

## **NORTH DEVON COUNCIL**

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE held at the Crematorium, Barnstaple on Friday 8<sup>th</sup> November 2019 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Bulled, Cann, Y.Gubb, Lovering, Phillips and Walker

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors Christie, J.Gubb, Harding, Inch (Chairman) and Pennington

Officers

Head of Operational Services, Crematorium Manager, Secretary and Accountant.

### **(a) APOLOGIES**

Apologies were received from Councillor Davis and S. Hearse – Treasurer

### **(b) MINUTES**

(i) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9<sup>th</sup> August 2019 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

(ii) Matters Arising – There were no matters arising

The Chairman referred to the recent article in the ND Gazette regarding the works to improving the paths disturbing memorials. The Crematorium Manager stated that no memorials were disturbed during the works.

### **(c) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest declared

### **(d) CREMATORIUM MATTERS**

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

i) Update from last meeting

Planning for Replacement Cremation Equipment

The Crematorium Manager reported that the life expectancy of the existing

cremation equipment had been revised by the manufacturer to be approximately 20 years, a further 12 years from now. Parts of the system may need replacing earlier, some later.

The cost today would be about £750,000 to replace them completely with equivalent equipment. Allowing for a 3% annual rate of inflation, the total cost would be about £1,100,000 in 2031.

At the current rate the fund would build a reserve for replacement of £1,600,000 in 12 years (existing £400,000 plus 12 years of £100,000 per year). This supported a reduction in the rate at which funds were being added to the equipment reserve.

On the presumption of the same technology like for like' replacement there were two options:

- 1. Reduce the amount added to reserve to £60,000 per year (reaching £1,120,000 in 2031).
- 2. Reduce the amount added to reserve to £80,000 per year – allowing for major cremator re-brick costs to be automatically funded from the reserve.

He further reported one cremator was due to be re-lined this year and the other next year. £40,000 had been identified for each cremator to be re-lined. He had however been advised that for an additional £20,000 per cremator they could be re-lined with new technology which would give a longer life expectancy and be more cost effective in the long term. This would however give a budget short fall in this year of £20,000 and require additional funding of £20,000 in next year's budget.

RESOLVED:

- (A) that option 2 be adopted as this would allow a high degree of certainty around major maintenance expenditure and reduce the variance in surpluses year on year.
- (B) that the cremators be re-lined with the new technology and the additional £20,000 in this year's budget be approved.

#### ii) Solar Panels

It was noted that costs were still being investigated

#### iii) Achievements

It was noted that

- The annual internal audit of the crematorium conducted by Mazars Risk & Assurance Services had identified no concerns and no issues to be addressed

The Committee congratulated the staff for their hard work in achieving a full assurance audit report.

- The cremator computers had been replaced (aged 8 years) and re-housed in a better bespoke housing.
- The Music system remote control extenders had been installed in the Rowan and Aspen Chapels allowing the chapel attendant to operate the system from anywhere surrounding the chapels.
- Additional music system remotes had been installed in each chapel, allowing the minister/officiant to control the music from the lectern.
- Williamson bed (a rhododendron bed in Authors) had been cleared, re-edged and re-planted after consultation with the memorial owners. The recycled plastic edging was a long-term solution to replace the short-lived softwood edging widely used on-site.
- The close-down of the Phillips memorial building had been completed with the Phillips family ashes having been interred in a large sanctum and the other encased ashes returned to their respective families in accordance with their expressed wishes.
- Polyhives had been purchased for the bee colonies. The more vulnerable (swarm) colony had already been transferred. It was hoped these would offer superior warmth in winter and coolness in summer to help them thrive.

#### iv) Staffing

It was noted that the new Bereavement Administrator had been appointed on 20<sup>th</sup> August and had started employment on 23<sup>rd</sup> September

#### v) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted that a cheque for £8,000 had been received for the Children's Hospice South West. The formal presentation had been made by Cllr Tony Inch on 25<sup>th</sup> October on behalf of the crematorium.

The next charity to be nominated would be 'Over and Above' as previously agreed.

Councillor Lovering declared an interest in the North Devon Hospital 'Over and Above' Charity as she worked in the maternity unit at the hospital

#### vi) Crematorium Figures

The Cremation figures were noted.

#### vii) New South West Crematorium

It was noted that a pre-application for planning had been submitted for a new crematorium just south of Bude. In the event the application proceeded without significant disruption a realistic operational date would be 3-5 years.

#### viii) Emergency Planning

It was noted that recent roadworks outside the crematorium had resulted in an unexpected interruption to the power supply. The systems were able to complete the cremations in progress despite the power supply and gas being cut (automatic safety feature). This was a 'lucky escape' and prompted a review of how the service could continue in the event of another similar incident. Initial investigations suggested that the Aspen's recent refurb (which separated its electric supply board) offered the possibility of a generator back-up with battery support to cover the initial outage. This would allow the day's services to be completed albeit, only in the smaller chapel.

Investigations on the options/costs were underway.

It was suggested that the use of power from the solar panels be also investigated.

#### ix) Service Improvements

It was noted that an imminent booking software update would enable a 'Public Diary' capability. This would give the capability for the public and funeral directors to search on line for any service (by name) or view all the services booked for a specific day.

The service would be available via a link on the soon to be updated website. This was a desirable service that would be widely used and enable a search at any time of the day. Private services would be blocked from searching. The costs were £1,850 installation plus an annual service charge of £550 (payable 1<sup>st</sup> January 2020).

RESOLVED, that the proposal be considered as part of next year's budget considerations.

#### x) Larkbear Development

The Crematorium Manager reported that the proposals for the road layout, bus gate, new footpaths/cycle lanes and parking restrictions for the Larkbear development would impact the access to the crematorium were starting to emerge. A draft report by DCC on the footpaths was tabled.

RESOLVED that the Crematorium Manager produce a list of concerns on the effect of the develop on the Crematorium to be circulated to all Members of the Joint Committee, the DCC Ward Members, NDC Ward Members and the Leader of North Devon Council

xi) Christmas Working

It was noted and agreed that that the Crematorium would operate outside the Council closedown period– only closing on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> December and ‘early closing’ on Christmas Eve and New Year’s Eve

**(e) PERFORMANCE MONITORING QUARTER 2 2019/20**

The Joint Committee considered and noted a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the performance for Quarter 2 April to September 2019/20.

It was agreed that when the outturn figures were available to consider whether to reduce the contribution to the Equipment Replacement Reserve to £80,000 in 2019/20 or to reduce the contribution from 2020/21

**(f) EXCLUSION OF PUBLIC AND PRESS AND RESTRICTION OF DOCUMENTS**

RESOLVED:

- (a) That under section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the public and press be excluded from the meeting for the following item as it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act (as amended from time to time) namely information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information).
- (b) That all documents and reports relating to the item be confirmed as ‘Not for Publication’

**(g) FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Crematorium Manager (previously circulated) regarding future development opportunities.

RESOLVED:

- a) That in principle the proposal outlined therein be approved and the Crematorium Manager be authorised to prepare a detailed business plan for future consideration.
- b) That Phase B project, demolishing the garage/memorial hall and rebuilding storage, be delayed until 2020/21.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 3.50 p.m.

