

**DURHAM COUNTY COUNCIL**

**CENTRAL DURHAM CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE**

At a Meeting of **Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee** held in **Committee Room 2 - County Hall, Durham** on **Wednesday 25 November 2009** at **5.30 pm**

**PRESENT**

**COUNCILLOR J Marr** in the Chair

**Members of the Committee:**

Councillors J Chaplow, N Foster, M Plews, R Rodgers, A Thomson, F Walker, J Wood and C Woods

**Officers Present:**

Paul Darby	Head of Finance, HR and Business Support, Neighbourhood Services, Durham County Council
Alan José	Superintendent and Registrar, Durham Crematorium
Derek Shingleton	Accountant, Spennymoor Town Council
Sharon Spence	Clerk to the Central Durham Crematorium Joint Committee

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors D Stoker and M Williams.

**Restricted Minutes:**

**B4 Report of the Treasurer to the Joint Committee - Revised Statement of Accounts 2008/09 and External Audit Report**

The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support, Paul Darby explained to Members that unfortunately, the District Auditor had not yet completed his Report and therefore the amended Statement of Accounts was not available for Members to discuss at the meeting. It was recommended that a Special Meeting be arranged in order for the District Auditor to be in attendance to present his External Audit Report and for Members to receive the Statement of Accounts 2008/09.

**Resolved:**

That a Special Meeting of the Joint Committee be arranged for 14 December 2009 for Members to receive the revised Statement of Accounts for 2008/09 and the External Audit Report of the District Auditor.

**B5 Joint Report of the Treasure to the Joint Committee / Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services - Financial Monitoring Report**

The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support asked Members to note the contents of the Financial Monitoring Report – Position at 30 September 2009, with projected Outturn at 31 March 2010. The main points Members were asked to note were that any surplus in net income would be retained within the Joint Committee reserves and quarterly financial updates would continue to be presented to the Joint Committee in line with the Forward Plan.

**Resolved:**

- (a) That the April to September 2009 Revenue Spend Financial Monitoring Report and associated forecasts in terms of the outturn position 2009/10 be noted.
- (b) That the Joint Committee continue to receive quarterly financial reports in line with the Forward Plan.

**B6 Joint Report of the Treasure to the Joint Committee / Corporate Director Neighbourhood Services - Options Appraisal**

The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support referred Members to the Options Appraisal Report as set out in the agenda papers.

The Joint Committee were reminded that due to regulations, and the fact the cremators themselves were at the end of their lifecycle, works were required in order to make the Crematorium fit for purpose for future option.

Members were informed that there were 3 options that the Joint Committee could consider, namely a “do minimum” solution, the “do minimum” solution with some additional car parking and highways works and a full refurbishment. The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support noted that it was the technology that would drive the design process and how the project would take shape and accordingly, the first step would be to appoint mechanical and electrical engineers to undertake a study of technology and produce a shortlist of companies for further consideration. Members were asked to note that from this point, the project could then move to procurement then in turn to construction / installation, as set out by the outline timeline at Appendix 2 to the Report.

The Chair thanked the Head of Finance, HR and Business Support and asked Members of the Joint Committee if they had any questions on the Report.

Councillor F Walker asked whether the workload and capacity of cremator construction companies would be taken into account and whether such companies were “approved” in respect of the regulations coming into force. The Superintendent and Registrar responded by noting that it had been noted that one company, Facultative Technologies did indeed have approximately 90% of the UK contracts for cremator replacements in order to meet regulations.

The Superintendent and Registrar added that the best technology for the Central Durham Crematorium was the driving factor, and indeed the appointment of independent Engineers would help to provide a basis to move to the next stage. The Superintendent and Registrar stated he was not aware of any companies being “approved” in relation to regulations.

Councillor R Rodgers asked whether the full refurbishment option should be the preferred option as it would ensure the Crematorium was fit for purpose. The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support noted that whilst the report did not explicitly recommend an option in relation to the level of refurbishment, the “middle” option of replacing the cremators and undertaking some car park and highways works was that which could be accommodated within the financial option of existing reserves with modest prudent borrowing, a level deemed appropriate to the current global financing climate. The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support continued stating that this option would not preclude further addition works in the future, if appropriate, to further enhance the facility. Councillor C Woods agreed, but asked whether other financial options had been looked at as regards realising the full refurbishment option.

The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support reiterated that the Report itself did not look to the Joint Committee for a definitive decision as regards the level of works, and that from an Engineers’ Report, and further work undertaken by the Head of Finance, HR and Business Support and the Superintendent and Registrar, further options could be brought back to the Joint Committee at future meetings.

Councillor N Foster noted these comments and added that the wider context of competition within the Durham County Council Capital Programme and the prospect of savings having to be made in light of the global economic situation suggested that the full refurbishment option may be difficult to achieve. Councillor F Walker added that the full refurbishment option may not be feasible within the timescales set out by regulations.

Members discussed several issues relating to the need for additional capacity within both the office accommodation and the chapel area of the Crematorium. Again, Officers reiterated that the main issue was to be compliant with emissions regulations. The Head of Finance, HR and Business Support noted that options required to provide finance for anything beyond the “middle” option could involve bringing in partner organisations, which would have a knock on effect in relation to governance issues, which were beyond the scope of the Report as presented to Members. Members agreed that there was the desire to retain the facility wholly within the public sector.

The Chair thanked the Officers for their time and asked Members to decide upon the recommendations as set out within the Report.

**Resolved:**

- (a) That the Report be noted and the Joint Committee approves the appointment of a suitably qualified Company of Consulting Engineers to undertake a study of the cremator, mercury abatement and heat recovery market and produce a shortlist of companies / technologies for further consideration, identifying the advantages and disadvantages of each system and reference sites for potential site visits.
- (b) That the Treasurer to the Joint Committee / Corporate Director: Resources, procure the services of such a Consultant, on behalf of the Joint Committee, in accordance with the Contract Procedure Rules of Durham county Council.
- (c) That presentations and site visits (where appropriate) be arranged to aid understanding, with a further report being brought to the Joint Committee at the next meeting, January 2010.