

CHESTERFIELD AND DISTRICT JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE**Thursday, 23rd May, 2019**

Present:-

Councillor Powell (Chair)

Councillors Antcliff
Armitage
Blank
Holmes

Councillors J Innes
Mannion-Brunt
Wright

*Matters dealt with under the Delegation Scheme

1 APPOINTMENT OF A CHAIR (TO BE APPOINTED FROM NORTH EAST DERBYSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL)

That Councillor Powell be appointed Chair of the Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee for 2019/20.

(Councillor Powell took the Chair).

2 APPOINTMENT OF A VICE-CHAIR (TO BE APPOINTED FROM BOLSOVER DISTRICT COUNCIL)

That the appointment of a Vice-Chair from Bolsover District Council be deferred to the next meeting of the Committee as no members from Bolsover District Council were present.

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST BY MEMBERS AND OFFICERS RELATING TO ITEMS ON THE AGENDA

No declarations of interest were received.

4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ludlow.

5 MINUTES OF THE JOINT CREMATORIUM COMMITTEE HELD ON 11 MARCH, 2019

That the Minutes of the Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee on 11 March, 2019 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - EXCLUSION OF THE PUBLIC

RESOLVED –

That under Regulation 21 (1)(b) of the Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements)(Access to Information)(England) Regulations 2000, the public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined by Paragraphs 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972' on the grounds that it contains information relating to financial or business affairs.

7 BEREAVEMENT SERVICES MANAGER'S REPORT

The Bereavement Services Manager submitted a report on matters relating to the operation of the Crematorium.

Information on cremation totals, comparisons with national and regional data, and geographical information on which areas funerals had been received from in 2018/19 was provided in Section 2 of the officer's report.

The report also provided an update on the progress of Management Plan Projects and advised the Committee of reline work to Cremators 2 and 3, scheduled for completion during the traditionally quieter months, ensuring that cremation services continued without disruption.

The report also sought approval to extend the fixed term clerical position to November 2019, enabling the completion of the project to computerise paper cremation records which would allow administrative staff to deal more efficiently with enquiries and reduce the risk of loss or damage to records.

The Committee thanked all staff involved in the operation and presentation of the Crematorium and its grounds, and sent their best wishes to the Bereavement Services Officer.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the alterations to the fixed term contract of the Clerical Assistant post be approved.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS –

1. To ensure Members are informed of matters relating to the management of the Crematorium.
2. To ensure the back entry of cremation records is completed within the financial year.

8 REVIEW OF ASSETS AND RESERVES

The Assistant Director – Commercial Services and the Bereavement Services Manager submitted a report that provided information on the Crematorium's Reserves, Land and Property Assets, enabling the Committee to review their status and ensure that they continued to be managed efficiently and maintained in a consistent, strategic manner that supported service delivery.

The Crematorium holds six usable reserves: the Mercury Abatement Reserve, Cremator Repairs Reserve, Organ Reserve, Revenue Reserve, Capital Improvement Reserve and Equipment Reserve. The report provided details on the current position of the reserves and predicted future impacts including the need for repairs or replacement of equipment, drop in death rates and national investigations into the sector.

The Asset Register, which was attached at Appendix 2 of the officer's report, noted the current value of Land and Property Assets including the predicted life expectancy and replacement or re-build costs.

In response to the Committee's questions, the Bereavement Services Manager advised that the Crematorium had reduced its carbon footprint by harnessing heat to distribute throughout the buildings, installing solar panels on the roof and developing the grounds to create areas for wildlife. An assessment of the environmental impact of the Crematorium service would be carried out and the Committee requested that this be brought to the September meeting which would take place at the Crematorium.

RESOLVED –

1. That contributions to the Mercury Abatement Reserve continue at the rate per cremation set by CAMEO.
2. That the current balance of the Cremator Repairs Reserve be maintained and reviewed regularly.
3. That the Organ Reserve be maintained at the current level.
4. That the minimum balance of £250k be maintained in the Revenue Reserve and that the risks to revenue, including fluctuations in death rates, local competition and the investigation into the sector, be noted.
5. That the Management Plan projects, as detailed in Appendix 1 of the officer's report, be approved and that the current balance of the Capital Improvement Reserve be noted.
6. That the current value of land and assets, as detailed in Appendix 2 of the officer's report, be noted.
7. That an assessment of the environmental impact of the Crematorium be carried out and presented to the Committee in September, 2019.

