

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE held at the Crematorium on Friday 1st November 2024 at 2.30 pm

Present: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Cann, Haworth-Booth, P Leaver and Lovering

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors C Cottle-Hunkin, Gubb and Inch (Chair)

Officers

NDC Head of Customer Focus, Crematorium Manager, Secretary, Accountant and Trainee Bereavement Services Manager.

(A) APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Andrews, Denton, Harding, Renshaw and Walker and Steve Hearse (Treasurer).

(b) MINUTES

- (i) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 2nd August 2024 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- (ii) Matters Arising. There were no matters arising.

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

There were no items of urgency.

(d) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

(e) CREMATORIUM MATTERS

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

i) Staffing Update

That a part-time gardener had retired after 20 years' service and that in line with the service improvement plan and reduced post-autumn workload the recruitment would take place in the spring probably by an apprentice/hybrid appointment.

ii) Crematorium Figures- (excluding NVF)

The Cremation figures were noted. The Crematorium Manager reported that there had been 132 cremations in October of which 30 had been direct cremations. The total number of direct cremations to date were 176.

iii) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted:

That Cruse had been awarded £11,600

Rota for subsequent awards:

Children's Hospice SW
Families in Grief
North Devon Hospice
Cruse

iv) Service Improvement Plan

It was noted that a survey had been circulated to Funeral Directors seeking their views on the current service delivery and ideas for improvements. A copy of the questions and the results were tabled.

It was hoped that this would also help inform any decision making around pricing at the next Joint Committee meeting. Information regarding the National and South West crematoria statistics were tabled.

A question was raised regarding the apparent lack of awareness of Memorial only Services provided at the Crematorium.

v) Crematorium Solar Panels

It was noted that due to technical issues with Brynsworthy it had been agreed that the Crematorium progress as a stand-alone solar panela project. A preliminary single quote had been obtained based on current electricity costs which, whilst it incorporated some incorrect presumptions (such as use of the copper roof), did give an insight into costs and time to break even. The estimated cost for a basic 70KW system (no storage) was £61,500 with an annual electricity bill saving of £6,687, a payback period of 7 years 4 months and net savings over 20-years of £207,116.

It was noted that the funds for the project could be met from the Budget Management reserve.

It was also suggested that grants may be available for the project.

It was agreed that the Crematorium Manager be authorised to seek tenders for the provision of solar panels.

vi) Projects

It was noted that a 2.5 day closure for cremator servicing would start on 4th November. It had previously not been required to close for 6-monthly servicing but enhanced safety protocols imposed by the service company had made this necessary. A number of projects had been timed to use this opportunity.

Peace Garden: The works would be starting 4th November to create a peaceful garden with seating, water feature and pergola on the old garage site. The noisy elements would be largely completed at this time. Funding source was from a S106 payment. Completion of ground works was likely in late December/early January.

The tarmac repairs and the hearse bay marking would be completed at the entrance.

Drainage works: The ramp from the upper car-park by the Rowan Chapel frequently had an overflow of water when it rained. Drains were being installed to mitigate this flow of water where vehicles and visitors passed.

Installation of a replacement gas meter.

vii) Cremator Maintenance

It was noted that a number of costly repairs had already been carried out this financial period. It was anticipated that some additional expensive works would be required in the next few months: Flue perforation at base (fortunately the 'cold-side') (quote received of £33,000), damper on one cremator and hearth replacement (approx. £33,000). These works may require funding through the equipment reserve as anticipated for non-routine maintenance.

It was noted that these costs would be met from the Equipment Replacement reserve.

viii) Christmas Arrangements

It was noted that the Crematorium would be closed from 24th December 2024 and re-open on 2nd January 2025

(F) PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2 2024/2025

The Joint Committee noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the performance for quarter 2 April to September 2024/2025.

(G) PROPOSED DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS 2025/2026

RESOLVED that the following dates for 2025/2026 be agreed:

Friday 6th June 2025 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 1st August 2025 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 7th November 2025 @ 2.30 p.m.

Friday 6th February 2026 @ 2.30 p.m.

(H)DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would be on Friday 7th February 2025 @ 2.30 p.m.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 3.15 pm