members agreed.

Town Councillor I Machin asked if there would be feedback from the Annual Conference in June. The Bereavement Services Manager confirmed this would be provided by him at the next meeting and asked for any nominations for additional charities. Councillor J Shuttleworth noted he felt the Great North Air Ambulance would be a worthy charity, Members agreed.

Resolved:

- (i) That the current performance of the Crematorium be noted.
- (ii) That an apprentice position be created to backfill the two posts.
- (iii) That the change in NVF cremation charge from £9 to nil be agreed.
- (iv) That the attendance at the Burial and Cremation Conference be noted.
- (v) That the distribution of recycling income to the respective charity be noted and nomination of the Great North Air Ambulance be agreed.

Councillor S Quinn entered the meeting at 2.10pm

5 Financial Monitoring Report 2017/18 - Provisional Outturn as at 31/03/2018

The Principal Accountant, Ed Thompson referred Members to the Financial Monitoring Report, with the provisional outturn as at 31 March 2018 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Joint Committee noted that the updated projected revenue outturn was showing a surplus, of £663,073 against a budgeted surplus of £610,165. It was noted that the major variances were set out within the report.

Members noted that in terms of the capital programme, this was reported as being £76,159 under budget, with the underspends being attributed to a delay in the tarmacking of the roads and car park bays and staff car parking and cremator relining that was not required. It was noted those outstanding items would be carried forward into the 2018/19 Capital Budget.

Members noted a projected total reserve of £1,669,414 at the year-end, giving a strong financial position.

Resolved:

That the April 2017 to March 2018 Revenue Spend Financial Monitoring Report and associated Provision Outturn position at 31 March 2018 be noted.

6 Risk Register 2017/18 - Update

The Principal Accountant asked Members to note the Risk Register Update 2017/18 update report, the Joint Committee considering updates on a 6 monthly basis. Members recalled that the report set out Strategic Risks and Operational Risks with risks regularly reviewed by the DCC Risk Management Team and the Bereavement Services Manager. It was added that, as noted at the last meeting of the Joint Committee, the Town Clerk had joined the Bereavement Services Manager and DCC Risk Management Team.

It was noted that there had been no net change in the evaluation, with issues raised during the review included GDPR, privacy notes and staff training. Members noted that fireproof doors had been installed and were referred to the full list at Appendices 4 and 5.

Councillor I Machin noted that the approach seemed very good and was set out clearly.

Resolved:

That the Members of the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee note the content of the report and the updated position.

7 Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18

The Audit and Fraud Manager, Stephen Carter referred Members to the Annual Internal Audit Report 2017/18 (for copy see file of minutes).

The Audit and Fraud Manager reminded the Joint Committee that the Annual Internal Audit Report fulfilled the requirements of Public Sector Internal Audit Standards and CIPFA Local Government Application note for the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager to deliver an annual audit opinion.

Members were informed that the report looked at the Joint Committee's systems of governance, risk management and internal control and that, from the work undertaken, the Chief Internal Auditor and Corporate Fraud Manager was able to provide a "Substantial" overall assurance opinion of the adequacy and effectiveness of internal control operating across the Joint Committee in 2017/18. Members were reminded that "Substantial" was the highest level of assurance rating.

The Audit and Fraud Manager noted that the appendices to the report set out the work undertaken by Internal Audit and that there had been no significant control weaknesses that warranted inclusion in the 2017/18 Annual Governance Statement. Members were referred to good practice and three recommendations in terms of the: donation box; book of remembrance; and documentation and storage space.

The Chairman noted it was an excellent report and thanked the Officers for their hard work in once again obtaining a substantial assurance.

Resolved:

That the content of the Annual Internal Audit Report and the overall "Substantial" opinion on the adequacy and effectiveness of the Joint Committee's control environment for 2017/18 be noted.