

NORTH DEVON COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting of the NORTH DEVON CREMATORIUM JOINT COMMITTEE held at the Crematorium on Friday 11 June 2021 at 2.30 p.m.

Present: Representing North Devon District Council

Councillors Bulled, Cann, Lovering, Phillips and Walker Chair).

Representing Torridge District Council

Councillors Christie (Vice Chair), J. Gubb and Hurley.

Officers

Crematorium Manager, Treasurer, Secretary and Accountant.

(a) APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Walker be appointed Chair of the Joint Committee until re-appointments are made in the next municipal year.

(b) APOLOGIES

Apologies were received from Councillors Davis and Y. Gubb.

(c) APPOINTMENT OF VICE CHAIR

RESOLVED that Councillor Christie be appointed Vice Chair of the Joint Committee until re-appointments are made in the next municipal year.

(d) MINUTES

- (i) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5th February 2021 (previously circulated) be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.
- (ii) Matters Arising – There were no matters arising

(e) DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest declared.

(f) CREMATORIUM MATTERS

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

i) Covid Crisis Update

It was noted:

That on 17th May the number of mourners permitted was increased to 50 following the removal of the legislated 30-limit and a risk assessment of the chapel.

On June 21st it was anticipated that all legal & social distancing restrictions/requirements would be lifted. To help the transition, initially only the Rowan Chapel would be in use.

If that were the case, seating would probably increase to 160 which retained slightly enhanced spacing. Use of on-screen hymn lyrics would be retained to reduce need for staff to touch shared items as would hand sanitizing equipment in all mourner and staff facilities. All other restrictions would be lifted. The seating capacity would be reviewed once any winter spike in Covid-19 had been considered.

ii) Achievements

It was noted:

That an electrostatic sprayer had been deployed after each service since early March (kills viruses within 1 minute). This reduced the need for staff to manually wipe surfaces and enhanced coverage.

That the following software enhancements for service users had been purchased & were awaiting implementation:

- Public access to search for service dates/times via the internet (not private services).
- Automatic email confirmation of service bookings/changes to Funeral Directors.

That a shipping container had been rented (on-site) to cover storage shortage pending the re-building of garages.

iii) Staffing

It was noted:

That the second temporary part-time gardener post had been in place for over 2-years which afforded full employment protection rights to the current staff-member, the Lead Gardener was on long term sick leave due to personal family issues and the part-time Bereavement Administrator had also retired.

The Crematorium Manager stated that there was leeway within the budget to buy in additional staffing services if required to cover the staff shortfall.

It was agreed:

- A) That, the aforementioned temporary part-time gardener post be made a permanent post and the position advertised.
- B) That the Committees condolences be sent to the Lead Gardener.
- C) That the part-time Bereavement Administrator position be advertised.

iv) Metals Recycling Charity Award

It was noted:

That Clarity had been awarded £10,000 (paid direct December 2020). The 'formal cheque presentation' had not yet taken place and that the Calvert Trust (Exmoor) had been proposed for the next award (due June 2021).

The subsequent nomination list was:

Over and Above (Cancer & Wellbeing Centre)
Families in Grief
North Devon Children's Holiday Foundation
North Devon Hospice
Cruse
Children's Hospice SW
Over and Above (North Devon Hospital – Maternity Unit Bereavement Suite)
Clarity
Calvert Trust

That no further additions to be considered prior to February 2022.

v) Crematorium Figures

The Cremation figures were noted.

vi) Garden Improvements 2020/21

It was noted:

That the car-park hedge had been laid aesthetically and with regard to its future maintenance. It was an enhancement and enabled the provision of a footpath by DCC to serve the 200 new homes adjacent to the crematorium.

The bulk materials area in the carpark was about to be fenced off and hidden from view.

The Rowan exit sails were still pending due to contractor workload.

vii) Larkbear Development – Traffic Management

It was noted that the traffic order to remove the existing bus gate in Gratton Way and replace it with a new bus gate in Old Torrington Road had been published. The only exemptions currently confirmed were for buses/PSVs and bicycles. Enforcement was expected to be by camera. This would require all vehicular traffic, including the funeral cortege, to approach via the Roundswell/Sainsbury mini roundabout/Gratton Way Industrial Estate. The consultation period ended on 17th June 2021.

RESOLVED that the Joint Committee formally object to the proposal on the following grounds:

- Congestion. The effective closure of Old Torrington Road to all vehicles except buses will cause serious congestion in Gratton Way. All other vehicles, including funeral traffic will have to use Gratton Way and with increased use of the Crematorium, provision of over 200 additional homes at the end of Old Torrington Road and the Larbear Development and new Lidl store will cause chaos. An accident in this area particularly at the mini-roundabout, would potentially close off access to a large area including the Crematorium.
- Access through an Industrial Estate for a funeral procession was unacceptable.
- Concerns re-enforcement with the potential for mourners innocently being caught on the camera enforced bus gate.

It was agreed that to mitigate the problems consideration should be given to:

- Construction traffic use only Gratton Way route.
- That the bus gate be either removed and Gratton Way re-opened to create the 2-way route access for residents and the crematorium OR
- The bus gate is moved with significant exemptions and/or reduced hours of operation together with the simultaneous implementation of either the Cedar traffic lights or the Roundswell additional lanes proposed schemes.

(g) OUTTURN 2020/2021

The Joint Committee considered a report by the Treasurer (previously circulated) regarding the outturn figures for 2020/2021.

RESOLVED:

- i) That the Outturn report 2020/21 be noted.
- ii) That the reserves and balances outlined in paragraph 3.4 of the report be approved.

(h) DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

It was noted that the next meeting would be on Friday 6th August 2021 @ 2.30 p.m.

Chairman

The meeting ended at 3.20 p.m.