

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE held at the Crematorium, Barnstaple on Friday 9th February 2018 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Jones, Lane and Moores

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors S.Inch, Langmead (In the Chair) and Pennington.

Officers

Procurement and Service Delivery Manager, Crematorium Manager, Treasurer, Secretary and Accountant

(a) APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Edgell, T. Inch and Yabsley

(b) MINUTES

(i) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20th October 2017 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(ii) Matters Arising

(A) Upper Car Park – Phase 2 Snagging Update

Councillor Inch stated that the sub base works had not been completed as stated at the last meeting.

The Procurement and Service Delivery Manager stated that NDC were still in negotiations with the contractor over the snagging issues and £24,944.81 + VAT was still held by NDC.

He further stated that a sum over £10,000 had been agreed in lieu of replacing the brick slips.

Councillor Langmead asked if the water egress issue had been sorted.

The Procurement and Service Delivery Manager stated the leak was still being investigated and the contractor had been on site last week and would be again next week.

(c) ITEMS BROUGHT FORWARD WHICH, IN THE OPINION OF THE CHAIRMAN, SHOULD BE CONSIDERED BY THE MEETING AS A MATTER OF URGENCY

Councillor Langmead stated that directional finger posts were required to direct people to different parts of the gardens. At present people had no idea as to where to go for each named garden area. It was also asked if interpretation boards similar to that in the car park could be provided elsewhere in the garden.

The Crematorium Manager was asked to investigate and report back to the Joint Committee.

(d) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest announced.

(e) CREMATORIUM MATTERS

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Crematorium Manager (previously circulated).

i) Achievements

It was noted:

That the recent epidemic of flu had resulted in there being no organist being available on one recent occasion. Staff had stepped in to deliver the music seamlessly using the Obitus Music system.

That the gates at the entrance to the new Car Park, had been upgraded with new stronger posts to resist future damage from vehicles using the entrance to reverse. The work had also created a separate pedestrian access gate.

That the last of the paper cremation registers (2004-2009) had been sent to be bound using a Devon bookbinding company.

That some AV upgrades had been installed in the Rowan chapel. A tribute screen had been installed in the viewing room and a small tribute screen fitted to the lectern to allow the minister/celebrant to monitor the tributes without having to look behind them.

ii) Crematorium Figures

The Cremation figures were noted.

It was noted that the cremations in January was 182 and in February to date 165.

The Crematorium Manager reported that the Crematorium was currently operating near capacity but there was alternative ways of working in place to compensate for any increases. The capacity was 216 cremations per month.

iii) Metals Charity Recycling Award

It was noted:

That the scheme had issued a press release which showed that nationally the scheme had awarded £325,000 to local bereavement related charities in 2017.

That Families in Grief had been nominated for the next award with the announcement expected in March and the next charity on the rota was North Devon Children's Holiday Foundation.

iv) Legislation: Update

It was noted:

That the Cremation (England & Wales)(Amendment) Regulations 2017 would come into force in April 2019 and introduce new cremation forms which would incorporate instructions as to what the applicant wished to be done with the ashes after cremation. This would require some minor changes to the 'in-house' forms which previously dealt with ashes.

More importantly, electronic signing and transmitting of forms will be allowed. This had the potential to reduce paperwork and assist in cases where delays were created by the need to collect paperwork from outside our area.

v) Grounds Improvement Update

It was noted:

That the new summerhouse had been ordered, it was to be an oak structure with a slate roof for longevity –work was expected to commence during February half-term.

The Poets path works quote had been received and was within the allocated budget and the procurement process was underway. The identified product had 'foundations' as well as the 'top coat' which were permeable. This would be a huge benefit in this area which was prone to flooding, especially as conventional drainage was impossible because it would disturb cremated remains.

Concern was expressed that even though the new poet's path surface would permeable it may go green in time and become slippery. The crematorium Manage was asked to raise the issue with the contractor.

vi) Chapel Music System

It was noted that the music system had maintained a 100% record of reliability, save for some minor software issues and ordering the wrong music errors (identified pre-service). It's implementation had gone extremely well.

vi) Larkbear

It was noted that the Joint Committee's concerns had resulted in some feedback from the contractors regarding the viability of the suggestions and were being considered. It was likely the application would be considered by the NDC Planning Committee in March.

vii) Cameo

That the application for the 2017 round of CAMEO scheme trading had been submitted on the basis of 1633 cremations in total of which 1591 were abated. There were 1563 abated cremations in 2016.

viii) Medical Examiner Scheme

That the intended start date for the new medical examiner scheme had been reaffirmed by the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) as being April 2019. This would streamline the process for cremations for families and remove the need for the Crematorium to provide the medical referee service.

The MOJ had confirmed that the Unitary Authorities/County Councils would be responsible for setting up the service and as a result Devon County Council was starting to plan for the implementation. The responsible officer had been contacted to ensure close liaison over the implementation in view of its impact on bereavement services across both Councils.

ix) Refurbishment of Aspen Chapel

It was noted:

That in 2016, the Joint Committee, had approved £143,000 to fund the refurbishment of the Aspen Chapel. In addition to some inflationary price increases it had been identified that the VAT needed to be included in the costings together with buildings regulation fees and an increase in the contingency element by an extra 5% following a change in council policy.

A review of the proposed works had identified a number of additional elements which would benefit from being upgraded at the same time. These included the refurbishment of the vestry, new electrics, flooring upgrade, air conditioning replacement, heating (recovered), additional 'staff only' access & asbestos testing/removal.

To allow for these increases and improvements to the original scheme would require increasing the budget to £231,000.

It was agreed to consider the above matter when considering the budget for 2018/19 later in the agenda.

The Joint Committee recorded its thanks to the Crematorium Manager and staff for all their hard work

(f) CREMATORIUM MEMORIAL GARDENS – PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS 2018/19

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Crematorium Lead Gardener (previously circulated) regarding improvements to the Memorial Gardens.

The proposed improvements were disabled access works (rear of Aspen Chapel), new covered walkway (rear of Aspen Chapel) and footpath improvements. Total cost £62,100.

It was agreed to consider the above matter when considering the budget for 2018/19 later in the agenda.

(g) PERFORMANCE MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER 3 2017/18

The Joint Committee considered and noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the performance for April to December 2017/18

(h) 2018/19 BUDGET, FEES AND CHARGES

RESOLVED on consideration of a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the budget and charges 2018/19.

It was noted that the works identified in minutes (e)(xi) Aspen Chapel and (f) Memorial Gardens above had been included in the base budget for 2018/19.

RESOLVED:

- (i) That the 2018/19 Budget as set out in paragraph 3 of the report be approved.
- (ii) That the basic Cremation charge for 2018/19 be increased by £20 to £660.
- (iii) That the fees and charges for 2018/19 as detailed in paragraph 6.3 of the report and appendix 2 be approved.
- (iv) That the distribution of surpluses for 2017/18 of £334,880 to the constituent authorities: £200,928 to North Devon Council and £133,952 to Torridge District Council be approved.
- (v) That the budgeted distribution of surpluses of £367,680 for 2018/19 as set out in paragraph 7.1 be noted
- (vi) That the transfer of £100,000 to the equipment replacement reserve be approved.
- (vii) That the £231,000 spend on the refurbishment of the Aspen Chapel be approved and funded from the Capital funding reserve.
- (viii) That the £62,100 spend on the Memorial Gardens for disabled access works, new covered walkway and footpath improvements be approved.

(i) DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

The following dates for future meetings were agreed:

Friday 22 June 2018 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 3 August 2018 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 2 November 2018 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 15 February 2019 @ 2.30 p.m.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 4.05 p.m.