REASONS FOR DECISIONS –

1. To ensure that the Crematorium has sufficient funds to replace cremation equipment at the earliest foreseen time so as not to place financial burden on the three Constituent Authorities.
2. To ensure, in the unlikely event of plant failure, sufficient funds are available to maintain, service and if necessary, replace individual pieces of crematory equipment until the full plant replacement.
3. To ensure sufficient funds are available to maintain the Crematorium's Church Organ in suitable condition.
4. To ensure that the Crematorium is protected against a loss of revenue due to a fall in cremation numbers.

5. To maintain and manage the Crematorium to acceptable standards over the coming years and to provide a caring, dignified service for the people of North Derbyshire over the coming years.
6. To keep Members informed of the Crematoriums Assets and their value.

9 RESPONSE TO REVIEW OF CREMATORIA PROVISION

The Assistant Director – Commercial Services and the Bereavement Services Manager submitted a report to update the Committee on the Competition and Markets Authority investigation into the Funeral Director and Crematoria Services Sector, and advise Members of the position of Chesterfield and District Crematorium in relation to the concerns raised.

The purpose of the review was to decide whether any feature or combination of features of each relevant market prevents, restricts or distorts competition with the supply or acquisition of any goods or services in the UK. The report outlined the three priority items that will be investigated, accompanied by a summary on Chesterfield and District Crematorium's position in relation to each. The three items were:

1. How local Authority and Private Crematoria set their prices, range and quality, including the extent to which local authority crematoria set prices above the level necessary to recover costs.
2. The profitability of local authority and private crematoria including an analysis of whether price increases can be explained by cost increases or investments in quality.
3. Evidence of the proportion of customers that crematoria tend to attract from locations for which they are not the closest provider and investigation of whether in these circumstances, customers are making active choices based on quality and price.

The report also provided an overview of the actions taken to determine if the Crematorium met the needs of different religious and non-religious groups.

RESOLVED –

That the report be noted.

REASON FOR DECISION –

To ensure that Members are prepared to respond to the results of the market investigation and are reassured that management understand the concerns raised within the review and have acted accordingly.

10 LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972 - RE-ADMISSION OF THE PUBLIC

That the public be re-admitted to the meeting.

11 REMEMBERING SREBRENICA

A letter from Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth, Minister for Faith in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, was shared with the Committee. The letter invited all local authorities to join in the commemorations of Srebrenica Memorial Week, 7-14 July, 2019, by holding a memorial event.

RESOLVED –

That the letter from Lord Bourne of Aberystwyth be referred back to each individual authority for consideration.

REASON FOR DECISION –

To allow each individual authority to consider an appropriate commemoration for Srebrenica Memorial Week.

12 ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31ST MARCH 2019

The Treasurer to the Committee and the Bereavement Services Manager submitted a report on the final accounts of the Chesterfield and District Joint Crematorium Committee for the year ended 31 March, 2019, including the Revenue Account and Balance Sheet.

The report noted that at year end there had been a surplus of £572,913 and outlined the areas where there had been variances from the approved budget.

Section 3.3 of the officer's report provided detail on the schemes that required carry forwards to 2019/20 which totalled £14,330.

Information was given on six usable reserves shown in the Balance Sheet, as attached at Appendix B of the officer's report:

- Revenue Reserve;
- Mercury Abatement Reserve;
- Equipment Reserve;
- Organ Reserve;
- Cremator Repairs Reserve;
- Capital Improvement Reserve.

The report noted that a redistribution of £499k had been made to the constituent authorities, the details of which were set out in paragraph 5.2 of the officer's report.

RESOLVED –

1. That the report be noted.
2. That the Statement of Accounts be approved.
3. That the carry forward requests, as set out in paragraph 3.3 of the officer's report, be approved.

REASON FOR DECISION –

To ensure that the Joint Committee approves the Statement of Accounts for 2018/19 and that a balanced revenues budget is maintained for 2019/20.